

Capital City College Group

Governance effectiveness review

A report from Good Governance Improvement
Enabling change through good governance improvement

October 2024





About GGI

Good Governance Improvement exists to create a fairer, better world. Our part in this is to support those who run the organisations that will affect how humanity uses resources, cares for the sick, educates future generations, develops our professionals, creates wealth, nurtures sporting excellence, inspires through the arts, communicates the news, ensures all have decent homes, transports people and goods, administers justice and the law, designs and introduces new technologies, produces and sells the food we eat - in short, all aspects of being human.

We work to make sure that organisations are run by the most talented, skilled and ethical leaders possible and work to build fair systems that consider all, use evidence, are guided by ethics and thereby take the best decisions. Good governance of all organisations, from the smallest charity to the greatest public institution, benefits society as a whole. It enables organisations to play their part in building a sustainable, better future for all.

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This report has been prepared by GGI Development and Research LLP (T/A Good Governance Improvement - GGI) for the board of Capital City College Group (CCCG). The report highlights the conclusions drawn from the review and offers an outline of future suggested actions and improvements to address the identified shortcomings and strengthen the organisation's governance.

The matters raised in this report are limited to those that came to our attention during this assignment and are not necessarily a comprehensive statement of all the opportunities or weaknesses that may exist, nor of all the improvements that may be required. GGI Development and Research LLP has taken every care to ensure that the information provided in this report is as accurate as possible, based on the information provided and documentation reviewed. However, no complete guarantee or warranty can be given regarding the advice and information contained herein. This work does not provide absolute assurance that material errors, loss or fraud do not exist.

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GGI has carried out client work with about 800 organisations over the last decade. We are part-owned by the Good Governance Institute, the EU-based independent governance reference centre focusing on the public and third sectors. We have specific expertise in governance reviews of complex public purpose organisations. Our high-quality and ethical governance consultancy is carried out by our specialist staff team, supported by subject matter expert associates and partners.

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Introduction and purpose



Introduction and purpose

Background

In December 2023, Good Governance Improvement (GGI) was appointed by Capital City College Group (CCCG) to conduct a governance effectiveness review. It was commissioned in line with the [Skills and Post-16 Education Act](#) requirement that further education providers have an external governance review by July 2024, and every three years thereafter.

Formed through a series of mergers of providers across central and north London, CCCG is one of the largest further education providers in England. Rather than a compliance audit, the review was developmental with CCCG keen to be benchmarked against good practice principles and to draw on cross-sector learning.

This report sets out the outcomes, findings and recommendations from the review.

Scope

The findings and recommendations of this review are framed around nine key lines of enquiry, which were informed by the Department for Education's (DfE) guidance for external reviews:

- how effectively the board and board members discharge their role
- the effect of board culture on decision-making, challenge and contribution, and the culture and tone of an organisation
- the impact of governance, including policies, practices, and structures
- how the board sets and communicates strategy
- how the board models and promotes good diversity practice
- governor recruitment, induction, development, and succession planning
- the role, input, and influence of the governance professional
- governor, chair, governance professional and senior leadership team dynamics and effectiveness of working relationships
- the board's interaction with students and stakeholders.

Approach

GGI has been conducting governance reviews for well over a decade. An experienced team was deployed with education and cross-sector experience. The review was conducted using GGI's tried-and-tested methodology, involving:

- 22 one-to-one interviews with the board, executive and other key individuals
- a survey of board members
- observation of two meetings of the board and three committee meetings
- a staff focus group and a short survey of students
- review and analysis of key corporate documents provided by CCCG.

A key part of the process involved testing the findings and emerging recommendations towards the end of the review. This included presentations of the findings and recommendations to both the search and governance committee and then the board.

Acknowledgements

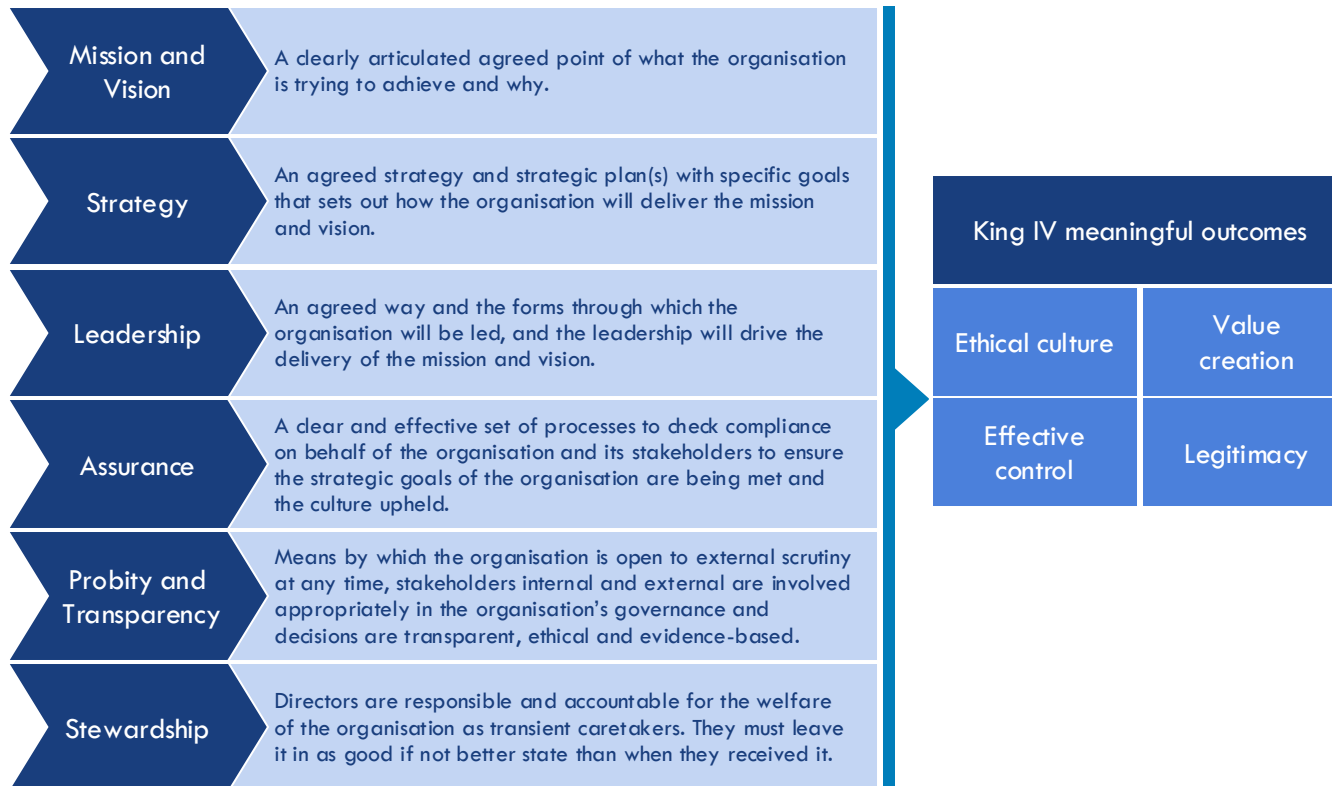
The GGI review team would like to thank everyone who made themselves available for interviews and those who provided project support and documentation for review, particularly the director of governance.

Limitations

The review is limited to the documentation that was provided to GGI during the period described, and to the information provided by those we interviewed as part of this process or observed at those meetings we were able to attend. The review was carried out at a time of senior personnel change and this, together with the other limitations, provides a caveat to the report's findings.

Assessment framework

This was a developmental review rather than a regulatory compliance audit. The focus was to assess the effectiveness and impact of the board, and its supporting oversight governance, against several agreed key lines of enquiry drawn from the Department for Education's guidance for the review of further education providers of the group.



Source: Developed from the King IV report on corporate governance for South Africa 2016 and GGI report *Modern Governance in the Public Sector 2019*.

There were three dimensions to assessment framework used by the review team:

- The Association of Colleges' (AoC) Code of Good Governance, as the code to which the board subscribes, as a benchmark of expected practice
- GGI's good governance outcomes framework (opposite), to allow more developmental, outcomes-driven, assessment against cross-sector best practice
- GGI's expertise and specialist tools, for particular elements of the assessment.

Much of GGI's work is grounded in the governance principles set out by the King Committee, which is internationally recognised as the high-level authority for most codes of corporate governance.

Central to much of the analysis that follows is GGI's governance framework, built around six principal dimensions of governance delivering the four meaningful outcomes derived from the four King Committee reports.

The framework is a sector-agnostic means for testing the added value and impact of governance, beyond regulatory compliance. It helps evaluate good governance in terms of delivering meaningful, measurable outcomes.

In coming to developmental recommendations to support continued improvement, the GGI review team were mindful of the strategic context, risks and ambitions of the group.

Executive summary



Executive summary



Context

Capital City College Group (CCCG) is one of the largest further education providers in England, with a 2022–23 turnover of £125m, employing 1,700 staff and enrolling over 30,000 students. CCCG is a further education college group serving central and north London areas with academic, professional and vocational courses in recognised specialisms. Capital City College Training provides apprenticeships and workforce development support. Consequently, CCCG is a substantial organisation operating at a scale more akin to higher education and with increased levels of risk compared to other further education colleges. As a result, there is a higher demand and expectation of the governance than is typical in the sector.

Capital City College Group was formed in 2016, following the successive mergers of three different colleges operating across central and north London. Over the past eight years, work has been done to reconcile the governance of these independent organisations as amalgamations have taken place and the group has formed. However, there remains work to do on this front, which is set out in this report.

In 2020, CCCG was given an Ofsted rating of Requires Improvement. Following immediate and focused actions a swift turnaround was achieved, and the group is now rated Good. This turnaround is commendable but there is a need now to

ensure the right governance is in place to sustain and continuously improve the performance of the organisation against its core purpose and its wider strategic objectives.

This review was conducted at a time of substantive leadership change at CCCG to both the executive and the board.

Headline findings

The overall finding of the review is that many of the foundations of good governance are in place, particularly around the administration and function of the governance, and the board is discharging its duties. However, the board has room to further develop its impact and the overall value it provides to the organisation.

In general, the board feels somewhat passive, with the heavy lifting of the governance being done at committees. There is a significant level of delegated authority to the executive, where much of the strategy work and decision-making happens. Some good work is being done in the committees but assurance reporting back to the board could be improved. The effectiveness of scrutiny and assurance in committees is variable, with the quality of papers and presentations being one factor. The size and relative contributions of some committee members are material too. The review team understand there is work underway to look at the committee structure, including formalising the finance group into a

committee, which will involve looking at memberships. Our findings support this process, and we recommend an honest look at individual board member contribution too.

A significant contributing factor to this is that the board appears to be operating in a fashion that is removed from the work of the college group. While the board may be able to discharge its duties by operating in this way, it is missing opportunities to do its work in a more connected, inclusive and influential way. More could be done to develop how the board works with the executive as a collective team and to capitalise on the broad expertise of its membership. Improvements to how actively the board directs and monitors the work of committees would improve its grip and control. In short, the board needs to ‘know’ the organisation better. Good assurance is simply not possible without board members being able to test the plausibility of what they are being told through a knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of their own organisation.

Executive summary



Key strengths

The review team observed the following key areas of strength in the governance which need to be maintained and provide a platform for further improvement of governance effectiveness:

- the quality of governance administration
- the calibre and breadth of experience of board members.



- the strategic role of the board
- board member relations and collective development
- board member engagement and board connectivity to the wider organisation
- student voice in governance beyond student members.



Next steps

The fundamental challenge for the board and the executive will be to maintain the good current standard of governance during this period of transition and leadership change and build on it to make further improvements towards becoming a high-impact, high-performing board.

This review has held the board and supporting governance up to the expectations of the AoC Code it works to and to the principles of good governance with a focus on meaningful outcomes. There is the potential, by acting on the recommendations from this review, to develop into an exemplar in the sector, delivering for students, staff and other key stakeholders.

Key areas for improvement



Recommendations

Recommendations

As we have commented above, the foundations of good governance are in place. A number of themes emerged from across the lines of enquiry that we used in our review, and we have set these out in our recommendations below, mapped to the related line(s) of enquiry. In the next section we provide more detail on each of the lines of enquiry, to provide background to each recommendation.

Recommendation	Line of enquiry
<p>R1 Board development</p> <p>The board should spend time together in board development to review, develop and gain a shared understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the role of the board and its members • the distinctive roles of governors and executives, and how the two groups work together and relate to each other • the board's role in shaping and governing culture • how committees provide assurance to the board • the role of board and executives in developing, setting and disseminating the strategy • how the board can test and get assurance on effective strategic alignment once the new strategy is finalised • diversity and inclusion, with emphasis on promoting diversity of thought and experience at board level. 	<p>How effectively the board and board members discharge their role</p> <p>The effect of board culture on decision-making, challenge contribution and organisational tone</p> <p>Impact of governance (policies, practices and structures)</p> <p>How the board sets and communicates strategy</p> <p>How the board models and promotes diversity</p>
<p>R2 Board membership</p> <p>The board should reflect on whether the size of its membership is optimal for its effectiveness.</p> <p>Encourage and promote individual board member effectiveness through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • induction • feedback and reflection • appraisal. <p>The appraisal process could be strengthened and used more effectively to hold individual governors to account where performance or contribution is below expectations.</p> <p>To help inform the equality, diversity and inclusion strategy, complete an exercise mapping the diversity at board level with the diversity of the staff and learners.</p> <p>Review the chairing and membership of committees as part of the structural review.</p>	<p>How effectively the board and board members discharge their role</p> <p>The effect of board culture on decision-making, challenge contribution and organisational tone</p> <p>Governor recruitment, induction, development and succession planning</p> <p>How the board models and promotes diversity</p> <p>Impact of governance (policies, practices and structures)</p>

Recommendations

Recommendation	Line of enquiry
<p>R3 Board papers</p> <p>Senior leaders should consider how to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop and present board papers so that they encourage debate • improve board papers so that they are shorter and more strategically focused. <p>Some training may be useful.</p> <p>Introduce the use of assurance reports from committee to board.</p>	<p>The effect of board culture on decision-making, challenge contribution and organisational tone</p> <p>Impact of governance (policies, practices and structures)</p>
<p>R4 Risk management</p> <p>Develop the risk register using the principles detailed in the report.</p>	<p>Impact of governance (policies, practices and structures)</p>
<p>R5 Governor engagement with staff, students and other key stakeholders</p> <p>Implement a light-touch student engagement framework to provide guidance for each college.</p> <p>Implement a structured programme of governor engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assign each governor to a college • set expectation of the amount of engagement including in-person visits • guided walk-arounds, which would ideally be themed • student forum meetings (which should be presented back to the board). <p>Engage with staff and other key stakeholders more formally in strategy development.</p>	<p>Board interaction with students and other key stakeholders</p> <p>How the board sets and communicates strategy</p>
<p>R6 Leadership in governance</p> <p>Raise the profile of the director of governance, including endorsing him as a ‘champion’ of governance at board level and across the group.</p>	<p>Role, input and influence of the governance professional</p>

Findings by key line of enquiry



How effectively the board and board members discharge their role

HEADLINES

The board's role is defined quite narrowly and consequently it plays a limited role at CCCG.

At times, the board can feel a bit passive and there is a disconnect between the board and the rest of the organisation.

The governors have a wide range of experience and skills. They are positive about the organisation and there is good attendance at meetings.

Board members do not always understand the distinctive roles of governors and senior executives.

Board role and effectiveness

There is a seriousness around the governance at CCCG and the board goes about its business efficiently. The board is generally discharging its duties, within the scope it has defined for them, with reasonable effectiveness. That said there is an almost rushed quality to board meetings, which are quite short with the board getting through a lot of business. This limits the opportunity for more strategic discussions and getting the most value out of the individual board members through discussion or the collective value of the board as a team.

The role of the board is narrowly defined at CCCG. This is quite common across the sector but given the scale of CCCG as an organisation there is a greater case for a broader, more value-added framing of the board's role. Reviewing and redefining the role of the board would be a useful exercise for the board. In doing so the board should reflect on how it collectively defines its role, drawing on the expectations set out in the Association of Colleges' code of governance together with the reference points in this report, which are drawn from research into high-performing boards and cross-sector best practice. Where the board's role is talked about, and that of board and board member responsibilities, it is done so in a very perfunctory way, missing lots of the added value contribution of a board, such as around strategic leadership. This plays into a general sense of the board feeling quite passive and disconnected from the organisation.

As is normal, much of the governance heavy lifting happens at the committees but the work of the board is more bottom-up driven than top-down shaping. This means that the board is spoon-fed much of its agenda rather than controlling what it feels it needs to discuss. This limits some of the added value one would expect the board to bring. Alongside this there is a very empowered executive which sets the pace.

The board would benefit from thinking and being more directive about the assurance work and remits of committees; improving the way committees report to the board would also help. A common gripe was a lack of visibility of committee work – at times leading to duplicative discussions at board – and a lack of concise reporting. The executive would benefit from a board more on the front foot because this would improve constructive challenge.

Board member understanding of role and expectation

The board's role could be more clearly outlined and communicated in the governance framework, the governors' handbook, and in how it is brought to life in the governance itself. The responsibilities and the expectations – via the code of conduct – of board members are clearly set out in the governors' handbook. That said, the role of the board could be more specifically captured and expressed in the document. This would provide a more helpful basis for assessing the impact of the board as a whole and the contributions of each governor.

Board members have a variety of backgrounds and experiences and have different views of the board's role. Another issue identified by the review team is some misunderstanding about the distinct roles of governors and senior executives, and the distinct and different roles of governance versus management, on which some training would be useful.

How effectively the board and board members discharge their role

Board member discharge of role

The governors have a wide range of experience and skills, which is covered in more detail in a later section. They are positive about the organisation and there is good attendance at meetings. However, there is mixed level of contribution, attention and input from governors in those forums. There is a core group that stand out in terms of the discharge of board member duties, including the chair and deputy chair.

Engagement of governors in meetings and outside of meetings is variable. The size of the board may have a limiting effect as it can create an environment where some governors are less likely to be active participants in the board or committees. The high calibre of governors on the board means that their time is often in short supply, however there should be an expectation to hold meetings in person where possible, and if online to ensure cameras are on and everyone contributes.

As a prompt for the board to develop itself the concept of the 'high-performing board' is useful. The high-performing board is a much-studied concept that associates particular board facets (such as how the board spend its time) with added value by the board to the organisation. High-performing boards are usually associated with top performing organisations or those on an improvement trajectory. The features of working as a high-performing board could be the basis of the board's ongoing development.

Steers and sets strategic direction with regard to both:

1. the organisation's strategy
2. the way in which specific governance areas are approached, addressed and conducted

Ensures accountability for organisation performance by means of, among others, exposure and disclosure



Approves policy and planning that give effect to the strategy and the set direction

Oversees and monitors implementation and execution by management

How effectively the board and board members discharge their role

High performing boards:

1. Set forward-focused, value-creating board agendas that focus on strategy and oversight of risks.
2. Set risk appetite and delegate to management, committees and partnership boards with defined risk tolerances.
3. Ensure clarity of roles so that the right decisions are made at the right level and duplication is avoided, and ensure clarity of reporting and information lines.
4. Take decisions based on evidence – triangulate data, include in all stakeholder perspectives, be pragmatic about data availability, ensure data requests are necessary and sufficient.
5. Provide assurance throughout the process – not including governors at an early-stage results in reactive and less influential challenge, rather than helping to improve plans.
6. Facilitate high-quality debate that builds trust and ensures different points of view are actively sought; avoiding groupthink is essential to making good board decisions; high-performing boards give themselves room to exert professional curiosity.
7. Provide performance feedback to directors and governors with their contributions assessed annually, accompanied by follow-up actions and coaching if necessary.
8. Discuss conflicts of interest candidly and include them in board development.
9. Have thought through their ethical stance and understand their moral bottom line – the board is the controlling conscience of the organisation as well as the controlling mind.

Recommendations

R1 Board development: spend time together in board development to review, develop and gain a shared understanding of:

- the role of the board and its members
- the distinctive roles of governors and executives, and how the two groups work together and relate to each other.

R2 Board membership: the board should reflect on whether the size of its membership is optimal for its effectiveness.

The effect of board culture on decision-making, including encouraging appropriate challenge and contribution, and on the culture and tone of an organisation

HEADLINES

All governors were invited to contribute at meetings, and governors were positive about the tone that is set.

In our observation of meetings, we saw limited constructive challenge. This is in part because of the way in which papers were drafted and presented.

Discussion would be improved if board members used more professional curiosity.

Board culture and decision-making

“If you are about to commit an organisation, public or otherwise, to a decision you have a duty as a board member to ensure the scrutiny of that decision has taken place and was of sufficient quality. Board meetings are a safeguarding act.” – GGI (2021) [‘Asking the right questions: why constructive challenge is key to board effectiveness’](#)

The board culture was overwhelmingly described as collaborative, friendly and welcoming. The chair was described as attentive to cultivating an open and inclusive environment, which we also observed, and board members generally felt that they were able to contribute. The tone at the board was generally positive, though not necessarily proactive. At committees, clarity of purpose was not as evident. At times, this resulted in meetings being dominated by discussions between two or three individuals.

Constructive challenge and debate

‘Constructive challenge is essential to board effectiveness and therefore good governance. The best boards understand its value and are proactive about consciously developing it as part of their culture.’ – GGI (2021) [‘Asking the right questions: why constructive challenge is key to board effectiveness’](#)

Constructive challenge and debate were limited at the meetings we observed, and this was broadly described as typical of the way the board and committees operated. Some papers are presented to the board and committees with little or no comment or feedback from members. This seemed to be a result of the way the papers were drafted, which we comment on in the next section of the report. At times, contributions in meetings were those of a ‘supportive friend’ providing useful insight from other contexts or helpful reference points. Where challenge was observed it amounted more to clarification and framing than to genuine scrutiny.

It is not clear whether the metrics and assurance provided in papers are fully understood by all board members. Feedback on papers and presentations was generally positive; however, we observed limited professional curiosity by those in attendance, despite a high level of collective experience and knowledge around the table. A development focus on how to improve challenge and debate would be beneficial to all board members. Examples of prompts for constructive challenge are set out in Appendix IV.

The effect of board culture on decision-making, including encouraging appropriate challenge and contribution, and on the culture and tone of an organisation

Contribution

As mentioned above, substantive input appeared to be limited to the same few board and committee members at the meetings we observed. Additionally, meetings seemed to be dominated by presentations of papers and information rather than feedback and input. For some governors, an incomplete understanding of their role may contribute to a reluctance to speak up during meetings. During our meeting observations, there were committee and board members who did not contribute to discussion and did not have cameras on. Limited visibility of other meeting attendees inhibits a sense of working together, and also discourages those with cameras off from contributing. This expectation should be made clear by the chair and included in induction materials as part of a formalised code of conduct policy.

The wider impact of governance and culture

The board had limited awareness of the way individual members could contribute to the broader organisational culture. We could not see any evidence of a connection between the culture at board level and the culture of the organisation, and the culture at board level did not extend beyond the work of the board and its committees. The link between culture and good governance did not appear to be apparent to some interviewees, particularly those who were not board members themselves. There was a lack of understanding of the role of the board in governing culture. We did not find strong and consistent recognition of the importance of culture to governance effectiveness and there was a level of reluctance to speak of the governance culture, potentially due to this perceived disconnect.

Recommendations

R2 Board membership: encourage and promote individual board member effectiveness through:

- induction
- feedback and reflection
- appraisal.

R1 Board development: gain a shared understanding of the board's role in shaping and governing culture

R3 Board papers: senior leaders should consider how to develop and present board papers so that they encourage debate. Some training may be useful.

The impact of governance, including policies, practices, and structures

HEADLINES

The impact and importance of good governance is not widely understood. Governance is seen as separate from the rest of the organisation.

Governance practice is generally good and considered to be effective.

The changes to the committee structures are positive. Committees should be chaired by governors other than the chair, and the chairs should provide assurance reports to the board.

Governance versus good governance

Good governance adds value. It is lean, transparent and ethical, focused on tackling operational challenges in ways that complement the big-picture vision. It always seeks the best outcomes for stakeholders and is never content with merely staying out of trouble.

Good governance is about delivering meaningful measurable outcomes. Professor Judge Mervyn King's view on the meaningful outcomes of good governance are summarised as follows:

- **Ethical culture:** In the course of making decisions in the best interests of the organisation, the governing body should ensure that a stakeholder-inclusive approach is adopted, which takes into account and balances their legitimate and reasonable needs, interests and expectations.
- **Good performance:** The governing body should lead an audacious value creation process by appreciating that strategy, risk and opportunity, performance and sustainable development are inseparable elements.
- **Effective control:** The governing body should govern risk and opportunity in a way that supports the organisation in defining its core purpose and sets and achieves strategic objectives. It should ensure that assurance results in an adequate and effective control environment and the integrity of reports for better decision-making.
- **Legitimacy:** The governing body should set the tone and lead ethically and effectively, ensuring that the organisation is a responsible corporate citizen delivering improvements to the wellbeing of staff, society and the environment as well as financial sustainability.

Adapted from: [GGI \(2022\)](#) Making it easy to do the right thing

The impact of governance, including policies, practices, and structures

Understanding of good governance

Good governance is a dynamic form of organisational control. If governance is seen solely as a static structure, safety net or obligation related to regulatory compliance, it cannot deliver real benefit. At CCCG, the impact of governance is not widely understood at both board and organisational level. Governance is seen as related exclusively to the board and governors, thus being somewhat separate from the institution.

The board and committees are generally well chaired. It is clear that the chairs have significant experience and knowledge in their areas, but this can inadvertently lead to discussion being dominated by the chairs rather than the chairs effectively engaging other members to input. The chair of the board also chairs one committee and the supporting finance group. Good practice suggests that the board chair should not generally chair board committees, although this is not a hard and fast rule. The argument for the board chair not also chairing committees is about avoiding groupthink with too much concentration of input from one individual. The current chair understands this point. The appointment of a new board chair is an ideal opportunity to review this arrangement and to appoint, through a skills-based process, new chairs for each of the board's committees.

Governance practices

Governance practices, including meeting administration, seem to be working well and at a consistently effective level across the board and committees. However, we did not see evidence of consideration of the wider impact of this beyond the board. Agendas and minutes are produced in a clear and consistent manner and include all the information expected, in sufficient detail. We noted that meeting minutes included significant detail from papers, which could be considered duplication of information. The board, audit committee and quality oversight committee have cycles of business in place setting out the yearly work programme; we did not see evidence that any other committees have work programmes in place.

Meeting papers are well developed and contain sufficient detail. However, paper packs are overly long and not always strategically focused, which makes it challenging for governors to be strategically focused in meetings. While many papers follow a similar format, cover sheets are not consistently used for committee papers, while they are consistently used for board papers.

There was mixed feedback on awareness about who prepares and presents papers to the board and committees. This furthers the perceived disconnect between the board and the day-to-day functioning of the organisation.

Overall, papers were well-presented and key points were drawn out by presenters. This did, however, seem to discourage challenge and discussion at times. While the board seems to have a high level of confidence in the information provided by the senior team, an effective board must be able to scrutinise and effectively seek assurance rather than relying on reassurance.

The impact of governance, including policies, practices, and structures



Reassurance



Assurance

“Is it okay because management says it is?”



“Is it okay because management have responded to questions from the board, and this has given me confidence?”



“It is okay because I am confident on the reliability of the process to develop the information?”

Strong management personalities may dominate.



Clear and logical explanations from board members. Information rather than data. Use of quantitative as well as qualitative information.



Independence of information source.

Track record of success.



What has happened, why it happened, and the response.



Evidence of historic progress, outcomes and impact.

Professional background or expertise.



The information was tested through constructive challenge. Management explanations are consistent.



Triangulation with other information – this builds into a consistent picture.

No contradictory evidence.



Presentations and discussion not just from executive directors. An opportunity to question staff below executive director level.



The information was developed by and has been scrutinised in valid forums and by people skilled and experienced in doing this.

Reassurance about systems and their reliability and not performance.



The process for delivering the information was scrutinised.



Plausibility through comparison with benchmarks or heuristic understanding.

Structures, reporting and escalation

The board has four established committees, supported by a finance oversight group. The current committees are as follows:

- Audit committee
- Quality oversight committee
- Search and governance committee
- Remuneration committee

We understand that the committee structure is under review, specifically with the aim of reconstituting the finance oversight group to a committee, which is supported by best practice.

Boards rely on committees to discharge the functions delegated to them by the board, and to receive assurance that these functions are carried out effectively. This requires clear processes for escalation and reporting from committees to the board. In our observations, we did not see evidence of a clear reporting and escalation structure between the board and committees. Committees appear to operate in siloes, and there was little evidence of systematic reporting from committees to the board, with reference to the work of committees minimal at board level. We have included an example of a report which can be used by committees to report to the board at appendix V.

The impact of governance, including policies, practices, and structures

Policies

The group has a suite of corporate policies covering key areas. We reviewed a selection of these policies as outlined in Appendix II. We did not identify any significant gaps in the policies in place or in the content of the policies reviewed.

A detailed policy register is in place outlining the review dates, leads and authors for all policies. Most of the corporate policies were in date. There were two significant exceptions: the equality, diversity and inclusion policy, which we understand is under review pending union consultation, and the health and safety policy, which is awaiting sign-off by audit committee. Many of the other policies are due for review in 2024.

The policy approval process is set out in a policy approval protocol; this document also sets out responsibilities for policies (including dissemination), the consultation process and the equality impact assessment.

Risk management

Overall, the group has an effective process for oversight of risk at board level, with a few areas that could be improved. The risk management policy sets out the group's approach to risk and risk management. It is a concise document that effectively outlines how risks are identified, reported and managed within the group. All of this is in line with good practice. However, the policy could provide more emphasis on how the risk management process works in practice.

The board has delegated oversight of the risk register to the audit committee, which receives regular risk reports. In our observation, discussion of the risk register was limited, though minutes of past committees demonstrated a good level of discussion on risks.

The audit committee chair provides a brief verbal update on risk management to the board and the committee provides an annual report, including an assessment of the effectiveness of the group's risk management arrangements.

In reviewing the minutes and papers of board meetings, we saw limited evidence of robust discussion related to risk at board level. The group risk register is reported to the board and audit committee on a regular basis, accompanied by a cover sheet summarising recent reviews by the senior team, risk movements and significant risks. The group risk register includes a brief description of risks, controls, evaluation of the effectiveness of controls, and scores pre- and post-controls. Some risks have sub-risks which have not been evaluated but are listed on the

register. Overall, this is a simplified and high-level risk register that sets out the key risks to the group. It is not clear how risks are raised and input onto the register. Risk registers could be improved by adopting some best practice principles, including:

- using 'if', 'then', 'leading to' format for risk descriptions, giving more context to the risk factors and the potential impacts of the risks materialising
- including additional detail on identified controls
- including timescales and owners for required actions.

We did not review any of the group's other risk registers and therefore cannot comment on the content or reporting mechanisms in place for these. However, it is important to recognise the links between these registers and how they can collectively support the achievement of the group's objectives.

The impact of governance, including policies, practices, and structures

Recommendations

- R1 Board development: develop a shared understanding of how committees provide assurance to the board.
- R2 Board membership: review the chairing and membership of committees as part of the structural review.
- R3 Board papers:
- improve board papers so that they are shorter and more strategically focused
 - introduce the use of assurance reports from committee to board.
- R4 Risk management: develop the risk register using the principles detailed in the report.



How the board sets and communicates strategy

HEADLINES

- Board members are passive on strategy development.
- The strategy is seen by governors and by staff as the domain of the chief executive.
- Staff were aware that a new strategy is in development. They had not been formally engaged in this process but thought their views may have been included informally.

Board role and input in setting strategy

Boards that have a strong ownership and understanding of the organisation's strategy tend to be more effective and impactful for several reasons:

Improved decision-making: A deep understanding of the strategy enables board members to make more informed and strategic decisions.

Better oversight: A board with a firm grasp of the strategy can provide more effective oversight of management's execution.

Increased alignment: When the board is aligned with the company's strategic direction, it fosters a shared sense of purpose and commitment among all stakeholders.

Enhanced risk management: A board with a deep understanding of the strategy can better identify and assess potential risks.

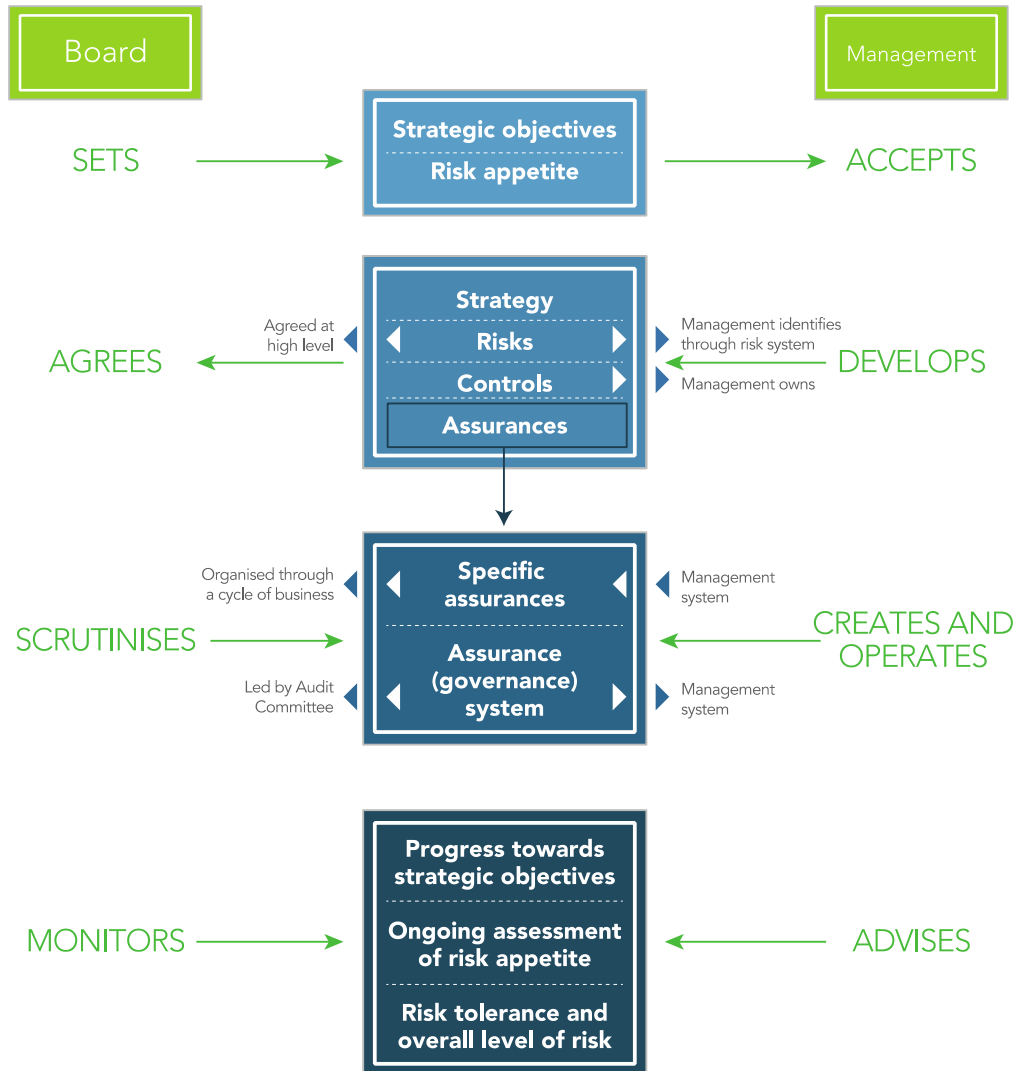
Improved communication: A board that is actively engaged in strategy development can communicate more effectively with management and shareholders.

The Association of Colleges' code is unequivocal in its expectation of the board's role in strategy: 'The board is responsible for the strategic direction of the college, defining the core values, strategic aims, and key outcomes for students.' The board should shape the direction in a few key aims; from this, the executive should build out the strategy with engagement from internal and external stakeholders.

The board at CCCG appears passive when it comes to the determination and formation of the group's strategy, acting more as an involved stakeholder in a process firmly led by the executive than as a co-leader. There is varied understanding across board members, and the executive, about levels of involvement and roles and responsibilities when it comes to strategy development. When asked, most of those we interviewed saw the strategy as the domain of and owned by the chief executive. A subtle but important shift is needed in this perception to improve understanding of the strategy among board members, as well as generating a greater sense of ownership and grip.

Strategy ownership is crucial because the strategy is the start point and the frame for the most vital work of the board - ensuring the management of the organisation is strategically aligned and that the strategy is achieved. The AoC code places responsibility on the board for 'delivering the strategic aims through the efficient and effective use of resources, and for supporting and holding the senior leadership to account.' The CCCG board could also use the strategy more actively to frame the assurance work of its committees, through a strategic/ board assurance framework. This would give the board more grip and control over the work of committees and shape assurance top down.

How the board sets and communicates strategy



Strategic narrative

The board has little visibility in the organisation, even among senior leaders beyond the executive leadership group. This feeds various misconceptions about the exact role and purpose of the board, as well as leaving a vacuum of understanding of its work and impact. This in turn leads to exaggerated views of the role, authority and responsibilities of the executive. The board should consider how it communicates the more significant aspects of its work, such as the substantive decisions it takes and the role it plays in setting the course for the organisation, but in a coordinated way driven by a strategic narrative. The narrative should be a combination of the board's role and the expression of the strategy's core aims. It will have the dual impact of raising the profile of the board as well as creating better connectivity to the group and its key stakeholders.

A clear strategic narrative from the board – conveying purpose, importance, journey and direction – can become a powerful tool for driving organisational performance, culture shaping, attracting and keeping talent. At CCCG, even quite senior leaders and managers in the organisation have limited view of and access to what the board is doing and what it is thinking. There is little awareness of the ideas it has and the contributions it makes to the strategy, the governance and the future of the organisation. In the context of CCCG's recent history, a strategic narrative that helps build and develop the new shared identity of the group would be beneficial, with many still thinking through the lens of and feeling identification with their college.

How the board sets and communicates strategy

Involvement in and communication of strategy

At the time the review was undertaken a new strategy for the organisation was under development. Staff we spoke to were aware that a new strategy is in development; they had not been formally engaged in this process but thought their views may have been included informally. As mentioned, the strategy development process is owned and run by the chief executive, and this is what staff and students see. Their view is that it is the executive that own the strategy and if they are engaged it is at the discretion of the executive, not the board. It was broadly felt that the group's last strategy did genuinely have good awareness across the leadership and management and did inform and shape their supporting strategies and work plans in meaningful ways. This is a useful foundation to build on for the development of the new strategy, and an area – strategic alignment – that the board and its committees should test.

The review team didn't see or hear much evidence of the involvement of wider key stakeholders in the development of the group's strategy, though the board are certainly very conscious of their wider stakeholder environment and the influence of certain groups within it. Stakeholder involvement in strategy is beneficial for three reasons: firstly, their input can be genuinely helpful in shaping the strategy and key priorities; secondly, it gives the strategy broader awareness and visibility among these key groups; and thirdly, it gives the strategy legitimacy and the board a mandate that stakeholders feel a certain ownership of.

How can boards develop a strategic narrative?

1. Define the organisation's purpose: Clearly articulate the reason for the organisation's existence and its unique value proposition.
2. Identify the core values: Determine the fundamental beliefs and principles that guide the organisation's behaviour.
3. Think about the narrative: Develop a compelling narrative that connects the past, present and future of the organisation.
4. Involve stakeholders: Gather input from key stakeholders to ensure the narrative resonates with different audiences.
5. Communicate effectively: Share the narrative consistently and authentically across all channels.
6. Measure impact: Track the effectiveness of the narrative in achieving organisational goals.

Recommendations

R1 Board development:

- Build a shared understanding of the role of board and executives in developing, setting and disseminating the strategy.
- Think about how the board can test and get assurance on effective strategic alignment once the new strategy is finalised.

R5 Governor engagement: engage with staff and other key stakeholders more formally in strategy development.

How the board models and promotes good diversity practice

HEADLINES

The governors are visibly a diverse group, but there is less diversity in the senior leadership.

It was not clear the extent to which protected characteristics have been considered.

Increasing the level of debate at board would increase the diversity of thought.

Board diversity

The CCCG board is large and visibly diverse across age, gender and ethnicity. The board is aware and attentive to the importance of its diversity. It is mindful of reflecting the profiles and diversity of its key stakeholders, particularly students, in its makeup.

The board has undertaken a diversity mapping exercise and now has a diversity profile, albeit one that is limited in its scope of diversity characteristics. This diversity profile has been reviewed and discussed at the search and governance committee and benchmarked against others in the sector to the general view that the CCCG board is generally well comprised but with more work to do 'with respect to ethnicity' to 'mirror the ethnicity profile of the student body'.

Governance of diversity

There is generally a good understanding among board members on their responsibilities around equality, diversity and inclusion. There have been discussions at the board about its responsibilities, expectations and duties concerning equality, diversity and inclusion, with a note that 'board members would be expected to provide a robust challenge with respect to the public sector equality duty'. The board has also agreed to test the impact and outcomes of its diversity through the strategic lens of what the group is doing to deliver social mobility, though it is unclear to the review team how it will do this.

The board – and the search, governance and remuneration committee – are attentive to board makeup and diversity in recruitment, though their consideration of diversity could be expanded to all protected characteristics. Diversity has been given good consideration in the governance around the recent recruitment of governors and the succession planning for the new chair. The board recently decided to expand its staff membership to two, to cover both teaching and professional support services perspectives, in a model similar to that in many higher education institutions. This decision was derived from a mindfulness about the importance of this part of its membership, the necessary perspective it needs from this role in relation to its key areas of business, and the most pressing areas of staff voice to these. It is a good demonstration of the board's consideration of its diversity of views and experience.

Getting more from board diversity

One key area for improvement is how the board maximises the value of its diverse membership. Part of this is about developing the relations and awareness of board members themselves of the diversity in their own membership and the specific backgrounds of each member. The board hasn't had much development time together focused on team building and getting to know each other; this would only strengthen inclusion and help utilise the board's diversity in core business. Alongside this, increasing the level of debate – particularly on strategic matters, risk and future direction – would stimulate more diversity of thought and capitalise on the various diversity characteristics across the membership.

How the board models and promotes good diversity practice

Getting more from board diversity, cont.

Another area for improvement is around how the board best supports and gets value from its student members, in particular creating the right conditions to ensure their equal and effective contribution. This is commented on more in other sections, since a large part of the issue seems to be in the induction and level of ongoing support they receive. There is a continuing need to reflect on the culture of board and committee meetings and the environment created, not just to have equity of voice and input from members but equal respect for all voices.

A final area to consider is how more diverse voices might be brought into the board and committee meetings through other means. Part of this is about developing the connectivity between the board and the student voice and communities, which we discuss in the final section. Another is related to staff voice; here the board should look at how it connects to the staff networks in the organisation, which are useful forums for staff engagement and insight but are currently detached from the board and its committees.

Promoting diversity

There is a good level of focus on board and wider organisational equality, diversity and inclusion within the governance, with most emphasis on diversity. The Association of Colleges' code expects that 'the board promotes EDI in every aspect of its work'. The board is heading in this direction but isn't there yet and here we would repeat the point above about increasing the level of debate.

The group's new five-year strategy is still under development but there have been conversations about equality, diversity and inclusion forming a central strand in the core strategic plan. During the review, work was being planned to commission an external specialist organisation to support the development of an equality diversity and inclusion strategy for the group. This would be a good development and would give a structure to this area of work and a means for assessing progress and performance.

More could be done by the board to champion equality, diversity and inclusion, by more actively promoting the diversity of its membership as part of a wider piece of work to develop board visibility, but also in the work it does to shape and influence organisational culture. This is a key part of the work of the board, with the executive – to define and shape the culture. Governing culture is an area of the board's work which could be developed more generally, although this is not uncommon. The board could think about how it tests that the culture in the organisation reflects the values of the group, alongside whether it is the right culture for delivering the strategy and the performance required.

Assurance around diversity

While there is a general awareness and recognition of the importance of equality, diversity and inclusion across the board, assurance could be more structured. The development of a new strategy will of course help, creating a framework and some targets to measure against. There is evidence that the board and/or its committees have looked externally to measure against good practice in certain areas, which is good practice. Once the strategy is developed the committees could conduct EDI deep-dives on key/ high-risk areas to focus their assurance.

Some governors apply particular focus in their scrutiny and challenge in this area, with one in particular acting almost like a non-executive designated lead for diversity. This may help raise the profile of this important component of board oversight but there are dangers in it becoming an almost singular point of focus for any one board member and of course there is a need to maintain the appropriate non-executive and executive role distinctions. The review team heard of several instances of these being breached, with one particular governor overstepping their role. It is also again the case that in their scrutiny and assurance work, governors and co-opted members of committees should take a broad view of diversity when challenging or seeking data on specific groups. There seems to have been a very narrow, and almost relentless, focus on certain groups and not others.

Recommendations

R1 Board development: review diversity and inclusion, with an emphasis on promoting diversity of thought and experience at board level.

R2 Board membership: to help inform the equality, diversity and inclusion strategy, complete an exercise mapping the diversity at board level with the diversity of the staff and learners.

Governor recruitment, induction, development, and succession planning

HEADLINES

Governors are recruited using an external agency and there is a clear interview process.

There is a clear role description, but governors do not always fully participate, e.g. reading papers in advance.

There is a governor appraisal process, but this could be strengthened.

Recruitment

Governor recruitment is taken seriously, with importance placed on appointing high-calibre board members who meet existing skills, experience and diversity needs. Governor recruitment is thoughtful and evidence-based and follows a considered process supported by external expertise. Governor recruitment gets good discussion time within the governance structure, particularly through the search, governance and remuneration committee. There seems to have been an improvement to the approach in recent years that has led to the current position.

Upon commencement of their role new governors are asked to complete a skills assessment. This forms part of an end-to-end process which helps the board, through the work of the search, governance and remuneration committee, to plan its recruitment around identified gaps. There is an attention to the composition of the board which has led to a diversity of skills and experience across a wide spectrum.

There are clear, well-structured job descriptions for governors, the vice-chair and the chair. The governor job description is clear about the role, its responsibilities and those of the collective board. It is also clear about the expected time commitment and contribution, which sets a clear expectation from the outset and forms a good basis for assessment in the appraisal process.

The results are demonstrable in the high-calibre of governors brought in through recent recruitment. Thought has also been given more recently to using co-opted members of committees as a developmental role to support a talent pipeline into the board.

Induction

The induction process is an area of strength in the governance of CCCG, with a robust and organised process in place. The induction materials used in the process and provided to all new governors are comprehensive and speak to the key areas – including strategic priorities, financial position, operating context, governance structures and processes, and key information about CCCG group. The induction process is something that the governance lead and the search, governance and remuneration committee attend to and review. The process was revised in 2023 to include a half-day session involving meetings and time with both the chief executive and the chair.

The board members we spoke to were full of praise for the induction process, singling out the productive and helpful role of the director of governance in facilitating the process and remaining in close contact and providing ongoing support for the first six months.

A good design feature of the process is a check-in with the director of governance at the end of the first six months to ensure new governors have fully developed their understanding and identify any gaps for further developmental support. One area that could be improved was a lack of opportunity to engage with and get to know other governors as part of the induction, starting with more information about the other members, their backgrounds and areas of experience and expertise.

Governor recruitment, induction, development, and succession planning

Induction, cont.

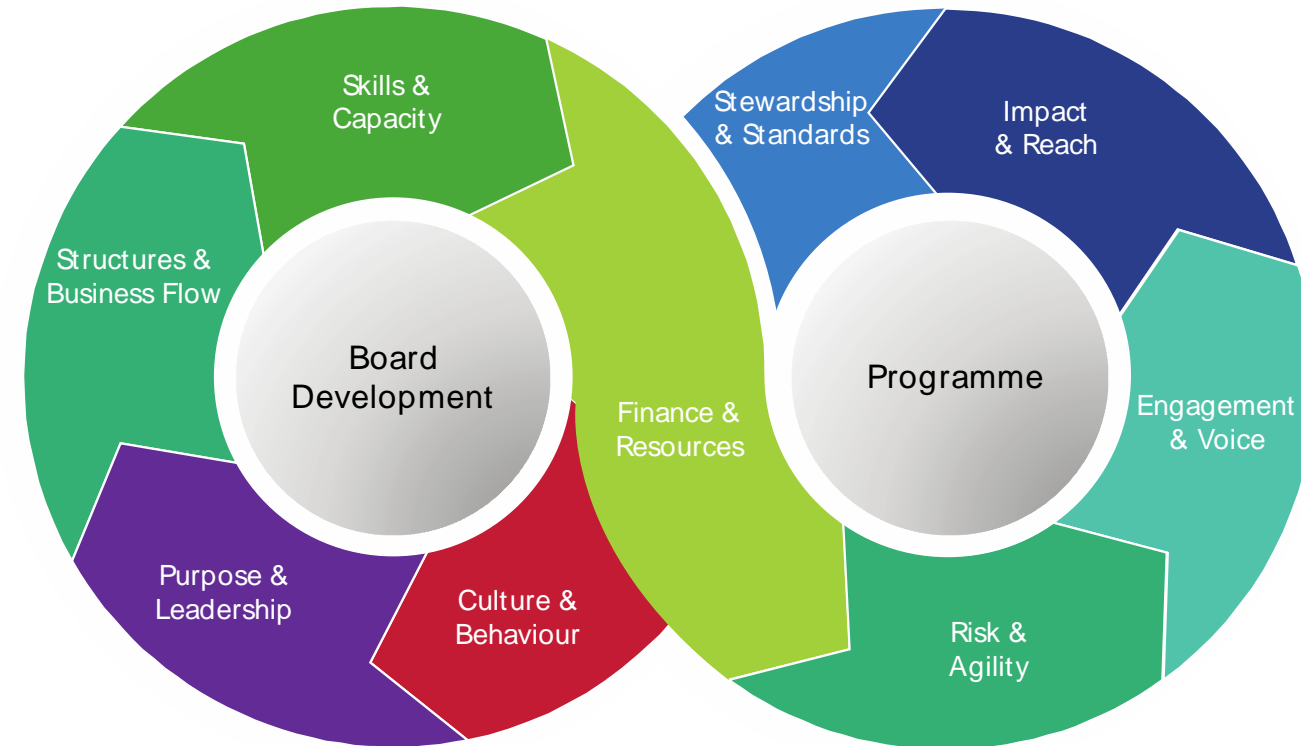
There is a separate question about how well inducted and supported the elected student members of the board are. The picture they painted to the review team was significantly different to other board members, with them generally feeling underprepared and supported for the role. This may mean that there needs to be more nuance, or a greater level of support given to student governors, as they come to the role with a very different level of understanding to other governors.

Development

Governor appraisals are attended to by the chair and vice-chair and are taken seriously. However, they seem to deliver more value in identifying training and support needs and as a feedback forum for improving whole board effectiveness, than in scrutinising and challenging individual member performance and contribution. The process around the appraisals could be strengthened, particularly in terms of how governors are challenged and held to account on performance and overall contribution. Feedback is presented to the search and governance committee with key thematic highlights drawn out. At the time of the review these key areas included a commonly expressed desire for more connectivity to the group through good news stories and invitations to attend college events, a desire to hear more student voice within the governance of the group, and a dissatisfaction with the length of papers for board meetings.

Although board members are well inducted and there is decent enough attention paid to – and development provided to – individual governors, more could be done in the way of full board development. A constant refrain in the assessment activities was the need for board members to simply get to know each other better. Good boards are teams, and teams take effort to cultivate. Their effectiveness relies as much on their mutual trust and strength of relations as on process. At the time of the review there was some planning for full board development around common areas of feedback from appraisals, which is a good start. Thought should be given to using expert external facilitation support, as well as finding dedicated time within the board's busy schedule, for this important work.

Example components of a board development programme



Governor recruitment, induction, development, and succession planning

Succession planning

Succession planning was a live area of work at the time the review was conducted, with a process being planned for the selection and appointment of a new chair of the board. There was a collective awareness of the importance of succession planning among the search and governance committee members, and beyond to other members of the board. A working group consisting of the vice-chair, chief executive and director of governance and one of the search and governance committee members was established to plan the process and consider the question of timing, reporting back into the committee. If there is a challenge from the review team it would be about the lead time into the process, which perhaps could have been started sooner.

Recommendations

See R1 for recommendations relating to board development.

R2 Board membership: the appraisal process could be strengthened and used more effectively to hold individual governors to account where performance or contribution is below expectations.

The role, input, and influence of the governance professional

HEADLINES

The group is supported by a director of governance, who is responsible for managing the work of the board.

Feedback on the support provided by the director of governance was positive, and input at board and committees was appropriate and helpful.

The role could be developed to increase its profile, including promoting the importance of governance across the group, beyond the board.

Role and input of the governance professional

The director of governance has been in post for several years, including seeing through the merger which brought together the group as it currently stands. He brings to the role considerable experience, including from previous roles.

It was clear from interviews that the director of governance is very well respected by governors and provides appropriate support and advice. In our meeting observations we saw helpful input. We have commented above that committees should be chaired by governors other than the chair of governors. This would mean that the chair of the search and governance committee would be able to report to the board in relation to the business of that committee, rather than the director of governance, which would be more appropriate.

Influence of the governance professional

The role of the director of governance is focused on the governance of the board. In our view, the role should be developed to promote good governance across the whole group. Active involvement of the director of governance with the increased profile of governors with students and staff, as recommended above, would be one way of developing his role and profile across the organisation.

Recommendations

R6 Leadership in governance: raise the profile of the director of governance, including endorsing him as a 'champion' of governance at board level and across the group.

Governor, chair, governance professional and senior leadership team dynamics and effectiveness of working relationships

HEADLINES

- There is work to do in how the executive use the board to maximise the value of its input.
- At the meetings we observed, the interactions between senior leaders and the board were limited to a few individuals. The new leadership structure provides an opportunity to develop this.
- There is a good level of trust from the board in the chief executive and in the director of governance.

Chair and governor relations

The chair enjoys the respect of the governors and is seen as being effective. He is an influential, experienced figure and it was evident from the meetings we observed that he is well-respected.

Governor and executive relationships

Working relationships between the board and senior team are strong and appear to be underpinned by mutual respect. We observed high levels of collegiality in meetings, and there is clearly trust between the governors and the senior leadership team.

The chief executive has implemented a new leadership structure and the inclusion of a wider executive presence in board meetings. Previously, only the chief executive, executive principal and director of governance attended board meetings. Broader executive participation allows the governors to hear from more people, broaden their points of reference and develop a wider set of relationships. This should also improve visibility of governors, which has been noted as an issue.

As recommended above, CCCG should formulate a programme of board and executive development with a focus on strengthening relationships and encouraging open debate and constructive challenge. Effective challenge and strong working relationships work hand in hand, and development of one aspect will lead to improvement in the other.

The board's interaction with students and stakeholders

HEADLINES

The board relies on staff and student governors for hearing the staff/student voice. This is not sufficient.

Visibility of governors across the organisation is poor. Insight and understanding would be improved by engaging with student forums and with structured visits.

Student engagement

Student engagement is carried out by teams in each college. Each college has student engagement leads who coordinate activities for their teams. We were told of a range of different activities and initiatives at a college level. Each college has a structured system to provide learners with an opportunity to feedback to management and propose changes. At City and Islington (CANDI), there are termly student council meetings where students are encouraged to present to and negotiate with college management. At The College of Haringey, Enfield and North East London (CONEL), class representatives attend school forums and centre meetings to engage with college leadership. Governors do not currently attend these meetings, but they could provide an organised way for governors to understand the issues that matter to students.

CANDI and Westminster Kingsway colleges both have student unions. CONEL have decided to stand theirs down.

Each college caters to a different core group of students, so having the independence to develop their own engagement strategies and processes suits them well. However, a general framework for engagement to ensure similarities across the group and that students' voices from each college are heard equally could be helpful to set a standardised baseline of expectation across the colleges.

Stakeholder voice in decision-making

The board includes two student governors and two staff governors who are encouraged to provide feedback and raise concerns openly. These governors can provide useful insight, but in practice this is predominantly personal rather than representative of their fellow staff and students.

Independent governors engaging with students and staff, for example through the student councils mentioned before and through staff networks, and feeding back to the board could provide greater insight into a wider range of student opinion. With increased input, it is important to ensure that actions are followed up and feedback (whether changes are to be made or not) is disseminated throughout the organisation, so students and staff feel they are being listened to and respected. To facilitate this, staff and student governors may be supported to convene staff and student forums to disseminate information from board meetings and gather feedback from their peers.

We noticed a disconnect between the business of CCCG and what this means for students, who are the organisation's main stakeholders. In meetings we observed, decisions were made without discussion of how they would impact students. While student experience is considered – student governors have been asked to present a report on student experience at the quality committee – it appears to be considered as a separate item, rather than embedded as a consideration in all decisions made by the board. For the board to advance its maturity, staff and student voice must be deeply valued and listening to it should be recognised as vital to CCCG's success.

The board's interaction with students and stakeholders

Visibility

Visibility of governors across the organisation is poor. The staff and students we spoke to did not know who the governors are or what their role is. The staff we spoke to felt that governors are not connected to what they do each day, so there is no need to know them.

Governors should spend more time physically in the colleges, engaging with staff and students. Pairing each governor with a college and implementing a structured programme of engagement, including visits, walkarounds and attendance at student events, will increase visibility of the board and help the governors understand the organisation and its stakeholders in a more material way. There is an added benefit of helping the students to understand how the organisation is run.

Members of the leadership of the individual colleges are visible to students and staff, who said they were approachable and helpful.

Recommendations

R5 Governor engagement:

- Implement a light-touch student engagement framework to provide guidance for each college.
- Implement a structured programme of governor engagement:
 - assign each governor to a college
 - set expectation of the amount of engagement including in-person visits
 - guided walk-arounds, which would ideally be themed
 - student forum meetings (and present these back to the board).



Appendices



Appendices

I. CCCG governance structure

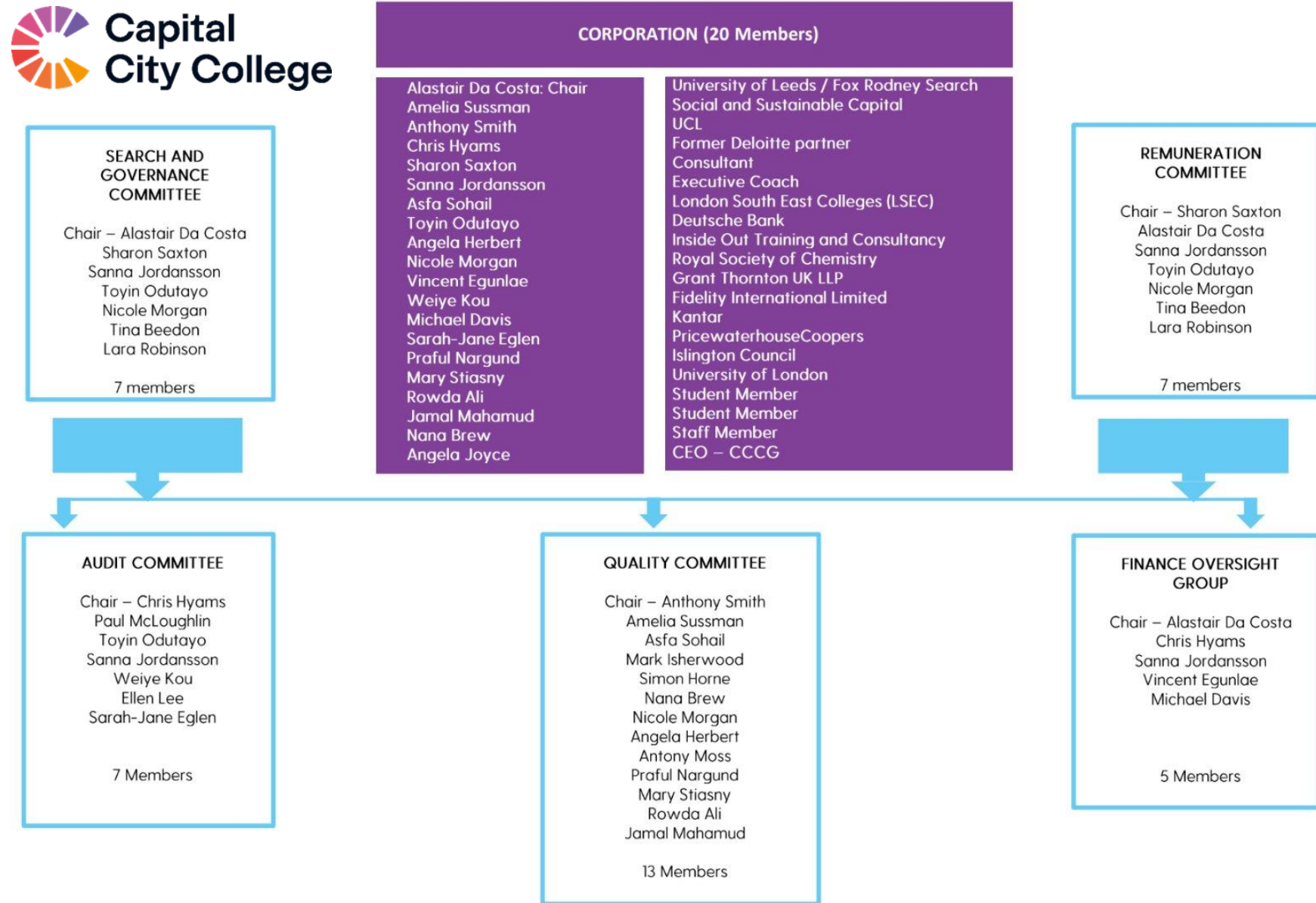
II. Interviewees and observations

III. Survey results

IV. Constructive challenge prompts

V. Key issues report

Appendix I - CCCG board governance structure



Appendix II – Interviewees and observations

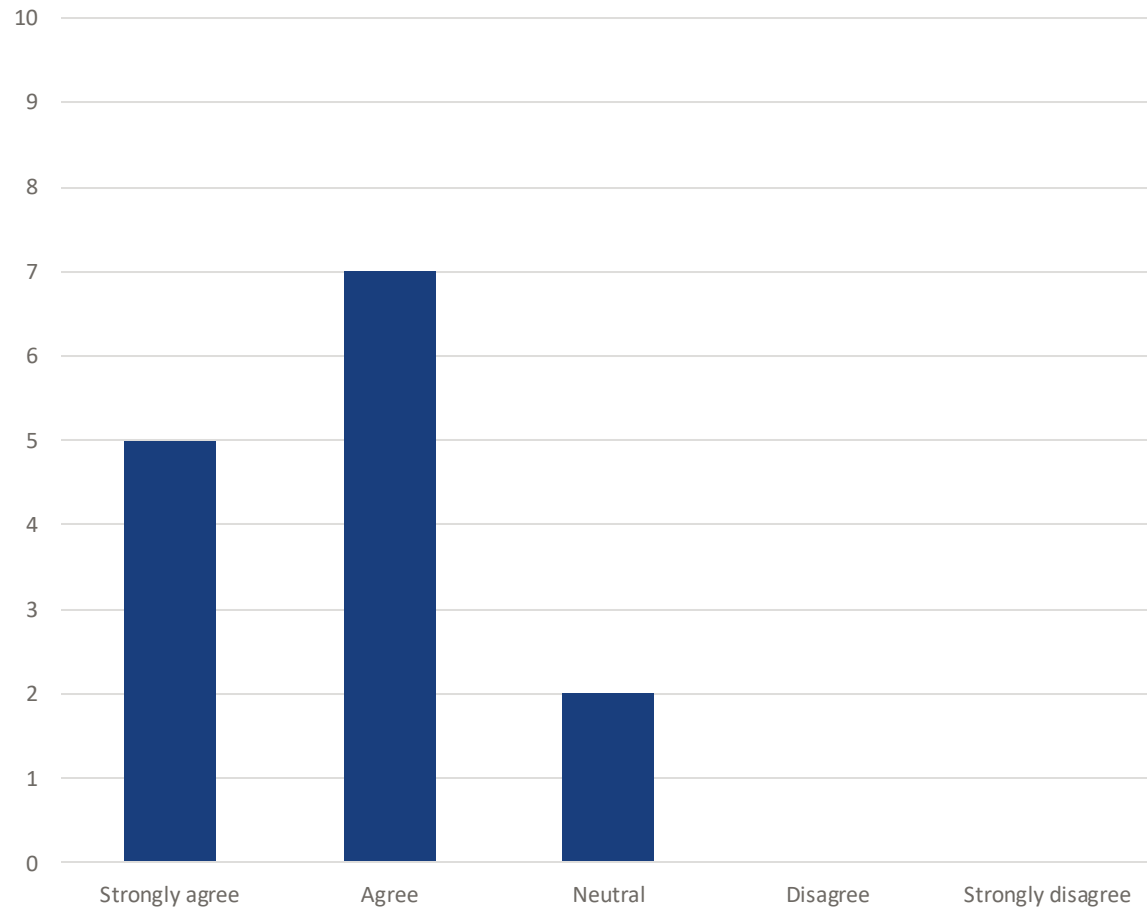
Interviewee name	Role
Kurt Hintz	Executive principal
Hillary Moore	Head of safeguarding
David Dangana	Director of group quality and compliance
Chris Hyams	Chair of audit committee
Nana Brew Banu Sathaliawala	Staff governors
Angela Joyce	Chief executive
Trovane Hartley	HR director
Alastair Da Costa	Chair of the board and search and governance committee and finance oversight Group
Jackie Chapman	Managing director, Capital City College Training
Colleen Marshall	Vice principal, City and Islington College
Jasbir Sondhi	Vice principal, Westminster Kingsway College
Robin Hindley	Vice principal, The College at Haringey, Enfield and North London
Sharon Saxton	Chair of remuneration committee

Observation	Date
Quality oversight committee	19 th March 2024
Audit committee	25 th March 2024
Board	27 th March 2024 23 rd May 2024
Search and governance committee/ remuneration committee	9 th May 2024

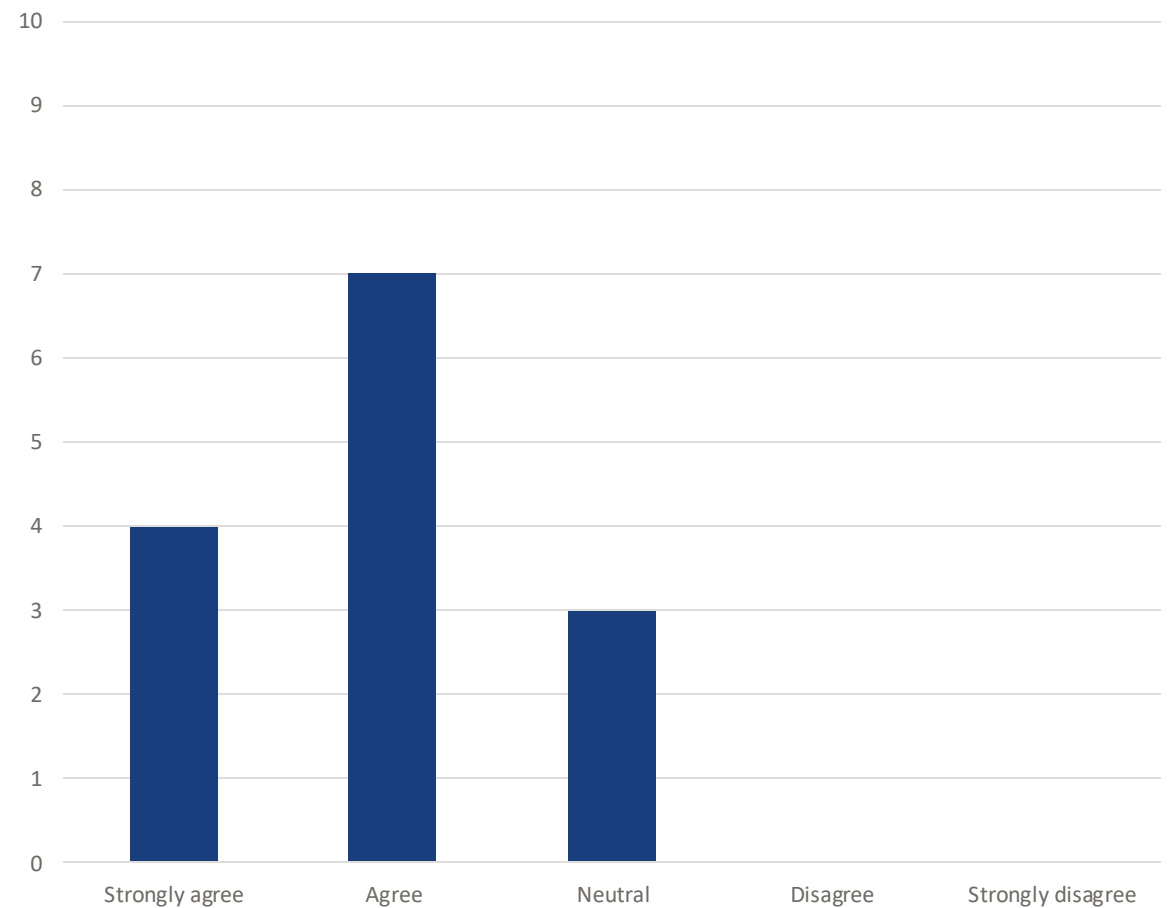
Interviewee name	Role
Jeremy Wells	Director of technology and infrastructure services
Stewart Cross	Director of integration and information
Jamal Alasco Rowda Ali	Student governors
Rachael White	Chief finance officer
Anthony Smith	Chair of quality committee
Praful Nargund Vincent Egunlae	Governors
Neill Scott	Director of estates and facilities
Weiye Kou Nicole Morgan Sarah-Jane Eglen	Governors
Amelia Sussman Michael Davis	Governors
Kate Hall Anthony Robinson	Student engagement leads
Graham Drummond	Group director of governance
Mary Stiasny	Governor

Appendix III - Survey results

Board meetings have a clear purpose, and the matters discussed are appropriate for that purpose

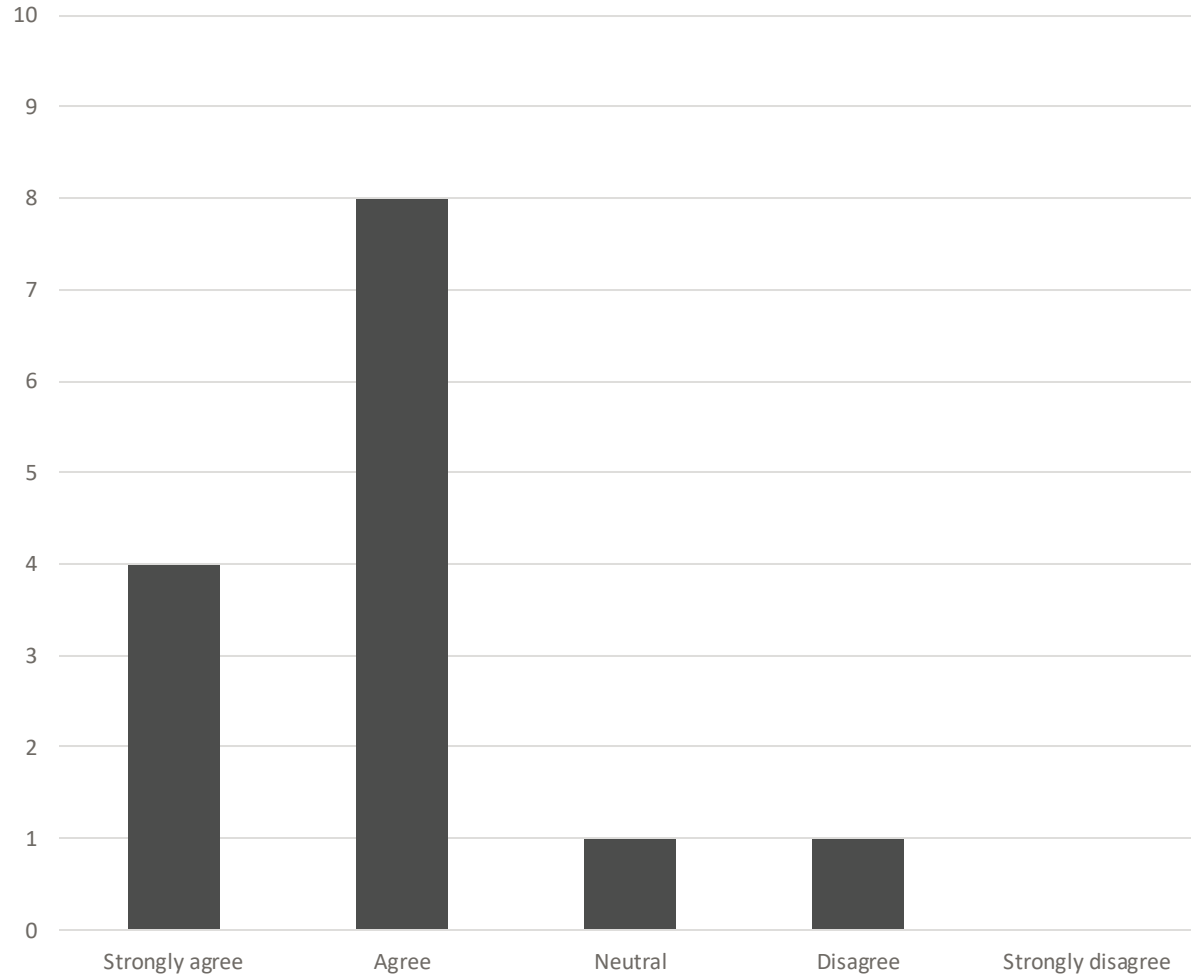


The board has an agreed cycle of business/workplan, which sets out the assurance that the board will receive, from both within and outside the organisation

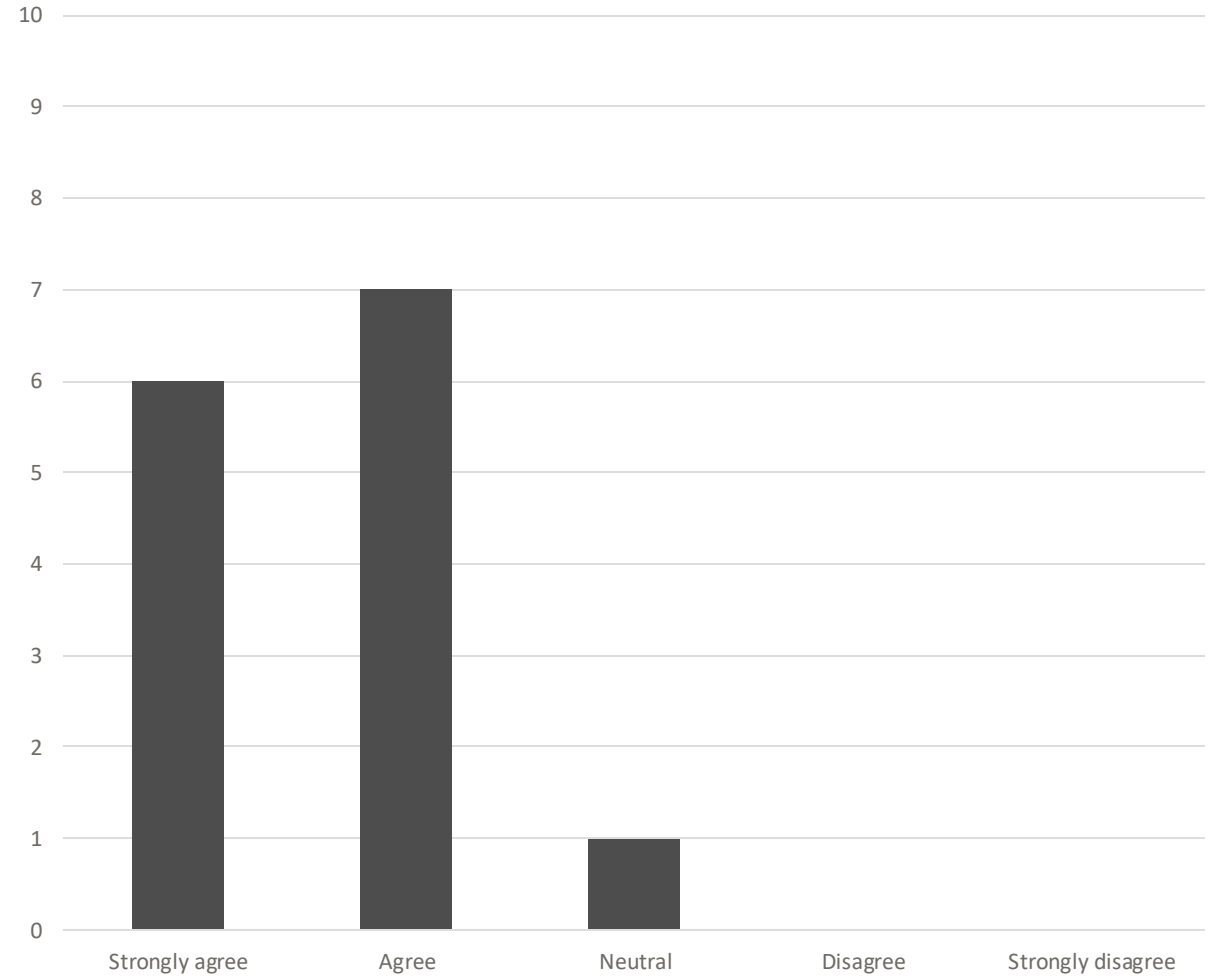


Appendix III - Survey results

The board has a shared understanding of what good governance means and looks like

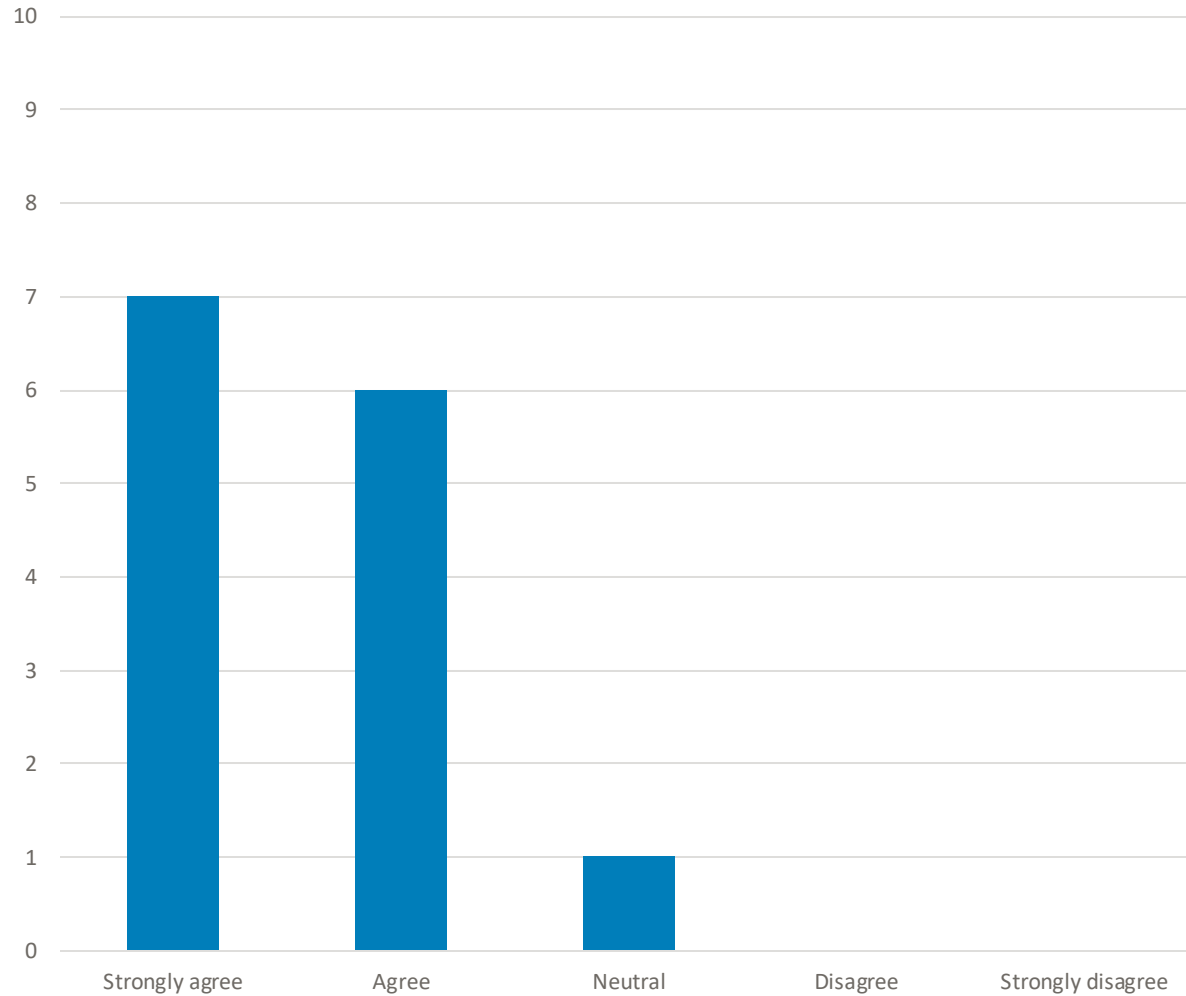


The board understands the regulatory environment of CCCG and the compliance requirements

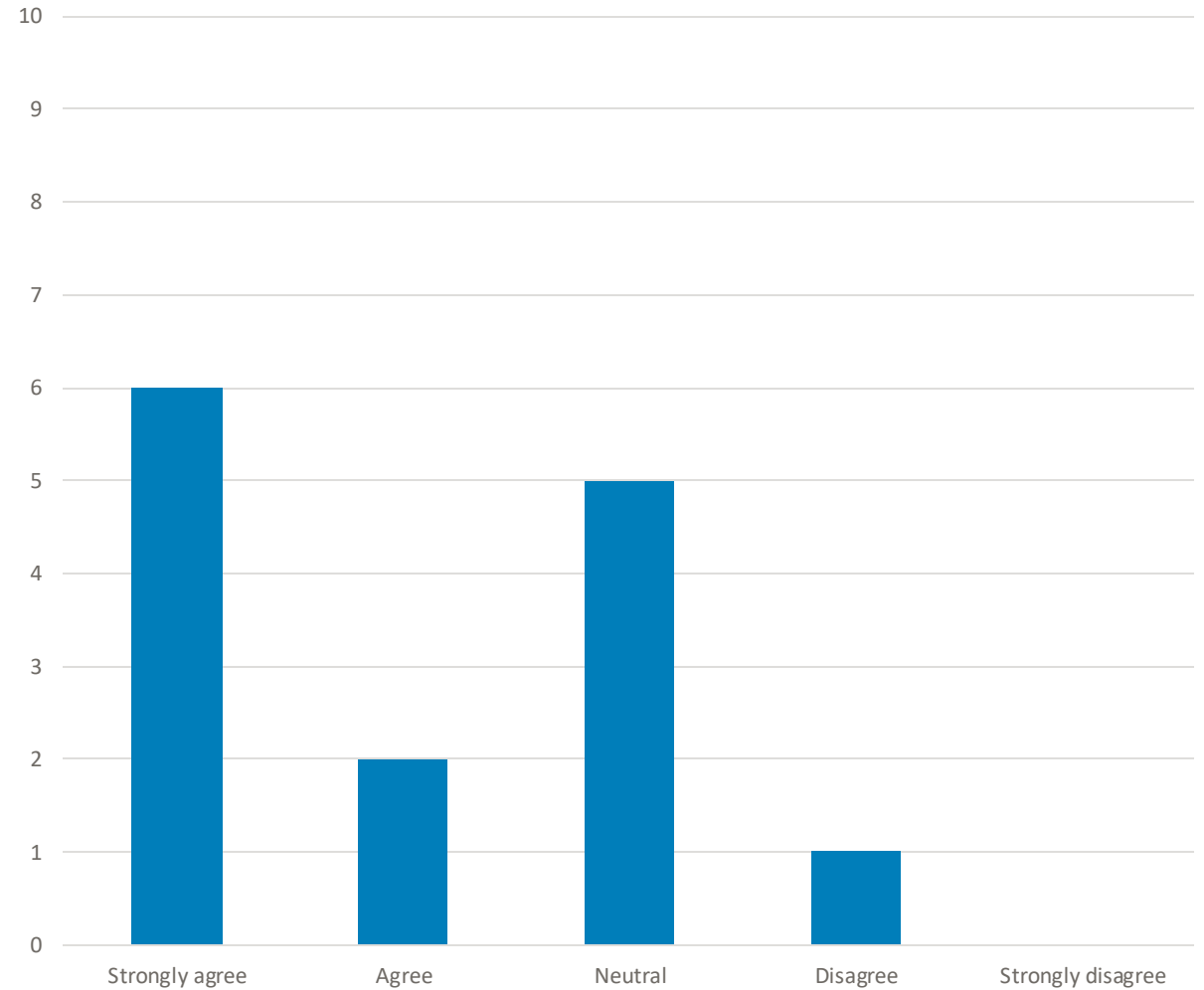


Appendix III - Survey results

Membership of the board is appropriate, bringing the right balance of experience, knowledge and skills

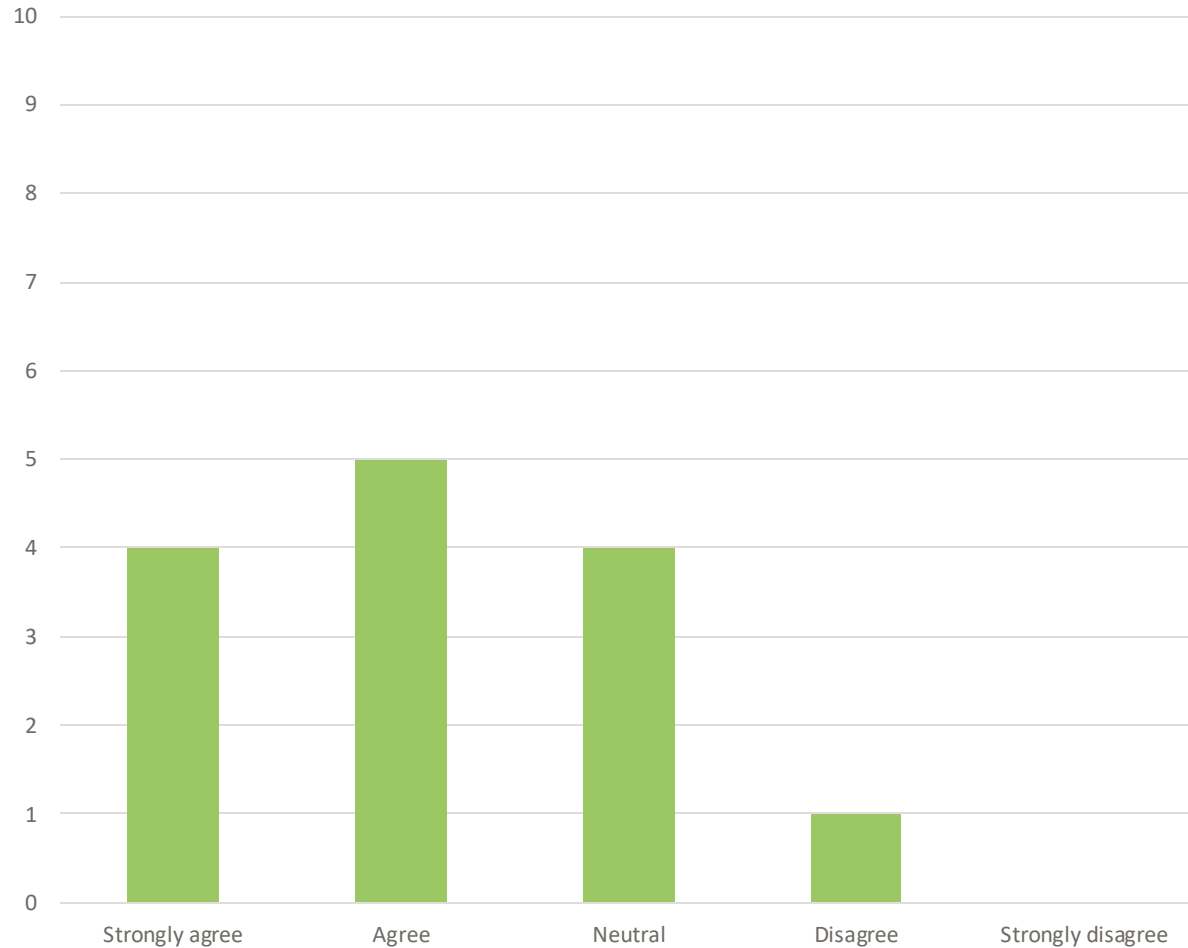


Members make active contributions across the range of items discussed at meetings

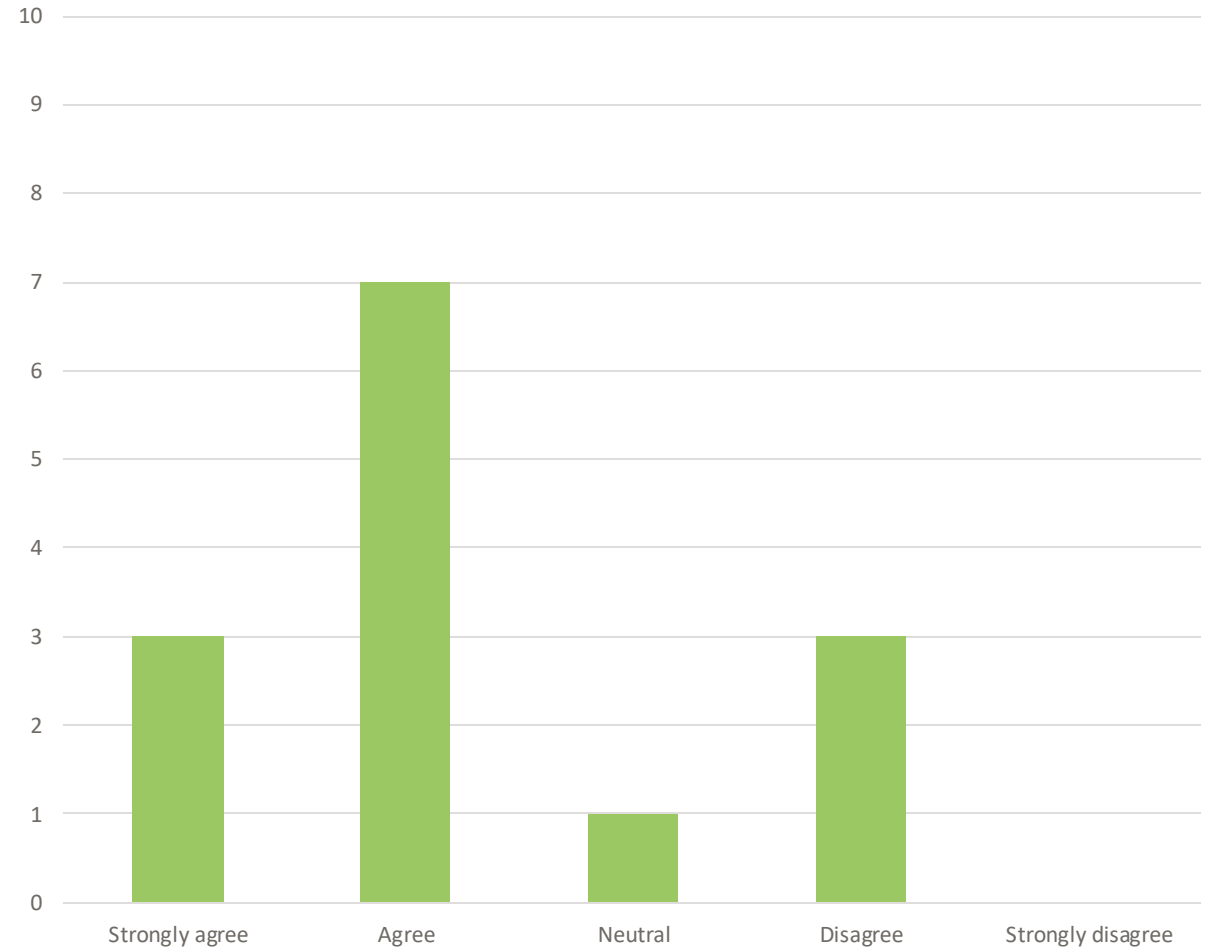


Appendix III - Survey results

Others attending board meetings, whether regularly or occasionally, contribute appropriately.

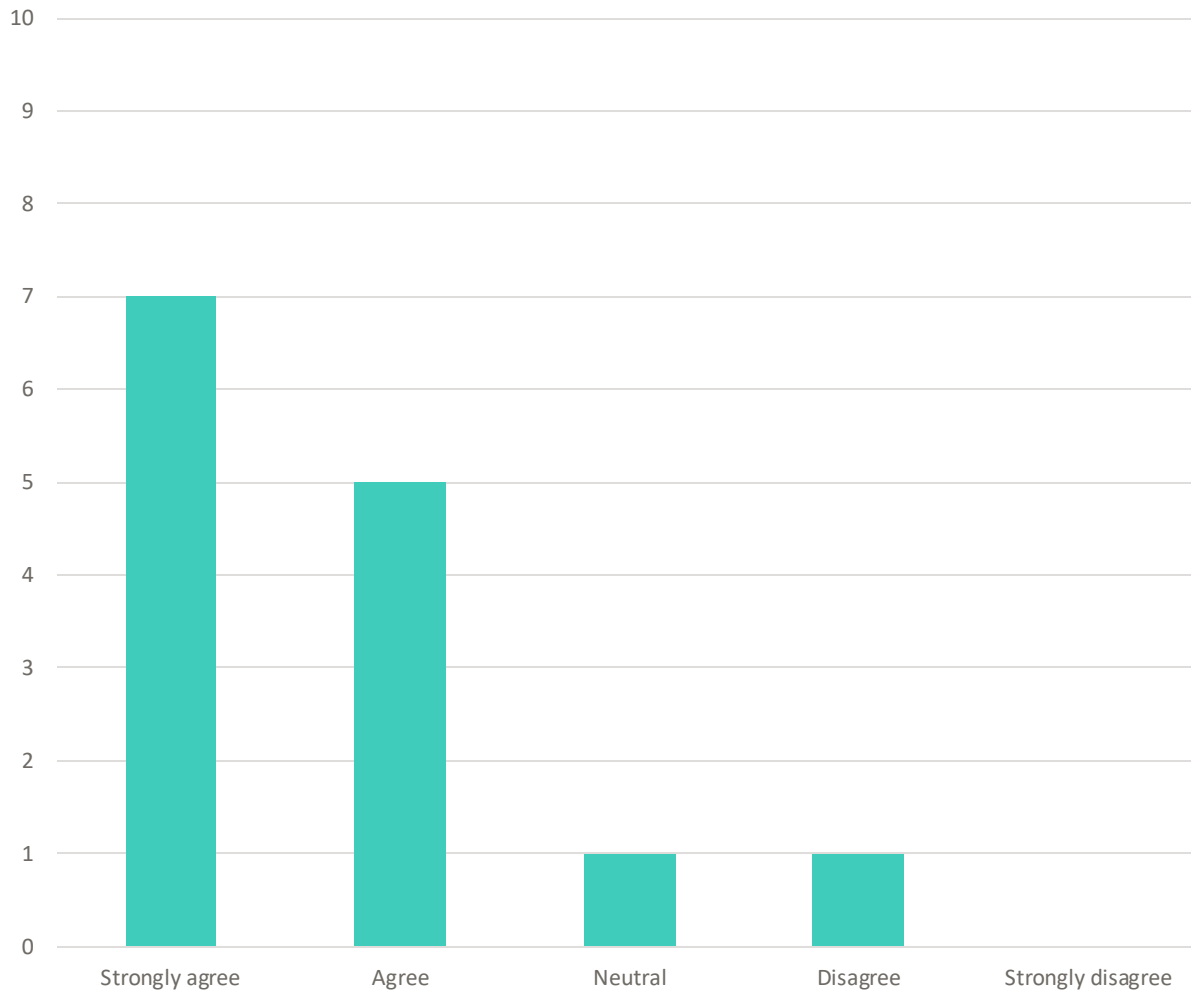


The papers for each meeting are of appropriate quality, and enable me to perform my role effectively

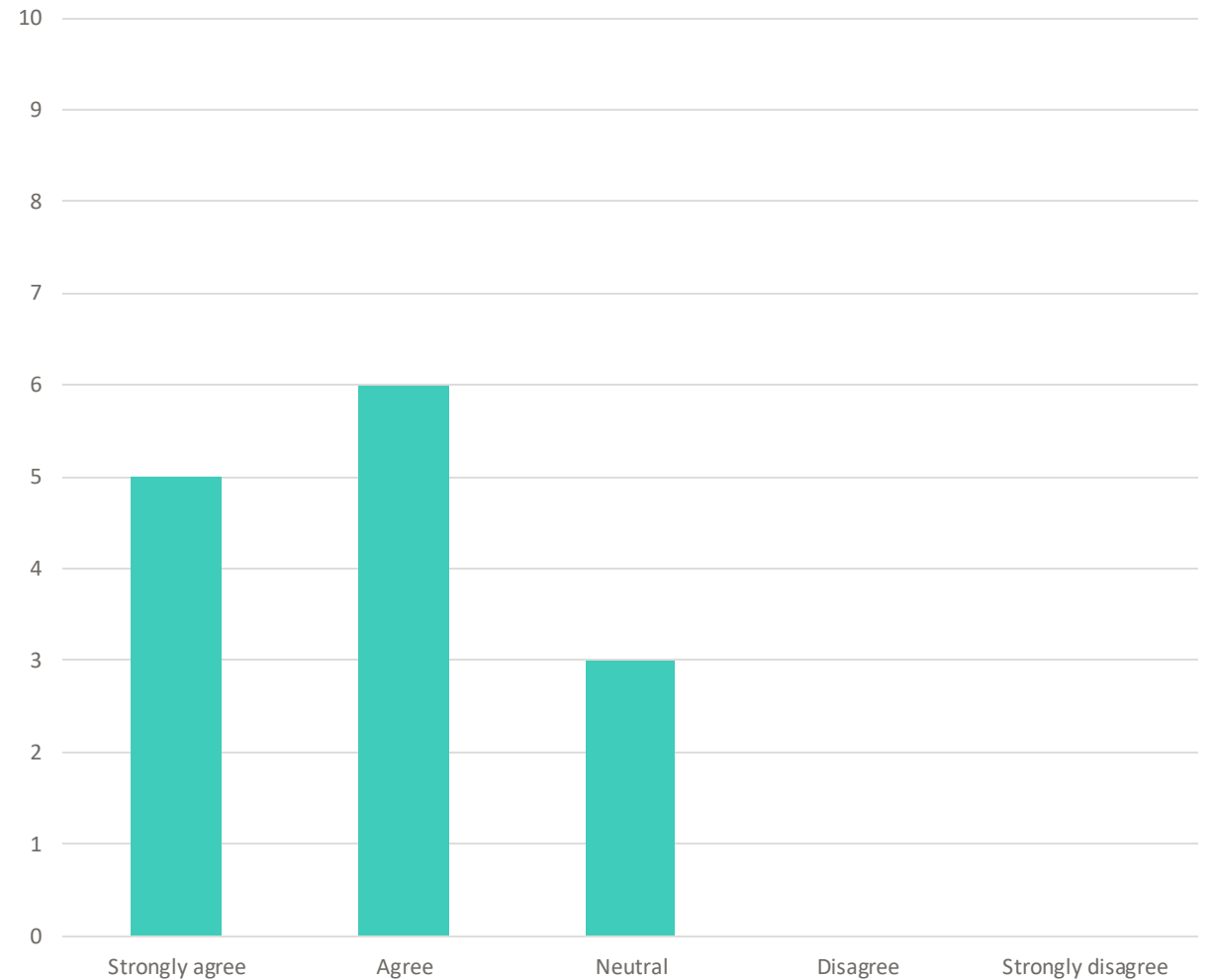


Appendix III - Survey results

Meetings are chaired effectively and there is clarity of purpose and outcome

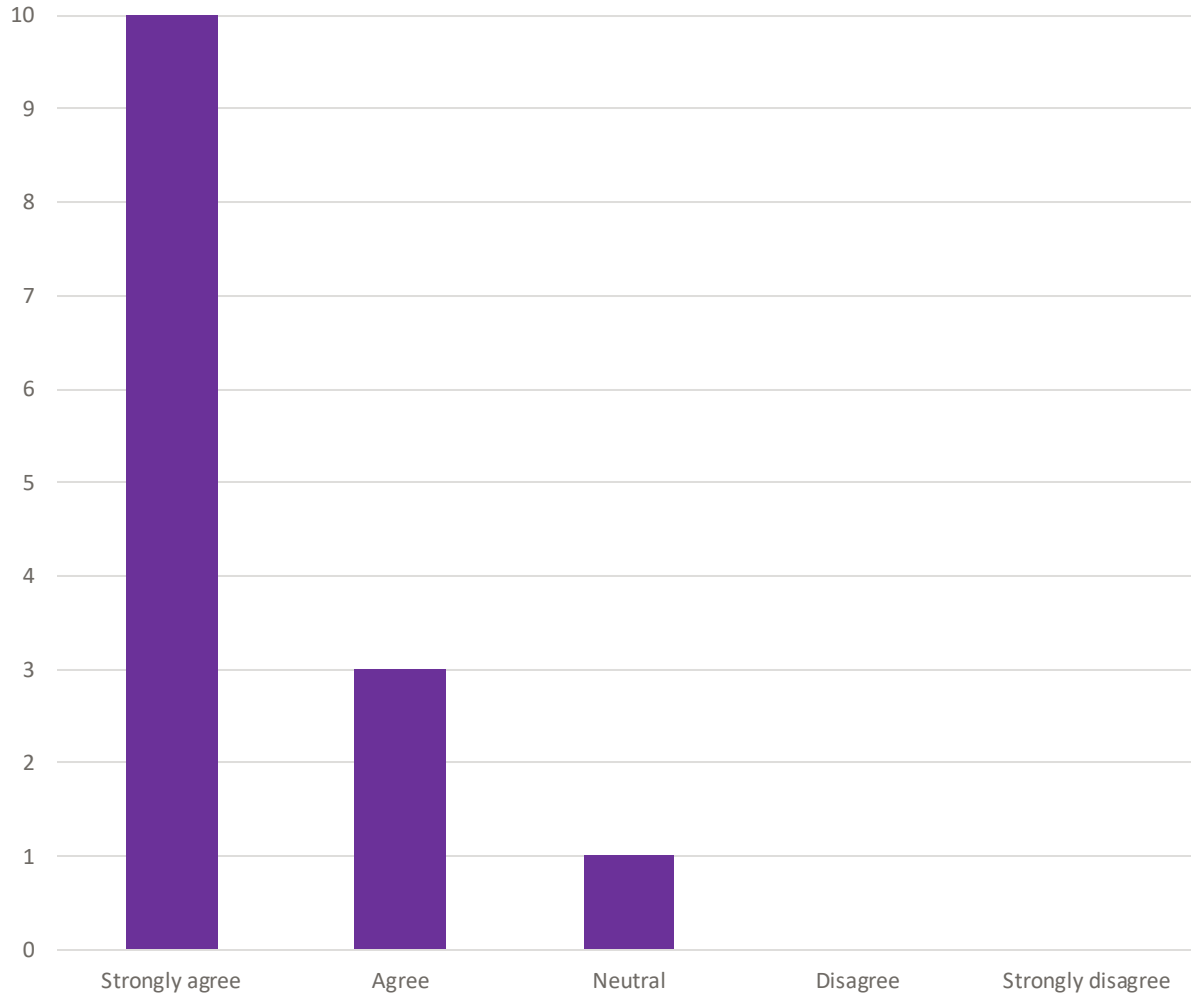


Board members provide real and genuine challenge of management and other assurance providers

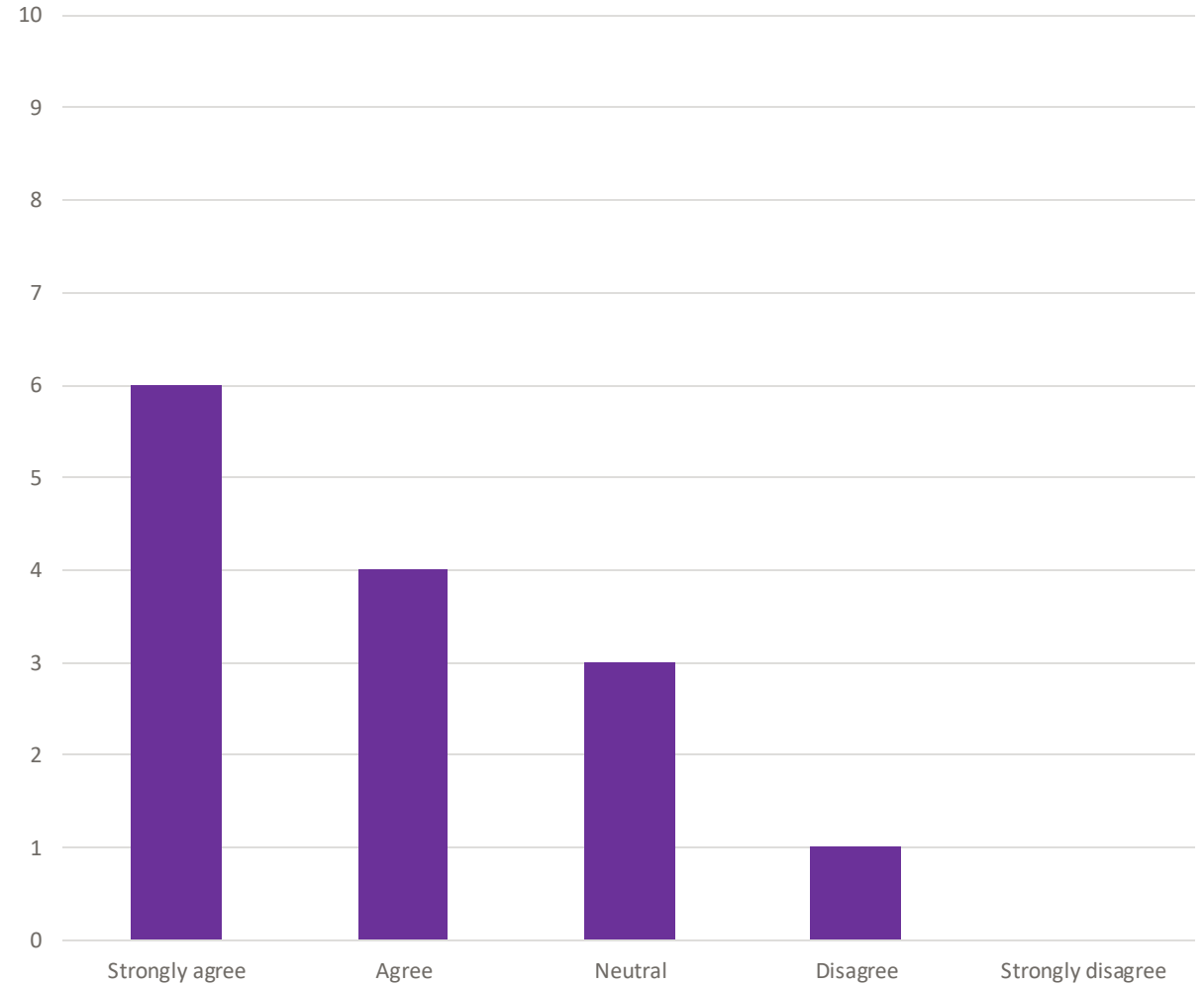


Appendix III - Survey results

I feel sufficiently comfortable at board meetings to express my views and opinions

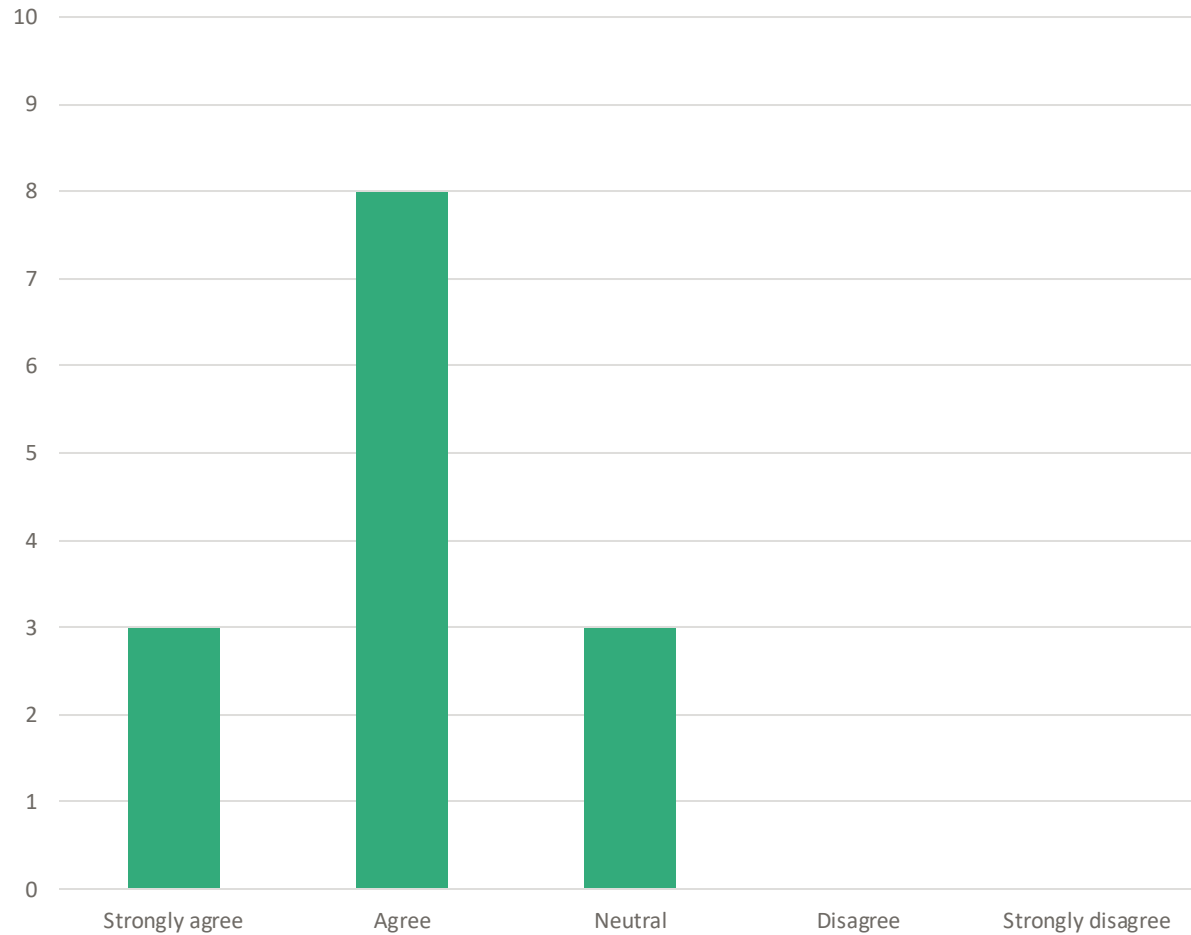


In its discussions, the board has an appropriate balance between strategic and operational matters

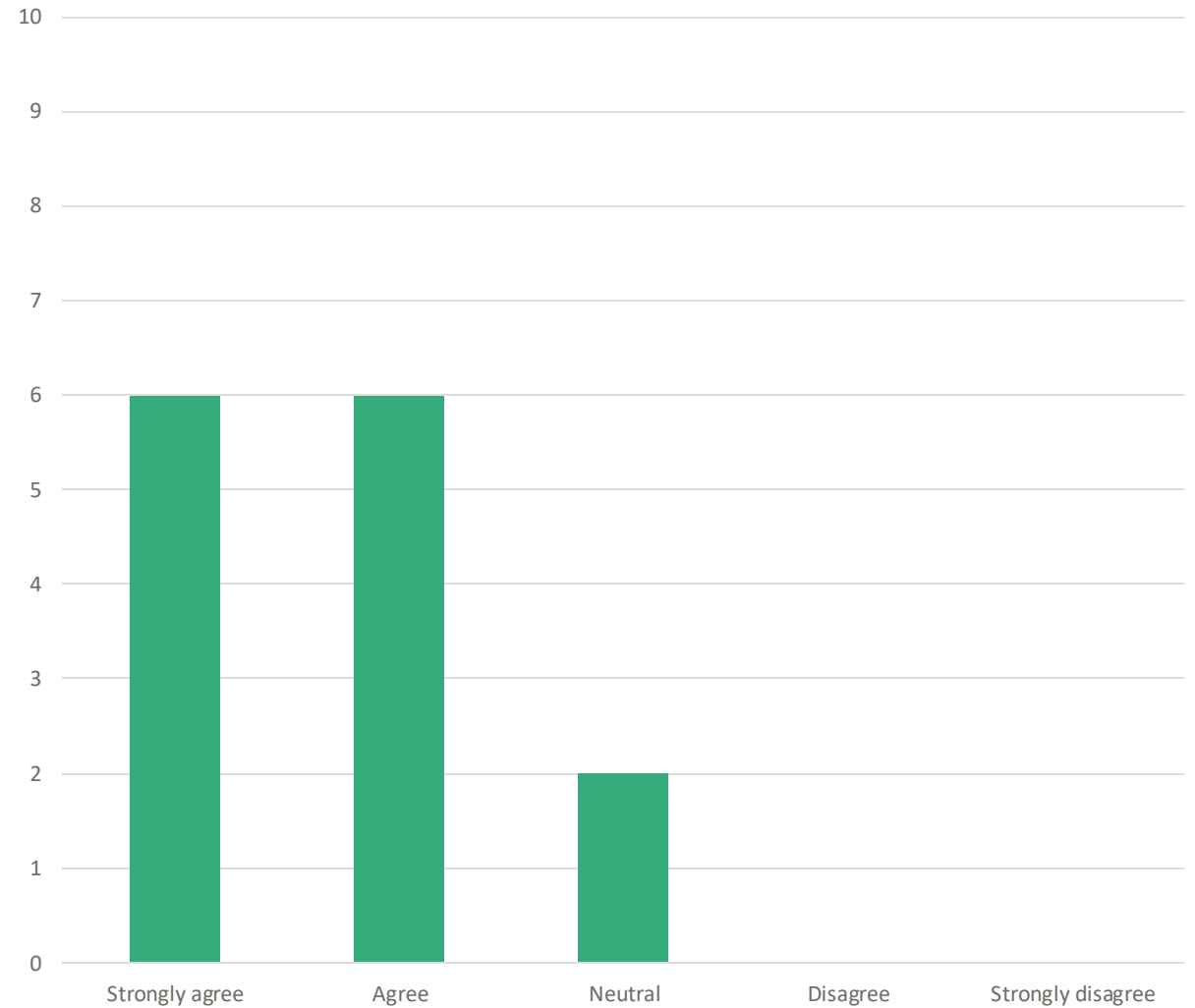


Appendix III - Survey results

When a decision has been made or action agreed I feel confident that it will be implemented as agreed and in line with timescale set down

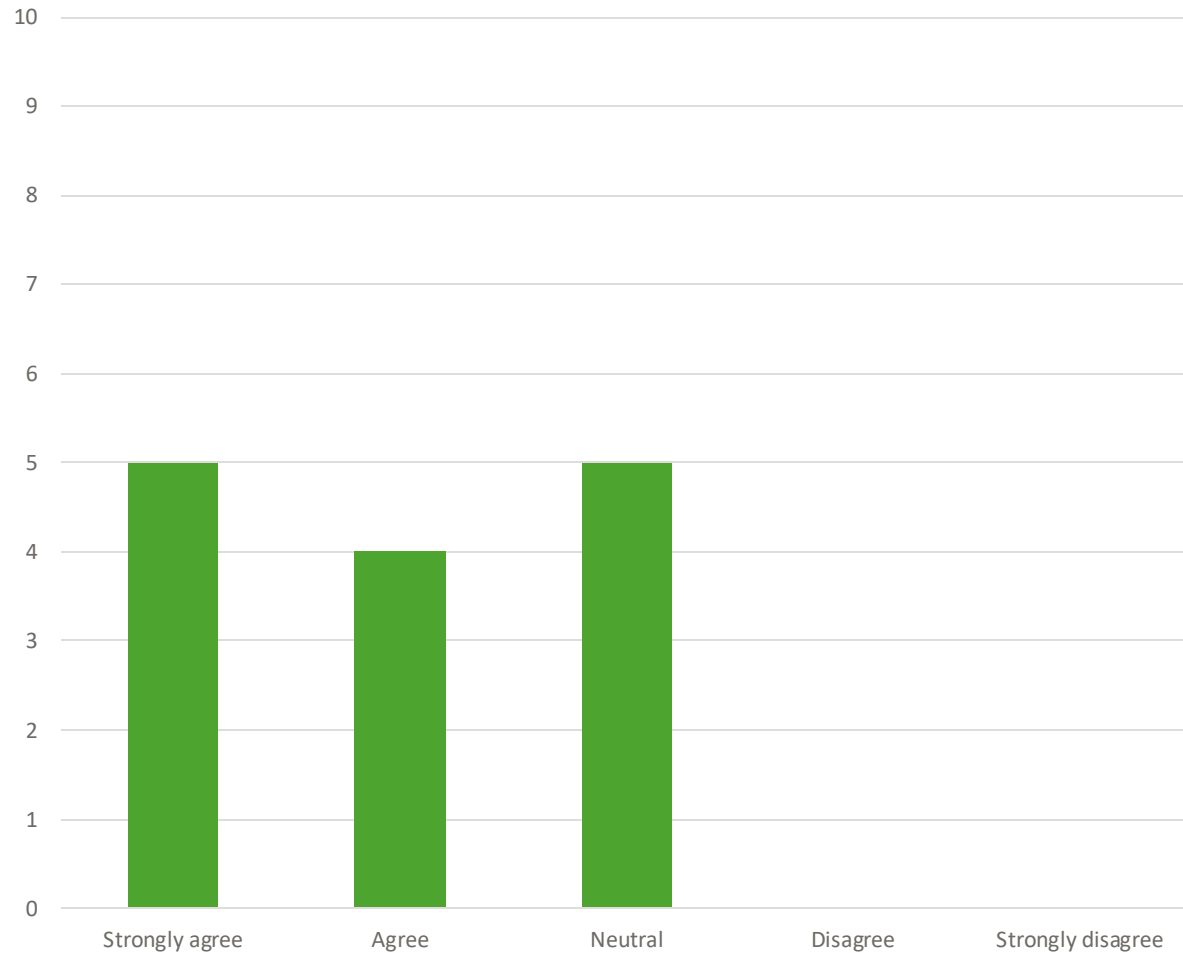


The board receives appropriate assurance from the committees

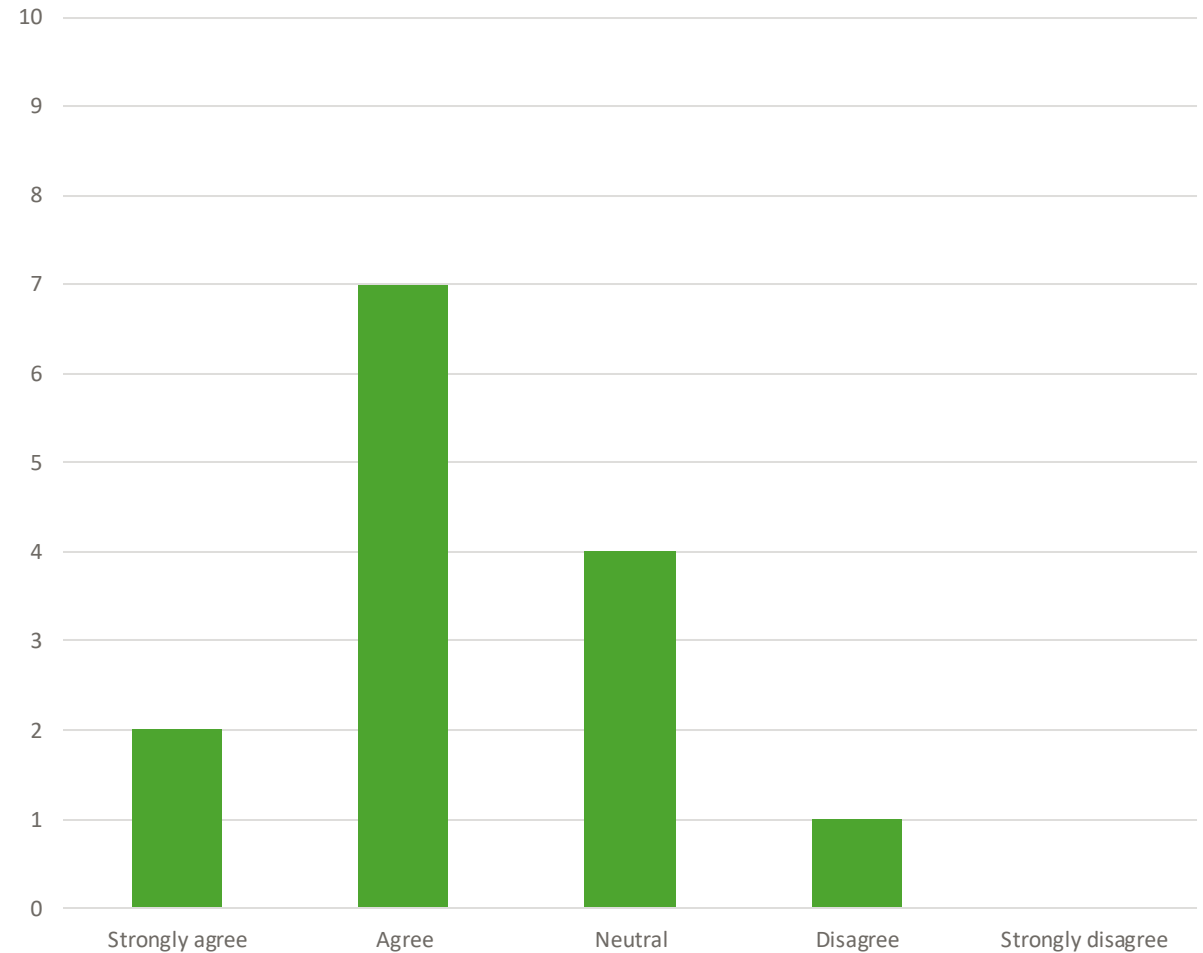


Appendix III - Survey results

Performance issues are escalated through the relevant committees to the board through clear structures and processes

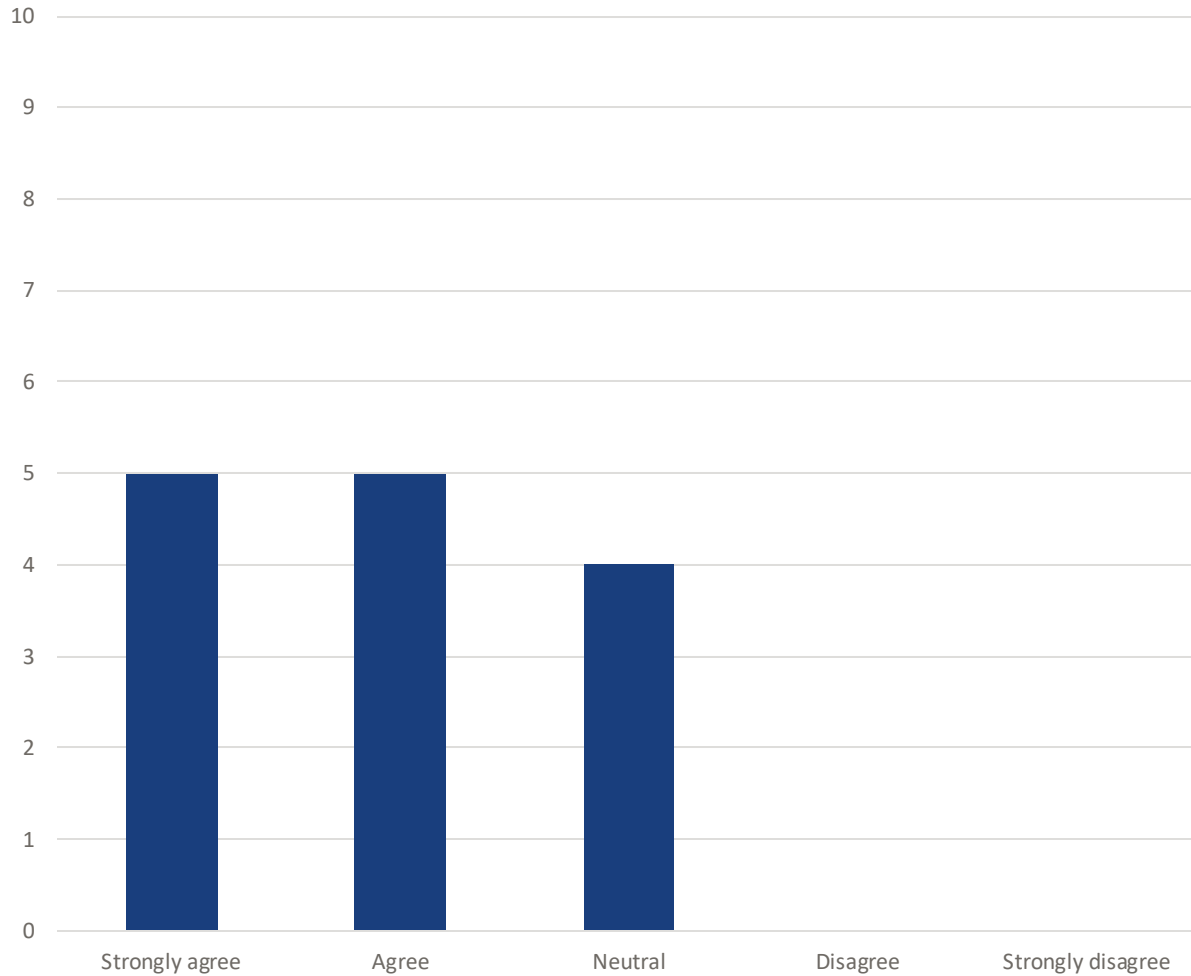


The leadership of the organisation promote staff empowerment, and a culture where the benefit of raising a concern is valued

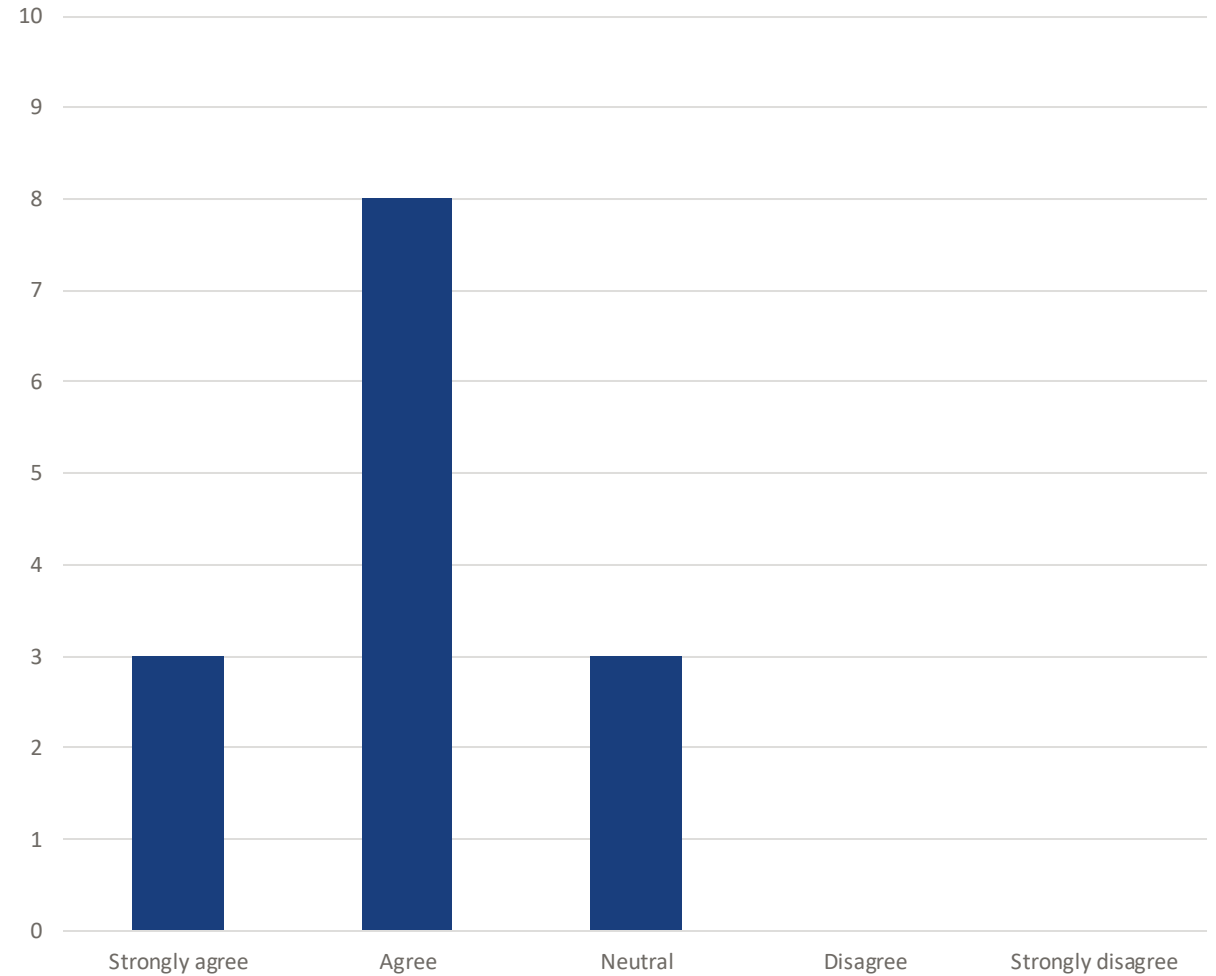


Appendix III - Survey results

The board uses information and analysis to identify opportunities and drive improvement in education

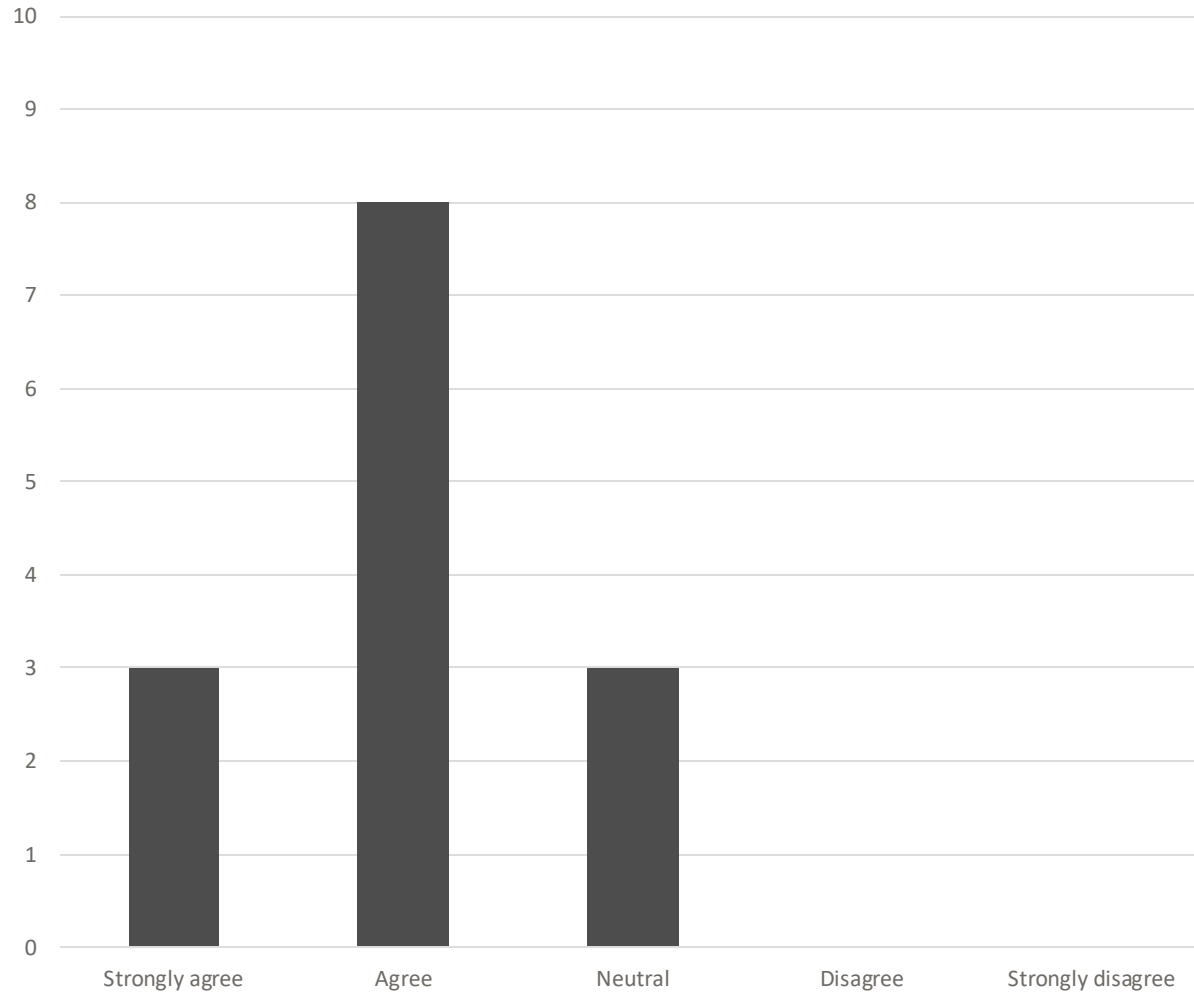


The structures, processes and systems of accountability are clearly set out, understood and effective



Appendix III - Survey results

Processes are in place, and information available, for the board to have oversight of current and future performance



Summarised comments from the survey

- Governors do not have contact with staff and students, and it feels as though this should be possible.
- Online meetings have increased attendance, but not always active participation.
- We've not really had an opportunity to gel as a board or get to know the new CEO yet – sadly, the recent workshop was not successful in team building owing to the nature of the task.
- Board meetings are okay, but often rambling and unfocused. A large amount of agenda time is dedicated to presentations from the executive, often repeats of what was discussed in committees, rather than strategic discussions and decision-making.
- Regarding papers, sometimes it is unclear what the key take aways from board papers are or what we should be focusing on. Due to large size of documents circulated, I feel like I miss certain things even though I thoroughly read the board papers.
- Some governors are not sufficiently vocal, i.e. do not speak enough or at all.
- Matters relating to accountability are unclear at times, especially issues around areas that are consistently underperforming. Unsure about matters relating to staff empowerment, as staff surveys do not correspond with feedback the board receives. There are structures in place to facilitate the board or committees to follow up on concerns/ seek further clarity.

Appendix IV: Constructive challenge – Prompts (1/2)

Constructive challenge prompts	Questions to ask yourself when reading papers	Good examples of constructive challenge in board meetings
<p>Strategic alignment</p> <p>Does the proposal support us to achieve our aims and objectives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does this align with the college's strategic plan and local skills priorities? • Have we been sufficiently ambitious? • How could we go further, faster? • Does this address a key priority? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the impact of this initiative likely to make a significant difference? • Could we make a bigger impact by aligning with other initiatives?
<p>Deliverability</p> <p>Do we have the capacity and capability to deliver?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has the plan addressed the main obstacles to delivery? • How are we leveraging partner capabilities and capacity to support delivery? • Do we have a credible delivery plan with sufficient contingency? • Does the proposal consider key government policies/ regulatory requirements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could we run activities concurrently rather than sequentially to have a greater impact? • Is the delivery plan realistic in the light of other current issues? • Do we understand the workload/ wider resource implications? How will we manage them?
<p>Engagement</p> <p>Do we understand the perspective of our stakeholders?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does this proposal speak to and look to meet the need of our diverse student base? • Have we consulted a range of stakeholders including local employers? • How did stakeholder views influence the development of the proposal? • Did we identify specific issues and have these been addressed? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the outcome of engagement with specific/target groups and how did it shape the proposal? • What efforts were made to ensure barriers to engagement for specific/target groups were addressed? • How are we going to ensure we effectively communicate and engage with our key stakeholders in delivery?
<p>Innovation</p> <p>Does the proposal harness innovation and best practice?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have we considered innovations and best practice from partners, other college groups, other sectors and other geographies? • How has our learning from previous innovation been incorporated? • Do we have the capability to deliver the required innovation? • Do the innovations in the proposal look to improve teaching and learning and enhance student outcomes? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has innovation enabled us to increase the impact of this intervention? • Do we have a credible plan to address potential barriers to innovation e.g. working practices?

Appendix IV: Constructive challenge – Prompts (2/2)

Constructive challenge prompts	Questions to ask yourself when reading papers	Good examples of constructive challenge in board meetings
<p>Evidence base How robust is the evidence that supports our approach?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the proposal supported by a credible evidence base? Does it align with the latest research and evidence on effective practice in FE? • How has evidence informed the development of the proposal? • Do we have sufficient evidence on the impact and deliverability of the proposal? And on areas such as impact on teaching or student outcomes? • Have we considered the specific needs of our learners when interpreting the evidence? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the evidence base relevant to our specific circumstances – how should we interpret it? • How do we resolve any conflicting evidence or address any gaps?
<p>Partnership Does the proposal leverage the opportunities for partnership?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have we considered collaboration with partners? • How would a partnership approach on this work add value to the proposal? • Do we have plans to address any barriers to partnership? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can we boost the opportunities for collaboration with partners by working differently with partners? • How will students experience this service – will it feel seamless to them?
<p>Value Does the proposal create value?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the proposal align with the government's priorities for FE, such as skills development and apprenticeships? • Have we understood the costs and benefits this proposal? • How realistic is the resourcing proposed? • Does the proposal represent value for money and a reasonable return on investment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the opportunity costs of agreeing this proposal? • Are we leveraging resources and assets from across the local area to support delivery and reduce costs? • How will the proposal contribute to the financial sustainability of the college?
<p>Measures How are we measuring success?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will this proposal contribute to the college's mission? And how will we know? • Have we identified success measures? • How will we gather the data required to measure success? • Do we understand the trajectory of improvement we expect? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will the proposed success measures provide us with a timely understanding of the impact of the proposal? • How will these measures help us evidence successful delivery?
<p>Risks What are the risks and how are we addressing them?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have we undertaken a full risk assessment to identify significant risks to success? • How will we monitor and review risk through delivery and thereafter? • Do we have credible plans in place to mitigate significant risks, particularly those for staff and student safety and wellbeing? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What can we do to improve our mitigation of specific risks e.g. proactive communications and engagement with stakeholders/regulators? • Do we understand the impacts on our key stakeholders? • Does the proposal consider the potential impact of funding cuts or changes in government policy?

Appendix V: Key issues report

This is an example of a key issues report, designed to be used by a committee reporting to a board, or a management group reporting to the group above it in the governance structure.

[Insert name] meeting Key issues report (This report should be a maximum of 2 sides of A4 paper)	
Report date:	Report of: [Insert name]
Date of last meeting:	Membership numbers: [State the number of members in attendance] Quoracy met = [For example: 100% attendance including the chair and deputy chair]
1	Agenda The [committee/group name] continues to meet [add in meeting frequency]. The [committee/group name] considered an agenda which is attached [attach agenda when sending]
2a	Alert The [committee/group name] wish to alert members of the [add in name of group that your meeting reports to under the governance structure] that: [Provide details of the key 3 or 4 matters you wish the committee or group that you report to under the governance structure to be alerted to and which have been discussed in your meeting].
2b	Assurance The [committee/group name] wish to assure members of the [add in name of group that your meeting reports to under the governance structure] that: [Provide details of the key 3 or 4 matters you wish the committee or group that you report to under the governance structure to be assured of and which have been discussed in your meeting].
2c	Advise The [committee/group name] wish to advise members of the [add in name of group that your meeting reports to under the governance structure] that: [Provide details of the key 3 or 4 matters you wish the committee or group that you report to under the governance structure to be advised of and which have been discussed in your meeting].
2d	Review of risks [Provide a brief update on any risk that needs to be escalated, for example if a risk is showing mitigating actions that are outside the agreed timescale or that meet a certain risk score that require their escalation in line with the risk management policy].
2e	Sharing of learning [Provide a details of key points of learning that should be shared across the organisation. This may be taken from the sections above, or additional information]
3	Actions to be considered by ... [Provide any additional actions not referenced above that you would like the committee/group that you report, to consider or undertake on your behalf.]
4	Report compiled by: [Name of Chair and officer who compiled the report] Minutes available from: [Name of officer from where the minutes of the meeting may be obtained]



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