

In late 2023, the college commissioned an external consultant to undertake an external governance review. It is a requirement for a Further Education college to undergo such a review every three years, with internal reviews to take place annually in between. It is recommended that colleges publish a summary of the outcomes and action plan from these external reviews.

The 2023 external review of West Nottinghamshire College’s governance resulted in the following recommendations, and the subsequent action is listed beside each one.

Great Governance Area 1: The board sets a strong organisational purpose, including having clarity of mission, vision and values.			
<u>Governance success criteria</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Detailed action to implement recommendation</u>	<u>Update as at June 2024</u>
1.1 Governors have a strong understanding of and commitment to college mission, values and students.	Governors to take the opportunity of the Community Pledge and its targets, to include accountability reporting to the community/key stakeholders about progress made from the end of the academic year 2023/24.	This will be an item for discussion on board agendas.	Complete. The Community Pledge is now regularly on committee and board agendas.
1.3 Has the board adopted the values of public life and of public benefit for colleges as set out in the AoC guidance, and are they included in the values and strategic priorities?	Clerk to identify relevant documents to be updated, if necessary, or new documents to be created, if required by July 2024.	Action identical to recommendation.	In progress
Great Governance Area 2: The board has a clear strategy & plans, including for curriculum, finance, equality, meeting local skills needs & sustainability.			
<u>Governance success criteria</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Detailed action to implement recommendation</u>	<u>Update as at June 2024</u>
2.1 Governors are actively engaged in the development of the college’s strategic plan.	All board members should endeavour to attend and input into the strategy days. Doing so in person is helpful, if possible.	Agendas and pre-reading will be shared a minimum of seven days in advance, and governors who cannot attend the sessions will be able to share their thoughts and engage via email.	In progress
2.4 Governors engage in effective collaborative work with other institutions on meeting employers and community needs.	WNC chair to seek again to enhance collaboration between colleges at governor level, to help joined up response to local needs.	Chair and clerk to liaise to consider ways to get other D2N2 college chairs and boards to collaborate with WNC.	Action not yet live, but this will be a priority in 2024/25.
Great Governance Area 3: The board has detailed oversight of delivery, including driving improvement in the quality of provision.			
<u>Governance success criteria</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Detailed action to implement recommendation</u>	<u>Update as at June 2024</u>

<p>3.1 Governors support and challenge the Executive to drive improvement of the college in board and committee meetings.</p>	<p>The Executive to add a ‘flag’ to ‘persistent ambers’ and action to address these and the four Ofsted recommendations in balanced scorecard reports/QIP updates, which will help focus challenge by the board and committees onto these matters.</p> <p>A new chair to be appointed to the Standards Committee, and a new governor should join this Committee (see section 6).</p> <p>The Standards Committee to consider how it could better structure its agendas and reduce duplication in reports, in order to give more time for discussion and challenge on persistent amber and red rated issues.</p>	<p>Relevant colleagues have confirmed that there is a way of flagging when something has been amber on the balanced scorecard for three consecutive iterations so that reports can be written. This will be implemented moving forward.</p> <p>A new governor has been identified to join this committee.</p> <p>Agendas are now more streamlined and duplication is avoided. Matters are covered efficiently and in as much detail as required.</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p>
<p>3.2 All governors have strong understanding of key strengths, weaknesses and risks in provision and student support. They hear and act on student voice and have oversight of action.</p>	<p>The board could build closer links to the lead learner rep meetings and consider a lead governor for ‘learner voice’ (see also 6.6 on student governors and on recruiting a youth board member).</p> <p>Curriculum deep dive reports to governors to include impact of ‘high aspirations’ on learners, on an annual basis.</p>	<p>Governors to be invited to step forward as learner voice link, with this person to attend lead learner rep meetings. This will be pulled into the wider links overhaul. In progress.</p> <p>To be reported to SC and board in October and June of every year – first October 2024.</p>	<p>A review of the whole process is in progress.</p> <p>Complete – this is on the work plan for 2024/25.</p>
<p>Great Governance Area 4: The board has strong oversight of finance and risk issues and has achieved/is making good progress to financial stability.</p>			
<p><u>Governance success criteria</u></p>	<p><u>Recommendation</u></p>	<p><u>Detailed action to implement recommendation</u></p>	<p><u>Update as at June 2024</u></p>
<p>4.4 The board has ensured that there are sufficient capital funds available to meet the college’s needs for investment in resources and monitors implementation and spending.</p>	<p>The Finance & Estates and Senior Postholder & Governance Committees to keep under review the need for longer F&E meetings, with a dedicated time slot for estates-related business.</p>	<p>At the board meeting in December, governors indicated a preference for increasing efficiency rather than lengthening meetings. The F&E agenda already has an estates/capital as a standing item with these reports subsequently going to the board. Therefore, this recommendation will not be implemented at present and will be closed, but the matter will be kept under review and the</p>	<p>Complete, but governors have been invited to feed back if they feel at any point that the approach is not working.</p>

