

WQE & Regent College Group

Corporation Meeting 29 June 2022, 17:00
Room M108, University Road campus

MINUTES

Members of the Corporation in attendance:

Stuart Dawkins (Chair), Joyce Black, Shelley Harvey, Bernadette Green, Neil McGhee, Anas Mohamed, Nisar Navsariwala, Ing'utu Palmer, Philip Parkinson, Paul Wilson, Aaron Winterton & Jimmy Zachariah

Other attendees:

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

Apologies:

Wayne Allsopp, Jo Cooke, Sofie Dadge, Jash Maadhavji, Jim Phillips, Amrik Singh

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcome all attendees to the final Corporation meeting of the academic year and the last meeting of the Corporation that he would chair before the end of his tenure. Apologies were received from Wayne Allsopp, Jo Cooke, Sofie Dadge, Jash Maadhavji, Jim Phillips and Amrik Singh.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes and matters arising - Paper 001

The minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 18 May 2022 were approved as an accurate record of proceedings. The action list was reviewed and updated.

The following action was completed in the intervening period between meetings:

- Report on the number of disadvantaged students progressing into HE

The following action was tabled within the Principal's Update and subsequently removed from the action list:

- Include an update on student application numbers at the next Corporation meeting within the Principal's Update

GOVERNOR TRAINING

4. Short Governor Briefing on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (to be followed by online Governor training)

Donna Trusler

Donna briefed Governors on how staff have received training on ED and identified a number of follow-up actions.

There remain a number of groups who the Office for National Statistics have identified nationally as being subject to discrimination in particular – transgender people, homeless people and those who identify as non-binary.

Action all Governors: to pursue the online training on EDI ahead of the next meeting. A link to complete this will be sent by Becky Grove.

5. Annual Equality and Diversity Report – Paper 002 – *For information and questions*
Donna Trusler

Donna thanked Joyce Black for her support with the report, particularly around the use of specific language and on the types of questions being asked.

Donna reported that students identifying as 'other' tend not to perform as well academically as those who have identified within a specific category. This needs to be investigated further by the College to determine where support can further be invested.

Action DT: to report back to Governors after the October 2022 half term on drilled down data relating to the category of 'other'.

Donna confirmed that students in receipt of a bursary were often in receipt of emotional and mental health support from the College.

There are no substantive changes to the demographics of the student body, when considering the latest application data. Students are drawn from across the city and county.

Governors asked questions about whether the bandings for eligibility to receive a bursary should be changed in light of the cost of living and inflation. Donna confirmed that the bands were re-assessed annually and there was some flexibility and discretion built into the process.

Governors asked about Looked After Children (LAC). Donna confirmed that there is a dedicated member of staff who is an advocate for LAC. The pastoral and academic welfare and progress of Looked After students is a priority area for the College.

Governors queried whether students were feeling the emotional and social impact of Covid or of rising inflation. Donna confirmed that more students were coming on to campus and asking for food and to apply for bursaries.

Governors expressed the wish to see students who had previously been in receipt of Pupil Premium when at secondary school, and who had therefore been eligible for Free School Meals, continue to be tracked further during their time at the College.

Action TR: This aspect to continue to be a feature of reporting and monitoring through the Student Outcomes task and finish group.

OVERSIGHT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION

6. Principal's Update

Paul Wilson

The Principal highlighted the following matters in his Update:

- 2022-23 student applications data
- A comparison of 2021-22 and 2022-23 applications data
- An outline of the impact of possible under- or over-recruitment

- Consideration of the continuation of a Clearing process for student applications
- CPD and College improvement around the Ofsted priorities.
- A focus on 5-year teaching and learning plans
- Staff Leavers – more than in past years but broadly due to promotions or retirement. There are no losses of teaching staff moving across to the school sector.
- The implementation of a structured long-service recognition scheme for staff
- Pastoral team - some internal promotions were made to further strengthen the team
- Estates development work – started as planned. Ongoing risks relate to costs increasing and delivery overrunning, but contingencies are in-built. Window replacement is particularly subject to issues relating to supply chain but is not as time critical as other elements of the build and can be re-scheduled.
- Estates planning for 2022-23: the consolidation of curriculum areas will be accelerated, in response to staff requests and feedback on the benefits of having full curriculum teams in one place. A bid to the Capacity Fund in the autumn term could enable the College, if successful, to develop Building C (a listed building).
- The exams season was completed successfully
- Welcome to WQE days were staged on 27 and 28 June.
- A Gatsby Benchmarks stakeholder event was held at the College, supported by the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP).
- A successful FutureWISE 2022 was held at the College
- The College received an award from the Lord Lieutenant of Leicester in recognition of its community support work, particularly around sports and the involvement of primary schools.

Governors asked questions about factors affecting student attendance rates, as well as any difficulties in teaching and support staff recruitment. Governors enquired whether outgoing staff exit surveys provided any learning for the College.

Action RM: The Clerk will build into the Business Plan the opportunity for the Principal to provide a staffing projection at the same time in the business cycle for 2022-23 outlining the age profile of staff and the impact on the College of the numbers nearing retirement.

7. Review of the Governor Conference – 18 May 2022

Stuart Dawkins

Stuart confirmed that the issues and questions captured at the Governor Conference had been mailed round to Governors ahead of the Corporation meeting and would be factored into the revision of the Strategic Plan, which ELT will take forward.

OVERSIGHT OF FINANCE, RESOURCES & ASSETS

8. Monthly management accounts (May) – Paper 003 – *For information and questions* Carolyn Davies

Carolyn confirmed that the reforecast firms up year one of the three-year financial plan. The projected budget outcome has improved. Governors asked questions about cyber insurance, pension cost projections and the gender pay gap.

9. Three-year financial plan – Paper 004a - For approval

Carolyn Davies

9.1 Commentary – Paper 004b – For information questions

Carolyn confirmed the three-year financial plan assumed no change in student numbers over the life of the plan.

Carolyn outlined the impact of the capital expenditure assumptions from the Estates Plan on this Plan and highlighted that cost estimates would change as a result of bringing forward the Phase 2A project.

The Plan shows positive cash generation in all years under review.

A consequence of the assumptions made in the Plan is a reduction in the balance of the income and the expenditure reserve during the period under review.

The ESFA are consulting on their financial health methodology. The commentary show the College's financial health for each year of the plan under both the current and the proposed methodology.

Some of the key assumptions in the plan:

- The headline ESFA 16-19 funding rate will increase, but this increase is required to fund an additional 40 hours of curriculum delivery for a full-time programme. These additional delivery costs have been factored into future years' budgets. There are a number of other changes to funding factors and disadvantage funding.
- A grant to continue to meet the costs of the increase in employer contributions to the TPS has been confirmed until July 2024.
- ESFA Tuition Fund allocation has now been received – c. £200k. This will necessitate expenditure of roughly the same amount to enable delivery.

Challenges:

- There is upwards pressure on pay costs
- The budget assumes a 3% cost of living increase in 2022-23 and a 2% cost of living increase in 2023-24.
- There is a lack of access to capital funding in the Sixth Form College sector – the budget and financial plan assume no success in securing funding.
- No costs have been assumed for the implementation of any T Levels.
- There is uncertainty over the proposed Leicester City parking levy.
- Covid-19 has impacted on costs this academic year – cleaning, staff cover etc. Financial assumptions have been made that there will be no significant ongoing Covid-related costs going forward.
- Utility costs are contracted through Framework Agreements. Inflation assumptions depend on the nature of the expense and range from 5% to 265% for gas unit prices.

- Bank covenant compliance - likely breach of the capex covenant in summer 2023 if we continued with our identified capital spending priorities. The College therefore considers it prudent to repay the loan early by two years, noting that the outstanding balance is covered by cash reserves.

Governors asked questions about the contracts relating to energy costs and whether there was a need to deploy energy consultants to support the College to reduce its energy use. Additionally, they asked about the reserves threshold the College was comfortable holding.

Governors considered whether there were any discernible benefits to the College of being graded Outstanding rather than Good by the ESFA's Financial Health methodology.

The budget was approved by the Corporation and the CFFR and supporting commentary will now be submitted to the ESFA.

The Corporation approved the early repayment of the loan to avoid a breach of the capex covenant in 2023.

10. Draft Performance Review and Development Policy – Paper 005 – *For approval*

Sarah Oldfield

No substantive changes were made to the latest iteration of the policy, other than some minor changes in language. Cross-reference to the Capability Policy has been included.

11. Staff Wellbeing Strategy – verbal update – *For information and questions*

Carolyn Davies

Two elements of the strategy will continue into the next academic year – *thriving at work and mental health*.

Carolyn presented an overview of all of the strands of work underpinning the which have been undertaken over the last academic year. Governors thanked Carolyn and the team for the work and they noted the breadth and volume of work which had been undertaken.

Governors affirmed their preference that Mental Health First Aid training be completed in a face-to-face format.

12. Draft Sustainability Strategy – Paper 006 – *For approval*

Paul Wilson

This has been produced with the DfE's latest sustainability guidance in mind. There is a recognition that the real agents for change will be young people who come to the College – there is a strategy focus therefore on young people's activism and engagement. The strategy covers economic and social sustainability as well as environmental.

Representatives from the Local Authority have joined the Student Executive to explore a range of activities and collaborations which could assist in reaching a carbon zero footprint.

Governors suggested there could be mileage in the College linking to other green

initiatives within the city and investigating whether there were tools available for students and staff to use to track their carbon footprint. These opportunities were noted and would be considered as the plans associated with the strategy develop further.

The Corporation approved the Sustainability Strategy.

An annual update on the Sustainability Strategy will be tabled at an appropriate point in the Business Plan ongoing.

Updates on progress will be reported through the Principal's Update ongoing.

OVERSIGHT OF STUDENT OUTCOMES & EXPERIENCES

13. Critical Incident Policy – Paper 007 – *For approval*

Donna Trusler

There were no substantive changes to this iteration of the policy.

Governors noted that reference to the application of the SafeZone app was included in the policy.

The policy was approved by the Corporation.

14. Single Equality Scheme Update – Paper 008 - *For approval*

Donna Trusler

This was reviewed and no substantive changes have been made. Donna confirmed that this document was viewed positively by Ofsted during the recent inspection.

The Corporation approved the document.

EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

15. How we Govern– Paper 009 – (to follow) - *For approval*

Joyce Black

Joyce thanked the Clerk for her work on revising How we Govern. She confirmed that this iteration of How we Govern is a live document and will be subject to change given the range of new developments which are pending e.g. guidance on external reviews of governance, confirmation of memberships of Corporation Committees, revisions to the Governor insights guidance and pro-forma and the introduction of the governance portal – GovernorHub.

Joyce drew the attention of the Governors to the proposed work which will follow, outlined in paragraph 87:

- Task & Finish Group priorities for 2022-23
- Business Plan 2022 -23

Joyce will work alongside the Clerk to ensure that the next iteration is viewed by the Governance & Search Committee at its 5 October meeting.

The Corporation approved the document with a view to any subsequent changes being approved by the Governance & Search Committee.

16. Review of Standing Orders – Paper 010 – *For approval*

Joyce Black

An annual refresh of the Standing Orders was completed by the Clerk.

There are no substantive changes. Any changes are a reflection of current practice. Reference to a postal ballot relating to elections will be replaced by reference to a suitable online balloting system.

The Corporation approved the Standing Orders.

17. Feedback from the Audit & Risk Committee meeting – 07.06.22

Philip Parkinson

In the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee's absence, Philip Parkinson reported the proceedings of the meeting to the Corporation.

17.1 Risk Register and Significant Risk Action Plan - Paper 011 –

For information and questions

The Committee discussed the most significant risks and changes to the profile of Risks. The Corporation noted the risk register and action plan.

17.2 External Audit Plan – Paper 012 – *For approval*

Philip drew the attention of the Corporation to the proposed rise in annual fee for the external audit fee – a rise of c. 10%. Governors discussed whether the increase was appropriate. A Governor from the same sector confirmed there was a 10-15% increase in costs in the sector e.g. rising staff costs. Additionally, there were ever more providers falling out of the school and college audit market, meaning that a retendering process was likely to yield savings for the College.

The Corporation approved the fees and the scope of the work of the external auditor.

17.3 External Assurance Programme 2022-2023 – Paper 013 – *For approval*

The areas proposed for the external assurance programme for 2022-23, discussed by the Audit & Risk Committee at its June meeting, were as follows:

- An evaluation of Individualised Learner Records (ILR)
- Catering
- Energy management
- Cyber Essentials Plus
- GDPR
- Health and Safety

The Committee discussed the optimal time to commit to an external governance review within the timeframes set down by the ESFA. It was determined that there were no advantages to committing to a review during the 2022-23 academic year as the guidance had not been fully scoped out in practical terms and the sector awaited news of the role that the SFCA and AoC would be playing in providing a service to externally review governance. The Committee therefore recommended an external review of governance should take place during the 2023-24 academic year.

The Corporation accepted the recommendation from the Committee to commit to external governance review in 2023-24.

Governors queried whether full completion of Cyber Awareness training by all staff would mean a reduction in the cost to the College of cyber insurance. Carolyn Davies confirmed this would be the case.

The external assurance programme for 2022-23 was approved by the Corporation.

18. Feedback from Extraordinary meeting of the Vaughan Endowment Committee

– Paper 014

Stuart Dawkins

Stuart summarised the detail within the summary paper and also provided a live update relating to the bank's request for a further meeting with three Trustees present in order to action a change to the nature of the investment portfolio. The Chair reaffirmed that the Committee is not part of the formal governance structure of the College and therefore has the ability to determine how the assets are invested and to monitor this ongoing. In keeping with transparent governance procedure, any such decisions are reported to the full Corporation. The Corporation was asked to note the Committee's decision to move to a balanced portfolio.

19. Approval of policies issued to the Corporation by email in advance of the meeting:

19.1 Health & Safety Policy

The policy was approved by the Corporation and signed by the Chair and the Principal.

19.2 Capability Policy & Procedure

The policy and procedure was approved by the Corporation.

20. Governor appointments – *For approval*

Rachel Middleton

20.1 Chair of Governors

20.2 Vice Chair of Governors

In May 2022 nominations for Chair and Vice Chair of Governors for the Corporation were opened.

There was a single nomination for the role as Chair and Vice Chair respectively.

Joyce Black was nominated for Vice Chair of Governors (2022-2023). Joyce's nomination was unopposed and no election was required.

Philip Parkinson was nominated for Chair of Governors (2022-2024). Philip's nomination was unopposed and no election was required.

No automatic ratification of these positions was assumed. In the spirit of inclusivity, any Governor was allowed to raise a query or objection to the nominees for both positions. A deadline of midday on Weds 22 June was given to Governors to raise any matters with the Clerk and Chair. No issues or objections were raised by Governors.

The Corporation therefore ratified both appointments at its meeting on 29 June 2022.

Subsequent steps following ratification of appointments:

Joyce's tenure as Vice Chair continues seamlessly for another academic year, up to the end of her tenure as Corporation Governor at the end of the 2022-23 academic year. A few additional weeks will be added to Joyce's tenure as Governor, to carry her into July 2023 to ensure the Vice Chair concludes their office to coincide with the academic year end. In the course of the 2022-23 academic year the Clerk will be opening nominations for Vice Chair for the period 2023-2025.

Stuart Dawkins will continue in the role as Chair of Governors until the end of the summer term. Philip then immediately assumes the role as Chair with a handover and induction planned by the Clerk. Philip's term of office as Governor will be extended by around 4 months to enable him to conclude his two-year tenure as Chair, and to ensure this carries him to the end of the 2023-24 academic year.

ROUND-UP

21. Confidentiality

Subject to discussions during the meeting, the Corporation considered the financial forecasts to be confidential.

22. Any other Business – For discussion

The Chair confirmed that the Governor skills audit would be moving online and will come out to Governors to complete over the summer.

23. Chair's final round-up

Stuart Dawkins

Stuart thanked all Governors and members of ELT for their commitment and support throughout his tenure. Joyce gave a short speech to thank Stuart for his service in the role as Chair on behalf of the Corporation.

Stuart was presented with an award recognising excellence in Governance, which was awarded by the SFCA at their annual awards event to him and Joyce Black, following a successful nomination by the College.

24. Next Meeting

Weds 05 October 2022, 17:00, UR campus.

Action List

	Actions arising from 29 June 2022 Corporation meeting	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
1.	EDI: to report back to Governors after the October 2022 half term on drilled down data relating to the category of 'other'.	DT	November 2022 Corporation meeting
2.	Reporting and monitoring through the Student Outcomes task and finish group on the tracking of students who were formerly in receipt of Pupil Premium funding and Free School Meals	TR	

3.	Build into the Business Plan the opportunity for the Principal to provide a staffing projection at the same time in the business cycle for 2022-23 outlining the age profile of staff and the impact on the College of the numbers nearing retirement.	RM	
	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	