

WQE & Regent College Group

Corporation Meeting 13 November 2024, 17:00, Room G01,
University Road campus

Members of the Corporation in attendance:

Philip Parkinson (Chair), Frances Bettsworth, Joyce Black, Shamir Ghumra, Bernadette Green, Neil McGhee, Nikki O'Brien, Alison Stone, Paul Wilson, & Jimmy Zachariah

Other attendees:

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

Apologies:

Tia Brookes, Sofie Dadge, Jim Phillips, Sarah Thomson

MINUTES

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting. Apologies were received from Tia Brookes, Sofie Dadge, Jim Phillips and Sarah Thomson.

The Director of Governance confirmed a certificate of appreciation was being created to present to Tia, marking the end of her service as a Student Governor.

The Chair welcomed Ray Upton, Curriculum Area Leader for Physics, Electronics, Computing & IT (PECIT) who joined the meeting remotely.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in business items on the agenda.

3. Minutes and matters arising– Paper 001

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2024 were approved as an accurate record of proceedings.

The Director of Governance was tasked with liaising with the Safeguarding Assistant to issue instructions to Governors to pursue Safeguarding and PREVENT training.

Action RM

GOVERNOR BRIEFING

4. Physics, Electronics, Computing & IT (PECIT)

Curriculum Area Leader - Ray Upton

Ray joined the College in 2023 as a Curriculum Area for PECIT. Ray explained to Governors that the focus of their presentation would be on their first year of leadership.

Ray talked Governors through:

- their professional background and experience
- the scope of the curriculum area
- the volume of students now pursuing PECIT courses
- plans to recruit a full-time technician to support PECIT

- a programme of change management across the subject areas within PECIT
- aims for year one
- quick wins
- team culture
- longer term aims for the department
- curriculum review post-Ofsted – aiming to work more closely with employer and universities in partnership

Ray reported on the positive impact of last year's Governor insights programme which added value to their own development journey. Ray also referenced the importance of constructive Ofsted feedback from the 2024 inspection and additionally the benefit of internal validation work in providing them with constructive challenge.

Governors asked questions about movement away from a traditional lecturing style. Ray reported that the department had worked on questioning techniques and that development of questioning had been built into all of the staff's objectives across the department.

Governors asked what success would look like. Ray reported that success would be reflected in improved student outcomes, in more positive student feedback captured in College questionnaires, in observations captured through learning walks.

Governors noted that earlier issues relating to recruitment issues had now been positively resolved.

Governors thanked Ray for their input and reflected on how inspirational their presentation had been.

OVERSIGHT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION

5. Principal's Update – *For information and questions* Paul Wilson

The Principal highlighted:

- the success of the Open Day – 8500 visitors
- the prominence of WQE branding across Leicester city on Open Day
- the rigour of the process behind SAR/QIP validation exercises where there was constructive challenge as well as a celebration of successes. Governors were thanked for their participation and interest in these sessions.
- the benefits of the validation visits in pulling together common themes: consistency of leadership and management, peer to peer support across departments; and contribution to local skills agenda.
- an invitation to Governors to participate in next year's validation visits

Governors reflected on their own involvement in the Open Day which gave them the opportunity to man an exhibition stand to promote Governor vacancies as well as the

chance to speak to a range of stakeholders including parents and carers about the benefits and opportunities offered to students attending the College. Governors agreed that a presence next year was advised and that this should be ongoing every year. Governors thought the flyers produced for the occasion were helpful. Thanks were extended to Philip Parkinson, Neil McGhee, Bernie Green and Joyce Black for their attendance on the day and to the Director of Governance for coordinating materials, stands and the flyers.

The Principal reported on the change request which had been submitted to the DfE in respect of a refocused plan of works for the C Block Project, which would mean the College could deliver in accordance with the stipulated funding timelines. He reported on plans to go out to tender for contractors in February 2025.

The Principal reported that the DfE's financial health dashboard indicated the College's financial health remained 'Good' and is projected to remain so with a revised scope to the capital project.

Carolyn Davies answered Governor queries about the indicators which underpin a judgment of 'Good' financial health.

Tim Rogers and Sarah Oldfield left the meeting at 17:45.

6. Strategic Development Plan 2023-2026 - Context Updates Nov 2024 - Nov 2025 – Paper 002 – *For information and discussion*

Paul Wilson

Governors noted the paper.

Governors asked the Principal to reference the following:

- outlining the curriculum areas at risk through possible defunding of qualifications and referencing the impact in terms of loss of student numbers potentially
- likely impact of the loss of the ESFA as the regulator
- some syntax and formatting issues, as well as minor updating of some tenses within the report to factor in completion of the External Review of Governance etc.
- outlining which level of accreditation the College holds in relation to cyber security

Governors asked for more ambition in the statement relating to sustainability. Two Governors offered to meet College leadership to discuss this further.

Governors reported that they found the document very insightful and requested that the minor changes be actioned and that the report then be recirculated to Governors.

Action PW

OVERSIGHT OF STUDENT OUTCOMES & EXPERIENCES

7. **Accountability Agreement, Skills and Preparing Young Professionals Report – Paper 003– *For information and questions***
Andrew Jackson

Governors noted the report.

Governors asked for more clarity around which ‘local HE providers’ were being referenced in the third section of the report.

Governors asked for more specificity around the identity of ‘local key stakeholders’

Governors queried whether targets for progression into HE should be reset, considering that current targets had been exceeded. Governors understood that the HE sector is currently in flux with regards to volume of students being recruited from overseas and the impact on home students of there being more available spaces at UK universities, and the desire not to propose to home students that they aspire to achievement of lower grades as a consequence of the current situation.

