

# WQE & REGENT COLLEGE GROUP

Corporation Meeting Minutes  
22 May 2024, 17:00 – 19:00, Room G01, University Road Campus

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

Philip Parkinson (Chair), Frances Bettsworth, Sofie Dadge, Shamir Ghumra, Bernadette Green, Neil McGhee, Nikki O'Brien, Sarah Thomson, Paul Wilson and Jimmy Zachariah

## **Other attendees:**

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

**Apologies:** Joyce Black, Tia Brookes, Ibrahim Fadiga, Jim Phillips and Alison Stone

### **1. Chair's welcome and apologies for absence**

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting. Apologies were received from Joyce Black, Jim Phillips and Alison Stone. Additionally, both Student Governors sent apologies as they were focusing on their studies.

Two Governors reported they were delayed but would arrive during the first half of the meeting.

The Chair opened the meeting by thanking the Principal, ELT, staff and students for their hard work and commitment during the recent Ofsted visit.

The Chair thanked the following Governors for their participation and professionalism in joining him on the Governor panel and the skills panel during the inspection: Joyce Black, Sofie Dadge, Bernie Green, Neil McGhee and Sarah Thomson.

The Corporation echoed the Chair's thanks.

### **2. Declarations of Interest in agenda items**

Jimmy Zachariah declared an interest in agenda item 6- subcontracting.

It was agreed that Jimmy would leave the room when this agenda item was discussed.

Philip Parkinson also agreed to step out of the room when agenda item 13.3 was discussed – arrangements for nominations of Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporation.

### **3. Minutes of last meeting and matters arising – Paper 001**

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

The following actions were completed during the intervening period between

meetings:

- Clerk to amend last minutes as requested by the Corporation and to re-issue to the board
- Extend invitation to all External, Staff and Parent Governors to attend governance task & finish group meeting
- Improve format of tables in reports for readability

The following items were tabled for discussion on the agenda and subsequently removed from the ongoing actions list:

- Table arrangements for nomination as Chair on May Corporation agenda
- Complete Student Search Policy for referral to May Corporation meeting
- Governor Insight Visits – completion and submission of reflection forms by Easter 2024
- Set a specific target for GCSE attendance for 2023/24 and to report on this to the Corporation
- Provide a bar chart outlining the spread of attendance percentages, as part of future attendance reports to the Corporation.

Sarah Oldfield updated the Corporation on the following action point, which was subsequently removed from the action list:

- To provide feedback to the May Corporation meeting on outcome of Learning Walks

Sarah reported that the second learning walks were very positive and well received. The focus was young-person centred and some of the areas covered were originality, curiosity, personal development, personal attitudes and behaviours, global perspectives and digital skills.

The two areas for further development were affirmed as digital skills and global perspectives.

The outcomes from the Learning Walks have informed CPD discussions and work with Young Professionals Co-ordinators. Curriculum areas are now considering where to place the emphasis of CPD for the academic year ahead.

## **OVERSIGHT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION**

### **4. Principal's Update**

Paul Wilson

Paul reminded Governors that two accompanying documents were distributed to Governors ahead of the meeting, providing context to his Update.

Paul confirmed that the Ofsted report was embargoed at the point the meeting was taking place and that information remained confidential until publication. Paul talked Governors through a number of outcomes from the Ofsted inspection.

Paul affirmed that the Ofsted grade awarded to the College was in line with the College's own self-assessment in all areas. He confirmed that the Student Outcomes Task & Finish Group had looked in detail at the education-focused elements of Ofsted findings at their meeting on 07 May 2024.

ELT consider that, based on the detailed Ofsted feedback received and the small number of improvement areas formally identified within the report, the College is at the top end of the current grading scale, with the direction of travel validated and a clear sense of how to develop further.

The finalised Ofsted report will be published on 10 June 2024 and will appear on the Ofsted website a week later.

Carolyn Davies updated Governors on the Phase 3 C Block Estates Project. Carolyn reported that when planning permission had been achieved a number of conditions were applied which needed to be discharged, some of which were complex and present timing challenges for the College. As a result, the College had achieved support to vary the timing of number growth through the significant change request process and had discussed budget reprofiling with the DfE. Carolyn reported that a revised tender document was expected on 17 June 2024. Consequently, updated documentation for consideration by the Corporation would not be available before the 26 June 2024 Corporation meeting.

The Corporation approved the proposal to maintain discussion and monitoring of risks where applicable via the Estates & Finance Task & Finish Group meetings planned provisionally for July, August and September.

Governors asked a number of questions about whether DfE discussions about project delivery and budget profile would be subject to purdah restrictions and therefore impact on timelines for project delivery. They also asked about the timing of orders of building materials and the related risks.

Governors were informed that further decisions may be required with regards to the Estates project, depending upon the extent to which discharge of planning conditions and the revised tender impact the programme and budget plans. Given that the key information will arrive too late for the June Corporation meeting, it was agreed to use some or all of the proposed Task & Finish Group meetings to determine whether there is a need to reconsider risks and/or revise plans from those currently approved by the Corporation (having considered all of the ramifications for proceeding, delaying or varying the project first).

## 5. Accountability Statement

Andrew Jackson

Andrew reminded Governors of the context for the Accountability Statement.

### 5.1 Review of 2023-24 actions - Paper 002

Andrew confirmed he had highlighted what still needed to be achieved.

Governors noted the shift back from a higher uptake of apprenticeship places, back towards higher numbers of applications to HEIs.

Andrew reported that Career Ready are not taking on any more Colleges presently. They offer a post-16 support programme which includes one-to-one mentoring and real experiences of the world of work. The College will need to consider an alternative way to seek mentoring from people aged 20+ who can potentially mentor College students.

A Governor confirmed they could connect the College with a permanent member of staff at a local university to discuss support for this. Action ST and AJ

Andrew reported that rapid progress had been made during the year in meeting The Gatsby Benchmarks.

### 5.2 Proposed Statement for 2024-25 – Paper 003

Andrew confirmed that last year's statement had been prepared before the Local Skills Improvement Plan had been published. Andrew referenced the comprehensive sections in the LSIP covering knowledge, skills and behaviours. He reported on a successful meeting discussing how the College could play an active part in Leicester's Cultural Strategy.

Andrew reported on the ambitious targets within the Statement in relation to progression to HEIs.

Andrew reported on a development which the College will be embedding for the future, under the banner 'Unbox your Future'. This would see live project briefs posed to College students to work through together.

The Corporation agreed that there would be a fortnight period during which Governors could consider the proposed Statement further and contact Andrew if they have any queries. Following the fortnight, the Corporation delegated the Chair the responsibility to take Chair's action to approve the Statement. **Action AJ and all Governors**

**6. Subcontracting annual report – Paper 004 - For information & questions**

Tim Rogers

Jimmy Zacahariah left the meeting for this agenda item due to conflicted interest.

Tim confirmed there are three sub-contracted providers for the College. These all have very positive outcomes for students and these were noted by Ofsted during their recent visit.

Tim reported that there was a review taking place about the delivery of Maths teaching in subcontracted provision. Governors asked questions about the model for teaching Maths, as well as the size of teaching groups.

Tim confirmed there were no plans to grow the subcontracted provision and that there was rigorous checking on the quality of delivery and monitoring of student outcomes.

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

**7. Update from Student Outcomes Task & Finish Group meeting – 7<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

Bernie Green

Bernie gave a comprehensive update on the outcomes discussed at the Task & Finish Group:

- Achievement targets for the College are: 86% in 23/24, 87% in 24/25 and 88% in 25/26
- The current retention rate of 90.6% and the higher pass rate of 95% give an overall achievement rate for 23/24 of 86%
- In year monitoring figures for the sub- groups in scope, show a positive picture
  - Level 3 Vocational - retention rate 81.6%, with 72% on course to achieve MEG .
  - Level 1 Entry Level - retention rate 98.8%, with 82% on course to achieve MEG.
  - Level 2 GCSE 64% on track to achieve MEG. Vocational = 71% on track to achieve MEG.
  - Level 2 GCSE non- English and Maths - 48% are on track to achieve MEG.

Governors raised concerns about Level 2 GCSE non- English and Maths achievement. The College acknowledged this concern but reminded Governors that the offer had been reshaped for next year.

- 69% of Looked After students are on target to achieve their MEG.

Governors noted there has been an overall attendance increase of 3% since the previous Ofsted inspection. However there are some groups where attendance still needs to improve, such as the Entry Level cohort which is currently 82.4%. Governors were concerned about this yet also recognised the huge amount of support that is offered to vulnerable students and that for some, even a low attendance represents a significant achievement. It was suggested that the College might share some anonymised case studies to emphasise this.

Bernie also shared a range of subject-specific achievement targets.

She provided Governors with a verbal summary of the teaching and learning elements of the Ofsted report.

The Chair thanked Bernie for her thorough report to the Corporation.

#### 8. **Student Attendance Monitoring Report** – Paper 005

Donna Trusler

Donna highlighted the overall improvement in students' attendance.

Level 3: 90.5% (+0.9)

L3: A Level 90.8% (+0.4); L3 Vocational 89.7% (+1.9);

Level 2: 88.3% (+5.7)

L2: GCSE 86.6% (+5.3); L2 Vocational 90.6% (+5.8)

Level 1: 87.7% (+1.3)

Entry Level: 82.4% (-3.4)

#### 9. **Student Search Policy** – Paper 006

Donna Trusler

Donna informed Governors that there had been a light refresh to the policy.

Pronouns within have been changed from 'his' and 'her' to 'they'.

Reference to vaping has been included. Vape alarms have been trialled.

Governors asked Donna to outline the issues regarding vaping, which covered selling on vapes and the health and safety implications and lack of regulation making identification of what is actually in a vape very difficult.

The Corporation approved the policy.

10. **Equality & Diversity Annual Report and Single Equality Scheme action plan update**– Paper 007  
Donna Trusler

Governors noted the report.

Donna thanked Joyce Black for her support in overseeing the report.

Donna reported there had been an increased number of students enrolled from the county of Leicestershire this year and noted it would be interesting to see the impact of this on overall diversity in next year's report.

The category known as 'other' has been problematic as it does not provide enough clarity. Work is underway to try and improve this categorisation.

Donna also highlighted that some students could potentially be double counted where they present with multiple needs.

Governors noted reference to students in receipt of bursary funding.

Governors asked for tables to be reformatted for greater ease of reading, particularly consistency in layout of data tables.

Governors queried the leap in reported figures of social and emotional health difficulties. Donna informed Governors that the College had changed their approach to recording based on diagnosed and undiagnosed mental health difficulties and this explained a spike in one category.

Donna reported changes in the College's recruitment of staff, as follows:

- More people in their 30s and 40 were being recruited
- More people with disclosed disabilities were being recruited
- More people identifying as female were being recruited.

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

11. **Monthly management accounts- March 2024** – Paper 008

Carolyn Davies

The Corporation noted the management accounts.

12. **Treasury Management Policy** – Paper 009

Carolyn Davies

Carolyn confirmed that this policy had been given a light touch refresh as part of the annual cycle of review.

The policy was approved by the Corporation.

## **EFFICIENT & EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE**

13. **Feedback from the Governance & Search Committee meeting – 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024** (including outcomes from Governance Codes & Frameworks Task & Finish Group meeting – 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024)  
Rachel Middleton

Rachel reminded the Corporation that it had tasked the Governance & Search Committee with looking in-depth at the AoC Code of Good Governance. The Committee subsequently convened a Governance Codes & Frameworks Task & Finish group where Governors reviewed a self-audit of the College against the AoC Code of Good Governance, as well as the Corporate Code of Governance. The Remuneration Committee will be considering its impact using elements of the Corporate Code of Governance at its meeting in June. The group also considered the concept of a Senior Independent Governor as an independent broker between Governors and the Chair of the Corporation and a reviewer of the Chair's performance. It was felt that this role is currently performed by the Vice Chair. The Committee was comfortable with its recommendation to the Corporation to adopt the AoC Code of Good Governance, with effect from the start of the new academic year.

The Committee also reviewed the Task & Finish Group's views on the implementation of requirements outlined in the new College's Financial Handbook. A number of elements from the Handbook are tabled for consideration at the Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 18 June 2024. Any changes to the Committee's terms of reference will be made in readiness for the new academic year. The College Financial Handbook applies from 01 August 2024.

The Committee considered the merits of the new Governor and Chair Competency Frameworks published by the Education Training Foundation. Their recommendation to the Corporation was not to fully adopt the competency framework but to use the competencies as a guide when holding informal Governor reviews at the end of the academic year, held by the Chair. Additionally, the Committee recommended that the technical competencies outlined in the Governor Competency Framework be included in the Corporation's Governor skills audit. The Competency Framework for Governance Professionals will be considered by the Remuneration Committee on 19 June 2024.

