

WQE & Regent College Group

Corporation Meeting 03 March 2021, 17:00, virtual via Zoom

Minutes

Members of the Corporation in attendance: Stuart Dawkins (Chair), Wayne Allsopp, Joyce Black, Jo Cooke, Alistair Lockhart-Smith, Jash Maadhavji, Neil McGhee, Nisar Navsariwala, Ing'utu Palmer, Philip Parkinson, Jim Phillips, Allfaz Samnani, Paul Wilson, Aaron Winterton & Jimmy Zachariah

Other attendees: Tim Cullinan, Carolyn Davies, Andrew Jackson, Sarah Oldfield & Rachel Middleton

Apologies: Bernadette Green, Amrik Singh, Donna Trusler

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting. Apologies were received from Bernadette Green, Amrik Singh and Donna Trusler.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in agenda items.

3. Minutes and matters arising– Paper 001 – *For approval*

The minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 27 January 2021 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting. The action list was discussed and updated accordingly.

The following matters were tabled for discussion on the agenda and subsequently removed from the action list:

- Discuss the Governor Conference themes and structure
- To collate the Governor opportunities identified by PW and match and track Governors' interests and uptake.

The following matters were completed and subsequently removed from the action list:

- Send a sample congratulatory message to staff to Governors for them to view
- To identify a number of specific opportunities for Governors to engage, and for these to be presented to Governors as optional activities.
- To discuss specific opportunities for Governors' engagement with Kate O'Farrell
- To get in touch with MB to prompt him to submit a statement of interest in February
- Cascade on to RM details of prospective Governor candidate from a local university

OVERSIGHT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION

4. Principal's Update – (doc)– *For information and questions*

Paul Wilson – Presentation

The Principal's Update was circulated in advance of the meeting to Governors and covered updates on the following topics:

- Arrangements for summer assessments
- On-site return and rapid lateral flow testing
- Student recruitment numbers and arrangements for interviewing for September intake
- Student attendance figures
- Teachers' pay settlement
- Estates planning update
- Changes to the Covid-19 risk register based on the impact of the emerging information on exams/assessment in summer 2021, and the expansion of lateral flow testing capacity.

5. Covid-19 Risk Register – Paper 002 – *For information and questions*

Paul Wilson

Governors noted the Covid- 19 Risk Register.

OVERSIGHT OF STUDENT OUTCOMES & EXPERIENCES

6. Retention and Progress – In Year Monitoring Report- Paper 003- *For information & questions*

Tim Cullinan

Retention figures are good and in line with last year. TC reminded Governors they had seen the retention figures for Level 3 courses at the December Corporation meeting. Level 3 retention looks to be higher than last year.

The approach to in-year monitoring has been revised. Students are on track to do as well as last year's cohort. TC highlighted the commentary in the paper focusing on Level 1 and 2. TC reported on the positive outcomes from the whole cohort sitting GCSE English and Maths exams in the autumn.

7. Interim arrangements for monitoring students' learning – Paper 004 - *For information & questions*

Sarah Oldfield

SO confirmed that a broad set of measures were being deployed this year, rather than lesson observation. The pandemic had created a culture of thinking differently and some of the wider measures would be used ongoing.

SO reflected on the teaching and learning styles deployed during the pandemic and outlined that there had been the opportunity to embrace innovation.

The Chair thanked the staff and students for their flexibility.

8. Student Executive President's report and financial statement – Paper 005A and 005B -*For information & questions*

Donna Trusler

Governors praised the Student Executive for such a positive contribution made to the College during a pandemic, where a commitment to charity was upheld. Governors appreciated the way the Executive had celebrated their work through the use of social media.

Governors noted the underspend in the accounts.

9. Complaints Procedure and Annual Report for 2020/21 - For information & questions

Sarah Oldfield

9.1 Complaints Report – Paper 006A

9.2 College Complaints Procedure – Paper 006B

9.3 College Complaints Form – Paper 006C

SO confirmed that to improve timing and consistency, the cycle for recording and reporting complaints will now run according to an academic year, with a report in the early Spring covering the most recent fully complete year and an accompanying mid-year update.

The Complaints Procedure and form have now been itemized as separate documents for ease of access on the College website.

SO outlined the stages at which an appeal is heard by the Principal and then subsequently dismissed or progressed to the next stage, where it is escalated to the ESFA.

No complaints were received in relation to campus allocation or travel between these this year.

10. Equality & Diversity Annual Report – Paper 007- For information & questions

Paul Wilson presented the paper in Donna Trusler's absence.

Governors noted that the report was more comprehensive than previous years. Governors considered the diversity metrics within the report. Queries were raised with regards to British Values, progress with these and likely the measurement of these by Ofsted. It was confirmed that this remained a priority focus and examples were shared to demonstrate formal and informal ways in which British Values were being promoted and embedded.

The Principal confirmed Ofsted may begin full inspection of Colleges again in the summer term, but until Easter would be conducting monitoring visits that were likely to be focused specifically on Covid responses.

Governors requested that some work be conducted on the use of terminology to avoid using terms which could be considered as 'deficit language'. For reasons of continuing improvement JB agreed to work collaboratively with DT on this matter. **Action JB and DT**

Governors noted the retention rate for the student cohort with medical conditions. PW confirmed that the College considers meeting the needs of these students at an individual level, given their personal needs and that this data also includes those who may choose or need to restart a year following treatment or recovery.

Governors discussed meeting the needs of students with mental health issues. PW confirmed that an increased level of counselling support was being provided by the College to respond to student need. Governors expressed the need for Governors to continue to be mindful of student and staff well-being. **Action SD and PW: to discuss at next Board meeting how to update the Board on this important topic.**

It was noted that the data on Governors had not been updated prior to the report being produced.

Action RM: Contact Governors to confirm gender and ethnicity, in order to update this section of the report.

Action RM: recirculate the report for Governors to note, once information for Governors has been updated.

11. Single Equality Scheme Update – Paper 008- *For information & questions*

Paul Wilson presented the paper in Donna Trusler's absence.

Governors noted the statement which has to be published on the College website.

12. Destinations & Progression Report – Paper 009 *For information & questions*

Andrew Jackson

AJ highlighted the progression being made by students on lower level courses and explained the context of this.

He confirmed that the College Admissions Policy was focused on attracting students with clear scope to follow a progression pathway taking them from lower level courses through to Level 3 or beyond. This had been much more clearly defined and applied in Autumn 2020 with a view to helping students plan progression internally from the outset or to make earlier decisions about the best pathways for their needs if these were potentially better served in technical or vocational routes, rather than further classroom-based learning.

Those students who pursued Level 3 qualifications during 2019/20 had progressed to different destinations than might have usually been expected. Admissions to HE were 10% higher than normal due to issues relating to the pandemic and its impact on companies recruiting or taking on apprentices.

Prior to the pandemic the College had witnessed an increase on the numbers progressing to apprenticeships and training opportunities. There is not sufficient data to track this and determine if this is a trend. This would need tracking across a number of years.

Governors discussed the admissions criteria and sought reassurance relating to the accessibility of places at the College and the recruitment process.

PW confirmed that the College was a classroom-based Sixth Form College provider and that as such, had a responsibility to students to help them plan out a pathway for future learning which would not be disrupted unnecessarily, meaning that sometimes a student would be better suited to a different programme or learning experience, sometimes elsewhere if that better suited individual needs and provided a better progression pathway.

SO confirmed the College has a specialist, well trained recruitment team which supports Level 1 and 2 applicants and that the process is not clinical, but nuanced.

Action: SO to discuss the admissions process and progression support for students within this with JZ.

OVERSIGHT OF FINANCE, RESOURCES & ASSETS

13. Tuition Fees Policy – Paper 010- *For approval*

Carolyn Davies

CD highlighted the main changes to the policy. CD confirmed that where students' courses were paid for through EFSA funds, there was no charge applied to the student for tuition.

Governors queried whether there were changes in the fees proposed for international

students due to Brexit. CD confirmed that there were no plans to increase the fees. The number of international students remains very small at the College.

14. Treasury management policy – annual review – Paper 011 *For approval*

Carolyn Davies

CD confirmed there were no changes required to the existing policy, with the exception of a date change. Governors re-approved the policy for the year ahead.

15. Financial Regulations – annual review – Paper 012- *For approval*

Carolyn Davies

Tracked changes were marked on this document for Governors to note. CD drew attention to a wording change with regards to severance payments. Governors agreed the regulations including the extent of the Principal's automatic authority, along with the threshold above which the Principal would be required to inform the Chair of the Corporation.

16. Monthly management accounts – January 2021 – Paper 013- *For information & questions*

Carolyn Davies

CD confirmed these were the first set of accounts seen by Governors which outlined the latest forecast. A number of matters were discussed including the lack of funding claw back in 2019/2020, VAT, the car park lease and the Teachers' Pension Grant. The current forecast has not factored in pay rises, costs of mass lateral flow testing, assessment costs, or revenue maintenance costs for Package 1A of the estates plan. These will be factored into the subsequent forecast.

CD confirmed the expectation that there would be some costs payable to exam boards despite the change of proposed approach to national exams during the summer of 2021.

EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

17. Governor training and development needs – *For discussion*

17.1 Plans for Governor conference 26.05.21, 17:00

Governors received an email from the Clerk the previous week about the plan which the Chair and Principal collated. Governors considered whether the conference would better be delivered later in the year, in order to convene face-to-face. It was agreed there were benefits to hearing some key sectoral updates during the summer term and the conference should go ahead virtually, with the possible use of break-out rooms to retain interactivity.

17.2 Governor involvement

Governors received an email from the Clerk the previous week about a number of opportunities to engage with the College. Governors were encouraged to confirm which opportunities they wished to engage with.

18. Whistleblowing Policy & Procedure – Paper 014 - For approval

Paul Wilson

The policy was checked against the College's obligations and there were no changes required to the existing policy. Governors re-approved the policy for the year ahead.

ROUND-UP

19. Any other Business - For discussion

19.1 Offer of support from the community to WQE families

A Governor extended support such as the offer of food parcels to the WQE families in need, as an extension to the support package which he had been offering within his local community. **Action DT and NN to discuss further.**

Governors discussed the community-based activities which the College was involved in and felt that these positive news items should be celebrated on the College social media channels and website.

19.2 Tuition Fund update

Governors will receive an update via email outlining provision for students.

C. 200 students are being reached, with a view to broadening provision after Easter.

Action RM

19.3 Task & Finish Groups

The Chair reminded Governors about the March dates for Task & Finish Groups and extended a welcome to all Governors. Dates and times would be confirmed by the Clerk. **Action RM**

19.4 Audit & Risk Committee

The Chair confirmed that the Audit & Risk Committee would not convene as originally planned on 23 March. There are no statutory reporting requirements which will be missed due to the cancellation.

19.5 Lateral flow testing

Governors queried if there was a contingency plan in place should there not be a high-volume take-up of lateral flow tests by students. SO confirmed that all testing slots (bookable in advance) had been taken up, and that take-up in practice would be monitored very carefully.

20. Confidentiality

There were no confidential matters recorded at the meeting.

21. Next Meeting

Wednesday 21 April 2021, 17:00, via Zoom

Chair's Signature

Date

Action List

	Actions arising from 27th January 2021 Committee meeting	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
1.	Progress work on revising How we Govern for 2021/2022	RM	To be tabled at next meeting
	Actions arising from 3rd March 2021 Committee meeting	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
2.	Work on the use of terminology in relation to the Equality & Diversity report	JB and DT	
3.	To discuss at next Board meeting how to update the Board on the topic of meeting the needs of students with mental health needs	PW and SD	
4.	Contact Governors to confirm gender and ethnicity for Equality & Diversity Report	RM	asap
5.	Recirculate updated Equality & Diversity Report to all Governors	RM	
6.	Discuss the admissions process and student support planned within this with JZ	DO	
7.	Discuss option for WQE families to receive support from a community group	NN and DT	
8.	Circulate report on the Tuition Fund update to Governors (produced by SO)	RM	asap
9.	Confirm dates and times of Task & Finish Groups to Governors	RM	asap