

GOVERNANCE⁴FE

EXTERNAL REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE

COLCHESTER INSTITUTE

20TH FEBRUARY 2024



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OVERVIEW

Board Review: art or science? Qualitative or quantitative? Compliance approval or forward looking? The reality is that Board Reviews are evolving rapidly. It's all the above and today there is no standard experience common across all boardrooms, though they are increasingly focused on:

- (i) deriving meaningful insights on key issues and
- (ii) using the recommendations and findings to align the Board and Executive and increase effectiveness

Every Board – however experienced - can increase its effectiveness and this review, through collaborative diagnosis between the reviewer, governors, and management, has sought to identify areas of effectiveness that can be built upon to deliver a greater maturity of governance. The follow up presentation and discussion with the Board is a key component to increasing effectiveness, as is our on-going support, guidance, and being a sounding board, during the months following the Review.

Of course, the Governance Review should provide comfort that the Board is alert to its duties and diligent in the performance of those duties. This is critically important for stakeholders, in particular our funders and regulators. In addition, the Review has considered how the Board is helping the organisation to achieve its purpose. At Governance4FE, we are very pleased to be tailoring our Board Review to shine a light on this key question and provide recommendations and a pathway as to how the Board can increase its effectiveness and value contribution.

Framework

The GREAT framework is developed on an evidence base gained over three decades of working with multiple boards, alongside academic study. We work in accordance with the DfE's current guidance on External Governance Reviews and the Chartered Governance Institute's Code of Practice for board reviewers.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SUMMARY OF REVIEW OUTCOMES & RECOMMENDATIONS

Within the overall review of governance effectiveness, this is a positive report, showing governance is effective at Colchester Institute. This summary of review outcomes should be read in conjunction with the full report as the report contains important contextual information, rationale, and evidence for all the recommendations made. The review considered the Board's effectiveness and governance maturity across the 5 main areas.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Effectiveness is evident through well-defined roles, efficient committee operations, a good understanding of teaching quality measurement techniques, assurance of robust financial systems, compliance with statutory requirements, and productive meetings with effective oversight of KPIs and strategic objectives. Areas for development include clarifying governors' advocacy roles and enhancing the involvement of staff and student governors. Utilising a Board Portal could streamline compliance oversight and potentially reduce the frequency of committee meetings. Additionally, providing governors with more opportunities to validate management information through external benchmarks and stakeholder feedback, could increase objective understanding of the College's performance and stakeholder satisfaction.

RELATIONSHIPS

Effectiveness is marked by strong, respectful relationships between the Chair, CEO, and the Board, fostering a partnership that encourages constructive challenge and enhances decision-making. Reporting on stakeholder input to ensure decisions are well-informed by diverse perspectives, and in integrating the student voice more consistently into meetings, could be strengthened.

ENABLING

Effectiveness is observed through constructive challenges that are well-received by senior executives. However, there's a need to move away from passive 'To Note/For Information' report recommendations towards more actionable directives that enhance strategic oversight and impact assessment. Governors should ensure that they provide explicit guidance on their expectations from reports, ensuring requests align with strategic objectives and do not unduly increase the executive burden. The board's approach to considering multiple options and scenarios, along with the active and inclusive participation of all members, is good practice.

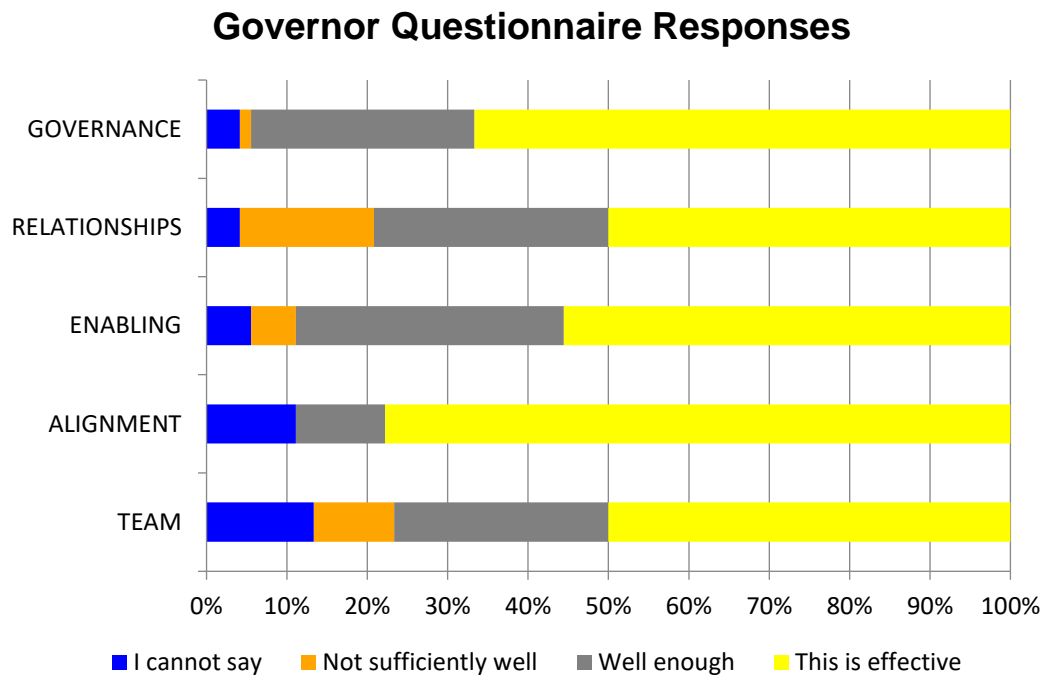
ALIGNMENT

The Board's involvement in setting the College's strategy, vision, values, and ethos is a key strength. The Board's clarity on strategic priorities and their influence on KPIs, along with a proactive approach to reviewing strategic objectives, stands out. However, reports could more explicitly address strategic implications, encouraging a shift towards forward-looking discussions by adding a 'strategic implications' section to executive summaries, facilitating more strategic governance.

