

WQE & Regent College Group

**Minutes of the Corporation Meeting
Held at the University Road Campus on
30 October 2019
Commencing at 5.00 pm**

Members of the Corporation Present:

Stuart Dawkins, Chair
Joyce Black, Jo Cooke, Sarah Fox, Bernadette Green, Neil McGhee, Nisar Navsariwala,
Jim Phillips, Amrik Singh, Paul Wilson, Aaron Winterton & Jimmy Zachariah

In attendance:

Carolyn Davies, Dawn Haywood, Andrew Jackson, Sarah Oldfield & Donna Trusler

Apologies for absence

Wayne Allsopp, Peter Butcher, Tim Cullinan, Alistair Lockhart-Smith,
Philip Parkinson & Rosie Whitley

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and informed members that Peter Butcher had returned to work as planned but had since been signed off again. The College continued to keep Peter informed of important Corporation matters. All present wished Peter the very best.

The Chair also informed the Corporation of an email from Wayne Allsopp, who was requesting a leave of absence from the Corporation for the remainder of the calendar year due to ill health. It was Wayne's intention to return in January if possible. All present were in agreement with this and wished Wayne the very best. The Chair noted that this matter would be picked up later in the meeting as part of the Search Committee item.

1. Declarations of Interest

None.

2. Minutes – Paper 001

The minutes of the Corporation meeting held 25 September 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3. Ongoing matters – Paper 002

These were reviewed and noted. It was confirmed that the second item would be brought before the Corporation in the late spring/summer term.

Members were also updated on the following:

- Capital Works – The outside canopy at Regent Road had been completed and outside furniture was in place.
- Dates for Task & Finish Group meetings – These had recently been finalised and Dawn will email all Governors to make them aware. Dawn was further requested to send an Outlook invitation to all core group members, and there was a suggestion that this might be done for Corporation and Committee meetings too. This to be discussed further at a later date.

4. **Governors' Training & Development**

a) **Updates on Insolvency Regime and Intervention Strategies** – Presentation

The Principal updated members on insolvency protocols, noting that the primary reason for their introduction was to protect students and educational assets. Governors were advised that their focus should be on EBITDA and debt/income ratios etc and a handout was distributed which explained this in greater depth. It was noted that surplus/deficit benchmarks are not always realistic. Governors were assured that the College had been and remained in good financial health and that if an issue was to arise there were a number of stages where the DfE/ESFA would be involved before insolvency would be considered. The Principal will send on some further information to Governors detailing potential triggers for early intervention, none of which are about a one-off moment in time. Governors thanked the Principal for the thorough presentation.

b) **Future Opportunities**

No new potential training opportunities were identified by Governors. Members were asked to please email the Chair or the Principal if anything came to mind. Amrik Singh noted that the series of SFCA Webinars mentioned at the last meeting looked interesting.

OVERSIGHT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION

5. **Principal's Update** - Presentation

The Principal updated the Corporation on a number of matters including:

- Update on Student Numbers
 - It was noted that the College had a strong business case for in-year funding and would also be in a strong position going into next year, however there may be some challenges arising due to the larger than expected L3 Year One cohort moving into Year Two. The College does not intend to grow again next year and will be planning contingencies around capacity in order to manage student numbers.
- Updates on Transition
 - The College timetable had been changed from 21 October to allow time for movement between sites and protocols have also been agreed for managing the endings of lessons.
 - Set sizes have been rebalanced, with only a handful exceptions to the planned maximum sizes
 - A number of part-time staff have been approached to increase their hours.
 - Union engagement around workload and staff welfare has been helpful. The Health & Safety Committee has met with regard to formulating a Wellbeing Strategy and the College has also subscribed to an Employee Assistance Programme, which has been rolled out to staff.
- General Updates
 - Community engagement
 - Single Central Record
 - Open Day (Saturday 9 November)
 - Remembrance Day
 - Early UCAS applications

In response to questions from members the Principal also confirmed that:

- Enrichment and Student Societies have not been negatively impacted by the growth in student numbers.
- The College has purchased a number of laptops to help free up access to computers for students in communal study areas. There may also be a need to make some further emergency purchases, however the College's good financial health and the strong possibility of receiving some in-year funding mean that there is some capacity to do this.
- NEU national strike action will take place on 5 November, with another strike planned towards the end of November. The College has planning in place around this and communications have been sent to all staff and students.

The Chair also informed members that he had received a letter from each of the teaching unions, whose concerns correlated quite strongly with issues raised in the Principal's update. The unions have been invited to a meeting with the Chair and the Principal in order to discuss these concerns. One union has replied positively to this invitation so far.

6. Update on progress against Strategic Development Plan in 2018/19 – Paper 003

The Principal introduced the Strategic Development Plan, noting that it comes to the Corporation in three stages:

- This meeting - what has been accomplished
- November meeting - next year's priorities
- December meeting – plans for the 2021/22 academic year

Governors noted that the vast majority of actions and goals had been achieved. There had been some delays in some areas, however given the scale of change this was perhaps to be expected.

Members queried the use of the word 'ongoing' in relation to the Harmonisation Plan and asked if the College had a specific date for completion in mind. The Principal stated that it continues to be regularly reviewed. Members requested that the report be written in plainer English and with greater clarity in future.

OVERSIGHT OF STUDENT OUTCOMES & EXPERIENCES

7. Safeguarding Young People, Annual Report for 2018/19 – Paper 004

Donna Trusler introduced the report, which highlighted the safeguarding work undertaken across the College in the last academic year. It was noted that the College is fully focused on delivering an impact-driven report in future. Donna further noted that all-staff training had taken place at the beginning of this academic year, including with outsourced staff. Catch-up sessions are also scheduled every six weeks in order to capture new staff. The College is committed to resourcing an online safeguarding system and is currently researching available options.

A discussion took place around Prevent and the negative feelings towards it in some communities. Donna was aware of this and had invited a Regional Prevent Officer to attend the College for a 'question time' session with a number of students who had expressed such feelings.

The Corporation felt assured that the College was fulfilling its duties in regard to safeguarding and thanked Donna for the report.

8. Policy on Safeguarding Young People – Paper 005

Donna Trusler introduced the updated policy, noting that it had previously been reviewed in March but would henceforth be brought to Corporation in the autumn term as the KCSIE (Keeping Children Safe in Education) guidelines were renewed each September. The new policy reflected a more comprehensive approach to students, with key amendments including the addition of sections on 'upskirting' and homelessness and more extensive information on peer-on-peer abuse, FGM and cyber crime. Governors were asked to read the Policy carefully and email any questions directly to Donna within the next three weeks.

The updated Policy on Safeguarding Young People was unanimously approved, subject to comments and the correction of a minor typographical error on Page 22.

Governors queried whether the College had a Serious Incident Policy or any written procedures around response to serious incidents. The Principal replied that it did not but that consideration would be given to this and a response brought back to Corporation by January.

9. Admissions Policy – Paper 006

Donna Trusler introduced the updated Policy, noting that it had been amended with the intent of attracting the right students to the most appropriate courses in order to offer them the best possible experience and chances of success. The main changes were around offers at a particular level and reducing risks to the College by asking students to disclose all relevant information. Donna noted that she would report to the Corporation on any impact after the next round of admissions.

A discussion took place around LACs (Looked After Children), part-time students and the procedures for dealing with students whose results are initially incorrect. Governors took assurance that the College's procedures in these areas were well-considered and fair.

The revised Admissions Policy was unanimously approved, subject to one minor typographical correction and the addition of a specific reference to applications from LACs. Donna will make these amendments and re-circulate the Policy. Any comments to be emailed directly to Donna prior to Open Day, please.

OVERSIGHT OF FINANCE, RESOURCES & ASSETS

10. Draft minutes and feedback from Audit Committee, 1 October 2019 – Paper 007

a) Regularity Audit Return

Carolyn Davies alerted the Corporation to the Regularity Audit Return, which self-assesses the Corporation. This had been scrutinised by the Audit Committee and would be submitted to the Corporation for final approval prior to the approval of the statutory accounts.

b) Annual Health & Safety Report

Carolyn Davies assured the Corporation that the Annual Health & Safety Report had been reviewed by the Audit Committee, who were satisfied that good progress continued to be made in this area. The report included a summary of key statistics around Health & Safety Policies and Procedures, training, first aid incidents etc.

The Chair drew Governors' attention to the italicised entry in the minutes concerning Sarah Fox's request for a one-year leave of absence from the Audit Committee and the Corporation confirmed that they were happy to approve this.

EFFICIENT & EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

11. **Feedback from Search Committee, 30 October 2019** – Verbal

a) **Updates on the appointments of Support Staff and Student Governors**

- Joyce Black informed members that two nominations had been received for Support Staff Governor, however the process of voting had been delayed due to the Clerk's absence. The Principal has now been asked to arrange a paper-based vote with independent scrutiny and it is hoped to have the process concluded before the next Corporation meeting.
- The process for appointing a new Student Governor, to replace Royston Bayliss, will be run in-house. All students on a one-year course will be emailed about the opportunity and Joyce Black will review applications. It is hoped to have this concluded by the next Corporation meeting.

b) **Updates on search and recruitment of External Governors**

- Members were reminded that, at the last round of recruitment, the board had been extended due to there being two exceptional candidates. Following Simon Catchpole's resignation the board was, therefore, back to its original number at the time of the merger. Due to this, and the fact that the latest Skills Audit showed no gaps, it was proposed not to recruit at this time. It was agreed that a job description would be written and circulated to all Governors, and if it was later decided to make a new appointment members would be advised so that they could let their networks know.
- Governors were informed that Wayne Allsopp's leave of absence would create a skills gap with regard to business/finance elements on QED. Any Governor interested in becoming a QED Director in the short-term was asked to express their interest by email to the Chair, Principal or Joyce Black by 13 November please. For further information on the role please contact the Principal or Carolyn Davies.
- Due to Simon Catchpole's resignation and Sarah Fox and Wayne Allsopp requesting leave of absence, the Audit Committee was currently inquorate. Jimmy Zachariah had confirmed his wish to join the Committee, and Joyce Black and Amrik Singh had also volunteered to step in on a temporary basis to the end of this academic year. Governors were asked to approve these appointments.

Governors unanimously approved the changes to Audit Committee membership as detailed above.

12. **Invitation to Midlands Parliamentary Reception 2020** – Paper 008

The invitation was noted and any Governors interested in attending were asked to please let Dawn know by Wednesday 6 November.

13. **Any Other Business**

Sarah Oldfield informed members of Studio 79's forthcoming Christmas Showcase performance on 12 December. Formal invitations will be sent to all Governors by email nearer the time.

Carolyn Davies thanked those Governors who had completed their Annual Declaration in relation to Employment Background Checks and asked those who hadn't to please do so as soon as possible.

The Principal extended an open invitation to Governors to come and look around the College at any time.

14. Confidentiality

None.

15. Next Meeting

5.00 pm, Wednesday 20 November 2019, Room M108 at University Road.

The Meeting closed at 7.20 pm

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Corporation Chair

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Date