

## THE COLLEGE OF RICHARD COLLYER

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY held on Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020 at 16.30 via Zoom

**Present:** Mr Karl Banister, Mr Tom Cox, Mr Aidan Cross, Mrs Ann Donoghue, Mrs Barbara Hobday, Mr Graham Lawrence, Mr Dan Lodge (Principal), Ms Lorna Macrae, Mrs Susan Martineau, Mr Paul Mittendorfer, Dr Grant Powell, Mrs Clare Ruaux, Dr David Skipp, Mrs Helen Smith, Mr Hugh Stafford-Smith, Mr Dominic Wakefield

**In attendance:** SMT: Mr Ian Dumbleton, Mr Rob Hussey, Ms Andrea John, Mr Steve Martell; Ms Nicola Whitehead (Clerk)

**Apologies:** Rev'd Canon Lisa Barnett

**In the Chair:** Dr David Skipp

*The Chair thanked the Principal and staff involved for the presentation before the meeting on the College's AI project. [Link available on Governors' SharePoint.]*

*He explained that items 6-11 (the Principal's and Student Voice reports, new Strategic Plan, QIP, and Report and Financial Statements), would form the focus of the discussion as illustrated by the indicative timings on the agenda. An update on item 10 was proposed but members were content with the remaining proposed consent items.*

**1561) Declarations of interest:** There were no declarations of interests.

**1562) Minutes of the meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020** were approved subject to an amendment on attendance.

#### **1563) Matters arising**

**Item 1554:** The Clerk confirmed that a revised budget outturn had been circulated following the last meeting clarifying the headings at the year-end and providing some minor updates to figures.

**Item 1555:** The Clerk confirmed that details of the SFCA webinars had been circulated. Whilst SFCA requested feedback directly, it would be helpful if governors could share this with the Clerk, both to track and further improve governor training.

#### **1564) Principal's Report**

*Paper: Principal's Report Autumn term 2020; KPIs Business and Education November 2020*

The Principal introduced his first **termly report** to include admissions, examination results, curriculum developments, estates news and Mercers' funded projects. He drew attention in particular to both staffing developments (to include the **resilience of the College's staff and students** in the face of the Covid pandemic) and new areas of work, most notably on the **new Strategic Plan** (with some associated realignment of SMT remits) as well as activity looking ahead to the College's 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Some College events had had to be cancelled or handled differently. The Deputy Principal commented, for example, on the **successful online open evening**. This format had the advantage of being even more accessible and the College had received c. 100 applications more than at the same time last year.

The Vice Chair applauded the College on the **robustness of the evidence to uphold the CAG grades**. In response to a question on the lessons learned from the latter process, the VP (Curriculum) commented on the few instances where more timely disclosure from students on their challenges would be helpful in providing them with appropriate support.

Referring to the **AI demonstration**, the parent governor asked about the potential for economies of scale if extending the project. The Principal commented on a number of potential collaborations or the further development of a more College-specific and marketable offer. Governors also asked about the potential recovery of the growth in the College's **international cohort** with, for example, the return of students from the Rikkyo School foreseen and ongoing discussion with agents in the traditional markets.

Members agreed that **the report was very positive and indicative of everyone pulling together**, both within SMT and across all staff and students. Finally, the governors **welcomed the new KPIs** as helpful in distinguishing more clearly between the Business and Education elements of the College and the appropriate detail within that.

#### 1565) Student Voice

*Paper: Written report of 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020*

The Chair thanked the student governors for their **very encouraging report in terms of student participation** to include the recruitment of first year officers and integration of the new tutor representatives. Both students welcomed the **developments in blended learning** since half term but stressed the challenges of the continuing uncertainty regarding the Government's position on the summer exams. They felt that **the RCU had adapted well to online discussions and events** thanks both to the **engagement of students** and support from staff. Governors agreed that the notable increase in donations to the Horsham Harvest foodbank was a credit to the students. Asked about a possible hybrid model for RCU discussions going forward, the students agreed that there could be such an opportunity – to be discussed – to help retain the current level of comprehensive response to the issues raised.

#### 1566) Strategic Plan 2023

*Paper: Strategic Plan 2020-23*

The Principal outlined the **committee, staff and student consultation process** to include the recent staff and governor discussions at Planning Day. It was considered vital to have a **clear sense of direction** amidst the daily operational challenges. **Further supporting strategies would sit beneath the plan**, such as that already in place on Curriculum, with Student Support and Enrichment, for example, brought forward in the coming months.

Members welcomed the **clear structure and ambitious but realistic content of the document - to include performance indicators, as well as its coherence with the College's quality improvement plan**. Asked about **accessibility**, the Principal explained that, subject to any comments, it was intended to make the Plan available on the website whilst bringing it more specifically to the attention of key stakeholders. Similar to the published plans of other colleges, it was not considered sensitive in this regard. Publication in full was not a requirement but consistent with freedom of information principles. Members thanked the Principal and SMT for their considerable investment in the document.

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Strategic Plan 2020-23**

*[ The VP(Pastoral) joined the meeting.]*

## 1567) Quality Assurance

*Papers: College Self-assessment report (SAR) 2019-20 and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2020-21*

The Chair introduced the **College SAR and QIP** as significant documents for which the new VP (Curriculum) was to be congratulated, noting that the QIP had been adapted to reflect the new Strategic Plan. The documents had been covered in some detail by the Q&C Committee and, for the first time, in F&GP in respect of the Business and Community sections falling within their remit.

Looking at the key themes within the **curriculum** area, the VP (Curriculum) commented on the themes of **aspiration** (with a broader 'one grade higher' initiative), **accuracy in progress review data** and **trends in value-added** (with reference to the KPIs - to include the implications of the recent exam season - as well as positive attendance and retention to-date). There would also be work undertaken in terms of the **vocational offer** reflecting the introduction of T levels, **further development of the curriculum strategy** and, inevitably, a focus on the **quality of distance learning**.

Turning to **pastoral issues**, the level of College support was considered high. Areas of focus would however include **the experience of vulnerable students in respect of distance learning and the new Student Support and Enrichment strategies** (to include improved tracking, a new work experience coordinator and a restructure of the progression provision).

*[17.30 Mrs Hobday left the meeting.]*

The VP (Curriculum) outlined the key aims within the **Business** section including staged **student growth** targets, **additional social space** and **development of the IT infrastructure, international markets and Adult Ed**. The latter encompassed a target increase in profitability and a possible greater focus on skills development in response to Covid-19. In terms of **Community**, the emphasis would be on **keeping safe** during the pandemic, as well as a celebration of the College's **heritage** in anticipation of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary, **environmental considerations** and the **strengthening of community links and partnerships** (building on the relationship with the Mercers' Company and its associated schools as well as that with FE Sussex and the AoC).

Members asked about:

- **Social space**, noting progress on the **new canopy** and **broader use of College venues** such as the Sports and Duckering Halls (in anticipation of the current intention to return to 100% on site attendance from February half term). The latter might accommodate **a second catering outlet** on which students were due to be consulted. Some ideas had appeared less practical e.g. covering the MUGA. **A review of the current MasterPlan would help ensure sustainable** solutions;
- **The promotion of T levels for 2021** particularly in respect of the Digital offer; the DP outlined the role of the Government in the wider promotion of the new qualifications as well as the College's own marketing campaign which would include broader use of social media. The Principal commented on the increased number of providers and courses on offer which would help build momentum as would, for Collyer's, showcasing of the Digihub, ideally with the return of onsite open days.
- **Pastoral issues**: the VP (Pastoral) reinforced the earlier messages on strategy development such as the considerable work on progression which now came within her remit. This included new networking opportunities, for example with the Coast to Capital LEP whose Careers Hub launch she had just attended.

In response to an earlier question on whether the 2A students' perception of university during Covid was impacting on applications for 2021, the VP (Pastoral) confirmed that, to-date, UCAS applications were slightly down. The Director of Progression anticipated however that the numbers may recover as the impact of the vaccination programme brought some return to normality, albeit with adverse economic conditions anticipated and potentially affecting employment opportunities.

The Chair concluded that members appeared very content with the reports and thanked the VP once again for his work on these and the wider team effort in producing a comprehensive document to help drive development.

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved:**

- a. the College Self-Assessment Report (SAR) 2019-20; and**
- b. the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2020-21**

**1568) Audit Committee Annual Report to the Governing Body 2019-20 (and Report from the Audit Committee)**

*Paper: Audit Committee Annual Report to the Governing Body 2019-20; Minutes of the meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020 (and verbal report from 7<sup>th</sup> December)*

The Committee Chair summarised the report's coverage of the activities of the Audit Committee in advising the Governing Body on **the adequacy of systems and controls in the College**, highlighting the questioning approach. He thanked Mr Bowley for his commitment over the past eight years and welcomed Mrs Martineau to the Committee. Members noted the Committee's confidence in the auditors, areas of audit review and positive levels of assurance.

In particular, the Committee Chair drew attention to an extraordinary meeting the preceding day which had considered refinements to the content of the report (and the Regularity SAQ) as well as a proposal to adjust the **Internal Audit Plan for 2020-21** to help manage workloads. This was not intended to set a precedent but allow the Principal and SMT to focus on strategic planning, a major new capital build and ongoing Covid adjustments. The Committee had endorsed the proposal, confident that alternative assurance would be available and that there would be an opportunity to revisit forward plans and consult further with the Governing Body on them.

Members were content that **the report reflected a very satisfactory position** both in terms of the Committee's attention to its remit and the assurances provided at all three levels of assurance. Going forward they understood that the revised plan did not materially undermine the assurance available to the Governing Body.

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Audit Committee Annual report (with revisions) and the proposed reduction in the (formal external) Internal Audit Plan for 2020-21.**

**1569) Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020**

*Papers: Draft Audit Findings Report incl. Letters or Representation; Regularity Self-assessment, Report and Financial Statements,*

Members noted the discussions of the **Report and Financial Statements** by both the F&GP and Audit Committees and that it had been a **straightforward audit** (other than the challenges of working remotely). Members sought clarification of a difference in figures on pages 44 and 45 relating to the Teachers' Pension Scheme. (**Postscript:** The lower figure of £802k was confirmed to be correct and the adjustment made.)

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved:**

- a. **The Audit Findings Report**
- b. **Signature by the Chair of the letters of representation**
- c. **Signature by the Chair of the Regularity Self-assessment on behalf of the Governing Body**
- d. **The Financial Statements and their signature to include signature by the Chair of the Statement of Corporate Governance and Internal Control.**

**1570) Report from the Finance and General Purposes Committee and Estates Sub-Committee**

*Paper: Minutes of the meetings of 19<sup>th</sup> October (ESC) and 17<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020 (F&GP); TLCF paper; Quarterly Management Accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2020; Policies: Health and Safety Policy and new Covid Working from Home Policy*

The Committee Chair highlighted the main issue of F&GP discussion – albeit in two stages – of the **successful TLCF bid**. Given the level of grant offered and existing challenges in running the College, not to mention a large capital project during the pandemic, members had been **keen to consider fully the implications of accepting the offer. On balance however they had endorsed going ahead** and advised the DfE accordingly - subject to the approval of the Governing Body.

**Members agreed this decision whilst noting that the programme was tight at a time when Covid (and possibly Brexit) could present additional challenges**, for example, in respect of the availability of materials. The Principal described alternative arrangements for student accommodation in the event of any delay to completion.

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved proceeding with the Shelley Building at a total cost of £2.5m with the assistance of the TLCF funding of £500k and a sum of up to £2m for the Shelley Building.**

*[18.15 Mrs Hobday rejoined the meeting].*

**Part II minutes: Criterion h) Information considered to be commercially sensitive**

The Vice Chair also reported on F&GP's consideration of an interim review of the current property plan with agreement that the **CIF 21/22 bid** should **focus on 'condition improvement'** rather than 'expansion' due to the greater likelihood of success. The bid was therefore expected to seek funding for a new main college boiler (c. £150k) and improved perimeter fencing, both projects that the College would have to fund in due course if funding could not be secured.

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved the scope of the CIF bid to be made by mid-January 2021.**

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved the first quarter management accounts**

Members noted that the key changes to the Health and Safety Policy and procedures reflected changes in protocols to include an annex on infectious diseases. The new 'Working from Home Policy' had been written specifically with Covid in mind but might be adapted for wider use in due course.

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved the minor changes to the Health and Safety Policy and new Covid Working from Home Policy.**

### 1571) Report from the Remuneration Committee

*Papers: Minutes of the meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020*

Members noted and received the minutes as an agreed consent item.

### 1572) Report from the Nominations Committee

*Papers: Minutes of the meeting of 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020; Governance Self-Assessment report (SAR) 2019-20 and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2020-21*

The Committee Chair drew attention primarily to the Governance QIP which included the following **priorities**:

- **Filling the governor and possible co-optee vacancies** – including where at all possible a return to the former diversity of the board. To-date, the GB Chair had introduced the College to an experienced project manager who, it was envisaged, would be an asset as a **co-optee to the ESC** at a key point in fulfilling the Property Strategy with the anticipated Shelley Building. A recommendation for approval of the appointment by written resolution was expected to follow shortly;
- **Further developing an effective induction and training programme.** The Committee had recognised both the pros and cons of the current reliance on Zoom in seeking to **work collectively as a coherent body**. Members were invited to submit any comments on the programme, available on the governance SharePoint (**Action: Governors**)

**Resolved: The Governing Body approved:**

- a. **the Governance Self-assessment review 2019-20**
- b. **the Governance Quality Improvement Plan 2020-21**

### 1573) Report from the Quality & Curriculum Committee

*Paper: Minutes of the meeting of 24<sup>th</sup> November 2020*

Members received the minutes reflecting the focus of discussion on the key strategic items of the Education KPIs, curriculum and pastoral aspects of the new Strategic Plan and the College SAR and QIP (see 1566-7 above). The Committee had also appreciated insights into the CAG process in the summer in the absence of exams.

### 1574) Chair's report

The Chair reported that:

- **Attendance** at the **Autumn Term** Committee meetings and overall was very high at 97%. Governing Body attendance in the **Autumn term** had been 94%;
- **Wider participation was also strong**, for example in the SAR/QIP processes and Planning day discussions. Presentations from the latter would be available on SharePoint by the end of the week. (**Action: Clerk**). Safeguarding and Prevent training had been completed by all governors who were invited to catch up with the College's EDI training and SFCA webinars if they had missed the first opportunities.
- **An appeal** against non-admission had been received. Scrutiny of the issue demonstrated that the Principal's decision had been consistent with the College's Admissions Policy as approved by the Governing Body and had therefore been upheld.

The Chair thanked the governors and the SMT for all their hard work throughout the challenges of the autumn term.

**1575) Trustees' report**

The Chair reported on the meeting of the Trustees of the Collyer Endowment of 29<sup>th</sup> November 2020 which had covered areas familiar to governors from the current meeting e.g. on property issues. Members noted that the **difficult year for investments** had resulted in a reduced dividend, down from £60k to £40k. That said **cash balances remained healthy** with the possibility of further support to the College in 20/21 if needed.

**1576) Any other business:** Those governors who had recently been involved in supporting Oxbridge interview preparations asked for thanks to be passed to the Oxbridge co-ordinator for all her hard work.

**1577) Governance Quality Framework**

*Paper: Governance Self-assessment*

Members were content that the meeting had focussed on the appropriate priorities.

The Chair wished everyone a happy and healthy Christmas and New Year.

**1578) Date of Next Meeting: Monday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021 at 10.45 a.m. either at Mercers' Hall in London or on Zoom- tbc**

The meeting closed at 18.31

Chair .....

Date .....

NCW 10/12/2020