

## Minutes of a meeting of the B&FC Corporation Board ('the Board')

Held on 26 September 2023 at 5.00pm

In the Boardroom at University Centre

### Members' attendance record:

		26 Sep 2023	31 Oct 2023	5 Dec 2023	30 Jan 2024	12 Mar 2024	23 Apr 2024	21 May 2024	9 Jul 2024	2023/24 attendance to date
Steve Fogg	Independent Member, Chair	✓								100%
Helen Broughton	Independent Member	✓								100%
Andrea Challis	Independent Member	✓								100%
Mark Chapman	Student Member	✓								100%
Jane Cole	Independent Member	✓								100%
Alun Francis	Principal and Chief Executive	✓								100%
Chris Holt	Independent Member	A								0%
Suzy Layton	Independent Member	✓								100%
Sandy Lee	Staff Member	✓								100%
Antony Lockley	Independent Member	✓								100%
Martin Long	Independent Member	✓								100%
Adrian Mills	Independent Member	✓								100%
Wendy Robinson	Independent Member	✓								100%
Jagjit Walia	Staff Member	✓								100%

### In attendance:

Linda Dean	Executive Director for Apprenticeships and People
Cheryl Dunn	Vice-Principal for Higher Education and Student Enhancement
Daryl Platt	Vice-Principal for Engagement
Paul Howard	Governance Professional, PDH Advisory (minutes)
Simon Hughes	Vice-Principal for Quality and Curriculum
Alistair Mulvey	Vice-Principal for Finance and Planning
Sam Bailey	Head of People and Payroll (for item 113/23 only)
Lisa Breeze	Director of Estates (for item 113/23 only)
Nigel Brown	Director for Students (for item 113/23 only)

**97/23 Chair and quorum**

Steve Fogg took the chair and noted that due notice had been given to all members and that a quorum was present. Accordingly, he declared the meeting duly convened and constituted.

**98/23 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received as shown in the attendance table above.

**99/23 Declarations of interest**

Note was made of the fact that Antony Lockley held an interest in minute reference 105/23 (Major projects update) by virtue of his employment and that Andrea Challis held an interest in minute reference 108/23 (Membership matters). It was agreed that both would withdraw from the meeting during consideration of the items in which they were conflicted.

**100/23 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes and the confidential minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 July 2023 and the confidential minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2023 were **APPROVED** as a true and accurate record.

**101/23 Dashboard**

- (i) Simon Hughes and Alistair Mulvey presented the regular dashboard containing headline quality and performance metrics and the Board had the opportunity to ask questions.
- (ii) The Board received the dashboard and noted the content.

**102/23 Principal and Chief Executive's report**

- (i) Alun Francis presented a report which had been circulated with the agenda, to share his initial reflections after having been with B&FC for just over a month as well as sharing some recent notable successes which included T-level and GCSE England and mathematics results and the annual strategic conversation with the Education and Skills Funding Agency. The report also shared some dates for board members to be able to participate in events during the year, such as internal review processes, attending Big Student Meetings or attending the Higher Education graduation ceremonies.
- (ii) Alun Francis noted his intention to review the current strategic plan with input from across the organisation during the Autumn term and to provide a more detailed update to the Board at its December 2023 meeting. This would allow the Board's comments to be considered before seeking the views of external stakeholders in the New Year to inform a revised plan. The Board endorsed this approach and the associated timescale.
- (iii) The Board received the report and noted the content.

