

St Helens College

GOVERNING BOARD

**Minutes from the meeting held at the Town Centre Campus, St Helens
Thursday 12 October 2023 at 3.30pm**

Present:	Phil Han	External Governor
	Alison Cannon	External Governor
	John Heritage	External Governor (via Microsoft Teams)
	Andrew Lang	External Governor
	Jim Pinsent	External Governor
	Alun Owen	External Governor
	David Balsamo	External Governor (via Microsoft Teams)
	Liz Duncan	External Governor
	Zulakha Desai	External Governor
	Simon Pierce	Chief Executive/Principal
	Tracey Turner	Staff Governor
	Jen McGill	Staff Governor

In attendance:	Janet Hulme	Director of HROD
	Darryn Hedges	Interim Finance Director
	Nick Gribben	Vice Principal
	James Jordan	Director of Student Services, Designated Safeguarding Lead
	Nicola Anderson	Health and Safety Manager
	Carys Bibby	Governance Director (minutes)

175 **Apologies for absence**
No apologies were received.

176 **Declarations of interest**
There were no declarations of interest to note.

177 **Recruitment of a Chair of the Corporation**
The Governing Board received a report setting out recommendations for recruiting to the post of Chair of the Corporation. Two nominations were received for the role of Vice Chair from Alison Cannon and David Balsamo.

Alison Cannon and David Balsamo left the meeting.

The board discussed the nominations received and a vote was taken. Alison Cannon was appointed as the Vice Chair.

Alison and David rejoined the meeting.

An invitation was extended to all members of the board to express their interest in joining the selection panel for the Chair. The Education and Skills Funding Agency has offered recruitment support through the National Leaders of Governance. It was discussed that independent advice would be helpful however, the board requested confirmation of whether the National Leader of Governance will actively participate in or observe the recruitment process.

RESOLVED: The Governing Board resolved to approve the appointment of Phil Han as interim Chair of the Corporation for a maximum period of sixth months while a recruitment exercise is undertaken.

The Governing Board resolved to appoint Alison Cannon as an interim Vice-Chair for the period during which Phil Han is interim Chair.

The Governing Board noted that no changes are proposed to the role description.

The Governing Board resolved to approve the recommendation that any selection panel for the recruitment of the Chair include:

- **Members of the Search and Governance Committee**
- **The Vice Chair of the Board**
- **Another member of the Board**

The Governing Board resolved to approve the appointment of a recruitment agency to manage the recruitment and selection process.

178 Minutes of the previous meetings held on 6 July 2023 and 25 August 2023

The minutes of the meetings held on 6 July 2023 and 25 August 2023, including private and confidential addenda, were approved as an accurate record, subject to the removal of Liz Duncan from the attendees of minutes 172 and 173.

179 Matters arising and action tracker

RESOLVED: The Governing Board noted the action tracker updates

180 Performance/exception report

The report set out high-level key performance indicators (KPIs) for 2023/24 and a new Operational Plan for scrutiny and approval by the Governing Board. The board supported the development of a live reporting dashboard containing the KPIs, with a static version of this report included in agenda packs.

The College will receive an additional 7.3% 16-19 funding from this academic year. The scale of this increase is linked to the number of high value programmes offered. The

board will receive a recommendation on a staff pay award at its next meeting, based on affordability and taking this funding increase into consideration. The Association of Colleges has recommended a 6.5% pay increase for college staff.

The board queried whether staff in areas where attendance was a challenge are ensuring students undertake catch up learning. It was confirmed that catch up learning was taking place through small group tuition sessions and through the Virtual Learning Environment. Most absences recorded were sporadic rather than persistent. As many courses included highly weighted end of year assessment, teachers are focusing on ensuring no gaps in knowledge for these exams.

Enrolment of adults remained a risk. This had been scrutinised by the Financial, Resources and Commercial Committee and the managers will consider a radical rebasing of the offer.

The board queried the achievability of targets. Attendance and pass rates were the most challenging targets however, the College is aspirational for and has high expectations of its students which is reflected in these targets. Retention had reduced in 2022/23 and the proposed target is to return to the sector average.

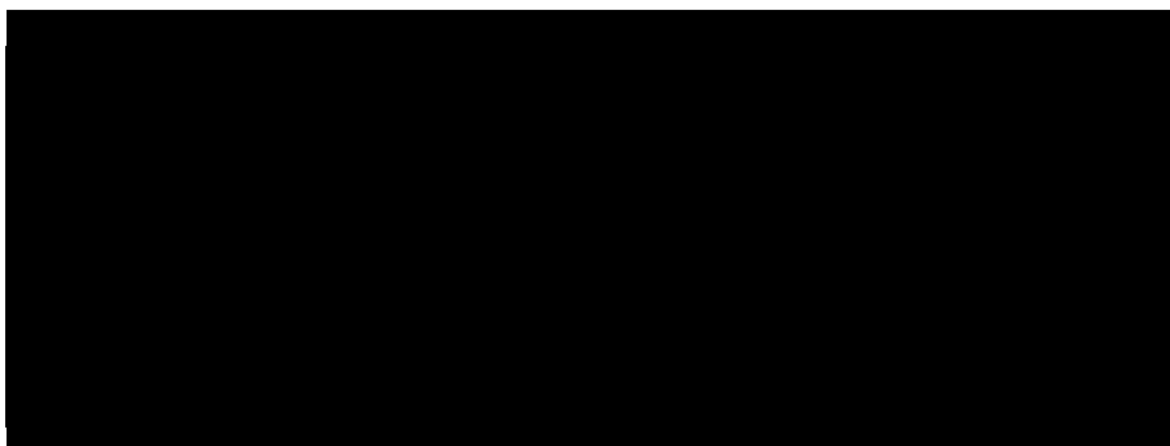
Regarding the compliance report, the board queried when those areas that are currently compliant will be compliant. On health and safety compliance, the Health and Safety Manager had conducted a thorough analysis of non-compliance, and an action plan is being devised based on risk. Workshop risk assessments are a priority and there is a target to complete these this term. The board were advised that the Health and Safety Manager reports directly to the Chief Financial Officer and has regular meetings with the Chief Executive/Principal indicating the focus on college wide health and safety. The College is now compliant with Office for Students regulations and the administration error has been resolved with emails directed to a generic inbox. The board will receive an update on performance management at its next meeting.

RESOLVED: **The Governing Board resolved to approve the high-level KPIs and targets for 2023/24 and note the proposed approach to development of a 'Governor Dashboard'.**

The Governing Board resolved to approve the College Operational Plan 2023/24.

The Governing Board noted the compliance report.

John Heritage joined the meeting.





RESOLVED:



Jen McGill joined the meeting.

182 Financial management report

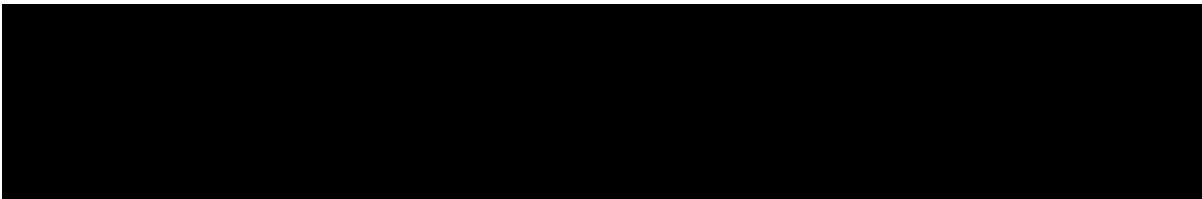
The report provided a summary of financial and estates matters, including a summary of the financial outturn for the year ended 31 July 2023. The audit of the financial statements began on 9 October 2023, and it is too early to report any findings. Senior managers have prepared prudent management accounts, and no significant changes are expected.

Alun Owen joined the meeting.

The board queried the schedule of receipt for the additional £1.3m of 16-18 funding. This money is received in line with the usual profile for 16-18 funding and will be consolidated in future years. Subject to agreement of new banking covenants, this will alleviate cash balance low points. The September accounts will include the additional income but assume that the entirety will be used for staffing costs.

Financial performance in the management accounts to the end of July 2023 was slightly worse than forecast, due to an insurance excess payment and a higher provision for claw back of the Adult Education Budget. In 2023/24, the College expects to deliver the non-devolved element of the Adult Education Budget through partnership delivery. A Curriculum Director with responsibility for adults and higher education is currently being recruited, following which further consideration will be given to the adult offer.

The board queried the robustness of assumptions in the curriculum plan for 2023/24 as the Adult Education Budget target had not been met through September recruitment. Most adult courses that were planned are running but with smaller cohorts than expected. These courses are still making a financial contribution although they have not reached their target. This is indicative of adult recruitment in the sector due to the economic climate.



RESOLVED: The Governing Board noted the financial summary report.

The Governing Board resolved to approve a change to the frequency of full financial forecasting from monthly to quarterly, with a high-level review in the intervening months.

James Jordan joined the meeting.

183 Safeguarding annual report

The report presented a summary of the range and type of incidents raised with the Safeguarding, Mental Health and Wellbeing Team along with measures taken by the College to ensure it is compliant with the requirements of Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 (KCSiE).

The board queried if the volume of cases is manageable for the team. The number of cases has increased as Keeping Children Safe in Education 2022 now requires all low-level concerns to be reported. It was reported that the College now has a positive culture of reporting which is beneficial for students. To deal with the number of cases, a triage system has been implemented to focus resources and to ensure that the team can focus on the most high-risk cases. Additional resource is being considered, including the creation of student ambassadors for wellbeing. The Designated Safeguarding Lead is now responsible for all pastoral support through their role as Director of Student Services and is working to create synergy between the various teams.

In response to a query on proactive measures being taken to reduce the demand on support, the board were advised that progress coaches were offering resilience training to students. This was themed on prevalent local issues such as drug use and violence.

The board queried what support the College received from other local agencies such as the NHS. In some cases, students are being referred to the College for support from other agencies. Mental health support systems are particularly overwhelmed. The board noted that one of the priorities for St Helens Council is resilience in young people. The College will continue to highlight the challenges faced in finding support for young people in the borough and the work that the College is doing on this agenda.

The safeguarding link governor commended the team on their outstanding work on often complex and difficult matters. The board thanked the safeguarding and pastoral teams for the invaluable work they do.

RESOLVED: The Governing Board noted the update on the number and nature of mental health and safeguarding concerns in 2022/23.

The Governing Board noted that the College has met the requirements of KCSiE 2022 for Safeguarding and Prevent.

James Jordan left the meeting. Nick Gribben joined the meeting.

184 2022/23 results summary (taken after safeguarding item)

The report presented an update on 2022/23 results, a summary analysis of the reasons for declining retention and pass rates and key actions to address this. Overall achievement and adult achievement had improved slightly since the report was published to governors.

The focus for the year is to improve retention and pass rates. The board queried the main reason that students had withdrawn in 2022/23. The most common reason given

for withdrawal was personal issues, which were wide ranging. Managers are conducting further work to look at common themes in the issues listed. On pass rates, the exam performance in technical qualifications was not in line with predictions. Teaching staff have received training on preparing students for examinations and this training, provided by an external provider, InnerDrive, will continue throughout the year. Students will also be offered additional sessions on exams skills this year. Nationally, results for technical qualifications were poor. In some areas the College has moved from technical qualifications to Vocationally-Related Qualifications this year.

The board requested assurance that the actions listed in the report are having the desired impact and for actions to be prioritised. At this early point in the year, staff governors reported that small changes were having a noticeable impact. The introduction of a 'review week' in week four of the academic year has allowed for staff to have aspirational conversations with students and to clearly set expectations. Parents evenings have been arranged locally rather than centrally, which has led improved engagement and attendance.

Some higher education examination boards had not been finalised due to issues with awarding bodies. In response to a query on the impact on students, governors were advised that all students affected had been contacted and this had not impacted their destinations. It was requested that an update on these issues with an action plan is brought to the November meeting of the Curriculum and Quality Committee.

RESOLVED: The Governing Board noted the report and associated actions.

Tracey Turner left the meeting.

185 Annual careers report

The report provided the board with an update on the implementation of the College's careers strategy and the action plan first time.

It is expected that all Gatsby benchmarks will be achieved by the end of the academic year. There are different barriers to this for different subject sector areas and there will be a focus on consistent opportunities to access the workplace across all schools.

The College has completed work with Myerscough College on careers. The report of this activity will be reviewed and relevant points added to the action plan.

RESOLVED: The Governing Board noted the information provided.

Nick Gribben left the meeting. Nicola Anderson joined the meeting.

186 Discussion topic: Health and Safety Strategy

The board received a presentation on the proposed health and safety strategy, which is based on legal requirements and includes relevant targets.

It is recommended that governors undertake the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) leading safely course.

The proposed timescale for the strategy is five years. The board queried whether this could be achieved more quickly. Five years will be needed to ensure that the strategy is embedded with systems in place and the relevant external agencies engaged. The resulting action plan will be prioritised, by month, based on legal compliance and risk assessment. The board requested a timeline for completing high, medium and low risk

actions. The Health and Safety Committee will assess any areas of the action plan that can be expedited.

A key strand of the strategy will be a cultural shift to ensure staff and students report issues. Wider Leadership Team members have received training on health and safety and this is included in the induction for new staff.

The board thanked the Health and Safety Manager for an excellent presentation and the great work undertaken so far.

RESOLVED: The Governing Board approved the Health and Safety Strategy.

Nicola Anderson left the meeting.

187 Discussion topic: Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

The board received a presentation on the proposed equality, diversity and inclusion strategy. Staff and students will be consulted for their input into this strategy and students and staff interest groups will be established.

The College had taken advice from organisations such as Stonewall on equality, diversity and inclusion matters. The board considered why the College had chosen Stonewall and whether other advice might offer a broader perspective. The strategy included an aim to be accredited by the National Centre for Diversity in 2024. Material disadvantage remains one of the key differentiators for students at the College and any strategies will consider this carefully.

The Board discussed the requirement for staff to feel comfortable and competent in dealing with issues around equality, diversity and inclusion. A key focus of the strategy will be embedding a culture of awareness. The board considered whether an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Manager might support a quicker change in culture.

RESOLVED: The Governing Board noted that the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy will be brought to the Governing Board meeting for approval in December 2023.

The Governing Board resolved to approve the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Policy, subject to any comments provided via email.

188 Discussion topic: People/Workforce Strategy

The board received a presentation on the proposed people/workforce strategy. This strategy has been developed with input from the Wider Leadership Team.

The strategy will consider performance management and the processes around this. A number of staff are on performance improvement plans and the Human Resources Team are working to expedite this process.

The board supported the name of the Human Resource Team being changed to the People Team, in line with current practice.

RESOLVED: The Governing Board discussed the People/Workforce Strategy will be brought to the Governing Board meeting for approval in December 2023.

David Balsamo and John Heritage left the meeting.

189 Discussion topic: Stakeholder Engagement Strategy

The board received a presentation on the proposed stakeholder engagement strategy. The strategy focuses on external stakeholders as the student voice process and people strategy deal with engagement for staff and students.

Engagement within the Knowsley borough is a key strand of the strategy. The senior leadership team restructure will give responsibility for Knowsley campus to a member of the team and the board are currently recruiting for a governor with a Knowsley borough background.

The strategy will prioritise engagement with certain stakeholders to ensure this is achievable. The board considered how they might contribute to the strategy, through providing contact links or representing the College at external events.

RESOLVED: The Governing Board discussed the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy.

190 Corporate risk register

RESOLVED: The Governing Board noted that there were no amendments required to the risk register as a result of the discussions.

191 Any other business

There were no items of other business.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Governing Board will be the termly performance meeting on Thursday 14 December 2023 at 3.30pm.

Jen McGill and Darryn Hedges left the meeting.

192 In camera session: Senior Post Holder update

An in camera discussion was held with external governors. A private and confidential minute is available from the Governance Director.

193 In camera session: Senior Staffing update

An in camera discussion was held with external governors. A private and confidential minute is available from the Governance Director.