		change can be immediately implemented if deemed necessary.	
Great Governance Area 5: The board is accountable to and engages with key stakeholders.			
<u>Governance success criteria</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Detailed action to implement recommendation</u>	<u>Update as at June 2024</u>
5.1 The board has strong visibility and accountability with student stakeholders (see also 6.6).	The Senior Postholder & Governance Committee to consider identifying a learner voice lead for the board. If agreed, they could attend learning rep meetings and also assist in feedback on governor decisions to students.	Repeat of action 3.2: Governors to be invited to step forward as learner voice link, with this person to attend lead learner rep meetings. This will be pulled into the wider links overhaul. In progress.	A review of the whole process is in progress.
5.2 The board has strong visibility and accountability with staff.	<p>Ensure staff continue to be involved through consultation in strategy development to secure continued commitment. Ensure feedback from staff is systematically reported back to governors.</p> <p>That the Board review its schedules and priorities for activities beyond formal meetings, to ensure that it can maintain its good practice in staff and student accountability.</p>	<p>Activity already in place and will continue.</p> <p>'Meet the team' sessions have not been successful in the past as governor and staff schedules are incompatible, so some other approach needs to be identified. In progress: this will be raised in the Employee Council meeting in July and has been added to the WDC work plan for 2024/25.</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>In progress and will be a particular focus in academic year 2024/25.</p>
5.3 The board encourages strong parental engagement across the college. It understands and ensures action on parental concerns.	The board to receive a presentation on parental engagement and consider appropriate action.	The VP: communications, engagement and student experience to produce such a report or presentation. This was presented to governors and will be taken forward into 2024/25.	Complete.
Great Governance Area 5: The board is accountable to, and engages with, key stakeholders.			
<u>Governance success criteria</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Detailed action to implement recommendation</u>	<u>Update as at June 2024</u>
5.4 The board has strong engagement and profile with local authorities and communities.	The website page on the board to include details of how to contact the board, give a link to the Community Pledge and to progress reports on the pledge, when produced.	The clerk is undertaking a full review of the website in the spring/summer term and will include these changes as part of this activity.	Currently on hold as the governors' website is being updated.

	<p><i>The board to consider making links to local citizens’ panels to understand needs and report back to them on college priorities and progress from time to time.</i></p>	<p><i>Meetings to be planned for the chair and principal with relevant individuals/organisations and governors invited to join.</i></p>	<p><i>Action not yet live, but this will be a priority in 2024/25.</i></p>
<p>Great Governance Area 6: The board has strong capability and effectiveness, including skilled and diverse membership and effective meetings.</p>			
<u>Governance success criteria</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Detailed action to implement recommendation</u>	<u>Update as at June 2024</u>
<p>6.1 The board membership is up to strength, skilled and sufficiently diverse to understand local needs and avoid risks of ‘groupthink’ (see also 6.6 on learner voice governor).</p>	<p>The board/Senior Postholder & Governance Committee to seek an additional governor with education, apprenticeship and quality management experience for the Standards Committee. Ideally, they will be from an Ofsted background or a trained additional inspector, former headteacher or college nominee. This person should have sufficient experience and availability to be a vice chair of the committee. In considering its planning for new governors, the Senior Postholder & Governance Committee might consider the value in having an explicit policy about the number of governors – e.g. chairs – without full-time external commitments, to ensure good attendance and give time to activities like staff and student visits and events, with this to be balanced against the value of governors with current work/industry knowledge.</p> <p>The board/Senior Postholder & Governance Committee should revisit its aspirations for the diversity of its membership, in the light of local population, student and staff profiles, to help ensure it is more reflective of students and the local population from background with protected characteristics under the Equality Act. (Benchmarks from the 2021 census Ashfield & Mansfield: In broad terms, about 50% of the population of working age [16-65] female/male, 12% are from a black or ethnic minority background; 10% have a disability; and 10% have a sexual orientation that is not heterosexual. Figures for students from MIS are broadly 50/50 male/female; 19% BAME; 29% have a leaning difficulty or disability [unsure whether there is any data on sexual orientation]).</p>	<p>Recruitment closed – four governors appointed with suitable experience. These recommendations were taken into account as part of this.</p> <p>Recruitment closed – four governors appointed with suitable experience. These recommendations were taken into account as part of this.</p>	<p>Complete</p> <p>Complete</p>

<p>6.2 Succession planning arrangements are in place for all vacancies, including senior governor roles.</p>	<p>The Senior Postholder & Governance Committee should develop an appropriate succession action plan to put into practice when the chair of governors gives notice of standing down (and interim arrangements, if required). It should also think about phasing arrangements so not all experienced governors stand down at the same time.</p>	<p>Some succession planning has been put into practice with the appointment of committee vice-chairs. The new board chair, principal and clerk have also discussed plans for such a time as the chair reaches the end of her second term. Furthermore, succession planning will be built into the ongoing governor recruitment drive, with the interview panel likewise briefed by the chair and/or clerk.</p>	<p>Ongoing, with a very long-term focus.</p>
<p>6.3 The board has captured in a clear document the range of skills, experience and interests which the governing body should collectively possess.</p>	<p>Clerk to update current governor skills profile and bring to the Senior Postholder & Governance Committee for use in developing an updated document on board skills requirements, etc.</p>	<p>The clerk to complete as per the recommendation and also to obtain a governor ‘job description’ that can be adapted for use by the college.</p>	<p>In progress – skills matrix sent out to governors for updating.</p>
<p>6.4 Meetings of the governing body and committees are run effectively and give sufficient time to key issues.</p>	<p>Less experienced chairs and vice-chairs to undertake a training session and/or mentoring from longstanding chairs, including on constructive questioning and how to ‘capture challenge’.</p>	<p>Training for chairs and vice-chairs is to be considered as part of a larger review of governor training and development.</p>	<p>In progress</p>
<p>6.5 There is good attendance and participation of governors in meetings.</p>	<p>The Senior Postholder & Governance Committee/Corporation Board might reconsider the terms of reference/standing orders to review a governor’s attendance if there are more than two consecutive unauthorised non-attendances.</p> <p>The Senior Postholder & Governance Committee/Corporation Board might introduce a category of ‘authorised absence’ in exceptional, short-term circumstances. To be signed off by the chair and be excluded from attendance stats.</p>	<p>To implement for 2024/25, if this is agreed (rather than applying a new approach mid-year). Clerk to update for approval at June’s meeting. To include the below suggestion.</p> <p>At the board meeting in December, this recommendation was rejected by the board. Instead, it was agreed that accepted reasons for absence would be made explicit alongside governors’ attendance percentages (i.e. ‘attendance is XX% but would have been YY% were it not for Z’).</p>	<p>Complete – the amended SPaG Terms of Reference will be presented for approval in June and July 2024, and the amendment to the Standing Orders will be presented in July 2024 (also included within another action).</p>
<p>6.6: There is good participation of staff and student governors in meetings.</p>	<p>The board and Executive to consider developing a new model of student governance, perhaps in collaboration with other colleges, to give the board effective student input. This could draw on structured conversations with lead student reps prior to each board meeting, along with (or instead of) student governors.</p>	<p>The college has implemented a slightly different model in 2023/24 as the student governors have a mentor in place to support them. This year’s student governors have engaged very well so far so, if this continues, the model could be used again next year. However, this recommendation</p>	<p>The same approach used in 2023/24 will be used again for 2024/25. Complete.</p>

	<i>The Senior Postholder & Governance Committee/Corporation Board to consider creating a lead governor for learner voice. This could be someone drawn from a local citizens panel or with youth service experience, which may contribute to the diversity of backgrounds.</i>	provides an alternative should the current model prove unsuccessful in the long-term.	Very long-term action – not yet live.
6.7: The board regularly reviews its own effectiveness and takes action to address areas for development.	An annual summary of the issues arising from the 2023 annual governor survey (and 1:1s) to come to the Senior Postholder & Governance Committee/Corporation Board in spring 2024.	This is in hand – a report was presented in May 2024. SPaG Committee saw the anonymised feedback in October 2023. Actions were discussed, agreed and built into the clerk’s own action plan.	Complete.
Great Governance Area 7: The board has effective governance structures, documents, procedures and support.			
<u>Governance success criteria</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Detailed action to implement recommendation</u>	<u>Update as at June 2024</u>
7.2 The board has appropriate and effective procedures and documents.	The Instrument and Articles of Government to be updated in December 2023. The Code of Conduct and Standing Orders of the Corporation to be updated by July 2024.	The Standing Orders have been updated. The Instrument and Articles and Code of Conduct will be updated by May 2024, as these changes are more administratively intense and require more scrutiny.	In progress
7.3 There is clarity and documentation of roles and boundaries of governance and management.	The board and Executive to consider producing a short document on the boundaries between governance and management, given governor turnover. Senior Postholder & Governance Committee and the Corporation Board to develop and approve a role description for governors and a committee chair.	The clerk to draft these documents and present to the committee and board.	In progress
7.4 The board is given effective support by a qualified and experienced governance professional, and there is an effective relationship between them, the chair and the CEO.	The board should agree a contingency arrangement for cover of the governance professional, just in case it should be required, and include it within the risk management plan.	An agreed contingency plan would include some reliance on the college’s Executive secretariat and/or using the AoC’s interim service to provide cover.	Complete
7.5 There is effective governor induction and training.	<i>New governors to be offered at least one mentoring session and have the offer of a year’s support of ‘governor buddy’ if they wish.</i>	<i>A larger review of governor training and development is to be undertaken before the next academic year, to include a review of</i>	<i>Action not yet live – a focus for the summer 2024 period.</i>

		<i>the induction process. However, the Senior Postholder and Governance Committee were not keen on the idea of a ‘buddy’ system as this can stifle original thinking and new ideas. Feedback, particularly from newer governors, is encouraged. Instead, the onboarding process will include a session with the board chair and the relevant committee chair.</i>	
7.7 Reports are timely and clear and give governors an insight into high priority issues, which supports effective challenge.	Officers to be consistent in identifying in full acronyms on each first occasion used in a report and/or governor glossary to be available with each agenda.	Moving forward, the clerk will weed out acronyms during proofreading.	Complete – now part of usual practice.
Great Governance Area 8: There are strong governance controls and standards, with the board meeting external requirements.			
<u>Governance success criteria</u>	<u>Recommendation</u>	<u>Detailed action to implement recommendation</u>	<u>Update as at June 2024</u>
8.3 The board has reviewed its effectiveness against the latest AoC Code of Good Governance	The next review of board practice against the 2023 update of the AoC Code of Good Governance should take account of the recommendations and actions arising from this external governance review and be completed this academic year.	The board agreed to adopt the AoC’s most recent Code of Good Governance at the October 2023 board meeting. The clerk will review against this document in the late spring/early summer term for an update to be given at June’s SPaG and July’s board meeting.	Complete – the internal review has been produced and will be presented to governors for approval in June and July.
8.4 The board has a role in helping the college to secure externally benchmarked quality standards, e.g. Matrix.	Appropriate governors could be invited to participate in other external assessments to indicate the commitment of the college’s leadership to these standards.	Governors are already invited to take part in the appropriate assessments (such as the SAR process, alongside critical friends from other colleges).	Complete

Number of recommendations: 33
Complete: 18
In progress: 10
Not due / on hold: 5