

WQE & Regent College Group

Corporation Meeting
20 March 2024, 17:00 – 19:00, Room G01, University Road Campus

Members of the Corporation in attendance:

Philip Parkinson (Chair), Frances Bettsworth, Joyce Black, Ibrahim Fadiga, Shamir Ghumra, Bernadette Green, Nikki O'Brien, Alison Stone, Sarah Thomson & Paul Wilson

Other attendees:

Carolyn Davies, Ashiyah Banglawala, Sarah Oldfield, Tim Rogers, Peter Ryder (Observer, Rockborn), Donna Trusler

Apologies:

Orhan Ahmed, Tia Brookes, Sofie Dadge, Andrew Jackson, Neil McGhee, Jim Phillips

MINUTES

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

Welcome to Ibrahim Fadiga, calendar year Student Governor nominated by the Student Executive.

Welcome to Peter Ryder in his capacity as ERG reviewer and Observer.

Apologies were received from Orhan Ahmed, Tia Brookes, Sofie Dadge, Andrew Jackson, Neil McGhee and Jim Phillips.

Joyce would be talking on behalf of the Audit & Risk Committee at the meeting.

The Corporation noted the timed agenda. The Chair made presenters aware of their time allocation and outlined that the meeting would conclude by 19:00.

The Corporation members were asked to pose follow-up questions once presentations had been concluded to ensure the effective flow of the meeting.

The Corporation was made aware that decisions would be required for the following agenda items:

- Agenda item 6 - Five-year Financial Plans
- Agenda item 7 - Recommendations from the 11 March 2024 Estates & Finance Task & Finish Group
- Agenda item 9.1 Approval of preferred external audit service provider
- Agenda item 13 - Terms of reference for the Governance Codes & Frameworks Task & Finish Group
- Agenda item 14.1 Whistleblowing Policy

2. Declarations of Interest

None

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

The Corporation agreed that the minutes from the Corporation meeting held on 24 January 2024 represented an accurate record of proceedings, subject to redaction of the paper accompanying agenda item 6 – Post-16 Capacity Project Update which contains proprietary information. The minutes will be revised accordingly and re-issued to the Corporation by the Clerk. **Action RM**

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

- Draft and issue questionnaire relating to strategic priorities to Governors
- Evaluate data and present findings for discussion at the February Student Outcomes Task & Finish Group meeting
- Arrange date for Estates & Finance Task & Finish Group to convene ahead of March Corporation meeting
- Provide an analysis of data looking at reasons why some students leave at the end of Year 1 and do not progress into their second year of study- Present to the Student Outcomes Task & Finish Group in February 2024
- Cascade on to PPM team the list of Sutton Trust universities
- Inform the Clerk if experienced Governors would like to attend the refresher session with ELT on 28th Feb.
- Inform Donna if Governors would like to attend PREVENT Day on 7th March
- Update the Corporation on whether fire assessment actions have been expedited – covered at the Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 12.03.24
- Table for discussion at SO T&F Group meeting in Feb a discussion on whether there is a link between disadvantaged or SEND students and retention
- External Review of Governance – return complete questionnaires in a timely manner

OVERSIGHT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION

4. **Principal's Update**

Paul Wilson

Paul's presentation has been saved on GovernorHub.

Attention was drawn to the four priority areas of People Strategy that emerged from the recent Governors' Conference – Recruitment and Staff Profile, Retention and Engagement, Resilience and Support, Refreshing and Developing. Question – What will it look like when it comes back to the board?

Response – ELT are looking to formulate a 3 – 5-year strategy, the People Strategy will set out goals in the four highlighted areas which will translate to operational action plans, with a focus on key impacts.

For staff it will be a plan that will also relate to the existing processes underpinning PRD discussions & goal setting. A Governor noted the use of 'People' as being more positive and inclusive than workforce and the Principal confirmed that this had been deliberate.

The summary of feedback on the need and opportunities to prioritise actions relating to student recruitment reach was also highlighted.

Following discussion about the next steps proposed, the Chair confirmed this had captured an appropriate summary of the outcomes from the recent conference and thanked all who had been able to participate. The proposed next steps were agreed and the Principal was asked to incorporate these within the next edition of the College's Strategic Plan in due course.

5. PREVENT Update

Donna Trusler

5.1 PREVENT Risk Register - Paper 002a – *For noting*

5.2 PREVENT Action Plan - Paper 002b – *For noting*

Donna Trusler highlighted that the Risk Register provides a headline summary, and the Action Plan has the detail of the College's response to those risks, with the two having been deliberately separated and cross-referenced. Donna confirmed that the documents had been subject to extensive scrutiny by the relevant regional PREVENT experts and WQE's approach has also been considered as a positive example for use in discussions with the national agencies and The Home Office,

Some of the activity taking place since the action plan went live has included:

- An external police officer from the Counter Terrorism Unit coming to talk to staff members to support PREVENT training.
- Two governors attending staff PREVENT days.
- Work built into PPM sessions

The action plan is further embedded through the staff bulletin/newsletter and a detailed programme of staff updating. External speakers are invited into College like the Counter Terrorism Police Unit, thereafter a staff survey is completed. Following the police event, 92% of staff confirmed they agree to the presentation and understand its contents.

To embed responsibility ELT have been attending Learning Walks where they are testing out whether British Values are being embedded into classroom learning. They will share feedback from the Learning Walks at the next Corporation Meeting.

New staff members undergo a rigorous induction programme on their first two days to instill safeguarding values from day one.

Next steps are to get all staff on board in taking responsibility for Safeguarding.

Donna was asked to remove a member of staff's details from clause 10.2 of the PREVENT documents.

OVERSIGHT OF FINANCE, RESOURCES & ASSETS

6. **Five-year financial plans** – Paper 003 - *For information and approval* Carolyn Davies

The Corporation carefully considered the financial forecasts for the 5 years ending 3 July 2027. The forecast for 2024/25 includes ESFA income calculated using the released funding factors. The actual allocation has now been received and is not materially different to that included in the forecast. The forecasts assume that the Phase 3 project progresses with the accompanying growth in student numbers of 150, phased over 2024/25 and 2025/26. The forecasts also include a number of capital and condition projects as set out in the paper.

The Corporation considered the key risks and assumptions within the forecasts, estimated cash reserves at 31 July for each year of the forecast and the key solvency ratios. It was noted that the investment in the Phase 3 project would lead to a reduction in cash balances at 31 July 2025, but a positive cashflow from operations is forecast to be generated in future years due to the forecast break even position on the Income and Expenditure account. Overall financial health is forecast to remain as Good/Outstanding during the period under review.

The Corporation adopted the 5-year financial forecasts.

7. **Recommendations from the 11 March 2024 Estates & Finance Task & Finish Group** – *For Corporation approval* Carolyn Davies

The Estates and Finance Task & Finish Group met on 11th March and:

- Considered the five-year financial forecasts (2022/23 to 2026/27) in detail and tested key risks and assumptions
- Considered the affordability of the next steps of the estates masterplan, including Phase 3 (C Building)
- Carefully considered the risks and opportunities of progressing with the Phase 3 project and the different value engineered options presented by project management team
- The Group reviewed if there was a better investment opportunity for the College

The different options for Phase 3 were debated, having regard to retaining as much flexibility as possible including in relation to the maintenance of the temporary accommodation at Regent Road and the future growth of the College.

The Group carefully considered the availability of sufficient cash reserves for future investments in College infrastructure and the fabric of the buildings, including essential heating systems and increasing the

sustainability of the estate through window and lighting replacement and upgrades.

The Phase 3 project is part-funded by a £2.5m grant from the Post-16 Capacity Fund. The DfE have confirmed that the grant received in relation to expenditure incurred before January 2024 is not repayable. If the College do not proceed with the project, the unspent grant (some £2.2million) will be cancelled.

It was noted that the Phase 3 project would require formal consent from the Department of Education to amend the scope to phase the growth in student numbers over two years. A formal application has been made and an outcome promised by 27 March 2024.

The Estates and Finance Task and Finish Group recommended that the College progressed with VE Option 1 of the Phase 3 Project.

After careful consideration, the Corporation agreed to progress with VE Option 1, subject to approval from the DfE in relation to the Post-16 Capacity Fund Scope Change request process.

The Corporation agreed a spend of £250,000 to progress an early works programme, if required, covering demolition and roof repairs.

8. Monthly management accounts – January 2024 – Paper 004 - *To note*

Carolyn Davies

Carolyn presented the management accounts to the Corporation, highlighting the latest forecast for 2023/24 in Section 1. The in-year reforecast would be updated monthly in the management accounts for the rest of the financial year.

9. Feedback from the Audit & Risk Committee meeting, 12 March 2024

Joyce Black

Feedback was presented to the Audit & Risk Committee in relation to the monitoring of outstanding actions following fire risk assessment. The College has invested in a software solution for tracking all required compliance actions, including those arising from Fire Risk Assessment. An update regarding the use of compliance software will be brought to the next Audit & Risk Committee meeting in June.

The meeting also considered the latest position in relation to the External Assurance programme, with further updates due to the June Audit & Risk Committee meeting.

9.1 Recommendation of preferred external audit service provider (JB)

Paper 005– *For questions and approval*

The Clerk issued an outline of the work which has underpinned the external audit re-tendering process so that the Corporation has the assurances it needs to accept a recommendation from the External Audit Re-tendering Panel (whose

membership was drawn from the Audit & Risk Committee. The Panel comprised Neil, Orhan and Joyce, with Carolyn also providing input into the tender process. This project was led by the Clerk). Corporation members can view any of the tender documents upon request. Members are asked, based on the assurances outlined in Paper 005, to approve the recommendation by the re-tendering panel to approve the re-appointment of RSM for the next 3 years, subject to the usual annual re-appointment processes required under the Joint Audit Code of Practice.

Thanks were conveyed to the reviewers on the panel for undertaking the role with such professionalism and rigour on behalf of the Corporation.

The Corporation approved the appointment of RSM as the new external auditors.

OVERSIGHT OF STUDENT OUTCOMES & EXPERIENCES

10. Verbal Report from the Student Outcomes Task & Finish Group meeting – 13 February 2024

Bernie Green

Bernie provided a detailed summary of the Group's recent meeting and associated activity. This included data shared showing comparison of different student sub-groups to February 2024 which suggested improvements in most areas and key targeted groups. The small EHCP cohort was flagged as a concern this year. Donna Trusler reminded the Corporation that the small numbers in this group and the significant differences in the specific nature of needs year by year, makes analysis of this group more difficult to compare statistically to last year.

ELT confirmed that staff are using the dashboard much more and intervening much earlier on to support students and to reduce the number of students dropping out or failing their course. The staff are currently within the infancy stage of using the dashboards and further CPD training session will be provided to them to use the data effectively.

Bernie expressed a view on behalf of those present at the Group, that significant strides forward had occurred in the type and extent of data used for analysis and that this was beginning to have positive impacts on targeting the scarce resources of the College to deliver targeted improvement across a range of areas. In addition to the targeted work of the Group, it was proposed that headline statistics across courses be a feature in future meetings too, to aid in year monitoring.

Bernie also encouraged all Governors to participate in future meetings where at all possible, highlighting the next Task & Finish Group meeting will take place on 7 May 2024.

11. Teaching and Learning Report – Paper 006 – *For information and questions*
Sarah Oldfield

Sarah highlighted that changes to quality assurance in this cycle went smoothly and had achieved the aim of observing staff early in the academic cycle to inform development priorities in year. An observation was completed before Christmas which allowed the academic teaching cohort to view the progress of individual students. Second observations were taking place this week and feedback will be provided to the Corporation at the next meeting. The observation is taking place through Learning Walks, including a focus on the embedding of the Young Professionals agenda within teaching and the curriculum. Summary data from the latest round of learning walks will be available from Friday 22 March 2024. This is a report giving insight on what staff should be doing through the focus on developing young professionals' progress. Carrying out learning walks supports development and implementation of the curriculum next academic year and highlights what more the College could be doing or what could be more consistent by sharing best practice. Staff and students have received the Learning Walks positively.

Action SO to provide feedback to the May Corporation meeting on outcome of Learning Walks

What is to come:

- More support to be given to staff next academic year through the CPD programme, which will support staff to understand student needs and enable collective work with Welfare & Support Teams.
- ELT are looking to embed focus groups to support the development of the curriculum.
- A possible research project to enhance collaboration in relation to meeting teaching & learning goals.

EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT GOVERNANCE

12. Notifying the Corporation about the Corporation Chair's tenure

Joyce Black

The Corporation was informed that the current Chair's tenure is coming to an end. A further discussion will take place at the May 2024 Corporation meeting about the nominations process.

13. Terms of reference for the Governance Codes & Frameworks Task & Finish Group – Paper 007- *For approval*

Joyce Black

The Corporation was informed that the Governance & Search Committee had tasked the Clerk with drafting terms of reference for a governance-related Task & Finish Group, focusing on two elements of governance – Codes of Governance and Competency Frameworks for Governors/Chairs.

The core membership is outlined in the terms of reference but the Clerk will be extending an invitation to all External, Parent and Staff Governors to attend the meeting. **Action RM**

This is an opportunity to get under the skin of the Corporation's governance and to understand and plan for governance developments ahead.

The Corporation approved the terms of reference for the Governance Codes & Frameworks Task & Finish Group.

14. Policies for re-approval

The Chair proposed that policies would not be discussed at this meeting. There was a single policy for consideration with minor changes referenced.

14.1 Whistleblowing Policy– Paper 008

Paul Wilson

The Corporation approved the policy in principle, asking for any feedback to be sent direct to the policy owner. If any changes are made which are substantive, these will be made and the policy will be re-issued to the Corporation by the Clerk to seek approval by resolution. If no changes are proposed or changes are minor, the policy will be approved by default after a period of a fortnight.

14.2 Student Search Policy

Donna Trusler

This policy has been deferred to the May 2024 Corporation meeting to enable it to pass through the College's internal assurance process.

Action DT

ROUND-UP

15. Any Other Business

A great number of visits have taken place as part of the Governor Insights Programme this year. Governors were thanked for undertaking these. Staff and Governors have enjoyed the experience and staff would welcome Governors engaging in a range of future events. External and Parent Governors were reminded to submit their Governor Insight reflection forms to the Clerk by the 22 March 2024 deadline. If there is a delay in doing so, Governors are asked to inform the Clerk about when these can be expected.

16. Confidentiality

Paper 005 to be redacted and not for scrutiny by members of the public.
A specific person's name and contact details to be removed from PREVENT documents

17. Next Corporation Meeting

Wednesday 22 May 2024, 17:00, Room G01, G Building, UR Campus

The Corporation was reminded that Melissa Drayson, one of the ERG reviewers will attend, providing Governors with headline observations from the ERG.

Action List:

Actions arising from 20 March 2024 Corporation meeting	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
Clerk to amend last minutes as requested by the Corporation and to re-issue to the board	RM	ASAP
To provide feedback to the May Corporation meeting on outcome of Learning Walks	SO	22 May 2024 Corporation meeting
Table arrangements for nomination as Chair on May Corporation agenda	RM	14 May 2024
Extend invitation to all External, Staff and Parent Governors to attend governance task & finish group meeting	RM	ASAP
Complete Student Search Policy for referral to May Corporation meeting	DT	14 May 2024
Actions arising from 24 January 2024 Corporation meeting	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
Improve format of tables in reports for readability	TR	From next meeting onwards
Promote student engagement opportunities run by the Student Executive via student desktops	DT and Student Executive	
Present some options to the Corporation for Governor Socials	PP	
Actions arising from 13 December 2023 Corporation meeting	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
Governor Insight Visits – completion and submission of reflection forms by Easter 2024	All External and Parent Governors	End of Spring term 2024 – 22/03/24
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	
Actions arising from 24 May 2023 Corporation meeting	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
Set a specific target for GCSE attendance for 2023/24 and to report on this to the Corporation	Now DT	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.	Now DT	At appropriate points 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	
Table discussion about Artificial Intelligence on a Corporation agenda	RM	At an appropriate point again on the 2023/24 Business Plan

The meeting concluded at 18:47

Signed

Chair of the Corporation

Date