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BORDERS COLLEGE
REGIONAL BOARD

Actions from the meeting of the Regional Board meeting
held in the Board Room at 17:30 on Thursday 27 March 2025.

Item	Action	Responsibility and Date	Action Status
02/25	Future funding of Start-up Project to be discussed with D Clancy, Head of Sector.	G Donald	Meeting held with DC. New draft proposal produced aiming to secure external funding to transition pilot to embedded approach for entrepreneurship. GD meeting DC in July to refresh proposal. SLT and Board input will be sought.
06/25	An update to the Register of Interest will be sent to the Board Secretary.	U Mbaezue	Completed
09/25	Future EDI Initiatives will be discussed with H Broatch, EDI Officer.	H Boyce	
11/25	Financial Sustainability Development Plan – paper will be issued to the Board following receipt of SFC allocations.	Principal	Completed
17/25	BCSA Update Risk Commentary - paper to reflect that the operational plan is designed to mitigate risks for students, rather than indicating no risk.	Student President	Completed - Paper updated

BORDERS COLLEGE
REGIONAL BOARD

Meeting of the Regional Board held in the Board Room at 17:30 on Thursday 27 March 2025.

ITEM	MINUTE
Present:	Ray McCowan (Chair) Chris Alder (Student President) Heather Boyce Paul Cathrow (Chair of Curriculum, Quality & Student Experience Committee) Mark Catto (Teaching Staff Member) Garry Dickson (Teaching Union Member) Gordon Donald Lindsey Hastie Vernice Key (Senior Independent Member) Ugo Mbaezue (Chair of Finance & Resources Committee) Douglas Ormston Sonia Phythian - *Online* Dave Roberts (Vice-Chair & Chair of Audit & Risk Committee) Pete Smith (Principal) Nick Sparks
In Attendance:	Hilary Broatch (Equalities, Diversity & Inclusion Officer) Dale Clancy (Head of Sector – Business, Computing, Creative Industries & Core Skills) Mark Cockburn (Observer) Ingrid Earp (Governance Specialist/Board Secretary) Kirsty Robb (Vice Principal - Finance & Corporate Services) Anne-Marie Sturrock (Vice Principal - Student Experience) Lorraine Sulo (Minutes)
01/25	**Chair's Opening Remarks** The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting including Sonia Phythion who was joining online, and Mark Cockburn, observer, who would also be attending the next Audit & Risk Committee meeting. The Chair expressed gratitude to everyone for their punctuality and valuable contributions, emphasising their importance during the current challenging times.

02/25	**Borders College Entrepreneurial Activity & Delivery Presentation (D Clancy, Head of Sector)** A presentation was provided by the Head of Sector (HoS) on the College's entrepreneurial activity and curriculum area of Business, Computing, Creative Industries and Core Skills. The College's 25/26 Start-up project has followed on from the Ecosystem 23/24 project funded by Scottish Enterprise in partnership with the University of Edinburgh and has been guided by the Scottish Government's Entrepreneurial Campus report. The halfway highlights of the Start-up project have resulted in the delivery of: • 160 students, 21 staff members (excluding support); • 31 entrants (9 previously), 5 bespoke workshops, Schools and Dumfries and Galloway; • ScotEdge WildCard Finalist; • Start-Up Hub; • Sector sessions – Hairdressing, Beauty and Construction – Exit support; • Course experiences – all sectors – Bayes, Easter Bush, Robotarium, Ushers Hall Institute; • Conference access and hardship support – individual and group support; • Enterprise Week; • ScotCol Accelerator; and • Online area for all students at Borders College A question and answer session followed, which focused on future funding and resources, with particular concern about securing adequate funding. The next steps, which were to be discussed with SOSE, had been delayed due to the absence of a key contact. However, alternative staff contacts at SOSE were provided by P Cathrow. Current targets are being exceeded, and it is anticipated that by early May, a report detailing achievements and potential scalability will be available. Additionally, the consideration of incubation business space as part of the College's masterplan was noted. The significant experience of Board Members was acknowledged, and their input was welcomed. G Donald confirmed that he would contact the HoS to discuss future funding of the Start-up Project. **ACTION: GD** The Chair thanked the HoS who then left the meeting.
03/25	**Apologies for Absence** Apologies were noted from Cherene Thomson, Phil Macdonald and Jessica Elder.
04/25	**Minutes of previous meeting held on 12 December 2024 (Paper A)** The minutes from the previous meeting on 12 December 2024 were approved as an accurate record.
05/25	**Matters Arising** All actions from the previous meeting were complete with the Health & Safety action noted for the next Health & Safety Annual Report.