Governors notes that the Destinations Report would follow as part of the standard business cycle of papers viewed and discussed by the Corporation.

8. **Report on 2023-24 permanent exclusions – Paper 004 - *For information & Questions***
Donna Trusler

Donna reported that she had analysed whether there were any identifiable behavioural patterns across the College’s student cohort relating to conduct which were impacting on permanent exclusion figures. She reported that there were no patterns and that behaviours were specific to the individual students concerned.

In response to Governor queries, Donna reported the volume of students who had progressed to permanent exclusion for whom there had been a series of prior issues and interventions and the volume of students who had committed one serious act which had escalated them to permanent exclusion.

Governors asked about whether the College offered support to students who were being permanently excluded. Donna reported that students are given access to support from Heads of Studies and support services which are able to offer guidance to students after they have left the College. She reported that she was actively working with two students herself on their next steps, post-exclusion.

OVERSIGHT OF FINANCE, RESOURCES & ASSETS

The Chair extended thanks to the Finance Team and Carolyn Davies for their hard work in producing the end of year accounts and associated documentation for the external audit. He reminded the Corporation that end of financial year matters will be tabled on the December 2024 agenda.

- 9. Monthly management accounts (September 2024) – Paper 005 - *For information and questions***
Carolyn Davies

Governors noted the paper.

Carolyn reported that a bigger piece of work was being undertaken to revise the 2024/25 budget and that a revised budget commentary would be submitted to the Corporation at its December 2024 meeting.

Carolyn reported that a revised budget commentary would need to factor in assumptions around two current unknowns: the impact on National Insurance payments, post-government budget; and the impact and level of funding being given to accommodate any pay rises based on the SFCA-brokered pay negotiations.

Governors noted changes to the phasing of the management accounts.

Governors asked queries relating to pay compression and whether there was any drift of personnel across to the academies sector.

Governors queried whether there would be any impact on the College's cash position.

ELT will be discussing the risks/impacts of continuing to recruit support staff who have traditionally been paid at the lower salary scales.

EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT GOVERNANCE

- 10. Governor Insights programme – live**
Sarah Thomson

The Director of Governance covered this agenda item in Sarah Thomson's absence. She confirmed that this year's cycle of visits had now gone live and that Governors will have received notifications of curriculum and support areas assigned to them, via email from a colleague in the central administration team. Governors will now make their own appointments with curriculum and support staff to set up visits. She affirmed that, in keeping with previous years' practice, Governors should complete their visits by Easter 2025 and should submit two forms – the first being their insight reflections form and the second being their form cascading on learning for the collective benefit of the Corporation. A series of reminders to Governors will be issued by the Director of Governance as the deadline approaches in the new year.

- 11. Verbal update on the Vaughan Endowment Fund and Thornton Fund (Vaughan Fund Committee meeting – 13/11/24)**
Philip Parkinson

Philip reminded Governors of the existence of both funds and the process for distributing funds to alumni who have gone on to study at Higher Education Institutions. Philip reported that the overall balance of the investment was c. £275k. He reminded Governors that a change to the way in which the funds were invested

had increased the overall yield and that this year, this amounted to 15%. He reported that members of the Committee had reviewed the risk profile for the investment of the funds and that this would be submitted to the bank on the Committee's behalf by the Director of Governance. An annual review of the performance of the fund had been undertaken with the bank by the Chair of Governors with the Director of Governance present, during the summer.

This year there were 45 applications for funding. Having carefully considered the applications and the application of award criteria, the Committee agreed 16 grants of £850 pounds each, as well as 28 awards of £100 each. The Thornton Fund award was granted to a Mathematics student, drawing on £500 from the Fund and topped up by a further £350 from the Thornton Fund.

Carolyn reported that another bequest had been given to the College and that this would enable the Committee to make additional awards. Details would be circulated to the Director of Governance and the Committee.

Philip reported that the Committee had noted the testimonials received from recipients of funding last year and that it was clear to see how funds had impacted on students' capacity to fund IT, books and essential travel costs.

The aspiration is that other College alumni may leave bequests in the future.

Governors noted the awards.

POLICY UPDATES AND APPROVALS

12. Permanent Exclusion Policy – annual review – Paper 006 – *For approval* (DT)

Governors asked for clarification on what occurs when a student is living independently and has no parental/carer contact.

13. Contemplation and Prayer Policy – annual review – Paper 007 – *For approval* (DT)

Governors suggested that the addition of some contextual text about the role of Student Warden and Security Warden could be added for greater clarity on page 2.

Both policies were approved in principle and Governors were asked to refer any substantive issues to the policy authors within the next fortnight, beyond which the policies will automatically be approved.

ROUND-UP

14. Any Other Business

Shamir Ghumra thanked Donna Trusler for her clarifications around wording of the documentation focusing on equality, diversity and inclusion.

There were no other matters of AoB.

15. Confidentiality

Subject to discussions during the meeting, the Corporation considered the following matters to be confidential – the management accounts outlined in Paper 005.

16. Next Meeting

Wednesday 18 December 2024, 17:00, Room G01, University Road campus
Governors noted that the external auditor would be present at the December Corporation meeting.

Action List

Task	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
RM to prompt about issuing instructions for online safeguarding & PREVENT training	RM	ASAP
Make requested changes to the Strategic Plan 2023-26 – context updates Nov 2024- Nov 2025	PW	ASAP
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	

The meeting closed at 18:40.

Signature:
Chair of Governors

Date: