

WQE & Regent College Group

Corporation Meeting 06 April 2022, 17:00, blended meeting
Room G01, University Road campus

MINUTES

Members of the Corporation in attendance:

Stuart Dawkins (Chair), Wayne Allsopp, Jo Cooke, Bernadette Green, Jash Maadhavji, Neil McGhee, Anas Mohamed, Nisar Navsariwala, Amrik Singh, Paul Wilson, Aaron Winterton & Jimmy Zachariah

Other attendees:

Carolyn Davies, Andrew Jackson, Sarah Oldfield, Tim Rogers, Donna Trusler & Rachel Middleton

Observer in attendance:

Sofie Dadge

Apologies:

Joyce Black, Anas Mohamed, Nisar Navsariwala, Ing'utu Palmer, Philip Parkinson and Jim Phillips

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Joyce Black, Anas Mohamed, Nisar Navsariwala, Ing'utu Palmer, Philip Parkinson and Jim Phillips

The Chair welcomed prospective External Governor, Sofie Dadge, to the meeting as an Observer.

Sofie left the room, to return following agenda item 3.

The additional prospective External Governor, Shelley Harvey, was unable to attend the meeting as an Observer due to another commitment.

2. Declarations of Interest

None

3. Appointment of Governors

The Corporation was asked to note the recommendations of the Governance & Search Committee which convened an extraordinary meeting on 28th March.

The Corporation received two applications for the role as External Governor.

Interviews were conducted by four members of the G&S Committee, w/c 25th March.

The G&S Committee recommends the appointment of both candidates to the Corporation, with a view that they commence Governor duties once their DBS checks have cleared and that they are fully inducted by the end of the academic year.

Candidate 1 –Sofie Dadge's background, skills and experience:

Teaching and senior leadership experience, involvement in setting up a free school in Rutland, digital marketing and copywriting experience.

Candidate 2 – Shelley Harvey

Qualified accountant, just been made a partner. Experienced in advisory and audit work. Responsible in the Leicester practice for HR and staffing oversight.

Involvement in corporate governance and manages clients across a range of sectors.

The Corporation was unanimous in approving the appointments of both External Governors, subject to the return of clean DBS and Section 128 checks. It was noted that the College's HR Team are aware of this process.

Sofie was invited back into the meeting room. Her appointment was confirmed subject to the checks outlined above.

Action RM: to confirm Shelley's appointment to her.

4. Minutes and matters arising

The minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 02 March 2022 were approved as a correct record of the meeting.

The Corporation reviewed the action list.

OVERSIGHT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION

5. Principal's Update

Paul Wilson

The Principal's Update focused on the following topics:

- Student attendance trends reflecting Covid infections
- ESFA Financial Statements review – letter received 30th March 2022
- ESFA financials dashboard and access for Governors
- Ofsted feedback
- Schools White Paper
- An outline of the range of student narrative groups which have met over the last few months, the range of topics discussed, and the lessons learned by the College as a result.

Topics explored included:

- How safe do students feel at College; are there areas of the College that they don't feel safe in?
- Do students know about the Student Assist Programme/Safezone app?
- Have students been the victim of/witnessed any form of discrimination or harassment including: sexual, racism or homophobia?
- What have students been taught about keeping themselves safe since joining College? (Online, Prevent, safeguarding, mental health etc)
- What would students do if they were concerned or felt unsafe?
- Do students know about the Welfare team and support available in College?
- What can we do as a College to improve safety/any of the issues raised?

Feedback from the Ofsted inspection:

The inspection took place between 22-25 March, comprising 6 inspectors, a shadow inspector and 2 days of a senior Her Majesty's Inspector's time, looking specifically at quality improvement.

Headlines:

- Governance – very positively viewed; leaders and Governors know the College well.

-Very strong alignment with the College's own self-assessment.

- Over-riding sense that students enjoy their College experience; are well motivated and keen to learn and value what the College does
- Inclusive and positive environment where students feel very safe – Safeguarding effective and viewed very positively by inspectors - particularly the substantial improvements in the College's systems
- The majority of teaching is Good, demanding and valued
- The College offers a broad curriculum that meets needs well and has clear intent - Academic provision, which is taken by the majority, was seen as strong and high quality – assessment was a particularly positive feature, even being referred to as amongst the best inspectors had seen in academic programmes
- The College prepares students well for progression and next steps generally, especially where this is Higher Education, which is the preference for most. Careers support and guidance was seen as comprehensive & personalised.
- The College is less effective at preparing progression from vocational provision where opportunities for valuable work experience are still too limited and too few are prepared sufficiently to progress from lower levels to Level 3 provision at the College.
- The College's own self-assessment identified weaknesses in vocational and lower level provision and identified these as key areas for further review and improvement. Ofsted echoed this and concluded that intent is less clear at lower levels and the College staff had not been as ambitious for learners following vocational provision.

Outcomes/progress/attendance of the smaller numbers following these types of courses led to the conclusion that quality of provision in these areas and resulting progression were not as strong.

For example, links to employers and progress in developing relevant and valued work experience and employer links to courses was identified as a priority for improvement. Improvements in identifying and highlighting students with additional support needs were clearly recognised, but inspectors found that teachers were not always doing enough to support or effectively applying strategies that had been identified – inconsistency in this was a key finding. – This was aligned to the College's own self-assessment.

- Attendance in most of the College's provision was considered to be in line with expectations, but in a smaller number of mainly vocational/GCSE areas some students had lower attendance and actions were not always effective in rapidly changing this. There is a need to narrow variations in attendance across different types of provision and for those with the lowest attendance to be prioritised for improvement.
- The positive developments in wider tutorial provision were recognised, especially in ensuring the key area of personal safety, such as understanding risks of radicalisation and how to stay safe. There is a need to be more ambitious and imaginative about the range of this programme, so that students value it more.
- Clear and appropriate quality systems and improvement plans were seen to be in place. For example, inspectors recognised the cross-college developments in VESPA and assessment. However, further work to improve the quality and consistency of the lesson observation records and associated links to personalised CPD were identified as an area that will support further improvement.

After the Easter break, work begins in earnest to use this feedback as a springboard for the next phase of quality improvement and development. Visits to providers rated

Outstanding by Ofsted are being explored.

The Chair thanked the Principal and the Executive Leadership Team for a successful Ofsted inspection. Governors reflected on the thoroughness of the discussion three Governors had with an inspector.

The Chair reflected on the accuracy of the SAR and the fact that the outcome of the inspection presented no surprises to the Corporation. Matters highlighted by the inspectors aligned with the priorities for improvement identified by the Corporation.

6. Level 2 consultation – Paper 002 – *For information and questions*

Paul Wilson

The Principal highlighted the government consultation focusing on Level 2 and the likely impacts and implications for the College of the proposals.

The Corporation noted the paper.

7. Five-year financial forecasts – Paper 003a and Commentary – Paper 003b – *For information and questions*

Carolyn Davies

Carolyn confirmed the 2021-22 accounts reflected the current revised budget.

The 2022-23 budget is modelled on the ESFA funding toolkit and other elements of the budget remain a forecast only.

The final two years' budgets are modelled based on assumptions in the paper. There are a number of challenges which could impact on budgets:

- For the 2022-23 budget core funding rates are included but with estimated costs for the delivery of an additional 40 hours of teaching for the year, based on full teaching rate costs.
- Forecasts exclude any T Level implementation costs
- Employer contribution rates for teachers' pensions – the assumption has been made that the grant will continue for the full forecast timespan.
- There are pay negotiations expected
- Phasing or re-phasing of the Estates master plan

Carolyn highlighted deficits adjustments:

- Revenue maintenance costs relating to the Estates master plan have been removed
- At the end of the phase, efficiency savings will need to be made to put the College on a secure financial footing. Options to pursue could include asset disposal and applying for grant funding.
- December 2024 is the deadline for the repayment of the College's loan. This presents no real risk to the College's banking position.
- Financial Health remains on a Good ranking until year 5. The ESFA is looking at remodelling financial health calculations and any changes to this will be monitored ongoing by the College. Earlier recalculations could affect the EBITDA calculation, which could impact on the College's Financial Health score.

Governors asked questions about timelines for recalculating budgets, as well as questions about the impact of the proposed Leicester car parking levy and energy costs.

8. Estates Plan and Recommendations from the Estates & Finance Task & Finish Group

Carolyn Davies and Stuart Dawkins

The Task & Finish Group convened after the last meeting of the Corporation and chose not to veto the decision made in principle at the Corporation meeting to order materials to progress package 1b of the Estates master plan.

Governors noted the challenges for a summer build in relation to costs increasing ongoing. Carolyn reminded Governors that Phase 1b has been included in the revised budgets and it is important to go ahead.

OVERSIGHT OF FINANCE, RESOURCES & ASSETS

9. Monthly management accounts (February) – Paper 004 – *For information and questions*

Carolyn Davies

The Corporation noted the paper.

10. Verbal update from the Audit & Risk Committee meeting – 22 March 2022

Wayne Allsopp

- The Committee considered a newly updated ESFA document called *The scope of work of Audit Committees and Internal Auditors in College Corporations* (updated 12 Jan 2022)
- The Committee considered a document outlining a revised set of terms of reference for the Audit & Risk Committee, factoring in changes to the Post-16 Audit Code of Practice, the ESFA document alluded to above and an updated Code of Good Governance in English Colleges. A few further changes are being made and will come to the April G&S Committee for review, once the Committee has considered a second iteration via email. The aim is for the Corporation to approve these as part of the approval of How we Govern 2022-23, tabled for the June Corporation meeting.
- The Committee discussed whether there was a requirement for a Finance Committee in addition to an Audit & Risk Committee. They will consider this further based on further research.
- The Committee received an update on matters in scope for the College's external assurance activity.
- The Committee approved the key performance indicators for the external auditors.

Wayne thanked Stuart and Philip for their handover meeting when Wayne assumed the role as Chair and Carolyn and Rachel for their support during the first meeting chaired by Wayne in March 2022.

11. Grievance Procedure - Paper 005 (to follow) – *For approval*

Carolyn Davies

Changes were highlighted to Governors. This iteration has been scrutinised by the trade union consultative group.

The Corporation approved the procedure.

OVERSIGHT OF STUDENT OUTCOMES & EXPERIENCES

12. Feedback from the Student Outcomes Task & Finish Group – Paper 006 – For information and questions:

Tim Rogers

Tim provided an update on:

- Priority areas
- In-year retention and progress monitoring
- data and systems development, showing Governors a draft data dashboard

Governors commented on the positive improvements being made in the use of data and how this is informing plans to narrow performance gaps.

Data and systems development was a theme discussed with staff by a number of Governors during their recent Governor Insight Visits.

13. Policy on financial support for students 2022-2023 – Paper 007 – For information and questions

Aaron Winterton

Governors queried whether increased costs of living would have a bearing on applications for financial support.

The Corporation approved the policy.

14. Student Attendance Report, March 2022 – Paper 008 - For information and questions

Andrew Jackson

Andrew confirmed that Governors had last seen a report on attendance at their January meeting. The data presented in the report provided some national contextual data in relation to student attendance.

In a number of places, the report shows a slight close of gaps in attendance. Level 2 attendance has dipped and this is consistent with Ofsted's findings.

The College aims to strengthen systems and to have a more systematic approach to student attendance.

Student attendance matters were raised at three separate Governor Insight Visits.

Governors expressed their wish for Looked After Children's attendance to be in line or exceed average levels of student attendance. (There are 19 Looked After Children at WQE and 12 care leavers).

EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

15. Plans for the May Governor Conference

Stuart Dawkins

Stuart confirmed the Governor Conference would take place on Weds 18th May from 17:30 to 19:30, following a shorter Corporation meeting.

The conference will be workshop-based and will likely focus on changes in the external environment - T levels, Ofsted feedback, Schools White Paper and the academisation framework; and the Level 2/3 curriculum.

ROUND-UP

16. Confidentiality

Subject to discussions during the meeting, the Corporation considered reference to the Ofsted inspection to be confidential until the formal publication of the Ofsted report on 18th May.

17. Any Other Business – *For discussion*

- The Chair reminded Governors to submit any outstanding Governor Insights reflections forms to RM before the Easter break. JB, PW and RM will be looking at these on 11.4.22.
- Governors asked about how prepared the College was to receive Ukrainian refugees. The Principal confirmed the College already had experience of supporting displaced students and that there were arrangements for support via BACA and English as a Second Language programmes which would be implemented according to need. Applications for places had already been received.

18. Next Meeting

Weds 18 May 2022, 16:00 – 17:30 - Corporation meeting

Weds 18 May 2022, 17:30 – 19:30 - Governor Conference

The meeting closed at 19:03.

Signed: Date:
Corporation Chair

Action List

	Actions arising from 26 January 2022 Corporation meeting	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
1..	For Governors to set up their insight visits in College, with a view to completing a follow-up Governor Insights reflection form.	All Governors	By 6 th April
	Actions arising from 02 March 2022 Corporation meeting	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
2.	Requests for information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - number of fast-track applications which converted into student enrolments last year - applicant demographics 	AW	
3.	Update on T Level implementation from the perspective of a College which has undergone the process, as well as any policy and implementation updates.	TR	April or May Corporation meeting
4.	Report on the number of disadvantaged students progressing into HE	AJ	

	Actions arising from 06 April 2022 Corporation meeting	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
5.	Confirm appointment as External Governor to Shelley Harvey, subject to DBS and Section 128 checks	RM	asap
	Standing item	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
	To refer any matter which could be externally assured to the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee	All Governors	
	To ensure Curriculum Policy is updated if needed once mission/values work with Governors is completed	TR	
	To update the Corporation on progress towards completion of actions within the annual self -review of governance action plan, at a timely point in the business plan	RM	
	To report on the emerging themes around student changing narratives work in the Principal's Update as appropriate from time to time	PW	