

WQE & Regent College Group

Corporation Meeting 29 March 2023, 17:00, Room M108, University Road Campus

Members of the Corporation in attendance:

Philip Parkinson (Chair), Sofie Dadge, Stuart Dawkins, Shamir Ghumra, Bernadette Green, Shelley Harvey, Neil McGhee, Ing'utu Palmer, Julia Pastuszek, Paul Wilson, Aaron Winterton

Other attendees:

Carolyn Davies, Andrew Jackson, Rachel Middleton, Sarah Oldfield, Tim Rogers

Apologies:

Joyce Black, Amrik Singh, Jimmy Zachariah

MINUTES

- 1. Welcome and apologies for absence**
The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting.
Apologies were received from Joyce Black, Amrik Singh and Jimmy Zachariah.
- 2. Declarations of Interest**
There were no known declarations of interest at the start of the meeting.
In the course of the meeting, during the presentation relating to the Accountability Statement/Agreement, Stuart Dawkins declared an interest as a non-executive Director of the East Midlands Chamber of Commerce and Neil McGhee declared his interest as a Board Director of the Leicester[shire] Enterprise Partnership (LLEP).
- 3. Minutes and matters arising– Paper 001**
The minutes from the Corporation meeting held on 25 January 2023 were approved as a correct record.
The single item on the action list was carried forward to a future meeting.

OVERSIGHT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION

- 4. Feedback from the Governor Conference – 08 March 2023**
Paul Wilson and Philip Parkinson
Paul gave a short summary of the themes discussed at the conference.
The summary will be made available to Governors on GovernorHub.
- 5. Principal's Update – Presentation**
Paul Wilson
The Principal's update covered:
 - The Tuition Fund and Easter revision programme including 461 tuition and revision sessions creating capacity for up to 2305 student visits/sessions

- The HE Exhibition and the Careers Event – over 70 universities were present at the HE Exhibition including a US-based university. Over 40 exhibitors attended the Careers Event, including numerous local employers. Over 800 students attended the sessions.
- An update on the number of students who have participated in work experience placements
- The January series of assessment results for vocational courses
- An update on applications received for the 2023/2024 academic year
- An update on applications from those with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) for 2023/24 compared to enrolment data for the last two academic years
- Developments to the leadership structure of the College
- Teacher pay increases
- An update on strikes

Governors asked questions about the recent story in the national press relating to alleged stresses faced by leaders and teachers in the education sector due to Ofsted pressures.

6. Accountability Statement/Agreement – Presentation

Andrew Jackson

Andrew provided Governors with the context underpinning the requirement for an Accountability Agreement originating from the Skills for Jobs White Paper (2021). Governors were informed that local skills needs will be a core focus for Ofsted when the College is next inspected and that our focus on the preparation of young professionals aligns well with this agenda.

Andrew outlined the five different sections of the agreement, highlighting the fact that the agreement needed to focus on national, regional and local priorities.

Andrew highlighted the Skills Plan 2022-24 from the Leicester[shire] Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) was still in development and that the College was directly engaged in consultations relating to this.

The College is exploring the potential of a career academy model to respond to strategically significant local industries.

The next steps for the College are to write 5-10 development targets to shape our response to the emerging LSIP. This will be centred on establishing the foundations to support our engagement and responsiveness. Next academic year the College will develop this work further and expects to be able to add in key metrics that respond more directly to areas within the LSIP once this is produced and published.

Governors asked questions about whether the Higher Education sector was keeping pace with the Skills Agenda, and whether the College was measuring long-term progression of students into specific careers.

Governors asked whether draft agreements could be refined by sharing amongst local Partners to achieve a more rounded and locally appropriate set of agreements. It was confirmed that our accountability statement would be accessible and published on the college website.

Andrew outlined the timelines for consultation and submission of the Accountability Agreement:

- The draft document will be circulated by 03 May 2023
- Comments will be sought and any amendments made
- The agreement will be submitted by the end of May 2023

The Corporation agreed that the Chair would take Chair's action to approve the finalised agreement.

OVERSIGHT OF FINANCE, RESOURCES & ASSETS

7. Feedback from the Audit & Risk Committee

Shelley Harvey

Shelley provided a round-up of the two papers which were considered by the Committee:

- External KPIs for the external auditors
- An update on external assurance matters

The Corporation noted the update and agreed to appoint RSM as the external auditor for the financial year ending July 2023.

8. Feedback from the Estates & Finance Task & Finish Group meeting – 16 February 2023

Carolyn Davies

The Task & Finish Group were granted delegated authority by the Corporation to consider the 5-year financial plan and to approve early purchase orders for Phase 2A building works.

9. Five-year financial plan - Paper 002

Carolyn Davies

Carolyn confirmed this was an iteration of the financial plan which had been amended since consideration by the Estates & Finance Task & Finish Group in February, to include actual, rather than projected funding allocations.

Carolyn confirmed a number of factors which impact on funding: student numbers, ESFA funding rates, pay increases and the order of priority and rate of progress of Estates work.

Carolyn confirmed that the Phase 2A building works will conclude in Summer 2023. After this point the improvements to teaching and learning spaces will all have been made. The next anticipated focus for the Estates Master Plan will be on circulation spaces.

If the College is not successful in being granted Capacity Funds, then funds become more challenged in Year 4 of the financial plan.

Governors asked questions about the College's cash reserves position.

The Corporation ratified the decisions taken by the Estates & Finance Task & Finish Group in February 2023.

10. Monthly management accounts - January 2023 – Paper 003

Carolyn Davies

The Corporation noted the January accounts. Carolyn confirmed these were the first set of accounts received by the Corporation this year with reworked budget figures. Carolyn outlined some accounts reporting changes (FRS102) which change the way the College capitalises spending. Carolyn confirmed she had met with the external auditors and they were content with the College's approach.

11. Financial Regulations annual review - Paper 004

Carolyn Davies

A number of changes to the Financial Regulations have been made to reference the ONS reclassification of colleges into the public accounts, as well as some new HMRC requirements.

Another change (section 18.6) relates to tenders and quotations.

The College sets the limit above which it needs to seek three quotes for goods/services. This has been set for a number of years at £2.5k and with the rise in inflation this is no longer viable. Carolyn performed an analysis of other Colleges to determine whether there was a consistently higher rate being applied in the sector. She established there was a £5k norm.

The Corporation approved a limit of £5k after which the College needs to seek 3 quotes for goods/services, with the exception of the Estates team, who will seek 2 quotes above this level (many estates-related suppliers are not interested in quoting for work with low returns).

Governors asked questions about how often the College wishes to spend above the existing £2.5k limit. Carolyn agreed that in future annual procurement reports, information relating to volume of £5k+ tenders can be included for Governors' reference.

Governors approved the revised Financial Regulations.

12. Treasury Management Policy – Paper 005

Carolyn Davies

Carolyn confirmed there was nothing in the policy which conflicted with the requirements on public spending. The Corporation approved the policy.

OVERSIGHT OF STUDENT OUTCOMES & EXPERIENCES

13. Update from the Student Outcomes Task & Finish Group meeting – 15 February 2023

Tim Rogers

Tim provided an update on the discussion at the Student Outcomes Task & Finish Group meeting. The Group looked at the work in train which is focusing on data dashboards. The main aim of this development work is to enable a wider range of staff to access and manipulate data sets to support their knowledge of student performance and to inform future teaching and learning.

The Group also reviewed the performance of students in those sub-groups previously

identified by the Group.

14. SAR Quality Improvement Plan – update on progress - Paper 006

Tim Rogers

Governors were reminded that the full SAR was received by Governors outside of a Corporation meeting in January 2023. The SAR and QIP summary were discussed with Governors at the December 2022 meeting. Paper 006 was an update on progress.

Tim reported on a number of areas where progress had been made.

Governors asked questions relating to the number of students applying to Oxbridge.

15. Course Evaluation Questionnaire – Paper 007

Sarah Oldfield

Sarah highlighted developments made to this year's questionnaire, including referencing students' unique reference numbers and a statement for students to indicate whether they are content to discuss any of their responses further with College staff. There was a 37% overall course level response rate from students overall, but 60% of students have responded at least partially, indicating a higher level of engagement and an interest in informing the College, to effect positive change for students.

Sarah highlighted that there was a greater percentage of positive responses than in previous years. One area where there were improvements in positive responses related to receipt of feedback from staff and feeling well supported in classrooms.

Responses from students who have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) were very positive. Responses from Looked After Children were positive.

Responses from students with SEND were less positive than the general College Cohort and further exploration of this was taking place. One of the sub-groups identified to focus on by the Student Outcomes Task & Finish Group last year was students with visual or hearing impairments. This group's responses were lower than the general College cohort.

Responses from students pursuing vocational courses were generally positive.

White and Black African students responded less positively to the statement 'I feel up to date with my studies'. Level 3 year 1 students and Level 2 students also responded less positively to this question. Students from these groups will be contacted to explore reasons for their responses and to build in appropriate support.

Governors asked to view more detail in relation to the responses from SEND students to understand why their experience was different to the rest of the College cohort.

Governors congratulated Sarah on the improvements to the analysis and the greater detail now available at subgroup levels.

Action SO - issue Governors with data from the full SEND cohort of students.

Post-meeting note - following the meeting, in discussion with the Link SEND

Governor, it transpired that there was an error in the data relating to SEND students and the responses were in fact much more positive than reported at the Corporation meeting. A revised report containing correct data was subsequently circulated to all Governors.

Sarah reported that learning walks will also feature as part of monitoring and developing teaching and learning next year, in addition to classroom observations.

The Corporation proposed that this agenda item be considered earlier on an agenda in future years to enable full discussion.

16. Destinations and Progression Report - Paper 008

Andrew Jackson

Governors were encouraged to submit any in-depth questions for Andrew by email.

Andrew reported that the vast majority of students go on to pursue positive destinations after leaving WQE. There are very few students who become NEET (Not in Education, Training or Employment).

The data for this year had been cut to include drill down on destinations of students in receipt of bursaries, those in receipt of Free College Meals, Looked After Children and other more vulnerable groups.

Andrew explained the 10% shift in destinations from entry to Higher Education towards pursuit of apprenticeships and training.

Governors asked questions about entry to Oxbridge and the activity within College to promote applications, particularly from students in minority groups.

The report also outlined the destinations of students who had pursued Level 1 and 2 qualifications.

Andrew highlighted the proposed actions in the report. One the actions is to move the collection of destinations information by a third party to much earlier in the year. The outcomes can then inform the SAR.

Governors asked questions about why students prefer to stay locally to pursue post-19 learning/training options.

The Progression and Destinations report will be tabled earlier in the Corporation business plan in subsequent years and earlier on an agenda to enable thorough discussion.

EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT GOVERNANCE

17. Governor tenures and recruitment

Philip Parkinson

The Chair informed the Corporation that Jim Phillips approached the Chair to seek a sabbatical, due to heavy work commitments for the next twelve months. The sabbatical was agreed by the Governance & Search Committee and commenced in January 2023. It will conclude before the January 2024 Corporation meeting.

The Corporation also approved a sabbatical until the end of the academic year for Wayne Allsopp, due to issues relating to family health. Wayne will step down from Committees during the period.

The Corporation has received two applications from prospective External Governors and will shortly be arranging candidate interviews with a panel of current Governors.

18. Arrangements for nomination and appointment of Vice Chair

Rachel Middleton

Rachel confirmed the arrangements for nominations for the role as Vice Chair of the Corporation. Nominations will open from 30 March 2023. The date for receipt of nominations is 02 May 2023.

ROUND-UP

19. Any Other Business

- WQE emails and WIFI set-up –Governors were prompted to arrange, via the Clerk, to get their IT account and WIFI access set up.
- Governor Hub – were asked to progress setting up their Governor Hub registrations
- Governor Insight Visits – the deadline for completing visits and for the receipt of Governor reflections forms has been extended to the last day of the first summer half term – Friday 26 May.
- The Chair confirmed that arrangements were being made to consider the memberships of Committees, and in particular the Audit & Risk Committee.

20. Confidentiality

The Corporation considered the following paper to be confidential - the five-year financial plan.

21. Next Corporation Meeting

Wednesday 24 May 2023, 5:00pm, Room G01, University Road campus

The Corporation meeting closed at 19:40.

Action List

Actions arising from 29 March 2023 Corporation meeting	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
Issue Governors with the full set of data relating to SEND students (Course Evaluation Questionnaire)	SO	asap

Governors to progress setting up their WIFI access and WQE email address	All Governors for whom this remains an issue	urgent
Governors to progress their Governorhub registrations	All Governors for whom this remains an issue	urgent
Governors to complete Governor insight visits by Friday 26 th May 2023	All Governors	By 26 th May 2023
Actions arising from 25 January 2023 Corporation meeting	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
Update on the impact of the automated attendance monitoring system at a subsequent Corporation meeting	AJ	
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	

Signed:
Chair of Corporation

Date: