



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ESHER SIXTH FORM COLLEGE ACADEMY TRUSTEES

PART 1

Wednesday, 6th December 2023 at 6.00pm

Present:

Tim Oliver (Chair)

Dan Hards

Paul Collyer (Vice Chair)

Natasha Meade

Anna Mawson

Emma O'Brien

Claire Douglas

John Thater

Sophie Cook

Dave Roberts

Jane Duscherer

Stephanie Fudge

Carl Egginton

David Lavarack (Member)

Sagar Patel, Deputy Principal, (Advising Officer)

Stephanie Wiles, Director of Finance and Estates, (Advising Officer)

Catherine Davies (Clerk)

1. REGISTER OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of business interests.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Liz Gilroy-Scott, Mark Nelligan, Ross Robinson, and Andy McVeigh.

3. CONSTITUTION

3.1 The Career Progression Link Trustee TOR was reviewed.

3.2 Dave Roberts was welcomed to the Board as a Parent Trustee appointed by the Members on the 15th November 2023.

3.3 The Vice Chair took the chair of the meeting.
The Vice Chair asked the Board to consider recommending Tim Oliver to the Members of the Board to be re-appointed for a further term of office.
The Board agreed to recommend Tim Oliver to the Members of the Board for re-appointment for a further term of office.

3.4 The Chair asked the Board to consider recommending Mark Nelligan to the Members of the Board to be re-appointed for a further term of office.
The Board agreed to recommend Mark Nelligan to the Members of the Board for re-appointment for a further term of office.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Board approved the minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting of 20th September 2023.

5. MATTERS ARISING

AT1-01 Assistant Principal to circulate the Safeguarding training to all Trustees and Members for completion by mid-October. **The Clerk updated the Board that a handful of Trustees need to complete the Safeguarding Training in the next 7 days and have been sent a reminder.**

6. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Principal briefed the Board on the following:

- The Senior Leadership Team continues to meet with local further education colleges to ensure a co-ordinated approach to Level 3 Reform.
- BTEC courses at the College are subject to an Internal Quality review to both improve the student experience and outcomes but also help inform the SLT in terms of the College's approach to AAQ's in 2025/26. The Principal has been leading the internal quality review into Music Tech BTEC which is being defunded from September 2024. The Music Department needs to select a course to offer students until 2026 when the new BTEC in Music Tech will be released. The Board noted the other BTECS courses which are due to be defunded and replacement courses will be released in most cases apart from Applied Science, Health and Social Care and Film and TV.
- The DfE has issued guidance to suggest that students with lower attainment, SEND and other exceptional circumstances will be able to study 2 AAQ's alongside 1 A Level. This update will ensure the College can continue to be an open access provider of both A Levels and AAQ's.
- The Government is in negotiation with schools, colleges, and universities regarding minimum service levels.
- The number of applications for places at the College in September 2024 was high with a waiting list created and applications declined.
- Support staff changes were noted including the hiring of an HR Officer, the strong team now in place in the Finance Department and the retirement of the Deputy Clerk, Sharon Kelly.

The Board welcomed the Principal's report.

The Principal thanked Trustee Sophie Cook for her help in the recruitment of new HR staff.

The Chair thanked Sharon Kelly for her 20 years of service to the College and her role as Deputy Clerk to the Board of Trustees.

The Vice Chair asked if the Principal's Report could return to being a written summary and the Principal agreed.

The Vice Chair asked for more information concerning the Music AAQ that will be offered from September 2024 to '26 and the Principal gave an update of the options that the SLT are currently reviewing.

Action: Principal's Report to include a written summary going forward.

6.1 Student Union Report

The Student Trustee briefed the Board on the activities of the Student Union highlighting the Student Voice meetings and an initiative with the catering company to bring in “Blue Dot” meal deals to provide a meal option at the price of a free school meal. Fundraising events have resulted in a £2600 donation to ECAT and the social media profile of the SU continues to rise with an increased number of followers. The Eco Committee is flourishing and an anti-littering campaign is being planned for the next term. A survey held during the Freshers Fair found that 87% of students were “very happy” with the college experience.

The Board thanked the Student Trustee for his report and welcomed his work to engage and support the students to ensure their voices are heard and charity events promoted.

6.2 Finance Reports (August and October)

The Director of Finance and Estates briefed the Board on the management accounts and reports for periods to the end of August and the end of October. The Board noted that the budget will be revised in the Spring when the salaries are re-calculated to include the teachers’ negotiated pay rise with the 3.5% contribution from the Government.

The Board approved the Management Accounts and Reports.

7. REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 AUGUST 2023 AND LETTER OF REPRESENTATION TOGETHER WITH AUDIT FINDINGS REPORT AND AUDIT COMMITTEE INTERNAL SCRUTINY REPORT

The Director of Finance and Estates introduced this item noting that the Audit Committee and the Finance and Estates Committee had seen these documents and recommended them to the Board. She added that the auditors had asked for a last-minute presentational change to the accounts regarding the assets held on deposit. This was to ensure the accounts were consistent with other educational institutions that they audit.

Report and Financial Statements – The Board approved the Report and Financial Statements.

Audit Findings Report and Letter of Representation – The Board approved the Letter of Representation.

Audit Committee Internal Scrutiny Report – The Board noted the Audit Committee Internal Scrutiny Report.

The Board thanked the Director of Finance and Estates for her work on the reports.

8. COLLEGE SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT

The Deputy Principal introduced the College Self-Assessment Report, noting that the Report had been considered by the Quality and Standards Committee. The Deputy Principal focused on successes at the College, including:

- Formal exam opportunities, supervised academic study, timetabled learning sessions, and other initiatives to develop independent, resilient and effective learners.

- UCAS data shows the high tariff acceptance rate has increased at the College and 3 of the 5 top universities that students attend are in the Russell Group. This success is reflected in the HESA data which continues to show the College as one of the best Colleges in the country in preparing students successfully for Higher Education.
- Wider Skills Week has been re-introduced following the pandemic and student enrolment and enumeration numbers continue to be robust.

A Member commented on the HESA statistics and noted that as the College is non-selective this is an excellent achievement.

A Trustee asked if the record level of applications was a trend seen at other Colleges and the Deputy Principal replied that this was not a common theme seen at other Colleges.

A Trustee asked about the availability of study spaces for independent learning and the Principal replied that he was aware of the issue of space and the laptop lockers can be accessed by students so they can study on site when the computers in the learning resource areas are in use.

The Deputy Principal introduced the QIP 2023/24, noting that the Plan had been considered by the Quality and Standards Committee. At the Committee meeting the discussion focused on adjusting Targets 1 and 2 and following consideration the Deputy Principal asked the Board to approve Targets 1 and 2 as follows:

Target 1 – To achieve a pass rate at A Level of 99% or above.

Target 2 – To achieve an A Level high grade rate of over 60%.

The Board approved Targets 1 and 2.

The Deputy Principal gave an overview of the remaining Targets and the Board noted the importance of developing strategies to improve attendance.

A Trustee asked about the aspirations of the College with regard to Learning Support and the growing number of students with access arrangements and the Principal replied that both a review of the Learning Support department and processes/training is due to take place to ensure that Targets 7 and 8 are achieved. The Board discussed the use of AI in both the classroom and as a learning aid and the cost of housing in the area impacting teacher recruitment.

9. REPORT BACK FROM COMMITTEES

9.1 Finance and Estates

The Chair asked the Director of Finance and Estates to update the Board on the migration of the payroll to a new provider in time for the next payroll run.

The Chair briefed the Board on the new extension building and the approval given for £40,000 to be spent on drawing up fully costed plans.

The Chair invited all the Trustees to tour the estate on the 13th March at 6pm as part of the Finance and Estates Committee meeting.

Action: Clerk to ensure all Trustees and Members are invited to a tour of the estate on the 13th March 2024 at 6pm.

9.2 Quality and Standards

The Chair asked the Clerk to circulate the table of BTECS that are due to be defunded to the Board.

Action: Clerk to circulate the table of BTECS that are due to be defunded to the Board.

9.3 Strategy and Policy

The Chair reminded the Board that the Training Morning is taking place on the 22nd February at the College.

10. BUSINESS CASE FOR NEW EXTENSION BUILDING

The Chair gave an overview of the discussion that had taken place at the Finance and Estates Committee meeting. Since the meeting the business case proposal has been improved and Planning Permission was granted on 27th November 2023.

The Board discussed the risk to student experience if the number of classrooms is not increased, the long-term fall in the local birth rate and the lack of opportunity to bid for matched funding from the Government this year. The removal of the temporary classrooms in May 2026 was noted which ties in with the proposed build of the extension block from July 2024 until September 2025.

Due to planning permission being granted since the Finance and Estates Committee met, the Board agreed to approve the business case for building a new extension subject to the build cost not exceeding 20% of the figure provided in the business case proposal.

11. LINK TRUSTEE REPORT

The Safeguarding and EDI Link Trustee gave an update of the recent Safeguarding SAR.

The Careers Link Trustee outlined steps taken by the Progression Guidance Department to ensure Gatsby Benchmarks 7 and 8 are met.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

13. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING : Wednesday 27TH March 2024.

The meeting closed at 8.10pm

Attendance was 82%

Signed.....

Date.....

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

AT2-001	Principal's Report to include a written summary going forward.
AT1-002	Clerk to ensure all Trustees and Members are invited to a tour of the estate on the 13 th March 2024 at 6pm.
AT1-003	Clerk to circulate the table of BTECS that are due to be defunded to the Board. (Done)

SUMMARY OF TRUSTEE CHALLENGE [C] / SUPPORT [S]

C/S	Minute	Topic
S	6	The Principal thanked Trustee Sophie Cook for her help in the recruitment of new HR staff.
S	6	The Chair thanked Sharon Kelly for her 20 years of service to the College and her role as Deputy Clerk to the Board of Trustees.
C	8	A Trustee asked if the record level of applications was a trend seen at other Colleges and the Deputy Principal replied that this was not a common theme seen at other Colleges.
C	8	A Trustee asked about the aspirations of the College with regard to Learning Support and the growing number of students with access arrangements and the Principal replied that both a restructure of the Learning Support department and a review of processes and training is due to take place to ensure that Targets 7 and 8 are achieved.

