

THE COLLEGE OF RICHARD COLLYER

MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY

held on Monday 29th March 2021 at 10.45 a.m. (on 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 welcomed staff governor, Tom Cox, and the student governors to their last meeting as governors.

1579) Urgent Business: None

1580) Consent items

In opening the meeting, the Chair invited comments on the consent agenda items. Members were content with these and the proposed priorities and timings for each item.

1581) Declarations of interest: There were no declarations of interests.

1582) Minutes of the meeting held on 8th December 2020 were approved.

1583) Matters arising

The Clerk confirmed that:

1572: No comments had been received from governors on their **Training and Development programme** which therefore stood as considered by the Nominations Committee. That said the implications for the summer term of continued social distancing with meetings on Zoom and the cancellation of the UMG Awayday would be considered to ensure ongoing support to governors.

1574: The video recordings of the main **presentations from planning day** had been placed on the Governors' SharePoint for ease of reference for those unable to attend.

1584) Principal's report including KPIs

Paper: Principal's report to the Governing Body Spring Term 2021 and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): Business and Education

The Principal explained that **the last term had been challenging for all** with **online teaching** and **admissions interviews** followed by the **mass testing** required on return to College in early March. To this had now been added the **extensive preparations for teacher assessed grades (TAGs)** to replace the summer exams and the immediate focus on getting ready for **100% reopening after Easter**.

However, Covid was not dominating all College activity. New Finance, Property and Curriculum strategies were ready for consideration, to be followed in the summer by those covering Pastoral, Digital and Marketing activities. The **Principal's report covered** further topics including **Progression**, innovative work in the **Library** and the wealth of measures undertaken by the **Estates** team to ensure the health and safety of all on site.

Turning to the **KPIs**, the Principal explained that these would be further reviewed in the light of governor feedback whilst remaining streamlined. Both the Business and Education documents presented a **generally positive picture** of the year to-date albeit with **business profit a little down - as predicted -** and some additional measures being taken to **support the transition cohort** for whom lockdown had been particularly challenging. **High grade and L3 performance was very encouraging.**

In response to **questions on the Property Strategy**, the Principal reported on his meeting with the Richard Collyer Union (**RCU**) and staff 'surgeries'. There had been **notable excitement for the much-needed additional catering and social areas**. The staff and student governors, in particular, welcomed the 'energising' impact of the overall vision as well as the more detailed plans e.g. for sustainability and a place for the student union at the centre of the campus and adjacent to new versatile outside social space. Members hoped students would be encouraged to stay on campus, engage with the activities and feel proud of their surroundings.

Members welcomed the **thorough Progression report**, expressing *interest, for future reports, in more explanation of the tables and graphs and gaining a better understanding of students' choice of course and institution, any correlation between the two and any divergence from national norms.* (**Action: VP (Pastoral) to raise with Director of Progression (HE)**). Looking at the **popularity of more local universities in 2020**, the VP (Pastoral) explained that in recent years UNIFROG had helped students to go further afield to study. The student governors commented on the **frustration at not currently being able to visit universities in person** despite the best efforts of the universities to provide online open days and taster lessons.

Staffing movements were confirmed to be at **usual** levels though there had been some **additional recruitment** associated with the **restructured Progression Directorate**. The May HR meeting of the F&GP Committee would look at such issues in more detail.

1585) Student Voice

Paper: Student Voice report: March 2021

The Chair asked the student governors to expand on their reflections in the report that **students were 'exhausted by this term's uncertainty'**. They felt it important to highlight that, despite efforts to remain positive, it had been an **immense strain facing an unknown exam process and future**, for example, in terms of university entrance and where they might be living. The memory of the previous year's results had led to a nagging mistrust in the Government's planning. They were however **grateful to the College for its support** and particularly welcomed the e-mails just received from subject leaders clarifying, in advance of the Easter break, how assessments would be undertaken.

Members commented on the **students' 'phenomenal resilience'** whilst appreciating that there would be **some legacy of anxiety going forward** requiring ongoing support. They thanked the students for keeping the governors informed, as well as Collyer's staff - and the SMT team in particular - for their understanding and positivity in helping students.

1586) Mid-year Update of the Financial Forecast

Paper: Mid-Year Forecast 2020/21

The Finance Director (FD) reported that the **forecast surplus for the full year was looking positive**. There was one adverse variance in relation to the **canteen** of over £100k (owing to

lockdown and reduced student numbers), though offset to some extent by cost savings. Further savings included energy and staffing costs with possibly more to come.

In response to questions, the FD explained the **favourable position in having in-house catering** both in financial and quality terms. Even during Covid, other colleges had similar fixed costs as a result of their contractual obligations. The College was **not yet sure of any savings on exam fees**. One of three main boards had been invoicing for work on moderation but the College had not yet heard from the remainder. Experience from the previous year suggested a rebate of c.20% might be received.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the revised mid-year budget forecast.

1587) Finance Strategy 2020-32

Paper: Finance Strategy 2020-32

Following an introduction from the Principal, **members commented favourably on the approach and level of detail with aims covering culture, income, expenditure and reserves.**

In response to questions, the Principal explained the potential opportunity costs of **lettings** when there was an overriding need for classroom space. In terms of current relationships, members noted the current **WSM** office tenancy ran to October 2021 and the expectation thereafter that there would be a **continuation of the arrangements regarding the shared staff member and lettings for music lessons and orchestras**. There was **also a continuing commitment to supporting QEII** in their forward plans.

Noting the **generally positive financial metrics** - but pressure on sixth form colleges to keep staffing costs at 70% of recurrent income - *some rewording of the expenditure objectives e.g. para 3.3 was proposed, not least to reflect the intention to achieve this through natural efficiencies.* **(Action: Principal)**. Members supported the Principal's **emphasis on maintaining quality**, posing further questions on **the identification of and investment in key skills** whilst not inflating costs. The Vice Chair commented on the F&GP Committee's **intention to examine payroll costs at their May HR meeting, looking in more detail at overtime costs, the nature and costs of the full range of support staff in particular, and what might be the optimum appropriate figure for pay costs.** **(Action: Principal, VP (Curriculum) and FD)**.

The Audit Committee Chair welcomed the discussion around **reserves**, noting the relevance in this context of the recent RMG discussion of the **need to consider the College's risk appetite**. The Principal explained that the Risk Management and Assurance Policy had been enhanced to seek to address this issue for consideration by the next Audit Committee.

Finally, the FD confirmed that some **£106 money** might be forthcoming for the College in response to building in the town but it was **difficult to predict the amount and timing** particularly following some delay in the North Horsham development. It was hoped that any such funding might coincide with the College's second phase of the Property Strategy.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Finance Strategy 2020-32 subject to the proposed amendment.

[12.02 Mrs Ruaux left the meeting]

1588) Property Strategy 2020-32

Papers: Property Strategy 2020-32

The Principal explained the **synergy between the Finance and Property strategies**. The Chair commented too on the recent extraordinary meeting of the Trustees of the Collyer Endowment at

which the Property Strategy had been shared as a useful backdrop to how the Trustees might help with the new Shelley Building project. The discussion had been encouraging but with further analysis of income and alternative sources of funding required.

The Principal had subsequently written to the Mercers' Company to explore any further possible support, mindful of the current market challenges. **Members welcomed any possible Mercer governor or Trustee support to a College approach.**

One member asked about the phasing and potential timing for discussion of the detail especially where current buildings were proposed to be replaced. The Principal responded that the two key phases were the current programme for the Shelley Building and additional social space to accommodate up to 2,500 students and the subsequent need for further classrooms to accommodate up to 3,000 students from c. 2025.

The ESC Chair expressed support for the Property Strategy in presenting **a vision and an orderly approach to its fulfilment**, subject to detailed approval at key stages. In addition to the 'big ticket' items, the ESC was also mindful of the **need for ongoing planned maintenance** of the existing site subject to the availability of dedicated ESFA funding.

Asked by the student governor about **student consultation**, especially with regard to social space, the Principal explained that further consultation would take place once the architect for the Shelley Building was in place and when the feasibility study for a new open plan café was completed. He responded to a **question on parking and alternative travel provision**, confirming that the new Sustainability Committee was looking at a Green Travel Plan (to include the promotion of car-pooling, cycling and public transport) with the intention also that college growth would not suggest increased parking. Members recognised however that this would need to take account of the potential impact on the College's neighbours. The ESC Chair commented that **sustainability** would be feature of all new builds and reflect market developments with e.g. new electric charging points being considered.

Further questions covered who would occupy the new 10 classroom block (not yet decided beyond Early Years T level), **additional group study space** (e.g. as part of the proposed new Art block) as well as any potential T level clawback. In response to a question from a student governor following an RCU executive meeting, the Deputy Principal also explained the measures being taken to **safely optimise capacity in the Library with 100% return** to onsite learning post-Easter.

Overall, the Governing Body very much welcomed the new Property Strategy.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Property Strategy

1589) Curriculum Strategy and Policy

Papers: Curriculum Strategy 2020-23 and Curriculum Policy 2021

The Vice Principal (Curriculum) explained that the SMT's annual review of the Curriculum Strategy 2020-23 suggested **no substantial changes were needed to the strategy on which governors had been consulted the previous year**. The vision and values remained the same with the **student at the centre**. The strategy was **appropriately ambitious** in seeking to remain top state provider in West Sussex and in the top 5 sixth form colleges nationally, **offering a broad and balanced sixth form education** with c. 70% 'A' level provision, 25% vocational/ technical and 5% at Level 2. Local demographics and school demand showed that student numbers were on target to meet the College's growth targets. **Strengthening links with local and regional employers** would help to support the development of the vocational/ technical programme. The strategy took account of Ofsted's shift towards the substance of education and now also reflected the conclusion of Brexit negotiations, enabling a more considered view of the impact on the College's international activity and focus. The Covid-19 pandemic had expedited consideration and realisation of the potential **benefits of digital technology**. The **threat remained with regard**

to some of the College's current vocational provision requiring careful forward planning of the curriculum from 2023.

In response to questions, the VP (C) explained that:

- The proposed launch of academies for Arts, Business and Science did not imply a structural change but an **aim better to identify, track and promote the student's wider enrichment opportunities**;
- Current market research was being undertaken into 100% online international courses, acknowledging a concern raised about potential impact on on-site international enrolments;
- For the student cohort as a whole, the College anticipated **some limited ongoing online provision, for example, for catch-up workshops**. However, the anticipated return to 100% lessons on site reflected the **belief in the wider benefits of the college community being together**;
- Whilst students would have an opportunity for **Autumn retakes**, funding was not available for further tuition support. It was hoped however that the teacher assessed grades (TAGs) would be considered fair and the numbers taking this option would be limited as in the previous year;
- The College recognised the existing good practice in **supporting students who changed courses** and would seek to address any inconsistencies across subjects;
- The **T level target numbers** were a stretch and it was hoped that further Government promotion would help their achievement, though possibly with a year lag.

Finally, members noted that the Curriculum Policy was largely unchanged and as such proposed as a consent item.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved both the Curriculum Strategy and Policy

[12.41 Mrs Ruaux rejoined the meeting.]

1590) Report from the Audit Committee
Paper: Minutes of the meeting of 2nd March 2021

The Committee Chair reported on the recent **ESFA audit of the ILR** which had found no issues with the College's funding claim on funding. Turning to the review of **performance of the Financial Statements Auditor for 2020/21**, the Audit Committee acknowledged the challenges of a remote audit but were nonetheless pleased with the responsive, and indeed improved, performance from RSM. That said the Committee was conscious that it had been a long time since the College had **tested the market** for the external audit and this was therefore **recommended for the following year**. The Clerk added that the College had learnt subsequently that the Audit Code of Practice/ Accounts Direction might be changing to include a requirement to retender (though not necessarily change external auditor) every five years.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the reappointment of RSM for the Financial statements audit for the 2020/21 accounts at a cost of £20,000 excl. VAT.

1591) Report from the Finance and General Purposes Committee
Paper: Minutes of the meeting of 8th March; Estates minutes of 3rd March; Management Accounts to 31st January 2021;

The Committee Chair explained that much of the Committee's discussion had focussed on the Finance and Property strategies already covered. The **Digihub post-project review** was self-explanatory and, as such, a consent item. One further item worthy of Governing Body consideration was the **management accounts** with members acknowledging the previous discussion on pay costs. The Finance Director commented on the improved position in the February accounts, particularly in relation to EBITDA where the College was £72k ahead of budget.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved:

- a) **The Management Accounts to end January 2021;**
- b) **The Digihub Post Project Review**

1592) Report from the Quality & Curriculum Committee

Paper: Summary and Minutes of the meeting of 13th February;

The Chair referred to the minutes highlighting the following:

- **Good progress on the College Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)** with only one action – the one grade higher' initiative - postponed out of sensitivity to student welfare;
- The preparation of **detailed guidance for students** on how they would be assessed i.e. with **TAGs**;
- **Considerable ongoing support to ensure students** (and vulnerable students in particular) were **not disadvantaged by distance learning**. He acknowledged the hard work by the VP (Pastoral) -- and her team - who in turn explained that the help was in the usual form (121s, small groups etc) but online with an additional temporary student wellbeing practitioner appointed;
- **Ongoing changes to the Progression Directorate** with new appointments made for a Director of Progression for Careers and Employability and a work experience coordinator as well as a new careers adviser for which the ad was closing that day;

Governors agreed the paramount importance of student wellbeing alongside the strategy development and thanked the senior management team for all their hard work in steering such marked progress.

Members noted the relatively minor changes to the **Admissions Policy** clarifying both the post-Brexit position for overseas fee-paying nationals and EEA nationals with settled status as well as the College's late applications/waiting list process and the average GCSE score calculation.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the revised Admissions Policy

1593) Chairman's report

Paper: Remaining dates for 2020-21 meetings

The Chair thanked governors for their **strong attendance** to-date (97% at committees in the Spring term and mid 90s% overall - i.e. for GB and committees - in year to-date). Furthermore, the **Spring term virtual Learning Walk** had been attended by two-thirds of governors and the recordings shared with all. The comprehensive updates from Dan and SMT members had been much appreciated and the compilation video enlightening in terms of the challenges to staff and students in online learning, further illustrated by the complementary report on pastoral support.

The Chair spoke on behalf of the Governing Body in **thanking the SMT, staff and students for persevering over the past challenging year**. Governors hoped that the return to 100% on site learning after Easter returned the College to some form of normal and an easier time for all, albeit that Zoom meetings might need to continue for a little while yet. Members noted the remaining dates for the year and cancellation of the Upper Managers' Awayday.

1594) Any other business

The Chair of the Nominations Committee explained that the next meeting would be on 11th June. In the meantime, much **work was continuing in relation to filling governor vacancies**. Nominations were being sought for the new student governors and the parent governor position would be advertised after Easter. **A new staff governor, with a wide-ranging teaching and**

support staff portfolio, had recently been elected by all staff from a strong field.
Governors were invited to ratify that appointment.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the appointment of Will Power as staff governor with effect from 1st April 2021.

The Chair thanked the outgoing staff and student governors for their considerable contributions to the work of the Governing Body over their respective terms.

1595) Governance Quality Framework

Paper: Governance Self-assessment

In view of the timing constraints, governors were invited to provide any feedback on the meeting by e-mail to the Clerk.

1596) Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 14th July 2021 at 16.30 at Collyer's

The meeting closed at 13.10.

Chair.....

Date

NCW 11/05/2021