

THE COLLEGE OF RICHARD COLLYER

MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY

held on Tuesday 29th September 2020 at 16.30 by 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 Dominic Wakefield
- In attendance:** SMT: Mr Ian Dumbleton, Mr Rob Hussey, Ms Andrea John, Mr Steve Martell; Sarah Ediss (Audit Co-optee), Ms Nicola Whitehead (Clerk)
- Apologies:** Mr Hugh Stafford-Smith
- In the Chair:** Dr David Skipp

The Chair welcomed Mrs Susan Martineau to her first meeting as a governor as well as Mr Lodge in his new capacity as Principal and Dr Rob Hussey as the newly appointed Vice Principal-VP(Curriculum).

1544) Declarations of interest: There were no declarations of interests for the meeting.

1545) Minutes (Parts I and II) of the meeting held on 9th July 2020 were approved, subject to a minor amendment to those circulated to Min 1540 to clarify that the trustee contribution was 'to the College'.

1546) Matters Arising:

The Clerk confirmed that:

Item 1526: All governors had completed their **annual declarations of interests and eligibility**.

Item 1537ii: The **Risk Management Report** had been amended as requested to include the recent staff survey on lockdown as a mitigating action to potential staff dissatisfaction.

The meeting which followed was in the format of a presentation and report from the Principal with contributions from the SMT leads and from governors and co-optees in discussion of the topics covered.

1547) Presentation: Introduction from the Principal

By way of introduction against the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Principal summarised the ongoing business of the College in tune with what he saw as 'The Collyer's Way'. The previous weeks had been volatile with significant Government guidance and changes of direction. The College had responded with calm **confidence**, always putting the College **community** and **particularly students' first, consulting** on all key decisions internally and with the Chair of the Governing Body and **communicating** this clearly **to all stakeholders**.

1548) Examination results

Paper: A level, BTEC L3, Transition Vocational L2 and GCSE results including A level Value added (ALPS and L3VA) data, and year on year trend data

Members noted that, whilst it had been an unusual and nationally controversial year in terms of exams, the College had generally been pleased with the outcomes which reflected a strong cohort of students. As such the **pass rate at A level of 99.9%** (99.4% in 2019) and **high grades at 67.9%** (58.4% in 2019) were **considered fair as reflected in the continued excellent value-added score of 0.34** (up slightly from 0.31 in 2019).

The VP(Curriculum) expressed his confidence that the results were representative of students' progress over the past two years and the staff's efforts to support them. **Extreme care had been taken in the Collyer's centre assessment of grades (CAGs) and finely-tuned ranking, with multiple checks to ensure accuracy and fairness and no over-bidding. The L3VA value-added figures were a clear testament to the College's continuing success** in maximising students' potential with a consistent trajectory of outstanding performance. As such the College was among the best in the country and most students had progressed to their first choice of university, in spite of the unrest around the DfE algorithm at the time.

In addition to A Level results, **high grades for BTEC Level 3 courses continued to be strong** at 79.8% though slightly lower than in 2019 (84.7%) **with a pass rate once more of 100%**. Although the large increase in the number of students taking BTEC Level 3 courses had continued (up from 116 in 2018 to 297 in 2020) and presented challenges particularly in lockdown, the **value-added had once more been a Grade 3 'Excellent'** in 2020 (from a Grade 7 in 2016).

At Level 2, students on the College's Transition programme had also performed well. **GCSE results (Level 2) had been very good with a 15% rise in grades 9-4** and a more **than 25% rise in both Maths and Biology**. The VP thanked all staff involved in the analysis and assessment whilst grappling with distance learning in the early stages of the national lockdown.

Members praised the staff for their calm handling of the Government U-turn in the summer. In response to questions, the VP explained that the genuine increase in high grades at A level was reflected in the broadly consistent value-added (VA) and that the College was not concerned about the impact on the College's VA in two years' time following the high performance at GCSE of the 2020 intake. Members noted however that the College's **transition programme cohort** had halved reflecting greater eligibility for studying A levels. This would be **monitored carefully to ensure appropriate academic and pastoral support and to avoid a possible adverse impact on retention**.

The Chair thanked the staff, SMT and students on behalf of all governors for their considerable effort and success in difficult circumstances.

1549) Curriculum

The VP(Curriculum) explained the four pathways available to students at Collyer's with all courses supported by guidance in studentship. **New courses** offered in 2020 included the very popular Criminology (an A level equivalent Advanced Diploma). **The first technical 'T' level course in Early Years Education (EYE)** had launched with 14 students. Unfortunately, there had been insufficient interest in the **Digital Production 'T' level**, the reasons for which would be further explored. This would be **offered again in 2021** with the new Digihub facility a potential draw. The Transition programme at L2 had been slimmed down slightly to a BTEC Award (from Certificate level) to allow a greater focus on studentship in preparation for subsequent Level 3 study.

1550) Enrolment 2020

The Deputy Principal (DP) reported on the **successful enrolment for 2020** in spite of the background of the global pandemic. The **usual preparations had been adapted to be delivered online** - to include the summer Welcome days and post-March interviews on Zoom and ready to learn guidance. The College had been conscious of anxiety about travelling to Collyer's and the financial cost of doing so. The international programme had been under greater pressure still in terms of travel, homestay nervousness and some national political issues. In terms of competition, some local 11-18 schools had started to engage students early by teaching A levels in the summer term and there was a new college in the Haywards Heath area. Enrolment itself had been complicated by the need for multiple logistical changes in being back on site. He thanked the Principal, SMT and staff (including Registry, IT and Estates) for all their efforts in supporting the process. In terms of **Adult Education**, the DP commented that whilst the recreational courses had suffered owing to Covid, there had been **notable success in maintaining the qualification courses** which generated not only income but profit.

In summary, the DP reminded members that the College had grown from 1932 students at enumeration in 2018 to 2039 in 2019. **For 2020 the prospects looked promising with slightly lower Year 1 numbers but a higher rate of progression to Year 2 suggesting possibly 2100 students on roll at enumeration.**

1551) Reopening plans

The VP (Pastoral) reported on the **arrangements to ensure the safe return of students and staff** based on a 50:50 return, split between the two year groups. These included one-way systems, forward facing desks, screens and face coverings/ masks on campus and protocols on the use of sanitisers and equipment. The measures extended to social and study spaces which would come under increasing pressure as the weather deteriorated. The College had worked with the RCU to extend the Student Code of Conduct to include Covid and the First Aid procedures had been enhanced to reflect the need for the correct PPE when dealing with suspected cases. **The Student Services and Reception teams were to be commended for their front-line efforts.** The College had learned from the three cases to-date with c. 50 students having self-isolated.

The Principal commented on the challenge of adapting to continually updated guidance, and particularly that just prior to reopening proposing that 'onsite delivery counts for the majority of planned learning hours'. **The initial planning for a 50:50 approach with each (large) year group alternating was being continually reviewed.** The VP (Curriculum) explained a **possible 75:25 model** whilst being mindful of the pressures on space, the upward trend in cases and potential difficulties in maintaining a level playing field of access to consistently high quality education. He proposed that reasonable notice (of four weeks) of any change would be necessary (to reduce anxiety and enable planning).

The DP explained that the existing **shortage of social and study space**, for example in the Refectory and Library, had been **exacerbated by Covid**. Widespread consultation - including the RCU and student governors - had led to a **proposal to install canopies** with sites being considered in the Denne Quad and by the Sports Hall. Consultation with the Estates Sub-Committee Chair would be followed by a proposal to F&GP members (by written resolution) subject to the appropriate level of delegation. Members asked questions about capacity given social distancing and weatherproofing, learning that 'walls' would not be possible owing to fire escape routes. They noted that other colleges did use and value such canopies. The parent governor welcomed the development, aware of the need as both parent and local businessman. Indeed, the Horsham business forum had discussed looking at repurposing town centre facilities to help the students.

Asked about their experience of blended learning, the student governors commented that this was largely positive but it had been hard to adjust to the less structured week offsite (though advantageous for some in saving on travel costs). The VPs commented on the efforts in **repurposing areas of the College for additional social/ study space** when on site such as the Duckering Hall and the efforts to communicate availability to students such as in the Sports Hall. Additional cleaning had been introduced in the Refectory and students were being encouraged to sanitise hands before entering and eating.

1552) HR Update

The Principal explained the **realignment of responsibilities within SMT with a clearer focus between Business and Operations, and Education. Two new College Committees**, so named, would be feeding into Governing Body committees with **revised KPIs from each signalling the key messages**. Though turnover was generally low, he further explained the **staff changes** following on from the new appointments within the SMT as well as those at House, subject and responsibility level such as for EDI. Interviews were taking place the next day for a new RCU Manager and Secretary to the Parents' Forum.

1553) Estates/Property Strategy

The Principal explained that the **Estates team had been busy during lockdown**, supporting completion of the impressive and versatile **Digihub**, an increase in the number of **IT rooms** and a shared office for computer science, IT and the digital team. Music practice rooms had been soundproofed and further **painting and refurbishment undertaken**.

Going forward the Principal had been working with the DP and Estates team on **new ideas for the College estate** - to be further pursued at a forthcoming meeting with the ESC Chair, Clerk and, in turn, the ESC itself. The Governing Body had already signed off on the **TLCF bid which, if successful, would require a firm budget commitment** of c. £1.8m from College reserves. In the meantime, planning continued towards the Shelley Building, for example with regard to relocation of the Nursery and a new lease. Subject to the TLCF outcome, the expectation was to make a further bid for Condition Improvement Funding 2021 by the anticipated December deadline with the focus once again on the Shelley Building. That said, Covid was informing an updated consideration of priorities to be considered over the autumn term with the need for additional social space and a second catering outlet coming to the fore. Questions were asked in relation to the terms of funding, timeframes, classroom demand and alternative priorities for a future CIF bid.

1554) Budget outturn 2019/20

Paper: Financial outturn as at end July 2020

Members noted the very positive variance in the surplus at the end of 2019/20, up £155,042 from a more modest £2,063 forecast. The external audit was nearing completion with the only significant adjustment (from the outturn shared) a positive one in relation to exams credit. The Finance Director confirmed that the improved position reflected additional income -largely prior to lockdown- thanks to international students, lettings, grants and Adult Education as well as £150k from the Trustees. Pay expenditure had been higher, as previously indicated (though pending an adjustment for holiday accruals) but more than compensated for by savings on non-pay expenditure and increased income. Cash days in hand were extremely healthy at 179 as was the current ratio.

The Chair asked for clarification on the document shared (**Action: The Finance Director to correct an error in the outturn document**). The staff governor commented that it

would be valuable to consider where savings which had arisen from Covid - such as reduced printing costs – could be repeated going forward. A query was also raised in relation to staff costs which might usefully be the subject of further discussion.

1555) Sector update

The Principal reported on **national regional partnerships, where a decision to rejoin FE Sussex was considered valuable in** building on existing links with the S7 SFCs, SFCA and the broader AoC and **providing greater access to the sometimes more entrepreneurial spirit in GFEs. Closer links were also being forged with fellow associated Mercer institutions** such as St. Paul's School and St. Paul's Girls' School, where in spite of the different educational sectors, there was **considerable common ground in developing studentship, service leadership and wider enrichment activity.** The existing collaboration on an **Oxbridge** conference would be resumed subject to Covid and new **sports fixtures** arranged. There was also scope for shared **staff development.**

Members noted that **Ofsted were still potentially visiting colleges though not inspecting** during the Covid measures. Discussions of, for example, blended learning were reported as being valuable and whilst reports were produced, these were ungraded. **Whilst officially resuming in the Spring Term, this might yet be subject to change.**

In addition to the news on TLCF and the next CIF Funding, **SFCA continued to lobby for a dedicated capital expansion fund** at a difficult time. The College did anticipate receiving an additional £50k from the ESFA in catch-up funding to support student learning with particular benefit for those with lower GCSE scores in Maths and English. There was no impact on funding from blended learning but the College did need to respect the guidance on the share of teaching on site. The Principal continued to seek clarity on the potential clawback for reduced delivery of T levels although it was hoped this would reflect the costs incurred in preparation and planning.

The Principal anticipated further challenges in the term ahead in respect of Covid. As such consideration was being given to continuing to hold **key events such as Open and Parents' Evenings virtually.** Further updates would be given.

The Clerk reported on the new suite of **webinars to be offered by SFCA** to include the popular sector update. **Details of the programme would be circulated** once finalised. *(Action: Clerk).*

1556) College Strategic Plan 2020-23

Paper: College Strategic Plan 2020-23

The Chair explained that, with the College Strategic Plan 2015-2020 now at an end, its successor was in development. The Principal proposed that:

- Agreement of the plan should be reached by Christmas to provide a positive vision amidst the current uncertainty;
- The length of the plan should be 3 years rather than 5; and be more succinct for a wider audience;
- The scope of the plan should cover curriculum, pastoral, business and community themes clearly linked to the remits of individual SMT members.

Members recognised that whilst planning had started nearly a year ago at Planning Day, and the scope reduced, this timeframe could still be challenging given the additional demands on SMT time to address Covid-19. As such they welcomed the aspiration but accepted that some delay could yet be necessary.

Resolved: the Governing Body agreed the Principal's outline proposals on the timetable for agreement, a three year plan and its key themes.

1557) Chair's report

The Chair reported that in spite of the difficult circumstances, it would be largely 'business as usual' in terms of the **annual quality assurance cycle** with governors invited to take part in the annual SAR review and forward improvement planning processes. Faculty and Adult Ed link governors were already due to attend faculty meetings on 2nd and 3rd November – and in some instances the subject meetings also - for which he gave thanks in advance for their time. The Clerk would be in touch shortly with dates of review meetings for cross-college link areas (to take place before half-term) once review of those link areas had been completed to take account of the recent realignment of remits.

Finally, the Chair reminded members of the deadline for completion of the latest **Prevent training** of the end of the month.

In conclusion, the Chair spoke on behalf of the Governing Body in praising the Principal, SMT and staff for their remarkable work over recent months and particularly since the start of the term.

1558) Meeting assessment

The Chair welcomed feedback on the meeting which he believed had been comprehensive in updating governors on the business of the College and the work being undertaken in difficult circumstances.

1559) Any other business: None

1560) Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 8th December 2020 at 16.30 (via Zoom).

The meeting closed at 18.40

Chair

Date

NCW 30/09/2020