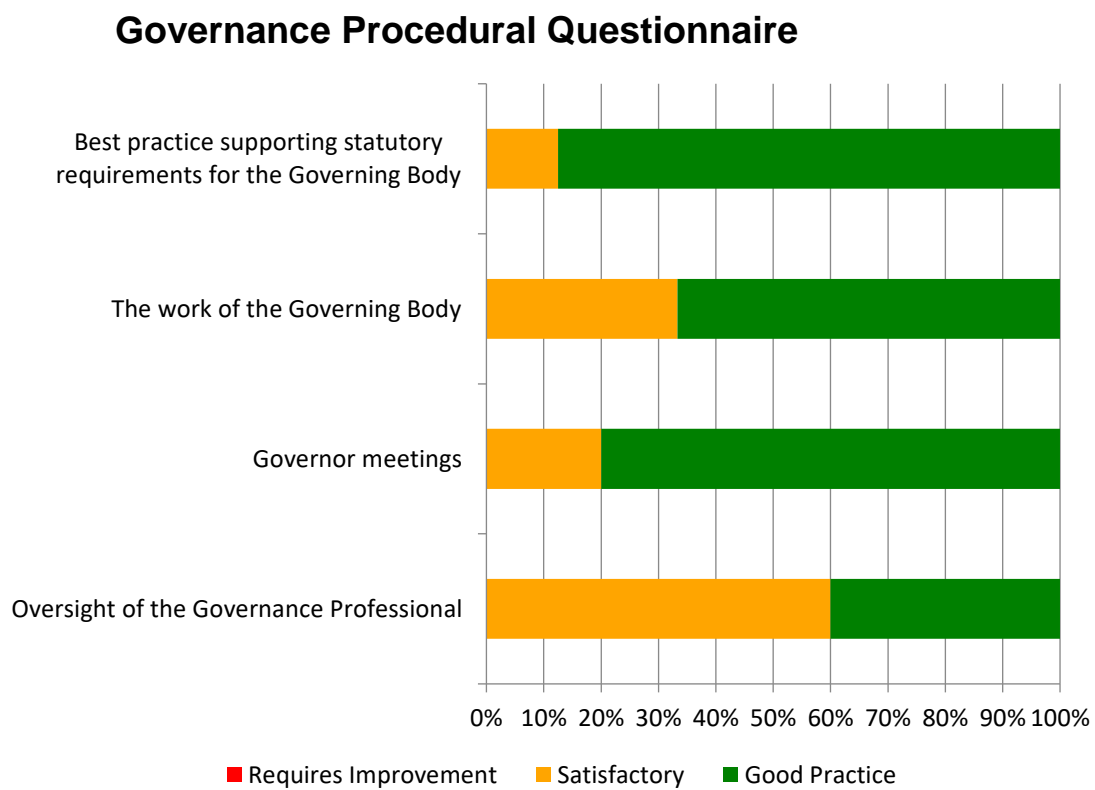
TEAM

The commitment to governance improvement is evident through annual governor discussions and exit interviews. However, there's a need for a formal succession plan for governors and senior executives. The Board has made strides towards cognitive diversity to prevent groupthink. Establishing EDI principles, integrating these into Board policies, and fostering a psychologically safe environment in the Boardroom for open discussions and feedback are areas for continuous reflection.

Governor Questionnaire Responses (6 responses)



Governance Procedural Questionnaire Response (Governance Professional response)



FULL REPORT

INTRODUCTION & METHODOLOGY

Purpose

The purpose of this Review is to support the board in becoming a more effective decision-making body as part of the organisations' commitment to excellence in governance and leadership, and to better understand how governance can move the organisation forward and the impact of governors – both when sat around the board table, and externally. The review identifies what is working well and how to build on that, as well as identifying priorities for any improvement, providing support on identified actions. By providing the catalyst for open, focused, and respectful dialogue, we have given board members and the Executive the insights and time needed to reflect on practices and behaviours and consider actionable solutions that will drive improvement. The aim is to develop mature governance - a board that fully understands its legal and governance duties, delivers them effectively, assesses them regularly, and learns continuously.

Process

Governance4FE was appointed in July 2023, to carry out an External Governance Effectiveness Review. The review has been carried out over the period of September 2023 to January 2024. In carrying out this review we have undertaken the following activities.

- A scoping exercise was undertaken with the CEO, Governance Professional, and Chair of Governors
- Questionnaires were drawn up and circulated to both board members and members of the senior management team.
- Conversations with chairs of committees, members of the Executive team, the chair of the Board, the CEO, and the governance professional.
- The governance professional undertook a governance procedural questionnaire and supplied the reviewer with documentation for perusal.
- Observation a committee meeting and a Board meeting in person.
- A facilitated discussion with the Board on the draft report on 29th February.

The data collected forms a coherent picture of the Board's effectiveness. A draft report was circulated to the Chair, CEO, and governance professional for comment, and a final report was circulated to all members. A facilitated discussion was led by the reviewer on the findings, to explore approaches to address any issues surfaced, and to agree methods of implementation of any required actions. These discussions are captured to form the action plan, which is the board's roadmap for the next 12-24 months. We register our thanks for the support from Colchester Institute for the conduct of this review, and the co-operation from many individuals.

The College

Colchester Institute provides education, professional development, and technical skills training to over 8,000 young people and adults every year, being the largest vocational college serving North Essex and the surrounding areas. Its vision is to be a celebrated as an outstanding provider of education and training in the Eastern region by 2024, making a significant contribution to the economic and social recovery following the pandemic. The Board operates a committee style of governance, with 20 governors, which include staff and student governors. The College holds an Ofsted Good grade from May 2022.

DETAILED FINDINGS

This board effectiveness review indicates that Colchester Institute has a high level of governance maturity when assessed against the Governance4FE appraisal framework. Our comments around improvement must be understood against the background of a strong governance function. The focus of our efforts have been on how to optimise what the organisation has already achieved, and to support it on its journey to delivering an Outstanding performance.

Examples of effectiveness across the 10 detailed areas of the framework are collated from the questionnaires, meeting observations, conversations, document review, and procedural questionnaire. The developments are flagged where most responses in the governor questionnaire fell into the 'not sufficiently well' and 'well enough but room for improvement' categories, as opposed to the 'effective' category, and where these and additional areas were raised through the Procedural questionnaire, the Executive questionnaire, in discussions and/or observed through the other activities undertaken.

Roles & Responsibilities

Examples of Effectiveness

Roles and Responsibilities are clearly defined and committees function well, with suitable delegations.

The curriculum offer and its rationale are well understood.

Areas for Development

Establish more clearly the advocate role of governors, including management's role in facilitating an ambassadorial function for governors, allowing governors to maximise their networks for the Executive's benefit.

The CEO's appraisal should be a transparent process. The Board (not the Chair) is the collective 'boss' of the CEO and is collectively responsible for providing everything a good boss should give to their employee – control, support, encouragement, incentives, rewards, etc.

The Governance Professional should have an annual appraisal against a competency framework (DfE recently launched a sector specific one), and a personal development plan in place (DfE requirement to report on how the Governance Professional has been developed)

Structures & Systems

Examples of Effectiveness

The systems and techniques to measure teaching quality are understood, although further reporting on the impact of these was mentioned as an area for strengthening.

The Board is assured that financial systems and internal controls are robust, and value for money is obtained.

Through the work of the Governance Professional, the Board is assured that it is compliant with statutory and regulatory compliance requirements.

The quality of board and committee reporting is improving, better contributing to meeting dialogue and decision-making.

Meetings are productive with oversight of performance against KPIs, and strategic objectives closely monitored.

Reporting from committees to the Board by committee chairs is good. This could be expanded further through the use of 3A report¹ – what the committee wants to Alert the Board to, what Assurance it can give, and what Action is wants the Board to take. This will reduce potential duplication of reports to the Board.

Areas for Development

Consider how IT, such as investment in a Board Portal, can be used to support the oversight/approval of compliance items outside of meetings. (This may require an amendment to the I&As). Such an investment would support the possibility of a reduction in committee meetings from 5 a year to 4, potentially removing the April/May meetings of FRC & GSRC. (Circulation of monthly management accounts to governors remains good practice).

Provide ample opportunities for governors to triangulate management information, including external verification of stakeholders views and their requirements of the College, and how well these are being met. This should include benchmarking data at every opportunity, where available.

Behavioural Governance

Examples of Effectiveness

Relationships work well, with trust and respect evident. The Chair and CEO clearly work hard to jointly enable a partnership model between the Board and the Executive, to encourage intelligent and robust challenge, enhancing decision-making.

Areas for Development

None.

Stakeholder Engagement

Examples of Effectiveness

Governors participate in Link visits to better understand the business of the business. Sharing amongst all governors the completed governor visit forms, will exponentially increase the knowledge of all members – a really time efficient practice for busy governors.

Areas for Development

Reports to give greater visibility on how stakeholder input to decisions has taken place, in order for governors to be assured that they have a rounded view and clear understanding of how stakeholders needs are being addressed.

Maximise the contribution of staff and student governors through such methods of allocating a mentor; promotion of the development benefits that come with inhabiting the role; allocating resources to support peer development in these roles, etc.

The student voice should be more firmly embedded, with structured opportunities put in place to support this², such as hearing a student story at each meeting.

Support & Challenge

Examples of Effectiveness

Constructive challenge is well delivered and positively responded to by senior executives.

¹ Example 3A committee report

² Governor Engagement guidance note

Areas for Development

Discontinue the use of 'To Note/For information' as an agenda/report recommendation. It is not a focused recommendation with a defined outcome. Replace it with an active recommendation such as, 'To scrutinise in order to be assured that ...' in support of oversight of achievement of strategic objectives. Providing a clear focus gives governors a clearer direction of where/how executives would like to gain benefit from governors' experience through sharing of perspectives and insights, to support executives³. Governor oversight should be focused on oversight of impact rather than simply oversight of activity. Having reports focused on impact of interventions as opposed to detailing activity, can lead to shorter reports, reducing time requirements to both executives and governors.

Governors to give greater clarity to the Executive on the question(s) they want each report to answer – the strategic reason behind any ask for more data/information, being mindful of any increase in burden on executives. An example maybe a request for data on development undertaken by staff, the strategic reason being in order to understand how such development contributes to outcomes for learners as part of achievement of strategic aim 1: *Provide an outstanding experience which enables students and apprentices to succeed in their qualification goals*, (as well as part of governors' fiduciary duty to ensure value for money as part of oversight of the institution's assets).

Impactful Decision Making

Examples of Effectiveness

The Board considers options and scenarios to help inform decision making.

All board members are able and willing to freely contribute to meetings.

The Board actively reflects on its contribution to organisational performance (through the influence it has on the Executive).

Areas for Development

Consider implementing a formal meeting review at the end of each meeting, to include reflection on the decision-making process itself⁴.

Vision, Ethos, and Purpose

Examples of Effectiveness

The Board has been involved in the setting of vision, values, and ethos of the College.

Areas for Development

None.

Being Strategic

Examples of Effectiveness

The Board is clear on the organisation's strategic priorities, and how these inform KPIs. Reviewing strategic objectives is hardwired throughout board governance processes.

The Board has a clear view of the risks and opportunities facing the College. Consider delegating risks to the relevant committee.

³ Board reporting Guidance Note

⁴ Meeting review template

Areas for Development

Reports to detail the strategic implications of the data and information contained within them. Add 'strategic implications/strategic question for governors' consideration' as a heading to Executive Summaries of reports. This can change the focus of a report from being a backward-looking update, to a forward-looking discussion paper. An example is: *'Governors are asked to consider whether the key strategic themes identified in this Marketing Strategy progress report, continue to effectively support the ambitions and realisation of the Strategic Plan'*.

Composition & Succession

Examples of Effectiveness

Governors are clear on how their skills, knowledge, and experience are relevant in the context of the organisation's strategic objectives.

The Board has a wide range of skills and experience on it. Consider IT & HR skills in the next round of recruitment, as these were identified by both staff and governors as opportunities to further strengthen board contribution.

The Board is highly committed to improving governance. The Chair holds 121 conversations annually with governors to discuss governance improvement and individual development. Exit interviews are undertaken to inform improvements.

Areas for Development

Implement a formal succession plan for governors⁵ and for senior executives (both short and long term)⁶.

Diversity & Inclusion

Examples of Effectiveness

The Board has taken actions to get a cognitively diverse Board to protect against groupthink.

Social opportunities are undertaken to enable governors and executives to get to know one another beyond their known role (legal/educationalist/accountant etc.).

Areas for Development

Consider setting EDI principles⁷ and measure progress against them. Ensure the College EDI strategy records the Board's role within it, or that the College EDI strategy is reflected in the Board Appointment policy.

Building a psychologically safe environment in the Boardroom is an ongoing activity to ensure that executives feel comfortable with sharing bad news, and where anyone can voice an idea or opinion without fear of negative consequences. Considering measuring the effectiveness of this process as part of the Board's annual evaluation.

⁵ Example governor succession plan

⁶ Note: How the best boards approach CEO succession planning

⁷ Example EDI principles

RECOMMENDATIONS

Critical to Success	Stakeholder Engagement	
	1.	The student voice to be more firmly embedded, with structured opportunities put in place to support this, such as hearing a student story at each meeting.
	Being Strategic	
2.	Reports to detail the strategic implications of the data and information contained within them. Add 'strategic implications/strategic question for governors' consideration' as a heading to Executive Summaries of reports. This will change the focus of a report from being a backward-looking update, to a forward-looking discussion paper.	
Important to Success	Roles & Responsibilities	
	3.	Establish more clearly the advocate role of governors, including management's role in facilitating an ambassadorial function for governors, allowing governors to maximise their networks for the Executive's benefit.
	Structures and Systems	
	4.	Provide ample opportunities for governors to triangulate management information, including external verification of stakeholders views and their requirements of the College, and how well these are being met. This should include benchmarking data at every opportunity, where available.
	Stakeholder Engagement	
	5.	Reports to give greater visibility on how stakeholder input to decisions has taken place, in order for governors to be assured that they have a rounded view and clear understanding of how stakeholders needs are being addressed.
	6.	Maximise the contribution of staff and student governors through such methods of allocating a mentor; promotion of the development benefits that come with inhabiting the role; allocating resources to support peer development in these roles, etc.
	Support and Challenge	
	7.	Discontinue the use of 'To Note/For information' as an agenda/report recommendation. It is not a focused recommendation with a defined outcome. Replace it with an active recommendation such as, 'To scrutinise in order to be assured that ...' in support of oversight of achievement of strategic objectives. Governor oversight should be focused on oversight of impact rather than simply oversight of activity. Providing a clear focus gives governors a clearer direction of where/how executives would like to gain benefit from governors' experience through sharing of perspectives and insights, to support executives. It also has the potential benefit of reducing the size of the reports.
8.	Governors to give greater clarity to the Executive on the question(s) they want each report to answer – the strategic reason behind any ask for more data/information, being mindful of any increase in burden on executives. An example maybe a request for data on development undertaken by staff, the strategic reason being in order to understand how such development contributes to outcomes for learners as part of achievement of strategic aim 1: <i>Provide an outstanding experience which enables students and apprentices to succeed in their qualification goals</i> , (as well as part of governors' fiduciary duty to ensure value for money as part of oversight of the institution's assets).	

Composition and Succession	
9.	Implement a formal succession plan for governors and for senior executives (both short and long term).
Considerations	
10.	Consider increasing the transparency of the CEO's appraisal process. The Board (not the Chair) is the collective 'boss' of the CEO and is collectively responsible for providing everything a good boss should give to their employee – control, support, encouragement, incentives, rewards, etc.
11.	Consider implementing a formal annual appraisal for the Governance Professional against a competency framework (DfE recently launched a sector specific one), and a personal development plan in place (DfE requirement to report on how the Governance Professional has been developed in-year)
12.	Consider how IT, such as investment in a Board Portal, can be used to support the oversight/approval of compliance items outside of meetings. (This may require an amendment to the I&As). Such an investment would support the possibility of a reduction in committee meetings from 5 a year to 4, potentially removing the April/May meetings of FRC & GSRC. (Circulation of monthly management accounts to governors remains good practice).
13.	Consider implementing a formal meeting review (with set questions) at the end of each meeting, to include reflection on the decision-making process itself.
14.	Consider setting EDI principles and measure progress against them. Ensure the College EDI strategy records the Board's role within it, or that the College EDI strategy is reflected in the Board Appointment policy.
15.	Consider sharing amongst all governors the completed governor visit forms, which will exponentially increase the knowledge of all members – a really time efficient practice for busy governors.
16.	Consider expanding committee chair reporting through the use of 3A report – what the committee wants to Alert the Board to, what Assurance it can give, and what Action it wants the Board to take. This will reduce potential duplication of reports to the Board.

ACTION PLAN (TO BE AGREED POST 29th FEBRUARY 2024)

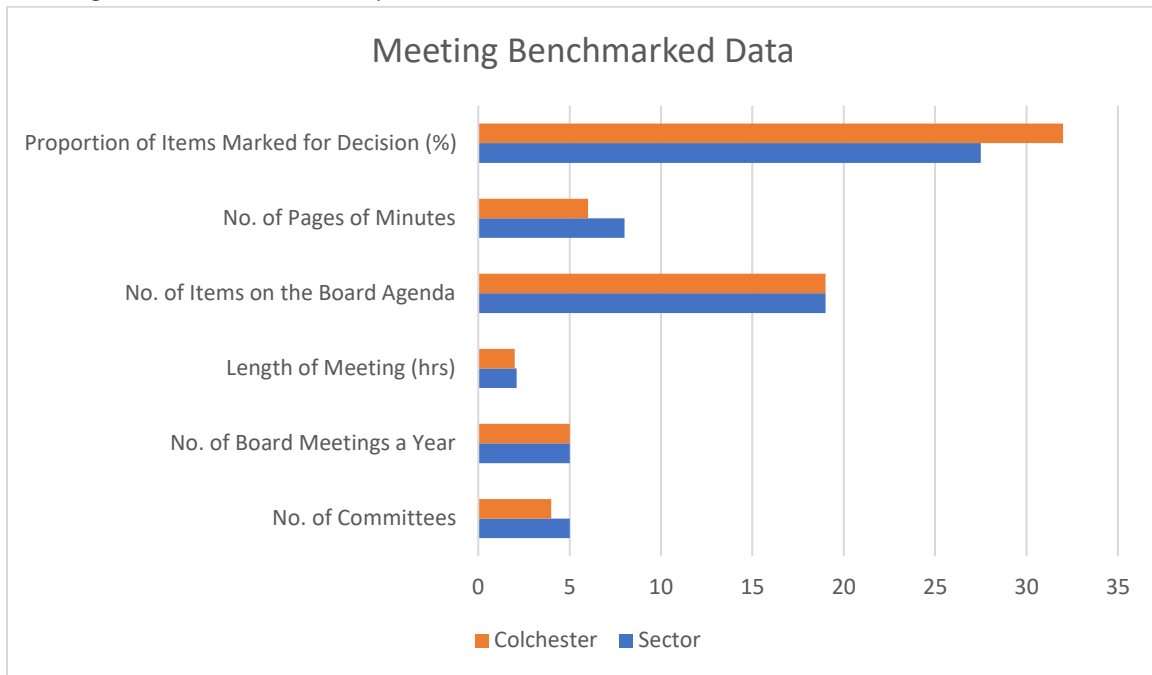
	Agreed Action	Intended Outcome	Named Lead	Timescale
1				

BENCHMARKING

Highlighted recommendations are those themes from review of other institutions which are in common with recommendations from this report for the College

Board evaluation recommendations- themes	40 institutions as at 13.2.24
Annual conversation between Board & Management	15
Attendance to be increased	1
Audit / internal control	1
Board portal implementation to manage papers	13
Board Structure: Carver or not to Carver rather than muddled hybrids	9
Board Team Skills - improvement required in ability to use the strengths of all members	22
Challenge: increase consistency/focus of governor challenge	19
Culture – development/oversight of board and/or college culture	9
Cycle of Business/agendas: review to prioritise strategic discussions	29
Diversity on boards - greater focus required	24
Evaluation - undertake for the board/cttee meetings, chair, and governors	36
Governance secretariat - greater involvement/better resourced	9
Governor development and training - implement a training plan/record/impact document	25
Inclusion - onboarding, mentoring, contribution of governors to be strengthened	12
Link Governors - more triangulation of information/greater engagement	15
Management reporting: greater use of data dashboard & KPIs	17
Management reporting: use summaries, keep recommendations focused, timelier	31
Minutes and action plans to be improved	8
Appraisal of the Principal	6
Risk: further scrutiny of risks required	7
Scheme of Delegation to be put in place	10
Skills: Finance/Property/FE required	17
Stakeholder engagement - governor advocate/ambassadorial role - value add to be clarified	18
Stakeholder engagement - greater oversight of stakeholder strategy/engagement	20
Strategy away days - more input from governors on setting strategy	14
Student voice: more interaction	25
Succession planning: implement/improve succession planning for the Board/SPH	30
The Code - implementation & understanding of the requirements of the Code	8
Triumvirate - more regular meetings	2

Meeting Data over a 12-month period



The above data shows Colchester Institute:

- has a larger portion of Board meeting items marked for decision. This is an effective indicator, suggesting that the committees are working effectively and referring matters to the Board appropriately.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 - Governor Questionnaire Comments

QUESTION: Name up to 3 other things you believe the Board does well and up to 3 things where there is room for improvement

THEMES FROM GOVERNORS' COMMENTS

STRENGTHS

- Strong culture of inclusion, valuing everyone's voice equally
- Excellent relationship with executive team, united in improving the quality of student achievement and experience
- Governors are all local to Essex, bring high expertise and a range of experiences, and are passionate about the College
- Highly competent governance professional
- Good strategic days and learning walks to help embed knowledge and awareness
- Balances constructive challenge and support of the Executive.
- Committees work well

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Be intentional on our focus on areas of concern/risk rather than coverage of all topics
- Increased focus on impact of actions rather than the actions themselves
- Increased attention on learner voice, and to hear more about student experiences
- Board packs can be overly detailed – maximise the use of executive summaries
- Governor succession planning for positions of office
- Management should use members' knowledge and expertise, not simply present them with reports

Question: Name 1 thing the board does well and 1 thing where it could become more effective.

THEMES FROM MANAGERMENTS' COMMENTS

STRENGTHS

Reaching a consensus to support decision making.

Supports Executive on specific tasks (e.g. joining SAR validation panels to provide different viewpoint and specialist expertise).

Input of expertise and knowledge through Link governor scheme, in sub-Committees and 1:1 sessions outside of meetings, discussing particular challenges, or getting help with particular tasks

Provision of external feedback and direction, particularly from a wide range of backgrounds to stop us being too inward looking

The chair is visible and approachable which leads to an open culture at the Board

DEVELOPMENT AREAS

Succession planning - continuing to maintain high calibre governors

Staff and student governors to be encouraged and supported to better contribute to meetings

1. Best practice supporting statutory requirements for the Governing Body

1. Governing Body membership is in line with its Instrument & Articles of Government & Standing Orders

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current record of appointed Governors and their terms of office align with membership as stated in the I&As and Standing Orders 	

2. Statutory Information – the requirements set by the DfE on what colleges should publish online are met

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any other relevant statutory policies are published i.e. modern slavery statement The Governance Professional works with Marketing Department to ensure the website is up to date 	<p>A review of the college website has been undertaken against the DfE guidance.</p>

3. Statutory Policies and documents are in place and reviewed by the Governing Body in line with stipulated review periods – including those policies referenced in statutory guidance

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DfE Policies and other documents that colleges are required to have by law are in place There is a process for ensuring policies are presented for approval in a timely way Minutes evidence policies have been approved Governors take a strategic view when approving policies – they may have input but do not draft them 	

4. Equality & Diversity & The Equality Duty – information is published to show compliance with the Equality Duty at least once a year. Specific measurable equality objectives are set at least every four years

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality Act 2010 – A review of the college's equality objectives are undertaken annually • Minutes evidence governor discussion and decision on E&D matters • The gender pay gap is reported to the Board annually • Diversity principles for Governing Body membership are stated 	

5. [Safeguarding Children in Education](#) – Governing Body meets its statutory duty

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a named Safeguarding Link Governor • Minutes evidence that safeguarding requirements (including the Prevent Duty) are discussed and reviewed regularly by the Governing Body • The annual safeguarding audit is completed & reported on termly, to the Governing Body • The safeguarding audit shows all governors have completed safeguarding training • Safer Recruitment Training has been completed by some governors (for SPH appointments) 	

6. Financial probity – Governing Body meets its statutory duty

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some governors have completed college funding & finance training • Minutes evidence that financial requirements are discussed and reviewed by the Governing Body • Monthly accounts are made available to all governors in a timely way • At least one independent governor is a qualified accountant • There is a 2-year financial plan in place • The budget is approved annually • Significant financial variances are recorded in the minutes • A costed curriculum plan is presented to the board each year for approval • Audited financial statements are approved & submitted to the ESFA by the stated deadline • The College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR) is approved by the governing body • Governors have access to the ESFA financial benchmarking tool as part of their assessment of the college's finances 	

7. Board Reporting – The Governing Body receives reports on confirmation of [statutory compliance and best practice](#), publishes required information where appropriate, and the minutes show governors have discussed / given approval on such (note - an HE report is also recommended for those institutions with higher education provision)

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health & Safety • Equality & Diversity • Safeguarding • Remuneration Committee Activity • Audit Committee Activity • The Corporation's Annual Report and / or Governance statement in the Audited Financial Statements • Student complaints • Human resources / workforce strategy • General Data Protection Regulation compliance • Freedom of Information requests • Search Committee Activity • Stakeholder Engagement, including student voice • Whistleblowing and Fraud Response Plan • Partnership working 	

8. [Governance Code](#) - Adoption and Reporting

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Governance Statement in the Audited Financial Statements indicates which Code has been adopted, if the college is compliant and if not, reasons for non-compliance and planned actions to gain compliance (ESFA Accounts Direction stipulates FE corporations must comply with the principles of a code) • The Governing Body receives a report annually on compliance with a governance code 	

2. The work of the Governing Body

1. Regular [self-review](#) of the effectiveness of the work of the Governing Body

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An annual governance self-review is completed • The Board has undertaken an external review of governance within the last 3 years, or is planning to do so • There is a governor induction programme and learning and development policy in place • Governor training is nuanced to individual governor requirements 	<p>A review of the performance of the Chair is undertaken annually against the DfE Competency Framework</p>

2. The Governing Body has a schedule of meetings planned for the year. Agenda items are linked to the college's quality improvement plan

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full Governing Body and Committee meeting dates are planned in advance for the upcoming academic year 	

3. Delegated responsibilities – the delegated responsibilities are reviewed annually and reflected in the committee terms of reference and Scheme of Delegation

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Scheme of Delegation is in place • Each committee has up-to-date Terms of Reference 	

4. A schedule of agenda items and a policy review schedule is maintained to ensure that all statutory responsibilities are fulfilled by the Governing Body throughout the year

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Governing Body Cycle of Business is in place • Agendas for the Governing Body and committee meetings are planned at the start of each year, and include statutory and cyclical items • A policy review schedule is in place 	

5. Chair / Vice Chair of Governor are elected annually / in line with Governing Body Standing Orders. Chairs of Committee are elected in line with Terms of Reference

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governing Body Standing Orders clearly state an appointment process • Agenda / Minutes evidence appointments are carried out in line with the stated process • Chair and Vice-Chair(s) have a role description 	

6. Governor Visits are planned in line with the Quality Improvement Plan and/or across college business areas. The Governance Professional keeps records of completed visits and circulates reports appropriately

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Governor Visits Policy and Visit form template is in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed governor visit forms are circulated to all governors/a committee in order to share knowledge and information with the whole board

7. [Governor Training](#) – records are kept of the training that Governors have attended

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole Governing Body training requirements are identified and planned 	Individual Governor development plans are in place
	Feedback reports on any external training undertaken are provided to all governors
	An assessment of the impact of training on Governing Body effectiveness is undertaken each year

8. A review of governor skills has been undertaken to inform training needs / succession planning / governor recruitment

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of a skills audit is undertaken at least annually, taking into account the college's strategic objectives and risk register • Agenda / Minutes show discussion of recruitment and succession planning • There is a policy stating the maximum term of office for board members, and succession planning shows adherence to the policy 	A succession plan is in place

9. [Governor recruitment](#) is based on skills to contribute to effective governance and the success of the college.

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills audits are undertaken when recruitment is being considered • Search committee minutes evidence skills-based recruitment <p>A Governor Appointment policy is in place</p>	

10. All prospective / new governors are helped to understand the role of a governor and the Governing Body's Code of Conduct.

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governors sign up to a Code of Conduct • A declaration of continued eligibility of each governor is signed annually • Conflicts of interest are recorded and updated on an on-going basis • Conflicts of interest are reported annually to the Board and made available for public viewing 	

11. A governor induction pack / mentor arrangement is in place / all new governors have completed induction training

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A college governor induction process in place • Each new governor is offered a mentor • Student governors are given appropriate support to help them fulfil their role 	

12. A [Principal/CEO Appraisal Review](#) is undertaken annually

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes record the rationale for any pay increase/bonus paid to senior post holders 	Performance appraisal is discussed at GRSC and Governing Body meetings

13. Board members play an active ambassadorial role, making known the work of the college, and review regularly how the college meets the needs of all stakeholders

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The governing body has reviewed and published how the college's education and training offer is meeting local skills needs, having due regard for the Local Skills Improvement Plan 	Board members regularly engage with the local community and the college's stakeholders.

14. Governor working groups are utilised to prepare / research and make recommendations to Governing Body (if required)

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No working parties have been utilised in year 	

15. [Strategic planning](#) – the governing body plays a fundamental part in strategic planning

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic objectives are agreed each year by the Governing Body • KPIs are set annually for financial health, teaching and learning, student experience and outcomes, staff performance, and stakeholder opinions • Minutes show monitoring against organisational KPIs takes place at least twice a year • Strategic discussions reflect the college's objectives, ethos and culture, and stakeholder views to ensure they are aligned • Strategic matters are agenda items at the majority of governing body meetings 	

16. [Risk Management](#) – risk appetite is set by the Governing Body and risks are regularly monitored

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The risk register is regularly reviewed by Audit Committee • High / new risks are reported to the Governing Body regularly • The Governing body discusses the setting of risk appetite • The Annual Audit Plan is approved by the Board 	

17. [Educational Character](#). Governors are assured that the learning experience is being monitored

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governors participate in the Self-Assessment Report validation process • The Self-Assessment Report is presented to the Governing Body annually • The minutes show regular oversight of the Quality Improvement Plan 	

18. Charity Commission legislation and case law is complied with

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None of the above apply 	

3. Governor meetings

1. Agenda setting is managed effectively to ensure a) timely inclusion of items and b) sufficient time to commission supporting documents/ research/ evidence for governors to consider

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda setting is commenced at least 4 weeks prior to a meeting • Agendas throughout the year include actions from the previous minutes • Agendas throughout the year include Items from the annual Governing Body Work Plan – e.g. standing items and cyclical items • Agenda items are suitably organised to ensure priority/strategic items are discussed first • Minutes of each meeting show apologies are accepted, interests are declared, and any non-quoracy is recorded 	

2. The agenda and supporting papers are appropriate and available for governor consideration in advance of meetings, and the management information is suitably robust to enable governors to exercise oversight

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agendas and supporting papers are distributed seven days before meetings • Reports are sufficiently detailed, transparent and comprehensive • The Governing Body and management have reviewed, discussed, and agreed the structure / format / length of reports • Papers, such as college reports including the Principal/CEO's report are not late or 'tabled' at meetings 	

3. All committee and full Governing Body meetings are attended and minuted by a suitably qualified/experienced governance professional

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes reflect a governance professional in attendance at all meetings 	

4. The Chair of governors and the Governing Body take advice on governance matters

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Governance Professional gives advice at meetings on the operation of Governing Body powers, procedural matters, conduct of its business, and matters of governance practice 	

5. The minutes show evidence of Governor support & challenge

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes of meetings record governor support & challenge 	

6. Decisions made by the Governing Body are recorded – e.g. approval of budget / policies

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes of meetings record decisions and their rationale 	

7. Confidential minute items are kept to a minimum. The minutes are recorded in a way that means they are not confidential or if they are confidential, they are in line with Information Commissioner's guidance

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes of meetings meet General Data Protection Regulation requirements 	Confidential items are reviewed annually and considered by the Governing Body for publication

8. Minutes are completed in a timely manner

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Once approved by the governing body, minutes are published on the website 	Draft minutes are circulated for review within a reasonable time frame

9. Action points are recorded and carried forward / followed up by the Governance Professional in a timely manner

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions are tracked and recorded The actions list details persons responsible for completion of actions and the date they are completed 	

10. Independence

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audit Committee members meet with auditors annually without management present 	

4. Governance Professional arrangements

1. Governance Professional training and development – the Governance Professional has sufficient opportunity and support to keep up to date with changes affecting the governance within the organisation

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attendance at area Governance Professional Network Meetings Attendance at training events and conferences A member of the FE clerks Jiscmail network 	

2. Governance Professional resources – the Governance Professional has access to resources to assist them in fulfilling their role

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access to administrative support to facilitate meeting arrangements College email address is provided The college supplies resources – laptop, printing etc. Access to an office on the college site is provided for the Governance Professional 	

3. A [Governance Professional Competency Framework](#) (DfE / ICSA / Governance4FE) is used to shape the recruitment, development and behaviours of the Governance Professional

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair and Governance Professional are aware of and have read the relevant framework 	Chair / Principal actively consider the framework when considering recruitment and planning the work of the Governance Professional

4. Governance Professional line management – the Governance Professional is provided with clear targets and performance management, including an annual appraisal

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair and Governance Professional meet regularly 	<p>A formal annual appraisal is undertaken by the Chair with Principal / CEO input</p> <p>The Governance Professional has a personal development plan in place (Skills Bill requirement)</p>

5. Governance Professional hours – the Governance Professional is provided with sufficient contracted hours or overtime to meet the needs of the Governing Body

Criteria Met	Criteria Not Met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for discussions on workload are available at the Chair and Governance Professional 121s. 	A review of hours worked against contracted hours forms part of the annual appraisal

Appendix 3 - Example Documents

The documents listed below are provided separately.

1. Example 3A committee report
2. Governor Engagement guidance note
3. Board reporting Guidance Note
4. Meeting review template
5. Example governor succession plan
6. Note: How the best boards approach CEO succession planning
7. Example EDI principles

Appendix 4 – Editing Amends

Throughout the report – change Colchester College to Colchester Institute

P5 – Clarify on the Governance Procedural chart, the bottom graph refers to ‘oversight of’ the Governance Professional, not the performance of the Governance Professional

P5 – add response number to governor responses graph

P7 – Detailed findings second paragraph, added: Procedural questionnaire, the Executive questionnaire,

P18 no. 5 – Add, ‘Safer Recruitment Training has been completed by some governors (for SPH appointments)’, to the MET category and change to green

P19 no.6 – Add, ‘Governors have access to the ESFA financial benchmarking tool as part of their assessment of the college's finances’, to the MET category and change to green

P23 – replace RemCo with GRSC

P28/29 – Add reference to the Chair and the Governance Professional meeting regularly, and change to orange