

WQE & Regent College Group

MINUTES

Corporation Meeting 28 June 2023, 17:00, University Road
Campus

Members of the Corporation in attendance:

Philip Parkinson (Chair), Orhan Ahmed, Joyce Black, Stuart Dawkins, Shamir Ghumra, Bernadette Green, Upneet Kang, Julia Pastuszak, Paul Wilson, Aaron Winterton

Other attendees:

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

Apologies:

Sofie Dadge, Shelley Harvey, Neil McGhee, Nikki O'Brien

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting. Apologies were received from Sofie Dadge, Neil McGhee and Nikki O'Brien.

Shelley Harvey has decided to stand down as a Governor at this present time, however the Corporation was asked to vote on Shelley becoming a Co-opted Member of the Audit & Risk Committee, based on her financial qualifications and experience.

The Corporation voted in favour of Shelley's co-option.

The Chair confirmed this meeting to be Stuart Dawkins' last in the role as External Governor. He thanked Stuart for his significant contribution as former Chair of the Corporation and as a Governor over a number of years. A presentation was made to Stuart on behalf of the Corporation.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in agenda items.

3. Minutes and matters arising- Paper 001

The minutes of the meeting were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

The following actions were completed during the intervening period between meetings:

- Confirm appointment as Vice Chair of Corporation 2023-25 to Joyce Black
- Governors to complete Governor insight visits by Friday 25 May 2023

OVERSIGHT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION

4. Principal's Update - Presentation (to follow) - For information and questions

Paul Wilson

The Principal's Update highlighted the following matters:

- An update on applications received and offers of places made to students to date

- Completion of student welcome days
- Futurewise event – preparing students for their next steps beyond WQE
- Industrial action – impacting on one Staff training day and one student teaching day
- Visit of the Shadow Minister for Education, FE & Skills – providing an opportunity to discuss the place of Sixth Form Colleges within the sector, as well as the Accountability Statement.
- The success of the recent Culture Day celebrated by students

OVERSIGHT OF FINANCE, RESOURCES & ASSETS

5. Staffing overview 2023-2024 and beyond - Paper002 -For information and questions Paul Wilson

The Chair reminded Governors that they had requested an annual report on staffing numbers and those falling into the retirement window, to give a view to the Corporation about the stability of staffing and likely requirement for succession planning. The data was broken down across functions and curriculum areas, highlighting where the impact of retirement could be most significant in the short term.

6. Feedback from the Audit & Risk Committee meeting - 06 June 2023 Joyce Black

Joyce confirmed that the external auditors were present at the Committee meeting. Governors received a thorough briefing on the ILR from Becca Perry which gave them a clearer understanding of the complexity of data, checking across systems and platforms and of the compliance requirements for doing so, especially in terms of impact on funding. Governors understood that the ILR is a record which contains a range of data for every student that can be used indirectly to inform performance and improvement monitoring and activities at the College. This includes records of student and their key characteristics, provision and support which students receive to support their academic and wellbeing needs, It also includes records of financial support received through bursaries and records of attendance on programmes as required for ESFA funding claims and use in benchmarking.

6.1 External audit plan for year ending 31 July 2023 — Paper 003 -For approval

The Audit & Risk Committee considered the plan and noted the activity planned for June to December 2023. The Corporation approved the external audit plan.

6.2 External assurance programme 2023 - 2024 – Paper 004 -For approval

Joyce reminded the Corporation that this is a dynamic programme and any requests for additional areas for external assurance activity should be directed to the Committee from members of the Corporation. Joyce confirmed that the External Review of Governance was planned for 2023/24 and that work had already been undertaken by the Clerk and the Vice Chair. A set of criteria is being used to evaluate each of the ERG providers and from this audit activity, a shortlist of providers will be drawn up to interview. A recommendation will be presented to the Corporation.

Work on the Individual Learner Record in 2023/24 will be considered by the Committee, informed by the outcome of the external audit work in June 2023.

An external review of the catering provision is planned, along with a range of other external assurance activity in line with the programme agreed with the Committee.

IT security and disaster recovery work will also form part of the external assurance

programme.

6.3 Risk Register and significant risk action plan – Paper 005-For information and questions

The Corporation noted rising and falling risks, which the Audit & Risk Committee discussed at length at their meeting in early June 2023.

7. May management accounts – Paper 006

Carolyn Davies

The Corporation noted the management accounts. These included the latest forecast for the year ending 31st July 2023. Carolyn confirmed the latest forecast was based on an assumption that there would be no more cost-of-living pay settlements relating to the year ending 31 July 2023. As a consequence this has improved the forecast and will impact on the figures in the three-year financial plan.

8. Three-year financial plan and approval of next year's budget -For approval

Carolyn Davies

8.1 Cover Note - Paper 007a

8.2 Commentary on Financial Plan - Paper 007b

8.3 Extracts from Financial Plan - Paper 007c

The Corporation noted assumptions about lagged student numbers, as well as information relating to capital expenditure, and the reasons for a forecast reduction in cash balances over the life of the forecasts.

Carolyn highlighted to the Corporation, the College's financial health grading over the life of the Plan.

A grading of Requires Improvement means that there would be a level of intervention by the ESFA. New financial health methodology is being proposed, with different criteria. If this is taken forwards, then it will have an impact on the whole sector.

The forecast for 2024/25 was included for illustrative purposes, and features adjustments based on assumptions about the Phase 3 estates project as well as cost-of-living pay increases and a 3.5% increase in the funding rate. There is no assumption that a pay grant to cover any additional salary costs will be made to colleges. No assumption has been made that additional funding will be secured during the course of the three-year financial plan.

Carolyn provided an update on how the Phase 3 estates works will be funded. Costs for this may be higher than anticipated in the bid and the timing of the announcement of the award of funds from the Post-16 Capacity Fund makes delivery within a specified timeline more challenging.

Carolyn outlined the benefits and disadvantages of using a framework agreement to procure the Phase 3 contractor. The Corporation approved a single source procurement route.

Carolyn provided an update on energy efficiency and decarbonisation work.

Carolyn confirmed that approval of the budget included approval of the proposed spend on capital works. Carolyn also confirmed that the College would be considering a public sector decarbonisation bid in autumn 2023.

The College has appointed Bond Bryan to create a landscape master plan.

Governors asked questions about the teacher's pay award as well as the readiness for the College to submit an application for a public sector decarbonisation grant when the grant window opens.

She confirmed that work will be undertaken over the summer in readiness for a grant submission.

The Corporation approved the budget including capital and revenue spending.

9. Estates Update

Carolyn Davies

The estates update was rolled into discussion about the budget and financial forecasts above.

10. Student records software re-licensing and service contract - Paper 008 - For approval
Tim Rogers

Tim confirmed that the College has evaluated different providers but is content with the fee and service provided by Civica for the REMS software and would like to re-contract for a period of 4 years.

Governors asked how the contract compared with other providers and whether due diligence was completed with regards to this supplier. Tim confirmed that a consultant had guided the College in its choice and that whilst other software may look more attractive, REMS' functionality was appropriate for the College. As there are likely to be 2024/25 curriculum changes within the College there is an argument for retaining the current software and reconsidering need later down the line.

11. Staff wellbeing strategy update - Paper 009 - For information and questions
Carolyn Davies

The Corporation noted the paper. Carolyn informed the Corporation that the HR team had collectively kept wellbeing matters on the agenda, despite a postholder leaving during the year who oversaw this work.

12. Health & Safety Policy - Paper 010 – For approval
Carolyn Davies

The policy was approved by the Corporation.

OVERSIGHT OF STUDENT OUTCOMES & EXPERIENCES

13. Student Mental Health Report - Paper 011 - For information and questions
Donna Trusler

Donna reminded the Corporation that they were receiving this paper in response to a request that Governors made when she shared a safeguarding report earlier in the year. Donna stated that the number of students reporting serious mental health needs was escalating. Support from CAMHS has been reduced which is having an even bigger impact on the College. Donna reported that a proportion of students require multiple interventions from the College welfare team.

There is additional work to undertake on getting students who identify as male to seek mental health support.

Work has been commenced on triangulating data to see if there is a link between students with EHCPs and those reporting mental health needs.

Donna reported on the plan to start focus groups on mental health during the 2023/24 academic

year.

A Governor recommended that Donna pursue contact with the charity CALM to see if they could assist. **Action DT**

Governors asked whether there was a mechanism for reporting students' ongoing mental health concerns to universities to enable them to provide seamless support when students transition. Donna confirmed there is no mechanism to formally do so.

Governors asked how the student welfare team are being supported with their own mental health when dealing with students' traumas ongoing. Donna affirmed that staff receive supervision and that the team meets regularly to talk matters through and to look at strategies.

14. Equality and Diversity Annual Report - Paper 012 - For information and questions
Donna Trusler

Donna thanked Joyce for her support with language and content in the initial draft.

Donna confirmed that there had been a shift in practice – the team now only logs a specific mental health condition if this has been confirmed by a medical professional.

Donna reported that there had been a reduction in bursary funding since 2019 (over £205k reduction) and the number of students on roll has also increased in this timeframe meaning distribution of funds is more and more challenging.

15. Single equality scheme update and action plan - Paper 013a & Paper 013b
Donna Trusler

The Corporation approved the Single Equality Scheme.

Donna confirmed that a new Marketing & Equalities Officer starting at the College in July 2023, would be facilitating the action plan. The Single Equality Scheme is published on the College website.

16. Cross-College questionnaire outcomes - Paper 014 - For information and questions
Sarah Oldfield

Sarah drew attention to how positively students had responded.

The number of responses has increased since last year and stands at 1016.

The most improved scores are in the area of College catering provision.

The highest rated service for students was welfare and skills.

The second highest rated service for students was the careers programme and support.

The Corporation noted the report and congratulated Sarah and the College on the encouraging ratings.

Governors asked why there had been increased responses. Sarah reported that students had been asked to complete the questionnaire during PPM sessions. Sarah had also prompted staff ongoing and had provided updates on the numbers of students who had responded at a given time. As an incentive, two reward vouchers were also offered in a prize draw for entrants who had completed the questionnaire.

17. Teaching, Learning and Assessment Final Report 22/23 - Paper 015
Sarah Oldfield

Sarah confirmed that this year the focus has been on three priorities identified by Ofsted: Staff CPD, Performance Review and Development and QA processes around teaching and

learning.

Staff have received a list of training opportunities and external experts have been brought into deliver training. Additionally, the College has worked in partnership with other colleges. There have been buddy systems set up to encourage knowledge and skills transfer, particularly around learning about new systems.

Sarah reported on the impact of the small group tuition fund activity within College. Seventy six percent of students who have received support will now be looking to pass their qualifications, and over 40% will reach their minimum expected grades.

The Chair thanked Sarah for the report and acknowledged the significant progress made in teaching and learning during this academic year.

EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT GOVERNANCE

18. Feedback from the Governance & Search Committee meeting -14 June 2023

Joyce Black

Joyce confirmed that the Clerk had revised all of the terms of reference for committees based on the advice from the external auditors due to the ONS reclassification of colleges back into the public accounts, but also to recognise some changes in practice and to make more overt the inclusion of Co-opted Members.

18.1 Revised terms of reference for the Governance & Search Committee - Paper 016

18.2 Revised terms of reference for the Audit & Risk Committee - Paper 017

18.3 Revised terms of reference for the Remuneration Committee - Paper 018

18.4 Revised terms of reference for the Vaughan Endowment Committee - Paper 019

All the terms of reference were approved by the Corporation, subject to minor formatting changes.

19. Report from Clerk to Corporation on governance activity - Paper 020 - For information The Corporation noted the report from the Clerk.

Given the forthcoming work on re-tendering for external auditors and the External Review of Governance, as well as continued efforts to diversify the Board, the Corporation recognised that the objectives of the Clerk needed to be re-evaluated at the point of the mid-year performance review. **Action JB, PP and RM:** to conduct mid-year review and revise objectives appropriately.

A Governor commended the Corporation for its success in recruiting new Governors during the 2023/24 academic year.

ROUND-UP

20. Any Other Business

-The Corporation approved the appointment of a Remuneration Committee Chair who will be in position for the full academic year. This provides continuity of approach and provides the Clerk with a consistent person to support them with research and preparation of agendas, papers and minutes. To date a Chair has been appointed at the annual Remuneration Committee

meeting itself.

The Governance & Search Committee recommended the appointment of Shamir Ghumra to the position as Chair of the Remuneration Committee. The Corporation thanked Shamir and approved his appointment. An induction will follow. **Action SG, RM, JB and PP:** to plan and hold induction.

- Governors were encouraged to attend the end of year Studio 79 musical theatre show next academic year as this was of an excellent standard and really showcased what students have achieved.
- A Governor requested that any prospective governance meeting dates for 2023/24 be checked for clashes with any religious days/festivals: **Action RM**

21. Confidentiality

There were no confidential minutes or papers identified.

22. Next Corporation Meeting

To be finalised - tentatively Wednesday 04 October 2023, 5:00pm, Room G01, University Road campus

The meeting closed at 19:43 and was followed by a closed meeting for External and Parent Governors only.

23. Closed meeting for External and Parent Governors only

23.1 Feedback from the Extraordinary Remuneration Committee

Minutes are captured in a separate document.

Action List

Actions arising from 28 June 2023 Corporation meeting	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
Conduct mid-year performance review for Clerk and review objectives	JB, PP and RM	asap
Plan and conduct induction for new Remuneration Committee Chair	JB, PP, SG and RM	Early in the autumn term 2023
Check any prospective governance meeting dates for 2023/24 for clashes with any religious days/festivals	RM	asap
Actions arising from 24 May 2023 Corporation meeting	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
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
Actions arising from 29 March 2023 Corporation meeting	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
Governors to progress setting up their WIFI access and WOE email address	All Governors for whom this remains an issue	urgent
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:
Corporation Chair

Date: