

WQE & Regent College Group

Corporation Meeting 18 December 2024, 17:00, Room G01, University Road Campus

Members of the Corporation in attendance:

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

Other attendees:

Carolyn Davies, Andrew Jackson, Rachel Middleton, Tim Rogers, Gareth Jones (RSM UK Ltd)

Apologies:

Sofie Dadge, Sarah Oldfield, Jim Phillips and Donna Trusler

PART 1 MINUTES

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

The Chair reminded attendees that this was Shamir Ghumra's last meeting as a Governor. He expressed thanks to Shamir for his service and contributions as a Governor and his work in chairing the Remuneration Committee.

The Chair welcomed Gareth Jones from RSM UK Ltd, the College's external auditor, who was in attendance to receive questions on the external audit 2023/24 and the RSM Emerging Issues Report.

Apologies were received from Sofie Dadge, Donna Trusler, Sarah Oldfield and Jim Phillips.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes and matters arising – Paper 001

The Corporation noted one typo to correct and subsequently approved the minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 13 November 2024 as a correct record.

To matters arising captured in the action list were discussed. The following actions were completed during the intervening time between meetings:

- RM to prompt about issuing instructions for online safeguarding & PREVENT training
- Make requested changes to the Strategic Plan 2023-26 – context updates Nov 2024- Nov 2025

Shamir Ghumra reported on a positive meeting with College leaders which he and Neil McGhee attended, with a focus on sustainability.

OVERSIGHT OF FINANCE, RESOURCES & ASSETS

4. 2023-2024 End of Year financial matters

Gareth Jones, RSM

Emerging Issues Report from Auditors – Paper 002 – *For information and questions*

Gareth reminded Governors that the Emerging Issues Report is compiled by RSM UK Ltd twice a year and that the version presented relates to Autumn 2024.

Gareth reported on:

- the delay of implementation of the Procurement Act until February 2025
- the announcement of the closure of EFSA
- ESFA's assurances with regards to post-16 funding and ESFA's financial health gradings
- a reminder that the College Financial handbook was implemented in August 2024
- advisory statements around severance pay, gardening leave etc.
- the assessment of financial hardship for Bursaries and Free School Meals
- Ofsted's Big Listen campaign, movement towards overall effectiveness as opposed to one-word ratings

Gareth stated that RSM conduct a risk radar analysis every six months - key issues for Colleges to monitor are:

- change of government priorities
- Artificial Intelligence
- Cyber Security
- Prevalence of ransomware attacks

Papers recommended to the Corporation from the 26 November Audit & Risk Committee

Neil McGhee

- i. WQE and Regent College Group statutory accounts for the year ended 31 July 2024 – Paper 003
- ii. QED (Leicester) Ltd annual accounts for year ended 31 July 2024 – Paper 004
- iii. Audit Findings Report – Paper 005
- iv. Internal Controls Annual Report - Paper 006
- v. Regulatory self-assessment Questionnaire – Paper 007
- vi. Health & Safety Annual Report for 2023/24 – Paper 008
- vii. Headline Risk Register and Plan – Paper 009
- viii. Reserves Policy – Paper 010

The Corporation noted in particular the progress made with MyCompliance, the level of detail provided within the Risk Register, the healthy financial position and the extent of the assurance work undertaken.

The Corporation noted the discussions held at Audit & Risk Committee and approved all of the papers above. The Corporation noted that there had been minor revisions to papers 003, 005 and 007 since the Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 26th November 2024.

5. Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report – Paper 011

Neil McGhee

The work of the Committee during the 2023-24 financial year was noted. The Corporation approved the recommendation of the report from the Audit & Risk Committee.

6. Letters of representation from Auditors

Carolyn Davies

- i. WQE Audit Letter of representation (financial statements) – Paper 012
- ii. WQE Audit Regulatory Assurance Letter – Paper 013

Governors approved the letters of representation.

7. Monthly management accounts (31 October 2024) - Paper 014

Carolyn Davies

The Corporation noted the management accounts.

8. Revised budget commentary - Paper 015

Carolyn Davies

Carolyn informed the Corporation that there were still some significant uncertainties in the revised budget in relation to the assumptions for pay costs and any related funding from DfE.

The sector still awaited the conclusion of the national pay negotiations between the SFCA and recognised unions. Assumptions have been made in the revised budget including the level of funding which will be received in order to off-set higher employer national insurance and pay costs. It is not yet clear whether the increases in costs will be funded by DfE in full.

The revised budget includes estimated costs for the Phase 3 (C Building) project based on the RIBA Stage 3 report from our advisors.

The courtyard window replacement work at Regent Road has been progressed.

Works commencing in Summer 2025 have been tendered for. The College is looking to progress boiler replacement work over Summer 2025 if it is feasible to do so.

A Condition Improvement Fund bid has been submitted for window replacements, with the outcome expected in May 2025.

Carolyn reminded the Corporation about its financial health grade. EBITDA continues to be carefully monitored as this is key for understanding the expected financial health category.

Governors asked questions about:

- impact on the College's subcontractor budgets of increased national insurance costs to meet their own responsibilities for employees
- the volatility of utility costs
- whether there would be immediate cost savings on energy due to window replacement work

The Corporation thanked Carolyn and her team for the work on preparing the revised budget. The Corporation approved the revised budget.

9. Tuition Fees Policy – Paper 016

Carolyn Davies

Subject to a minor typo correction, the policy was approved.

OVERSIGHT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION

10. Quality Improvement Statement 2024-25 and achievement targets- Paper 017

Tim Rogers

Tim informed the Corporation that the substance of the statement remained unchanged. The Student Outcomes Task & Finish Group reviewed the targets at their meeting in October 2024.

Tim reminded Governors that the improvement cycle with name and responsibility allocations had been updated and was outlined in the appendix.

Tim reminded Governors that there were curriculum quality meetings three times a year.

11. Executive summary of SAR and QIP - Paper 018

Tim Rogers

Governors asked for some minor wording changes to remove any ambiguity (e.g. quantifying what 'some' might mean) **Action TR:** to revise accordingly.

Governors will receive the full documentation via GovernorHub and are asked to send any questions or comments which may impact on the substantive judgements to Tim by an agreed January 2025 deadline. The SAR will be submitted to Ofsted by 31st January 2025.

Action Governors – send any SAR feedback to Tim by 15th January 2025.

12. Principal's Update – Presentation

Paul Wilson

The presentation was circulated to Governors.

Highlights included:

- confirmed student numbers enrolled
- industrial action
- vocational defunding announcements
- capital planning updates

Governors asked questions about:

- messaging to stakeholders about industrial action and expression of stakeholders' views
- model for teaching and supporting students during industrial action

OVERSIGHT OF STUDENT OUTCOMES & EXPERIENCES

13. Two-year Course Retention Monitoring Report - Paper 019

Tim Rogers

Governors noted the overall positive improvements made over time.

They noted additional information availability with regards to identified student subgroups.

Governors noted factors around the External Certificate and how students access these courses.

14. Student Voice: Early Weeks Questionnaire - Paper 020

Tim Rogers

Tim reported an increase to the response rate. He reminded Governors of the two further student voice surveys which are conducted later in the year – the cross-college questionnaire and the course evaluation questionnaire.

Governors noted the following issues:

- levels of support from students who came from Level 2 courses at school, transferring to Level 2 at College and challenges around this
- students reporting on the jump in levels of work and understanding between Level 2 to 3 and reflected on how challenging this was.
- how the most vulnerable students' needs are met
- students reporting that the offer holders event was useful and that the advice and enrolment process were received positively.
- most students feel safe on campus
- most students report that they would recommend the College to others.

Students are asked to comment on any difficulties they have had and to provide any additional feedback. There has been a 3% increase in suggestions put forward by students as part of the survey which is encouraging.

Tim confirmed that data is available to all Tier 3 leaders and that it is possible to drill down into the records of individual students and teaching groups, to inform teaching and learning.

Tim thanked and praised the PPMs, without whom there would not be such engagement with the survey.

EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

15. Committee Chair revised role profile – Paper 021

The Corporation approved the revised role profile.

16. Terms of reference for Committees 2025 - Papers 022a-e

Rachel Middleton

16.1 Audit & Risk Committee

16.2 Finance & Resources Committee

16.3 Governance & Search Committee

16.4 Remuneration Committee

16.5 Curriculum, Student Experiences and Outcomes Committee

The Corporation noted that each Committee had terms of reference and a January to January business plan.

The Corporation delegated responsibility to the Governance & Search Committee to refine the terms of reference further and to propose finalised terms of reference at the April 2025 Corporation meeting. **Action G&S Committee**

ROUND-UP

17. Any Other Business

Governors were reminded about reading the student case studies which have been housed on GovernorHub.

18. Confidentiality

Subject to discussions during the meeting, the Corporation considered the following papers to be confidential:

- Paper 009 – Headline Risk Register
- Paper 015 – revised budget commentary

19. Closed meeting – 18.12.24

Student Governors, Staff Governors and members of staff, with the exception of the Director of Governance were asked to leave the meeting. Separate confidential Part 2 meeting minutes relate to the recommendations of the Remuneration Committee.

20. Next meeting dates to note

- Governance & Search Committee – 5pm, Weds 15th January 2025
- Curriculum. Student Experiences & Outcomes Committee – 5pm, Weds 12th February 2025
- Governor Conference, 5pm, Weds 26th February 2025
- Finance & Resources Committee, 5pm, Tues 11th March 2025
- Corporation- 5.00pm, Weds 9th April 2025

Task	Who is responsible?	Date for completion
Make some minor word amendments to the Exec summary of SAR and QIP	TR	ASAP
Governors to send feedback and comments to TR in relation to the SAR	All Governors	By 15 th January 2025
Delegate responsibility to G&S Committee on 15.01.25 to revise Committee ToR further	Governance & Search Committee	15 th January 2025 meeting
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 the Corporation

Date: