

WQE & Regent College Group

**Minutes of the Corporation Meeting
Held at the Regent Road Campus on
22 May 2019
Commencing at 5.00 pm**

Members of the Corporation Present:

Stuart Dawkins, Chair

Wayne Allsopp, Royston Bayliss, Simon Catchpole, Jo Cooke, Bernadette Green,
Alistair Lockhart-Smith, Neil McGhee, Philip Parkinson, Jim Phillips, Paul Wilson,
Aaron Winterton & Jimmy Zachariah

In attendance:

Sue Ashwin, Tim Cullinan, Carolyn Davies, Andrew Jackson, Dawn Haywood &
Sarah Oldfield

Apologies for absence:

Joyce Black, Peter Butcher, Sarah Fox, Nisar Navsariwala, Amrik Singh & Rosie Whitley

The Chair gave an update on the current situation with regard to Peter Butcher and Joyce Black, noting that it is hoped that the Clerk's health will enable him to return to duties in the new academic year. Members were also informed of two staff changes relevant to the Corporation: Carol Shaw had resigned from her role as Staff Governor and Sue Ashwin would be retiring from her post as Associate Principal at the end of August. Governors wished them well.

1. Declarations of Interest

None.

2. Minutes – Paper 001

The minutes of the Corporation meeting held 10 April 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Any comments with regard to the confidential minutes which had been circulated separately were requested by the end of the week, directly to the Chair. If no proposed changes result, these will be approved as a correct record and signed accordingly.

3. Ongoing Matters – Paper 002

These were reviewed and noted. A written update on e-safety had been included with the agenda pack and several other items were to be covered later in the agenda.

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT

4. Governors' Training & Development

No training needs were identified beyond those already included in the annual plan.

Sue Ashwin provided Equality & Diversity refresher training, including a group activity and verbal updates around:

- Legal perspective – Equality Act 2010
- Equalities issues – current national FE picture
- The Corporation's role
- Recent events

Sue offered to email a link to the ETF's equality-related online training courses after the meeting for any Governors interested in looking into this further.

OVERTSIGHT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION

5. Principal's Update - Presentation

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

- Risk Management around the Summer Project
- Industrial Relations
- The Support & Business Services Review
- Other Key Communications
 - As part of this update the Chair informed members of a letter he had received from a student and the resulting actions that had been taken by the Chair and the Principal.
- Confirmed Qualification Achievement Rates
- HESA Report
- Governance Matters
 - Due to Peter Butcher's continuing absence, Governors unanimously agreed to continue with the Corporation's Standing Orders and the How We Govern principles without review or amendment until further notice. It was noted that the intention is to review these in the Autumn Term of next year.
 - Governors were informed that the Governance Conference would be held on Wednesday 12 June 2019, 5.30 – 8.00 pm, provisionally in Room G01 at the University Road campus. Governors were assured that any members unable to attend would still receive all relevant information.
- Death of a staff member
 - Governors asked that the minutes reflect that their thoughts were with the staff member's family.

6. Academisation and SFCs Update – Presentation

The Principal updated members on the current situation, noting that academisation was not currently a possibility for the College. Potential routes to becoming an Academy were explained, along with some scenarios in which a college might be allowed to join a MAT. The typical governance structure of an academy was highlighted. It was noted that the DFE was currently developing new guidance which may make academisation a possibility for the College in future. The pros and cons of academisation were discussed. Governors noted that starting a MAT and joining one were two very different things, but the College would need to consider its position very carefully before contemplating either.

A further update was requested in the autumn term when more details were available.

OVERTSIGHT OF STUDENT OUTCOMES & EXPERIENCES

7. Work Experience Update – Paper 003

Andrew Jackson introduced the paper, noting that the first part related to a project at the Regent Road campus and the second part gave a general overview across the whole college of students on

vocational courses at all levels and the numbers who would have completed some meaningful work experience by the end of this academic year. It was noted that in a couple of areas the work experience had been delayed until the start of next academic year.

A discussion took place around whether Governors could do anything to assist in this area of the College's work and it was agreed that this matter should be revisited in the new academic year. The Principal confirmed that work experience reporting was now incorporated within the Governance Annual Business Plan.

OVERSIGHT OF PAY & CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

8. Teaching Staff Pay Settlement 2018-19 – Paper 004

The Principal introduced the paper detailing the nationally negotiated settlement and proposed that it be adopted.

The Teaching Staff Pay Settlement was unanimously approved.

9. Staff Capability Procedure – Paper 005

The procedure was received in draft, with the Principal noting that it was the current University Road campus procedure which the College had decided to adopt. The Harmonisation Consultation Group supported it, with a caveat around point 1.4 which would be agreed through the ACAS process. The Chair asked that any comments be emailed directly to the Principal within the next two weeks.

The Staff Capability Procedure was unanimously approved, subject to comments.

OVERSIGHT OF FINANCE, RESOURCES & ASSETS

10. Updated five-year financial forecasts – Paper 006 & presentation

Carolyn Davies introduced the forecasts, which included highlights from an Institute of Fiscal Studies Report that detailed the severity of the downturn in funding for sixth form colleges in the last 10-15 years. Both WQE and Regent College had managed to make significant savings over the years, however challenges were still being faced. The forecasts for 2019/20 showed a deficit of around £500k; this differed from last year's forecasts due to those having included specific areas speculative income which had not materialised and the reasons for these were explained. The capital project this summer was also slightly bigger than anticipated, with some of the associated costs moving into 2019/20. The financial performance adjusted to tie in with the bank covenants showed a small surplus in 2019/20, which was good news.

Governors thanked Carolyn for the forecasts. The Chair informed members that, recognising continuing future pressure on finances, a Finance Task & Finish Group may be set up in the new academic year to look at finances more closely.

11. Policy on Financial Support for Students – Paper 007

Sue Ashwin introduced the policy, noting that it had been updated to reflect the latest guidance from ESFA and that references to the different campuses had been removed as the College would be fully harmonised from the start of the new academic year. The Chair asked that any comments be emailed directly to Sue within the next two weeks.

The Policy on Financial Support for Students was unanimously approved, subject to comments.

OTHER BUSINESS

12. Search Committee Update - Verbal

The Principal informed members that the Search Committee meeting that had been scheduled to take place immediately prior to this Corporation meeting had been cancelled due to almost all items of business requiring the input of the Clerk. The Chair and Principal were confident that nothing essential had been neglected and this had been confirmed in a conversation with the Clerk last week. The process for appointing a new Staff Governor would be started in the new academic year.

ROUND UP

13. Any Other Business

- Governors asked if there had been any response to the HMRC query. Carolyn confirmed that there had not and noted that it was time-limited; she will double-check the time limits.
- Governors noted the current student movement with regard to climate change and queried whether the College had an environmental policy or similar. Carolyn noted that there was nothing specific but that the Health and Safety Policy included environmental sections. The Chair asked the Principal to please give consideration to the development of an appropriate policy and this would be picked up again in the new academic year.
- Governors asked if there was any information available with regard to the Hadlow College situation and how it managed to get to the point where insolvency procedures were initiated. The Principal agreed to circulate an AoC update on this and also to add Corporation responsibilities around insolvency to a future Principal's update.
- The Principal distributed further data from the HESA Report mentioned under item 5.

14. Confidentiality

None.

15. Next Meeting

5.00 pm, Wednesday 3 July 2019, University Road campus.

The Meeting closed at 7.25pm.

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Corporation Chair

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Date