### **103/23 Period 12 finance report**

- (i) Alistair Mulvey presented a report which had been circulated with the agenda to summarise the financial position as at 31 July 2023, noting that the figures presented were based on management accounts and would therefore differ from the statutory accounts once they are finalised for the Board's approval in December 2023.
- (ii) Alistair Mulvey confirmed that a new buyer for the former Lytham Sixth Form College campus had been identified but noted that the sale would necessarily take some time to transact. He also noted that, as a result of further education colleges being reclassified into the public sector, it had become necessary to have a clear purpose for the use of capital arising from land sales. The Board confirmed its intention for the proceeds of the sale of the former Lytham Sixth Form College campus to be used as part of its investment in Multiversity.
- (iii) In response to a question from Helen Broughton around the write-off of some income related to apprenticeships, Alistair Mulvey advised that the income spanned a two-year period and related to cases where the full amount of funding cannot be claimed. He also noted that the final position was expected to improve from the one set out in the report. In response to a follow-up question from Helen Broughton as to how this had arisen, Alistair Mulvey summarised the reasons and described the system changes that had been put in place to ensure that a similar issue would not reoccur.
- (iv) Wendy Robinson suggested that it would be useful for the Board to have a better understanding of the role of apprenticeships as part of B&FC's overall strategic plan, and this was endorsed by Suzy Layton.

**ACTION: Executive Team**

- (v) The Board received the report and noted the content.

### **104/23 Early enrolment indicators**

- (i) Daryl Platt presented a slide which provided an update on enrolment against each of the key markets serviced by B&FC and confirmed that the majority were either green or amber rated, which is not an unusual position for this point in the year. The one area that had been red rated, higher education, was discussed in detail and Cheryl Dunn noted that there had been a national decline in higher education numbers over recent years. She commented that the market appeared to be changing, with higher education institutions enjoying a larger market share.
- (ii) With regard to the wider content of the slide, Sandy Lee commented that there seemed to be a real buzz amongst students on campus this year and Daryl Platt noted that improvements in behaviour had also been seen in comparison with previous years. Jagjit Walia shared her reflections too, noting that students appeared to be more comfortable in sharing areas of difficulty at an early stage, which allows the appropriate support to be provided from the start of their student journey.
- (iii) Simon Hughes commented that this improvement is likely due to the strength of relationship with local schools, facilitated by the Schools Link Team, which had not been

possible during recent years due to the challenges created by Covid-19 and the associated social distancing and other requirements.

- (iv) The Board received the report and noted the content.

#### **105/23 Major projects update**

The Board directed that this item be minuted confidentially.

#### **106/23 Review of external governance review action plan**

- (i) Paul Howard presented a report which had been circulated with the agenda to summarise progress with the action plan arising from the recent external governance review.
- (ii) Alun Francis referred the Board to recommendation 4, around the recruitment of a governor with specific further education experience, and expressed his support for this, particularly given the need to focus on quality of provision. He also supported the concept of Board members having regular contact with students and noted that bespoke sessions can be arranged around other diary commitments, including online sessions.
- (iii) The Board received the report and noted the content.

#### **107/23 Review of core governance documents**

- (i) Paul Howard presented a report which had been circulated with the agenda to seek approval of amendments to the Instrument and Articles of Government following routine review, and approval of Standing Orders without amendment, as no amendments had been deemed necessary during the review. He confirmed that the proposed amendments had also been reviewed by B&FC's legal advisors at no cost.
- (ii) The Board **APPROVED** the changes to the Instrument and Articles of Government and **APPROVED** Standing Orders without amendment.

#### **108/23 Membership matters**

- (i) Andrea Challis withdrew from the meeting during consideration of this item.
- (ii) Paul Howard presented a report which had been circulated with the agenda to set out the Search Committee's recommendations following its meeting on 29 August 2023. At that meeting, the Search Committee had considered Andrea Challis' performance as a Board member as she approached the end of her Induction Year, and considered that she had made strong contributions throughout the year and that her attendance had been excellent. In addition to attendance at meetings, the committee noted that Andrea had proactively engaged with the college during the year.
- (iii) The Search Committee had also had regard to the fact that a new mandated governor role had been introduced in respect of the provision of independent careers advice, and recommended that Andrea Challis be appointed to that role.
- (iv) On the recommendation of the Search Committee, the Board **CONFIRMED** Andrea Challis in post for the remainder of her first term of office, to end on 26 September 2026,

after a successful Induction Year and **APPOINTED** her as the Link Governor for Independent Careers Advice.

#### **109/23 Modern slavery and human trafficking statement**

- (i) Alistair Mulvey presented a report to seek approval of the modern slavery and human trafficking statement which had been endorsed by the Senior Management Team at its meeting on 1 September 2023.
- (ii) The Board **APPROVED** the statement as presented and **AUTHORISED** signature of the same by the Chair on its behalf.

#### **110/23 Gender pay gap report**

- (i) Linda Dean presented a report which had been circulated with the agenda to share B&FC's gender pay gap report as at 31 March 2023. Key highlights and benchmarking data had also been provided for information.
- (ii) The Board received the report and noted the content.

#### **111/23 Fit and proper person checks 2023**

- (i) Paul Howard presented a report which had been circulated with the agenda to confirm that fit and proper person declarations had been received from all Board members and that independent checks against these declarations had been undertaken, with no discrepancies having been identified. Confirmation was provided that for in-year appointments, declarations are sought immediately and that independent checks are undertaken on receipt.
- (ii) The Board received the report and noted the content.

#### **112/23 Board members' forum**

- (i) Board members took the opportunity to share any College-related activities since the last meeting. Particular thanks were given to Helen Broughton for supporting the Higher Education graduation ceremonies in July.

#### **113/23 Annual reports**

- (i) Sam Bailey, Lisa Breeze and Nigel Brown joined the meeting.
- (ii) An annual report on people and payroll had been circulated with the agenda, and Sam Bailey summarised the content. In response to a question from Helen Broughton on the cost of sickness, confirmation was provided that this is calculated on the basis of working hours lost and, in response to a follow-up question, a summary of the college's sickness policy was provided.
- (iii) In response to a question from Andrea Challis, Sam Bailey noted that return to work interviews are completed but advised that managers seek opportunities to support employees whilst still absent rather than waiting for them to return to work. In response to a question from Suzy Layton around the reducing sickness absence levels, Sam

Bailey advised that there had been a real focus on wellbeing and both emotional and physical health over the last year.

- (iv) An annual report on safeguarding and on equality, diversity and inclusion had been circulated with the agenda and Nigel Brown summarised the content. He noted that the college move to the *My Concern* system meant that some reporting categories were not directly comparable with those of previous years, and also noted an increase in data sharing in-year as part of Operation Encompass.
- (v) In response to a question from Steve Fogg, Nigel Brown noted that it is difficult to compare B&FC's position with other colleges as organisations tend not to report it publicly, but he noted that there was nothing in the report with which he was unduly concerned. Suzy Layton highlighted the reported number of eating disorder cases, to which Nigel Brown noted that the number shown did not just relate to eating disorders but also to other incidents which fall within the wider category. The Board found the report useful and suggested that a longer session on safeguarding be arranged in the near future.

**ACTION: Paul Howard (to schedule)**

- (vi) An annual report on health, safety and the environment had been circulated with the agenda and Lisa Breeze summarised the content. She highlighted in particular the fact that there had been no RIDDOR reportable incidents in the previous year and that the accidents reported had been limited to low-level ones. The Board received the report and noted the content.
- (vii) On behalf of the Chief Information Officer who was unable to attend due to annual leave, Daryl Platt presented a report which had been circulated with the agenda to brief the Board on matters relating to data protection and cyber-security. He briefed the Board on the work that is undertaken to remain aware of issues and to ensure the security of the college's systems. Particular note was made of the work that is undertaken to train users to spot malicious emails and other commonly used forms of attack. The Board received the report and noted the content.

**114/23 Update from the Principal and Chief Executive**

The Board directed that this item be minuted confidentially.

**115/23 Date, time and venue of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Board will be held on 31 October 2023, 5.00pm, by videoconference.