06/25	**Declaration of any Conflicts of Interest/Register of Interests Update** U Mbaezue confirmed his recent appointment as Live Borders Trustee Member. An update to the Register of Interest would be sent to the Board Secretary. **ACTION: UM** A conflict of interest was noted for P Cathrow and Paper G, Hawick Campus Update, due to his post at South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE). P Cathrow will leave the meeting for this discussion.
07/25	**Ratification of New Member (Paper B)** The Board ratified the appointment of Sonia Phythian.
08/25	**Ratification of Procurement Approval (Paper C)** The Board ratified the procurement of the College's IT infrastructure refresh. Due to the approval deadline falling outside the Board Meeting schedule, email approval had been necessary.

09/25	**Equality Mainstreaming Report – April 2025 (Paper D)** The Chair welcomed the EDI Officer to the meeting and commended the outstanding and highly significant work presented in the report. The EDI Officer emphasised that the achievement was a team effort. An amended table of page 12 of the report was circulated. The report outlines how the College meets the general and specific duties of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) of the Equality Act 2010. The EDI Officer explained that the information provided complies with legislative reporting requirements and demonstrates connections between various data points. Efforts have been made to structure the content in a clear and straightforward manner, including an easy-to-read version. All actions within the outcomes have been achieved, with the impact summarised on page 42, linked to outcomes 2025-29. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) strongly recommends institutions adopt National Equality Outcomes (NEOs), which, while not legislative, carry significant weight. Relevant evidence, including protected characteristics, has been considered, with the setting of more measured targets. The report was thoroughly examined by the Board. A member questioned why there is a gender pay gap as outlined on page 17. This was noted as primarily due to historical reasons with females traditionally undertaking less skilled posts to fit with caring responsibilities. The gender pay gap at the College has continued to reduce since 2023. In response to a question regarding the gathering of data, it was noted that more streamlined methods have been identified including the implementation of an EDI Dashboard. Additionally, a Power BI project via MIS to enhance data management is being explored. It was noted that the biggest risks/gaps over the next 2-3 years for the sector is around NEOs, with a need to establish baseline data, given that no national measurement currently exists. Disability pay gap was also discussed with the Board pleased to see that the gap continues to reduce at the College and is lower than in other sectors. A member added that this is a testament to the excellent statutory work and the genuine commitment to EDI by the College. H Boyce offered support with this area which was welcomed by the EDI Officer. **ACTION: HB** A discussion was held regarding the tools the College has implemented to support students following the emergence of negative role models in society, especially for young men. The VP of Student Experience advised on a collective approach that promotes positive behaviour rather than disciplinary actions, with the provision of guidelines for staff to manage behaviour. The new approach, which has been in place for about a year, represents a shift from punitive measures and has been well-received by students. Men's mental health services, including support through the Andy Man's Club, will continue to evolve as the College advances its trauma-informed work. The Board approved the Equality Mainstreaming Report 2025 and proposed Equality Outcomes for 2025-29. The Chair thanked the EDI Officer who then left the meeting.

10/25	**Mid-year Financial Forecast Return 24/25 (Paper E)** The Chair noted that at the start of the year, there was a £365k deficit forecast and whilst on track the reality is that the complexity of the £365k is not like for like with a colossal change, and an immense volume of work involved. The paper provided the Mid-year Financial Forecast Return which is due for submission to the SFC on 28 March 2025. The VP Finance & Corporate Services provided an overview of the paper with a significant amount of work completed in Quarter 1 and a substantial freeze on non-essential spend. Additional pressures from National Insurance contributions increasing has created uncertainty regarding funding sources. Grants have contributed positively bringing a return to a £365k deficit, however, maintaining this position will require considerable effort. The Board was advised that the figures were based on the recent financial update which was provided to the Finance & Resources Committee, with one change regarding the accounting treatment of Job Evaluation following the receipt of SFC guidance. A member enquired about the impact of the eight voluntary severance staff reductions. The VP Finance & Corporate Services clarified that each position had been individually assessed, ensuring no adverse effects. The consultation period is scheduled to conclude tomorrow. A member enquired about the availability of the consultation paper on the proposed delivery model for the College, with the Chair confirming that the paper had been issued to the Board. The Board approved the MYR for submission to SFC.

11/25	**Financial Sustainability Development Plan (Paper F)** The Chair advised that following yesterday's notification from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) that funding allocations would be deferred for potentially up to two weeks, it would not be possible to sign-off on the Development Plan today. The Chair reiterated that the scale of the challenge is immense, making the production of the plan challenging, however, a paper will be issued as soon as possible following confirmation of the allocations and in advance of the April Development Evening on 17 April 2025. The Vice Chair added that any proposal will undoubtedly have an impact. However, it is hoped that the plan will be one developed by the College itself, rather than one that is imposed. The Principal apologised for the bold type having been lost within the financial tables. The bottom line figure is an Adjusted Operating Result of a £344k deficit rising to a £618k deficit which does not take into account any funds received from SFC. It is the intention of SFC to reset the sector funding model through the recalculation of the credit value based on current curriculum delivery profiles, and for credits to be moved across colleges. It is believed that these changes will be of benefit to the College, however, amounts and timescales are still unknown. The Principal thanked members who had contributed valuable input through the Development Planning Sub-group. The Chair highlighted that completely closing the funding gap might not be possible and stressed the importance of managing expectations and considering potential impacts. A balanced budget may not be achieved. In response, a member stated that a balanced budget should be aimed for, with the addition of a level 4 if necessary. A member of the Development Planning Sub-group provided assurance by noting that, despite the initial significant gap, internal changes can be relied upon, and there is confidence in the accuracy of the information being provided. In summary, a paper will be issued as soon as possible following confirmation of the allocations from SFC. **ACTION: Principal**
12/25	**Hawick Campus Update (Paper G)** This was a confidential discussion with a separate minute.
13/25	**Audit & Risk Committee Report (Paper H)** The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee outlined the main points of business from the meeting held on 13 February 2025. The October Committee meeting will have appropriate time set-aside for the annual accounts to be scrutinised rather than being left to December as in previous years. Actions had been taken on the cash discrepancies which had been reported. The Board noted the contents of the paper.
14/25	**Finance & Resources Committee Report (Paper I)** The Chair of the Finance & Resources Committee summarised the key business points from the meeting held on March 13 2025. The agenda included a review of the Strategic Risk Register, with commendations for achieving a balanced budget. The Director of Finance presented on the current year forecast with a promising reduction in the deficit to £365k. Additionally, the Director of People Services

	delivered a positive report on activities, highlighting ongoing improvements in union relations. The budget planning timeline was also reviewed with the final budget scheduled for the June F&R Committee meeting followed by Regional Board at the end of June 2025. An update regarding the College's Cyber Security enhancements was also provided. The Board noted the contents of the paper.
15/25	**Curriculum, Quality & Student Experience Report (Paper J)** The Chair of the Curriculum, Quality & Student Experience Committee summarised the key business points from the meeting held on 6 February 2025. The agenda included updates on Mental Health and Corporate Parenting action plans with all actions either meeting or exceeding targets. The critical theme is the vulnerability of services, recognising the overlap between Mental Health and Corporate Parenting. The teams are successfully delivering on all fronts. The Regional Board Chair acknowledged the immense effort from staff on reducing the end-of-year withdrawals. The Board noted the contents of the paper.
16/25	**Principal's Report (Paper K)** The Principal highlighted the key points of development since the previous report in December 2024. Applications are looking very positive for the 2025/26 academic year with withdrawals reduced and projected credits showing strong performance. Recent outward mobility programmes to Tenerife, Dublin, and Canada have provided great experiences for our students and staff. The GPTW (Great Places to Work) survey shows significant improvement compared to last year. This progress is particularly noteworthy given that the survey was during the staff consultation process. Each manager will be reviewing the details, and a more comprehensive report will be presented to the Board. A member enquired about the increase in applications and the sources of this growth. The VP of Student Experience explained that the Schools Academy programme is providing a robust pathway, alongside growth in specific courses aligned with regional needs. There have been significant improvements in land-based and rural skills, with a 42% increase in Higher Education and enhanced articulation with universities. The College also has a strong presence at school events. The increase in applications is due to various factors with impacts now becoming evident. An analysis of three-year trends show growth for the bottom line rather than new courses for September. The Chair reported that he had attended the recent Community Planning Partnership (CPP) meeting and acknowledged the great efforts of the Principal and team who had attended a number of community evening meetings over the past few months. The Board noted the contents of the paper.

17/25	**BCSA Update (Paper L)** The Student President provided an overview of the paper which updated the Board on the ongoing activity of the Students' Association throughout the academic year 2024-25. The following points were highlighted: • Twenty-two class visits have been completed to coordinate March feedback, and is also being combined with the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey with QR codes being distributed; • The campaign for the new Student President is currently in progress, with three candidates participating; • BCSA is promoting the idea of assisting students with their exit strategies; and • Annual BCSA Staff and Student Awards will be held with nine trophies in total, including most inspirational staff member and student. It was noted that the risk commentary of the paper should be updated to reflect that the operational plan is designed to mitigate risks for students, rather than indicating no risk. **ACTION: Student President** The Board noted the contents of the paper.
18/25	**Strategic Implementation Plan 2024-26 Update (Paper M)** The Principal advised that updates as of March 2025 had been completed within Appendix A of the paper. Financial targets will be updated as part of the Development Plan process. The Board noted the contents of the paper.
19/25	**Strategic Risk Register Update (Paper N)** The paper provided updates on the five risks allocated to the Board which are within or under the agreed risk appetite under Appendix 1. The VP Finance & Corporate Services advised that good progress was being made on the agreed actions. The Finance and Resources Committee and CQSE Committee had reviewed their allocated risks at their recent meetings, with a full review also completed by the Senior Leadership Team on 18 March 2025. Appendix 2 provided the full risk register for information. The Board noted the progress on the agreed actions.
20/25	**Meeting Schedule 25/26 (Paper O)** Noted as paper for information.
21/25	**Board Secretary's Update (Paper P)** Noted as paper for information.

22/25	**Standing Items** <u>Health & Safety</u> No items were raised. <u>Equality & Diversity</u> No items were raised. <u>Environmental & Sustainability</u> No items were raised.
23/25	**Board Papers for Publication** No draft or confidential papers would be published.
24/25	**Any Other Business** **a) Board Members' CPD** Members were reminded on the requirements regarding CPD. Members can complete CDN modules, self-certify, or any wider needs should be raised with the Board Secretary or Chair.
25/25	**Date of Next Meeting** The next meeting will be the Development Evening on Thursday 17 April which will be followed by the Regional Board meeting on Thursday 26 June 2025 at 17:30 in the Board Room, Scottish Borders Campus, Galashiels.

Signed:…………………………………… Signed:…………………………………
Chair Board Secretary