The Corporation approved all of the recommendations from the Governance & Search Committee.



Thanks were extended to Governors who participated in the Governance Codes & Frameworks Task & Finish Group.

### **13.1. Governance Policies**

#### **13.1.1 Complaints against the Corporation Policy - Paper 010a**

Rachel confirmed that reference had been included to serious and vexatious complaints.

The Corporation approved the policy.

#### **13.1.2 Conflict of Interests Policy – Paper 010b**

Rachel reported that a section had been added relating to conflicts of loyalty, as referenced by Charity Commission guidance.

The Corporation approved the policy.

The Corporation requested that both policies be aligned so that they are reviewed in three years' time.

#### **13.1.3 Governor Insight Visits Report – Paper 011**

The Vice Chair, Principal and Clerk met to review the Governor visit reflection forms as well as the Governor reflection and development forms.

Rachel reported the Corporation's request for more returns of Governor reflection and development forms during next year's cycle.

The themes emerging from this year's visits were as follows:

- Staff recruitment and vacancies
- HR and wellbeing
- Student intervention and the Young Professionals agenda
- Use of dashboards and data
- Digital strategy and Artificial Intelligence.

The details in this year's visit reflection reports clearly indicated that the strategic issues tabled for discussion and decision making at Corporation meetings were also being discussed at middle leadership level during Governor insight visits.

### **13.2 Arrangements for nominations of Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporation**

Rachel affirmed that the Corporation had set the task of identifying arrangements for nominations of Chair. A Co-Chairing model was put before the Governance & Search Committee as no new candidates had expressed an interest in assuming the role of Chair. At this time there were felt to be some practical challenges around this model of practice. The Committee discussed alternative models and it was clear there was

some scope for further discussion of the model moving forwards, and informed by potential recommendations from the External Review of Governance as well. The Clerk was tasked with exploring different avenues for chairing in the future and for reporting back to the Corporation over the next 12 months.

The ERG report will flag a number of considerations which may impact on the governance model and use of Committees and Task & Finish Groups and this is likely to impact on roles of Chairs across the Corporation in turn. The Committee considered it was sensible to have a one-year tenure for Chair in the role's current guise to guide the Corporation through the next year and to transition to a new mode of chairing for 2025-2027.

The Committee was supportive of a Co-Vice Chair model. In light of discussions two Governors have expressed an interest in standing as Co-Vice Chairs and engaging more fully. This has been discussed with the current Vice Chair who is happy to stand down to enable Co-Vice Chairs to be appointed, with mentoring provided by Joyce Black throughout 24-25.

On behalf of the Committee, Rachel asked the Corporation to approve opening nominations for Co-Vice Chairs, as well as a one-year tenure for the Chair of Corporation for 2024-25.

Where an extension of tenure was required to facilitate the additional year's service for a potential Chair the Corporation was asked to remove this barrier and to extend tenures as necessary for the academic year ahead.

The Committee and the Clerk would be working over course of 2024-25 to determine governance model and role profiles which are sustainable and more inclusive for the future. Also be a focus on recruiting more Governors on to the Corporation.

The Corporation accepted the recommendations of the Governance and Search Committee.

The Clerk confirmed nominations would open on 28 May 2024.

## **14. Round-up**

### **14.1 Any other business**

There were no items of AoB.

### **14.2 Confidential items**

The Corporation considered the following paper to be confidential –  
Principal's update

**14.3 Date of next Corporation meeting – Weds 26<sup>th</sup> June, 17:00**

**Action List**

<b>Actions arising from 22 May 2024 Corporation meeting</b>	<b>Who is responsible?</b>	<b>Date for completion</b>
Governors to feed back any queries on the Accountability Statement over the next fortnight	AJ and all Governors	By 5th June 2024
<b>Actions arising from 24 January 2024 Corporation meeting</b>	<b>Who is responsible?</b>	<b>Date for completion</b>
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	
<b>Actions arising from 04 October 2023 Corporation meeting</b>	<b>Who is responsible?</b>	<b>Date for completion</b>
Update on sexual abuse action plan to be tabled at January 2024 Corporation meeting	DT	
<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	
Table discussion about Artificial Intelligence on a Corporation agenda	RM	Moved to the Audit & Risk Committee agenda 18.06.24

Signature .....

Chair of Corporation

Date: .....