

# WQE & Regent College Group

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## Corporation Meeting 24 May 2023, 17:00, Room M108, University Road Campus

### **Members of the Corporation in attendance:**

Philip Parkinson (Chair), Orhan Ahmed, Sofie Dadge, Stuart Dawkins, Shamir Ghumra, Bernadette Green, Neil McGhee, Ing'utu Palmer, Julia Pastuszak, Amrik Singh, Paul Wilson, Aaron Winterton & Jimmy Zachariah

### **Other attendees:**

Carolyn Davies, Andrew Jackson, Rachel Middleton, Sarah Oldfield, Tim Rogers, Nikki O'Brien (Observer), Sarah Thomson (Observer)

### **Apologies:**

Joyce Black, Shelley Harvey

## **MINUTES**

### **1. Welcome and apologies for absence**

The Chair welcomed Nikki O'Brien and Sarah Thomson, two prospective External Governors, joining the meeting as observers. The Chair welcomed back Orhan. Apologies were received from Joyce Black and Shelley Harvey.

The Chair confirmed that Ing'utu would be leaving the College at the end of the academic year. He thanked Ing'utu on behalf of the Corporation for her commitment as Staff Governor.

The Chair confirmed that this was Amrik's last meeting as an External Governor for the Corporation as his second tenure was concluding at the end of May 2023. A gift and a card was passed to Amrik.

The Chair drew the Corporation's attention to a matter of Chair's action taken between Corporation meetings - The final draft of the Accountability Agreement was circulated to Governors on 3<sup>rd</sup> May for comment. The Chair subsequently took Chair's action to approve this and it will now be formally submitted by the end of May deadline and published to the College's website as required.

### **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no known interests in agenda items.

### **3. Minutes and matters arising– Paper 001**

The minutes from the Corporation meeting held on 29 March 2023 were approved as a correct record.

The Corporation discussed the format of the minutes, in particular, how the minutes reference responses to questions posed by Governors. Governors were encouraged to review each set of minutes ongoing.

The following action points were completed during the intervening time between meetings:

- Issue Governors with the full set of data relating to SEND students (Course Evaluation Questionnaire)
- Governors to progress their Governorhub registrations

The following action point was tabled on the agenda and subsequently removed from the action list:

- Update on the impact of the automated attendance monitoring system at a subsequent Corporation meeting.

## **OVERSIGHT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION**

### **4. Governor briefing on counter-terrorism local profile/PREVENT update** - Presentation Donna Trusler

Donna provided Governors with a briefing. The presentation will be circulated to Governors following the meeting, via GovernorHub. The PREVENT risk register is being updated and will also be circulated. Governors will receive a further briefing on this during the autumn term.

Governors were invited to training relating to Incel.

Governors asked questions relating to on-site safety and the recently discussed right of way matter brought to the Corporation's attention. The Principal reported there was no update on the right of way matter, but a formal objection to the Council had been lodged by the College.

Governors asked questions about students' behaviours online. The Principal confirmed that students were aware that their online behaviours were being monitored by the College using sophisticated tools.

### **5. Principal's Update** - Presentation (to follow) – *For information and questions*

Paul Wilson

The Principal's update covered the following topics:

- LSIP partnership work
- Signing up to a local Provider Access Agreement in partnership with LLEP, Careers Hub and The Careers & Enterprise Company
- Summer 2023 estates works planned/underway – tenders are within acceptable tolerances and in line with budget forecasts.
- The successful award of a Post-16 Capacity Fund grant bid, with tight timelines due to the 8-week delay in learning the outcome of the bid
- CENBASE annual joint training day – 9<sup>th</sup> June
- Industrial action updates
- Sporting successes

Governors asked about risks associated with building works planned for 2024 needing to be delivered on time against a tight timeline and if this would adversely impact on the College's existing accommodation capacity during the works or the planned growth for the start of that academic year. The Principal reported that the spaces identified for development are not currently used for teaching and learning and were separated from other accommodation, such that building works would not be expected to adversely impact current accommodation directly. Furthermore, the College would anticipate knowing by April 2024 whether there would be any impacts on the project or planned capacity to increase student numbers for the autumn 2024 intake and could therefore plan accordingly in consultation with project consultants.

Governors asked whether the successful growth plan for the College could be promoted locally to enhance the College's reputation further. The Principal agreed this was a good opportunity to do so, but highlighted that the college was initially bound by the conditions of the capital grant in terms of when announcements could be released formally.

Governors asked whether the College had seen a significant shift in staff moving between unions in light of member ballots to strike/not strike. The College reported that there had been a shift in both directions.

## **OVERSIGHT OF FINANCE, RESOURCES & ASSETS**

### **6. Sustainability – progress on actions 2022-23 – Paper 002 - *For information and questions***

Paul Wilson

The Principal provided a comprehensive update on the College's sustainability plans. He thanked Carolyn and Donna for their inputs into the report.

The College has started to plan to apply for a public sector decarbonisation grant. It is likely that an application will be deferred until next year as the College has the requirements of the successful Post-16 Capacity Fund grant to meet first.

Governors reported that they would like to see greater reporting on the environmental sustainability actions being taken by the College, to celebrate these positive steps and to report these more actively to student, staff and to wider stakeholders.

Governors also stated that it was important to highlight both successes and failures in relation to moves made to decarbonise.

Shamir Ghumra and Neil McGhee expressed an interest in supporting the College further with its work on sustainability and agreed to contact Carolyn Davies to progress this. **Action SG, NMcG and CD.**

Governors noted and were encouraged by the positive feedback from students requesting a discussion with staff about the possibility of significantly reducing printing across the College. Sarah Oldfield reported that teacher feedback via Teams was successful in College and was well received by students. Students have reported that they have a preference for using technology to aid their learning, from a sustainability perspective as well as recognising that this can be a more immediate way to receive

feedback and learning. Sarah reported that staff teams were buddying up to fully explore the use of Teams.

Governors noted that if students were asking for more technologically integrated teaching and learning opportunities from the College, that the Corporation and College leadership should keep a watching brief on student expectations in this area.

**7. Monthly management accounts – March 2023 – Paper 003 – To note**  
Carolyn Davies

Management accounts for 30<sup>th</sup> April 2023 were also made available to the Corporation and were uploaded to GovernorHub on 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

Carolyn highlighted the following points to the Corporation:

- The April forecasts are reforecasts and show a breakeven budget position
- Phase 2A budgeted figures have been factored into the April management accounts
- A confirmed pay settlement is yet to be agreed. If this is different to budgeted assumptions, then every additional 1% award equates to £150k of additional spend.

Governors noted a reduction in energy costs.

## **OVERSIGHT OF STUDENT OUTCOMES & EXPERIENCES**

**8. Update from the Student Outcomes Task & Finish Group meeting – 09 May 2023**  
Tim Rogers

Tim thanked meeting attendees. The group considered an update on the support provided to visually and hearing-impaired students, whose attendance and performance is one of the specific sub-groups identified for special focus this academic year. The group looked at other sub-groups and provision types, as well as considering the plans for new approaches proposed for 2023/24 in terms of use of data dashboards to inform teaching, learning and support requirements.

Tim asked the group to provide feedback on the meetings this academic year and to consider how best to report any feedback from meetings back to the Corporation for next year. Tim thanked Sofie Dadge for her feedback.

**9. Attendance update & impact of monitoring software - Paper 004**  
Andrew Jackson

Andrew provided an attendance update to the Corporation. He reported that overall there was improved attendance in light of the introduction of attendance monitoring software. Attendance figures have plateaued, and Andrew is confident that the overall level of attendance can be maintained when a new cohort joins the College and becomes familiar with the system from day one of attendance.

Governors queried whether the aspiration of 95% attendance was unrealistically high. Andrew reported that the College would like to move to this figure across a number of

years. It's aspiration for 2023/24 is to keep attendance in line with other secondary schools across Leicestershire, noting that the college measure records every lesson of attendance or absence compared to schools recording on a half-day session basis. Governors asked about the reasons why GCSE course attendance was lower than those pursuing Level 3 qualifications. The Principal reiterated points made at previous meetings outlining that this is a national picture when students are being asked to re-sit courses and exams as a funding requirement to progress post-16 and are sometimes disenchanted about needing to continue with English and Maths study at College, having been unsuccessful at school.

Governors queried whether attendance was lower across all GCSE courses for students pursuing Level 2 study or whether there was variation. The Principal reported that attendance in Maths GCSE classes was significantly lower than option courses, but when students attended these classes, then outcomes were positive based on high quality teaching in this subject area. This is an area which the College is monitoring ongoing.

**Action AJ:** Governors asked Andrew to set a specific target for GCSE attendance for the 2023/24 academic year and to report on this to the Corporation.

Governors asked whether students having one-to-one support from the welfare team, were adversely impacted by the attendance monitoring software, which could mean they were marked absent from College because they were not in a lesson. Andrew reported that, where staff from the welfare team knew a student was with them, that they overrode any register indicating absence. This should prevent any message from being received by a mobile phone belonging to a student's parent/carer.

Governors asked whether there were issues relating to the currency of mobile numbers and whether there is a systematic approach to ensuring these are refreshed. Donna reported that from a safeguarding perspective it is important to have the correct numbers available and that efforts are made in year on an ongoing basis to seek up to date contact details.

Governors asked what the spread of the attendance data was e.g. is there a cohort with ongoing sporadic or sustained absence which is bringing the overall attendance rate down. Andrew stated that there was a small number of students with poor attendance and a larger group with attendance in the 86-90% range.

Governors requested a bar chart to aid their understanding of the spread of attendance across the College, to be included in future reports. **Action AJ.**

Andrew confirmed that at individual subject level, teachers and CALs monitor attendance levels.

#### **10. Critical Incident Policy** – annual review – Paper 005 – *For approval*

Donna Trusler

Governors noted the changes referenced in the policy.

Governors asked whether the system alerting the College to a critical incident and

enacting a lockdown was ever tested. Donna reported this was the case.

Governors asked whether there were copies of procedures available to staff should a critical incident occur. Donna reported on the whereabouts of physical copies of procedures and the fact that there was also an online system which was remotely accessible.

The Corporation approved the policy.

**11. PREVENT Risk Register update** (presentation)

Donna Trusler

This item was presented along with agenda item 4.

**12. Policy on Financial Support for Students 2023-2024 – Paper 006– For approval**

Donna Trusler

Donna reminded the Corporation that this policy was annually reviewed and the latest iteration was ready for approval.

Donna outlined how the College was monitoring attendance and considering whether funding of bus passes was working as intended for some cohorts of students.

Governors asked why there was a sum of £33k overall household income indicated in the policy, under which students could then access financial support, and whether this was an arbitrary amount. Donna reported that this threshold meant that the College was acting more generously than universities, and that it was a formula-based calculation which the College used.

Governors asked whether students in receipt of funds were expected to sign to agree to the College's expectations around attendance. Donna confirmed that students were asked to sign the Learner Agreement and that PPMs discussed any matter where behaviour and attendance was going awry with these students.

Governors asked whether payment of bursaries provided to vulnerable students were considered ongoing on an individual basis or whether they were subject to the same set of criteria applied to all bursary students. Donna confirmed they were considered on an individual case basis. Any student at risk of having their bursary stopped is flagged to staff and they can interject and provide reasons why this should not be the case.

The Corporation approved the policy.

## **EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT GOVERNANCE**

**13. Governor tenures and recruitment**

Philip Parkinson

Philip reported that the Corporation has two vacancies for External Governors due to the departure of Jo Cooke and the fact that Amrik Singh's second term of office concludes at the end of May. To this end, an interview panel comprising members of the Governance & Search Committee recommended to the Corporation the appointment of two new External Governors – Nikki O'Brien and Sarah Thomson.

Nikki and Sarah were individually invited to introduce themselves and outline their backgrounds and motivations for becoming a Governor. They then left the meeting room whilst their positions were considered.

The Corporation approved both nominations as External Governors and the appointments were confirmed to both candidates as they re-entered the meeting room. Appointments are dependent upon the return of clean DBS and section 128 checks. Nikki has agreed to join the Audit & Risk Committee from September 2023. Sarah has expressed an interest in observing a number of committees in operation before thinking about how her skill and experience can best be deployed. She will observe the Governance & Search Committee meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> June.

A further External Governor vacancy will arise when Stuart Dawkins leaves the Governor role at the end of August. At present this remains unfilled.

As Ing'utu is leaving the College, we will have an immediate vacancy for a Staff Governor. Ing'utu's term of office was due to end on 28<sup>th</sup> January 2024. Aaron Winterton's term of office also concludes on 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023. The Corporation will therefore be advertising for Staff Governors in the early autumn term.

Wayne Allsopp's sabbatical runs to the end of the academic year. Jim Philips' sabbatical runs until January 2024. Jimmy Zachariah has also requested a sabbatical for family reasons, for the remainder of this academic year until the first Corporation meeting of the autumn term 2023. The Corporation approved Jimmy's request for a sabbatical.

The Corporation proposed co-opting Amrik Singh on to the Governance & Search Committee for a minimum period of one year, as a Co-opted Member, to support work on a plan to diversify the Board further and increase representation from communities which the College serves. Shamir Ghumra has also kindly agreed to support this work.

After Stuart Dawkins concludes his term of office in August, the Corporation proposed that he joins the Vaughan Endowment Fund Committee as a Co-opted Member.

Both co-options were approved by the Corporation.

#### **14. Appointment of Vice Chair**

Rachel Middleton

Rachel reminded the Corporation of the process of appointing a Vice Chair. She reported that there had been a single candidate nominated by two External Governors – Joyce Black. As the position was unopposed, there was no requirement for an election process, however members of the Corporation were given the opportunity to raise any queries or objections via the Clerk and Chair, in advance of this meeting. No queries or objections were received. The Corporation approved the appointment of Joyce Black for a two-year period 2023 -2025. **Action RM** to confirm outcome to Joyce Black

### **ROUND-UP**

#### **15. Any Other Business**

- Reminder that the Governance & Search Committee is meeting at 4pm on Weds 14<sup>th</sup> June and an Extraordinary Remuneration Committee meeting takes place on Weds 28<sup>th</sup> June at 4pm. The Clerk confirmed that additional members of the Remuneration Committee were being sought for this particular meeting.
- Reminder that the Audit & Risk Committee meeting will be convening on Tues 6<sup>th</sup> June at 5.30pm.
- Thank you to all Governors attending Committee meetings who are part of the usual membership and special thanks to those who have stepped in to ensure we remain quorate and to enable our committee structure to run this year.
- A Governor raised the issue of artificial intelligence and asked for this to be tabled for discussion at a future Corporation meeting. **Action RM**

#### 16. Confidentiality

Subject to discussions during the meeting, the Corporation considered there to be no confidential matters.

#### 17. Next Corporation Meeting

Wednesday 28 June 2023, 5:00pm, Room G01, University Road campus

#### Action List

<b>Actions arising from 24 May 2023 Corporation meeting</b>	<b>Who is responsible?</b>	<b>Date for completion</b>
Confirm appointment as Vice Chair of Corporation 2023-25 to Joyce Black	RM	asap
SG and NMcG to contact Carolyn Davies to support College work on sustainability	SG, NMcG, CD	
Set a specific target for GCSE attendance for 2023/24 and to report on this to the Corporation	AJ	At appropriate points on the 2023/24 Business Plan
Provide a bar chart outlining the spread of attendance percentages, as part of future attendance reports to the Corporation.	AJ	At appropriate points on the 2023/24 Business Plan
Table discussion about Artificial Intelligence on a Corporation agenda.	RM	At an appropriate point on the 2023/24 Business Plan
<b>Actions arising from 29 March 2023 Corporation meeting</b>	<b>Who is responsible?</b>	<b>Date for completion</b>
Governors to progress setting up their WIFI access and WQE email address	All Governors for whom this remains an issue	urgent
Governors to complete Governor insight visits by Friday 26 <sup>th</sup> May 2023	All Governors	By 26 <sup>th</sup> May 2023
<b>Standing item</b>	<b>Who is responsible?</b>	<b>Date for completion</b>
To refer any matter which could be externally assured to the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee	All Governors	

Signature: .....

Date: .....

Chair of the Corporation