

LUMINATE EDUCATION GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE HARROGATE COLLEGE BOARD HELD ON TUESDAY 25 JUNE 2024

Present

Robin Burch	Staff Member
James Haddleton (to item 12)	Co-optee
Paul Hollins	Co-optee
Jane Pither (Chair)	Governor
Isabel Sutcliffe	Co-optee
Louise Tearle	Co-optee

The quorum for the meeting was three members (including at least one governor)

In Attendance

Eleanor Harris	Governance Manager
Nicola Johnson	Deputy Director of Curriculum
Stuart Jolley	Chief Financial Officer
Bill Jones	Deputy CEO and Executive Principal
Carol Layall (item 13 only)	Group Director, Quality of Education
Gemma Simmons Blench	Deputy CEO Curriculum & Quality
Ann Marie Spry	Group Vice Principal, Adults
Danny Wild (from item 8)	Principal, Harrogate College

The meeting took place at Harrogate College and started at 5.00pm

PART 1 - MEETING ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Apologies were recorded from Colin Booth (Group CEO and Governor), Levi Hughes (Student Member) and David Thorpe (Co-optee).

2. Determination of Observers/Attendees at the Meeting

The board agreed and welcomed all attendees/observers at the meeting as per the above attendance list.

3. Declaration of Interests in any Agenda Items

The Chair reminded board members of the requirement to declare their interest in any agenda item. There were none, other than the standing declarations as per the register of board members' interests, which were noted.

4. Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 12 March 2024 and consideration of any Actions or other Matters Arising

Members considered the draft minutes of the board meeting held on 12 March 2024 and a rolling list of actions and matters arising from previous meetings. The board heard that the recruitment process to fill the remaining vacancies on the board is ongoing. Vacancies have been advertised on LinkedIn, specifically targeted members with EDI and finance backgrounds. Any board members using LinkedIn were encouraged to share the advert among their networks.

The board noted that self-assessment of the board's compliance with the AOC Code of Good Governance would be presented in the autumn. Board members requested that an update regarding the issue related to the disaggregation of data in Smoothwall raised at the March meeting. It was agreed that this would be checked with the Deputy Director of Student Life and reported back to the board. Board members were pleased to be informed that the issues resulting in potential challenges with achieving a BREAM excellent rating on the new building reported in March had been addressed and the new college building would be rated as BREAM excellent when it is built.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the board held on 12 March 2024 be approved as a true and accurate record and that these be signed by the Chair.

5. Communications

a) Update from Chair including feedback from Group Board

The Chair informed the board that she, along with the Principal, Group Vice Principal Adult and Deputy CEO and Executive Principal, had met with the CEO of the Red Kite Learning Trust and Headteacher at Rossett School in June. As a result of the meeting a memorandum of understanding is being drawn up, which will help towards developing strong partnerships with local schools.

In June, a number of board members attended an event at the college bistro, with food prepared and served by the college's hospitality students. Board members in attendance remarked on the quality of the food and service and commended the college leadership team on the professionalism of the students involved.

The Chair updated the board on the discussions and key decisions from the Group Board meetings which took place in April, which included the approval of the Group Strategic Priorities for 2024/25, the proposed contracting arrangements for Harrogate College and Pudsey Sixth Form, the Group Data Protection policy and a revised Luminate contract of employment, which is intended for eventual use for all staff across the group.

b) Student Activity Update

The Deputy Director of Curriculum informed the board that a very successful staff vs. students football match had been held at the college with another event being planned for next year. The student Star Awards had also been held with a large number of students in attendance and the college had held a number of events for Refugee Week.

c) Feedback from Link Governors

The Link Governor for Teaching and Learning informed the board that she had attended the college to participate in a learning walk, which included visiting the electrical workshop, where she noted that the students worked in a very self-guided way with the Electrical Tutor on hand for support and guidance when needed. The full report from the visit is available in the Governor Portal.

PART 2 - STRATEGY SESSION

6. a) On Programme Survey Results

The Group Director, Quality of Education reported that engagement with the On Programme Survey at Harrogate has increased this year showing positive results and allowing for much more credible feedback. The results show no difference in satisfaction between SEND and non-SEND students, which the board noted was a positive improvement for the college. Confirmation was given that an update on progress against actions will be provided at the next board meeting.

The board heard that the team is working to improve students' understanding of what is meant by 'the student voice'. Board members proposed that it may be beneficial to put this to students to define and from this try to understand how and if the college is meeting expectations. The Group Director, Quality of Education undertook to take this proposal back to the quality team.

b) Quality Improvement Plan

The board reviewed the Quality Improvement Plan, noting that a number of actions have now been completed, with remaining amber actions due for completion in August. The quality team is also working with the college to identify actions which may need to run over more than one year so that this can be reflected in next year's Self-Assessment Report (SAR).

c) Predicted Student Outcomes

The board heard that retention at the college has been well managed through the year with staff engaging with the systems in place to ensure more accurate predicted outcomes. Overall, it was reported that predicted student outcomes are positive, with achievement set to meet target levels thanks largely to interventions, monitoring and support. The board heard that a purple rating has been added to the BRAG rating system for student outcomes to help identify those at risk.

The board commended the excellent levels of attendance at GCSE English and maths exams at 98% and 95% respectively and members felt assured that students are responding well to the change of provider for the GCSE maths paper. With regard to staffing, the board heard that new teachers in English and maths have been recruited and, although another maths teacher has resigned, the impact of this will be managed by increasing hours for fractional staff.

The board queried how many legacy Hull College apprentices remained at the college and members were informed that while there are still a handful of these learners enrolled these should all have completed by next year. It was emphasised that booking end point assessments continues to be a national issue. The board requested that the retention figures be presented in table format in the next iteration of the report.

7. Financial Position and Forecast 2023/24

The Chief Financial Officer presented the report, which was presented in a new dashboard format. Board members commented that the new format was clearer, easier to follow and more digestible and that the commentary and focused narrative were helpful.

The CFO explained that while the financial forecast still shows a negative £1.2m EBITDA position for the college at year end, the financial position had been improved as a result of increased recruitment leading to the allocation of exceptional growth funding, additional high needs funding and the enhanced funding award allocated for study programmes. With regard to staffing costs, it was noted that these were higher than budget due to increased reliance on agency staff in hard to fill vacancies.

8. New Building Update

The Group Vice Principal, Development appraised the board of the challenges facing the new Harrogate College building project, resulting from a request for a Judicial Review being granted regarding the planning decision. It was explained that this judicial review will result in at least a three month delay to the project pushing the end date of the project beyond the current deadline for the FEETF grant funding. Assurance was given that the group is lobbying the DfE for a possible extension to the FEETF grant terms. The Principal also informed board members that he has met with the Mayor of North Yorkshire, the local Conservative and Liberal Democrat candidates and local headteachers to secure their support in writing to the Secretary of State. The college is also utilising local contacts to gather support from businesses. In the meantime, the group is reviewing the plans for car parking and drainage to ensure that these stand up to

scrutiny when the planning application is resubmitted. Confirmation was given that the board will be kept informed as the situation progresses.

9. Principal's Report

a) Progress Against Strategic Priorities

The Principal presented the progress against the strategic priorities for the college, and drew the board's attention in particular to the recent appointment of a Deputy Head of Digital Transformation, which will be a key role for the digitisation of curriculum and impactful use of digital skills at the college.

Board members requested an update on application numbers and heard that these have increased by 29% compared to the same point last year. It was also reported that acceptances have increased compared to last year, which provides assurance regarding the potential enrolment position for the college for next year.

b) Review of Harrogate College Risk Register

The board reviewed the updates to the college risk register, which proposed to remove risk *HA2022-03 - Risk of potential industrial unrest as a result of the cost of living crisis and the group's ability to respond sufficiently*. The Principal explained that number of positive actions to support staff have been taken by both the college and the group, including the December 2023 pay award and adoption of the workload agreement for staff from September 2024 and it was felt that this risk could now be managed as business as usual.

The board supported the proposal to add two new risks to the risk register relating to the new college building: *HC22 - A delay to the building of the new college due to a judicial review, risks the loss of DfE grant funding to build the college* and *HC23 – Staff wellbeing caused by the judicial review impacting on the development of the new college*. Board members were pleased to see the impact of the delay to the new building on staff wellbeing and the risks associated with this being considered. The board was assured that the Principal and group will continue to engage with staff to keep them informed about progress with the building as things develop, but anecdotally it was reported that there is strong support for the building and a drive to continue to fight for the planning application to be successful among staff.

RESOLVED: That the board approve the updates to the risk register, including the removal of risk HA2022-03 and the addition of HC22 and HC23.

c) Proposed Quality Targets for 2024/25

The Principal presented the proposed quality targets for 2024/25, which have been set with the aim of the college being graded good in the next SAR. With regard to the target for achievement it was explained that the overall national rate is decreasing while achievement at Harrogate College is improving and it was therefore felt that retaining a target of 85% would be a realistic aim. The board queried why achievement is decreasing nationally and heard that the cost of living crisis, social, emotional and mental health needs of students and the continued impact of Covid-19 are all contributing factors.

Board members asked why the post-19 English and Maths value added target had been reduced when achievement in these courses is improving and it was clarified retaining or increasing the value added score this year would be unrealistic due to the profile of the students enrolling. It was also noted that a small target related to internal progression had been included for this year. This was set at 1% as the different profile in courses between University Centre and Harrogate College means only a small number of Harrogate College students are likely to progress to this destination. The HR targets for 2024/25 were not available at the time of the meeting and would be circulated to the board once available.

RESOLVED: That the board approve the proposed Quality Targets for 2024/25 and recommend to Group Board that these be included within the group SODP.

d) Draft Operating Budget 2024/25

The CFO presented the draft operating budget to board, which had been set with income at £4.7m, just over £300k more than the current budget. This was driven mostly by growth in student numbers, apprenticeships and ESFA and adult education funding. Expenditure had been set at £5.978m, a slight increase from 2023/24, reflecting the full impact of pay award, an increase in TPS contributions and increased estates and service charges.

The board discussed in particular, the increased service charge for the college for 2024/25. While it was acknowledged that the estates charge was driven largely by the size of the building, the board expressed concern that the other service charges had increased as a result of the increased student numbers this year, which it was felt could disincentivise growth. The Principal assured the board that all service charge figures are scrutinised and approved during the Business Planning process. Board members also heard that a Tribal benchmarking exercise had previously been carried out, which is being used to drive down costs. The board requested that this data be shared along with a breakdown of how charges are allocated in order to provide transparency and assurance that these service charges are fairly apportioned.

RESOLVED: That the board approve the draft operating budget and recommend to Group Board that this be included within the consolidated budget for the group.

10. Strategic Deep Dive: Education Inspection Framework Overview

The Principal gave a presentation to the board outlining the process that will be followed under the Education Inspection Framework (EIF) when the group is next inspected by Ofsted, including actions taken since the last inspection to improve the position of the college. It was explained that much of the activity since the last inspection has focused on demonstrating student progress the results of which have led to the college now being self-assessed as good. The board heard that changes have been made to timetabling, placing English and maths sessions in the middle of the day to improve attendance and attendance overall has been incentivised. With regard to achievement, the board was informed that the changes made to the exam board to provide a curriculum more suitable for post-16 for English and maths and increased support for learners with High Needs have improved student outcomes and retention. In addition, the group wide approach to tracking performance with support for English and maths teachers has resulted in performance at the college now being above the national rate.

Board members commended the work that has been undertaken since the last inspection and agreed that all necessary actions are being taken to ensure the college is in the best position possible for the next Ofsted inspection. The board was also pleased to note that these actions are being implemented as business as usual activity.

11. Harrogate College Skills Contribution

The Principal provided the board with a presentation explaining Harrogate College's contribution to the EIF skills sub-judgement. The board noted the significant level of activity taking place at the college with civic, community, education and employer stakeholders. With regard to civic stakeholders the board heard that the college is developing partnerships with North Yorkshire Council and York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority to shape the skills agenda and influence the allocation of skills and AEB funding for the region. In terms of the community the college has focused on engagement with local community groups, which has resulted in a number of events being hosted at the college and collaboratively off site. The Principal explained that in terms of education stakeholders he is building relationships with local head teachers and principals to bid collaboratively for funding, shape policy and develop pathways for learners into FE. The board noted the strong evidence of employer engagement through the Harrogate

College Employers Network, which consists of over 120 local businesses, who work closely with the college to shape and co-create the curriculum with skills needs in mind. The board was assured by the depth and breadth of activity taking place to contribute to the skills agenda, which it was felt would put the college in a strong position with a significant amount of evidence for the next Ofsted inspection.

It was proposed that a Link Governor for Skills be appointed for each member board and the board approved Louise Tearle in this role, which would be incorporated within her current role as Link Governor for Meeting Local Skills Needs.

The meeting closed at 7.05pm

Signed: (Chair) Date: