

WQE & Regent College Group

Corporation Meeting 04 October 2023, 16:00, Room G01,
University Road campus

MINUTES

Members of the Corporation in attendance:

Philip Parkinson (Chair), Orhan Ahmed, Joyce Black, Sofie Dadge, Bernadette Green, Neil McGhee,
Sarah Thomson, Paul Wilson, Aaron Winterton

Other attendees:

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

Apologies:

Shamir Ghumra, Nikki O'Brien (Observer), Julia Pastuszek, Jimmy Zachariah

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the first Corporation meeting of the academic year.

Apologies were received from Shamir Ghumra, Nikki O'Brien, Julia Pastuszek and Jimmy Zachariah.

Special thanks were extended to Aaron Winterton whose term of office as a Staff Governor comes to a close at the end of November 2023.

The Chair reflected on feedback from other Governors about Aaron's commitment to the role over 12 years pre- and post-merger and her contribution to governance. A presentation will be made to Aaron by the Chair during November.

The Chair confirmed that Sarah Thomson now has voting rights as a full External Governor.

The Chair stated that Jim Phillips will return to the Corporation for the November 2023 meetings onwards, following his sabbatical.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in agenda items.

The Chair declared a business interest. He has been working as a consultant to APB (Leicester) LLP of which fellow Governor, Jim Phillips, is a Partner. This interest has been entered into the Register of Interests, maintained by the Clerk to Corporation.

3. Minutes and matters arising – Paper 001

The Corporation approved the minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 28 June 2023 as a correct record.

The action list was reviewed and updated accordingly.

The following actions had been completed during the intervening period between meetings and were subsequently removed from the action list:

- Conduct mid-year performance review for Clerk and review objectives- Completed 19th July 2023.
Objectives were revised to reflect the following substantive projects for 2023-24: a) Management of the process for re-tendering for the external auditors, b) management of the external review of governance; and
c) Recruitment and induction of External, Staff, Student Governors.

Plan and conduct induction for new Remuneration Committee Chair – completed on 15th September 2023

- Check any prospective governance meeting dates for 2023/24 for clashes with any religious days/festivals

The following action was rolled off the action list for the time being due to technical restrictions which require further investigation and alternative solutions:

- Governors to progress setting up their WIFI access and WOE email address

GOVERNOR BRIEFING AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

4. Safeguarding and PREVENT (Presentation)

Donna Trusler

Donna provides the national and local picture with regards to PREVENT and safeguarding matters. Themes covered included:

- Sharing objectives relating to Safeguarding
- Changes to *Keeping Children Safe in Education*
- Requirements for monitoring and filtering
- An update to the College Safeguarding Team
- New staff roles covering responsibilities for safeguarding and wellbeing
- Improved radio contact across campuses and linked to a central control room
- Introduction of scheme to anonymously report concerns
- An outline of ways in which students are triaged to ensure they receive appropriate support
- An analysis of student referrals for support during 2022-23
- Instances of cyber bullying through the use of social media

- Outline of Incel subculture, new online communication channels without regulation, County Lines and latest practices relating to distribution of illegal drugs

Donna reported that there continue to be significant volumes of students requiring support with their mental health. Eleven per cent of students currently state they have a mental health need.

Work is underway with staff to develop strategies to support higher levels of disclosure and requests for support from males.

Donna confirmed that there is usually a peak in support requests from November to January every academic year and that the Welfare & Skills Team is developing ideas to build additional capacity to meet demand during this period.

Governors asked questions about whether there had been any instances of malicious reporting with the introduction of anonymous reporting of concerns. Donna reported this had not been the case.

Governors asked about the volume of referrals the College had made to Channel over 2022-23.

5. Safeguarding young people

5.1 Annual Report - Paper 002a

Questions about this paper were addressed under the previous item.

5.2 Annual refresh of policy and procedure – Paper 002b – *For approval*

Donna Trusler

The Corporation approved the policy and procedure noting the changes made in relation to the latest iteration of *Keeping Children Safe in Education*.

The Chair asked the Corporation to note the new format for policies which include a top sheet outlining policy author, internal QA mechanism, and audiences.

6. PREVENT Risk Register – Paper 003 – *For information and questions*

Donna Trusler

The Corporation noted the paper.

Donna confirmed that the DfE had withdrawn funding for the PREVENT Young Leaders Programme, however due to the importance of the scheme, the College is continuing to fund this.

7. Update on prevention of sexual abuse action plan - Paper 004 – *For information and questions*

Donna Trusler

There has been an increase in the number of disclosures being made which relate to incidents on public transport. A further update will be presented to the Corporation at the January 2024 meeting. **Action DT**

OVERSIGHT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION

8. Principal's post-summer update

Paul Wilson – Presentation

The Principal's update covered the following themes:

- Headlines relating to student outcomes including impressive outcomes for students with known safeguarding issues and those with SEND
- Headlines relating to student destinations
- Student enrolments 2023-24 and a reminder that the capital build will enable additional enrolments for 2024-25
- Success@ Sixth parent/carer induction event
- Estates and health and safety matters
- Key priorities for 2023-24
- Leadership developments
- Confirmation that, following our own desktop assessment of being low risk, the College also commissioned an independent expert to carry out a visual survey too. No Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) has been identified on the Estate,

Governors asked whether the College invites its alumni back into College to inspire students. The Principal confirmed this to be the case and that there were many positive examples of this.

OVERSIGHT OF STUDENT OUTCOMES & EXPERIENCES

9. Student Outcomes headlines 2022-23 - Paper 005

Tim Rogers

Tim provided some headline data to Governors. Members of the Student Outcomes Task & Finish Group would be looking at the data in granular detail during their meeting on 10 October. All Governors were encouraged to attend and to inform the Clerk if they required a meeting link.

Tim confirmed that:

- A Level Achievement Rates were now above national average based on the pre-pandemic 2019 baseline that awards were returned to this year.
- Entry Level and Level 1 provision is small at the College and achievement at these levels was lower than expected. An analysis will be considered by the Student Outcomes Task & Finish Group.
- Level 3 vocational courses (2021-2023) retained less students than expected and this affected the overall achievement rate which is well below the pre-pandemic national benchmarks
- Level 2 English and Maths GCSE outcomes, which are key for progression, were very high, relative to the national benchmarks and improved again in terms of Achievement and High Grades and there was a more mixed picture in relation to other GCSEs

- Level 2 vocation courses retained more students than expected, but this high retention was counterbalanced by a lower pass rate, resulting in Achievement Rate falling. This will be considered further in the Task and Finish Group meeting.

In response to questions, Tim reported there were some localised curriculum area issues to address in terms of GSCE entries relating to decisions on either the Higher or Foundation papers, to ensure students secured the optimal results based on their abilities.

The College has already revised its level 2 enrolment processes to ensure enhanced matching of students to courses this year, informed by a clearer evaluation of potential to progress to Level 3 and succeed.

Governors asked about the use of the data dashboard and the level of confidence in its use to guide interventions and impact positively on student outcomes. Tim confirmed that a consultant had been utilised as part of the roll out and would be supporting staff in its use.

Governors also asked whether the College was measuring valued added, noting that the normal systems and reference points for this were affected by the difficulties arising from CAG and TAG based outcomes for the current cohorts.

10. Curriculum Policy - annual review – Paper 006 – *For approval*

Tim Rogers

The policy had been updated to reflect the Accountability Agreement and to reflect the College's enrichment offer. The policy was approved by the Corporation.

11. Permanent exclusions from College

Andrew Jackson

11.1 Report on 2022-23 permanent exclusions – Paper 007 – *For information and questions*

The Corporation noted the report. Governors asked whether there were external factors impacting on permanent exclusion or whether the issues were educational. Andrew reported that the exclusions were based on serious incidences of one-off violence.

11.2 Permanent Exclusion Policy – annual review – Paper 008 – *For approval*

The proposed revisions to the policy were noted. The policy was approved by the Corporation.

12. Admissions Policy - annual review - Paper 009 – *For approval*

Donna Trusler

The Corporation approved the policy subject to correction of a typo under section 7.7.

OVERSIGHT OF FINANCE, RESOURCES & ASSETS

13. Audit & Risk Committee Chair recommendations

Joyce Black

Joyce reported that the Committee had not convened on 26 September as planned, as inquoracy was confirmed on the date of the meeting itself. There had not been a viable opportunity to meet at an alternative time before the Corporation meeting.

Joyce asked Governors to consider serving on the Audit & Risk Committee for the year ahead if they have capacity.

Sofie Dadge confirmed she could attend the meeting on 28 November 2023.

Joyce confirmed the Committee was recommending to the Corporation that papers relating to the Regulatory Self-Assessment Questionnaire and the Procurement Report should be referred to the 28 November 2023 meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee.

Both papers relating to sub-contracting were added to the Corporation agenda.

The paper relating to arrangements for re-tendering for external auditors had been circulated to the Audit & Risk Committee by email circulation for feedback or endorsement. The Committee agreed to the arrangements outlined in the paper. The Chair of the Corporation reviewed the paper and on behalf of the Corporation, agreed to take Chair's action to approve the arrangements. The Corporation accepted the recommendations and approved the Chair's action.

Joyce confirmed that the current Co-opted Member of the Audit & Risk Committee would not be a member of the external audit tendering sub-committee due to conflicted interest, as an employee of one of the companies the Corporation will invite to tender.

The Clerk to Corporation will manage the re-tendering process and draw upon the thorough documentation already in place to support the tendering process. A timeline of activity has been planned and involves briefings on how to audit tenders for members of the committee, as well as invitations to shortlisted providers to present to the committee. The current external auditor will be invited to apply along with four other companies with experience of auditing within the college sector.

Governors asked if there were barriers to selecting an external auditor which does not appear on the DfE's recommended CPC External Audit Framework for the East Midlands (Lot 15). It was confirmed that this was not the case.

Governors also asked if they were duty bound to accept the proposal which was the cheapest. The external auditor tendering criteria includes a score relating to fees, but this is not the overall determining factor.

Joyce confirmed that on 15 February 2024, the sub-committee will listen to presentations from providers, subsequently make a recommendation to the Audit & Risk Committee at its meeting on 12 March 2024 and the Corporation will be asked to approve the recommendation at its meeting on 24 March 2024.

14. Monthly management accounts (July 2023) – Paper 010 – For information and questions

Carolyn Davies

The provisional outturn for the year is a surplus of £590k. This outturn is subject to audit and compares to a deficit in the revised budget (November 2022) of £1,043k and a surplus in the latest forecast (May 2023) of £365k.

Following a robust forecast exercise in May, the principal factors for the increased surplus of £225k for the year are:

- The vast majority of the planned summer works, budgeted at £140k, were undertaken in August 2023, or related to items that were capital rather than revenue in nature
- A decrease in the FRS 102 charge of £58k to £142k; the amount in the revised budget and reforecast was £200k based on the Hyman Robertson pension reports received in September 2022.

The Cashflow forecast for 2023/24 has improved by some £700k compared to the forecast in May 2023 due to the revised 16-18 ESFA funding allocation for 2023/24.

The financial health of the College for 2022/23 is provisionally calculated as being Outstanding.

Governors asked questions about the likely teachers' and support staff pay settlements. Carolyn confirmed it was the College's policy to apply the recommendations from the SFCA following nationally negotiated pay settlements for the sixth form college sector.

15. Capital works update

Carolyn Davies

15.1 Phase 2A work completion

Carolyn presented a summary of progress against the overarching estates masterplan, approved by the Corporation in June 2020. The Phase 2A project completed in August 2023, on time and is currently estimated to be some £200k under budget. The Phase 2A works were part funded by the energy efficiency grant and capital allocation received from the DfE during 2022/23. Energy efficient measures included window replacement and LED lighting.

A formal review of the Estates Masterplan in terms of progress to date and future priorities is planned to be built into the revised budget for 2023/24.

15.2 Phase 3 – C Block refurbishment and extension

The Phase 3 project (refurbishment and extension of the C Block) is part funded through a grant from the Post-16 Capacity Fund of £2.5m. Stage 3 design is complete and the project will create a net gain of eight teaching rooms rather than the five which were originally planned. The application for planning permission was submitted on 15 September with a determination

anticipated for December 2023. Project completion is planned for August 2024.

A contractor has been appointed through the Pagabo Framework, with a start on site expected in January 2024. The Stage 3 cost estimate for the project is £3.8m, funded by sums already allocated in the College's financial plans and the underspend from the Phase 2A works.

15.3 Decarbonisation

A carbon efficiency technical feasibility study was undertaken during Summer 2023 at the Regent Road campus, considering the range of measures that could be progressed, costs estimates and the likelihood of being successful with an application for funding to the PSDS. Having regard for the cost estimates, the maximum amount of grant funding available to the College, the estimated remaining life expectancy for the heating system and the contribution that would be required from the College, no application for PSDS funding would be made in autumn 2023. The risks and opportunities in relation to decarbonising the College's estate were noted.

16. Recruitment & Selection Policy and Procedure (annual review) - Paper 011

Carolyn Davies

The policy references the latest changes to *Keeping Children Safe in Education*. Staff are required to complete an annual declaration confirming they have disclosed all appropriate safeguarding information, including criminal convictions, during the last year.

The policy was approved by the Corporation.

17. Sub-contracting:

17.1 Policy – Paper 012a

Sarah confirmed that the College is required to itemise the percentage spends on specific items, hence the table in Appendix B.

Governors noted and approved the policy.

17.2 Provider Review, Assurance and Compliance Declarations - Paper 012b

Sarah Oldfield

The Corporation noted the paper.

EFFICIENT & EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

18. Recommendations from 04 October Governance & Search Committee

Joyce Black

Joyce confirmed that Governor Exit Interviews had taken place with those Governors whose tenures had concluded during the 2022-23 academic year. The main finding was in relation to the role of Staff Governor and their role within the Corporation. Some minor changes to the induction materials for Student, Parent and External Governors will be made to reinforce the importance of Staff Governor contributions and their unique insights. An overhaul of the Staff

Governor induction materials will be undertaken by the Clerk to Corporation and piloted with new Staff Governors joining in 2023-24.

The Chair of Governors has completed all of the annual informal discussions with every Governor. This was a useful exercise and will be embedded in future years.

The Chair and Vice Chair annual performance reviews will be undertaken in October 2023.

The Committee reviewed the plan of governance work for the Clerk to Corporation as well as the revised objectives for the Clerk, as determined at a meeting in July 2023. The objectives focus on delivering the re-tendering process for the external audit contract, managing the External Review of Governance and maintaining and developing activity in relation to on-boarding new Governors. The Clerk's hours have been increased this academic year by an extra half day due to the significant additional workload around strategic governance priorities for the year ahead.

Joyce requested that all Governors ensure they respond to requests for action or responses in a timely manner.

18.1 Findings from the annual self-review of governance – Paper 013

The Corporation approved the grading of 'Good' which will be reported in the Annual Report.

Questionnaire completion rates remain disappointing. The questionnaire will be launched in May 2024 for the year ahead. This is in a bid to encourage completion during the academic year. All Governors were asked to note they will be required to complete the questionnaire.

There are a number of familiarisation/training actions which the Clerk will address to ensure all Governors are as briefed as possible, including a reminder of the Nolan Principles.

18.2 Update on progress with External Review of Governance

A desk-based audit against agreed selection criteria was undertaken by the ERG working party. This resulted in a clear shortlist of two companies – SK and R respectively. The working party will be interviewing both shortlisted companies with a view to bringing a recommendation to the Corporation at its meeting on 15 November 2023.

Sarah Thomson has agreed to join the working party to support with discussions at such point that the ERG company has been appointed and work commences.

18.3 Revised Standing Orders – Paper 014 – *For approval*

The Clerk had undertaken a thorough review of the Standing Orders.

The following matters have now been incorporated: a more informed introduction, expansion of sections relating to documentation and proceedings at meetings, a section on Chair's action, inclusion of reference to Co-opted

Members as well as Governors, and a comprehensive list of governance-related documentation itemised for the first time as an appendix.

The Corporation approved the revised Standing Orders.

18.4 Business Plan 2023-24 – Paper 015 – *For approval*

The Corporation welcomed the Business Plan. The Clerk confirmed this had already been reviewed by the ELT to determine whether the timings of papers for the Corporation were appropriate.

18.5 Terms of reference – Task & Finish Groups – Paper 016 – *For approval*

There were no changes proposed to the terms of reference for the Student Outcomes Task & Finish Group. There were some minor changes to the Estates & Finance Task & Finish Group terms of reference to remove reference to banking covenants, due to the repayment of a loan. The Corporation approved both terms of reference.

18.6 Arrangements for the nomination and appointment of Staff and Student Governors – *For information*

Staff and Student Governor recruitment will open shortly. The Teaching Governor will be advertised first, before the October half term, as there is an immediate vacancy for this role. The appointee will be approved at the November Corporation meeting. The Student Governor (academic year cycle) will be advertised shortly. The Support Staff Governor will be advertised just after half term with a view that the appointee be approved at the December 2023 Corporation meeting.

18.7 Governor Insights programme – review and forward look

This agenda item was not discussed at the Corporation but was discussed at the preceding Governance & Search Committee. The Clerk will issue the revised protocol to Governors. This continues the practice of pairing new Governors with more experienced Governors as well as Governors completing a visit to a curriculum and a support area respectively. Co-opted Members will be invited to participate in the Insights Programme, a suggestion proposed by one of the Co-opted Members themselves.

19. Any Other Business

Governors were encouraged to participate in the Open Day across both campuses on 04 November 2023, or to take part in the College's Remembrance event.

Governors asked whether there was anything tangible to report to the Corporation based on the government's announcement about the proposed Advanced British Standard qualifications.

20. Confidentiality

Subject to discussions during the meeting, the Corporation considered the following matters confidential – Estates Update presentation.

21. Next Meeting

Wednesday 15 November 2023, 17:00, Room G01, University Road campus.

Action List

Actions arising from 04 October 2023 Corporation meeting	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
Update on sexual abuse action plan to be tabled at January 2024 Corporation meeting	DT	By 24/01/24
Actions arising from 24 May 2023 Corporation meeting	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
Amended - NMcG to contact Carolyn Davies to support College work on decarbonisation	NMcG, CD	As soon as possible
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
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	

Signature:

Chair of Corporation

Date: