

THE COLLEGE OF RICHARD COLLYER

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY HELD ON Wednesday 6 December 2023 at 16.30

- Present:** Steve Allen, Karl Banister (via Zoom), Rev'd Lisa Barnett, Teddy Bridges, Ann Donoghue, Barbara Hobday, Graham Lawrence, Dan Lodge (Principal), Susan Martineau, Tanishka Mehra, Paul Mittendorfer, Dr Grant Powell, Will Power (via Zoom), Clare Ruaux, Helen Smith, Dom Valente
- In attendance:** Members of SMT - Ian Dumbleton (FD), Rob Hussey (VP Curriculum), Andrea John (VP Pastoral), Steve Martell (DP)
- Shachi Blakemore (External Audit Partner, Buzzacott) (via Zoom)
Russha Sellings (Clerk)
- In the Chair:** Graham Lawrence

Governors were invited to a briefing session to receive the latest updates on academisation prior to the meeting. There was an opportunity for further discussion under Item 9.

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Bev Valley and James Yandell. Karl Banister and Will Power joined the meeting by Zoom. The meeting was noted as quorate from the outset.

New Student Governor Tanishka Mehra was officially welcomed and thanked by the Chair for stepping into the role and introductions were made.

The Chair referred to the agenda timings and the attendance online of the College's external auditor for Item 7. The meeting pack had been divided into four sections with policies that had committee review available on SharePoint. The consent items would be noted for approval unless any Governor wished to raise anything in advance.

2. Urgent Business

None to report.

3. Declarations of Interest

None declared with respect of the items on the agenda.

4. Minutes inc Part II of the meeting held on the 25 September 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting including Part II were approved without amendment.

5. Matters Arising

Safeguarding briefing – this related to the annual safeguarding compliance training through a new training platform.

6. Written Resolutions

Paper: resolutions

Passed since the last meeting:

i) Student Governor appointment

ii) Co-optee appointment

Resolved: the minutes record the approval of the resolutions taken by relevant members of the Governing Body since the last meeting to confirm the appointments of Co-optee George Dummer and Student Governor Tanishka Mehra.

[16.35 – Shachi Blakemore joined the meeting]

7. Report & Financial Statements

Papers: Audit Findings Report, Letter of Representation, Report & Financial Statements ending July 2023

i) Audit Findings Report

The FD spoke briefly of the audit process in the second year of Buzzacott's contract. The audit had gone smoothly with only 3 findings to report; one category C and two others advisory; he assured Governors these were not of any significance.

Shachi provided some further updates on reaching the audit opinions which followed the prescribed ESFA format. The Teacher Pension Scheme (TPS) had a signed and clean audit opinion. The auditors were content with all the disclosures made for the remainder of the audits and it was confirmed there was an appropriate use of public funds which led to a related audit opinion on compliance since reclassification. Shachi highlighted the main discussion points at clearance and the recent Audit & Risk Committee meeting on the going concern statement in respect of academisation. From a financial perspective the College remained a going concern, however if it was more likely than not that the College would convert to academy status in the next 12 months, then the auditor would not be able to confirm the going concern from a legal perspective because in that situation the College would not continue to exist in its current legal form. As the timescales for conversion to academy status had adjusted, the Chair pointed to the narrative in the Statement of Corporate Governance and Financial Statements where this was explained. For the purposes of the Financial Statements, therefore, the College was a going concern. A Governor queried whether the going concern would have any impact on TUPE matters during the process of conversion and Shachi responded that this had no bearing on the definition. Shachi continued that the loan disclosure was not relevant at this point in time but could be next year when there was more certainty on the final position.

ii) Letter of Representation

It was noted that this was the standard letter with the addition of the going concern context. There were no further comments.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Letter of Representation.

iii) Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2023

Shachi emphasised the underlying financial position which was healthy and led to strong reserves and the FD explained this would enable the College to manage the financial challenges ahead, especially where funding was lagged. The reserves position was discussed in respect of the investment in the estate towards supporting future growth and Governors discussed the recommendation from the auditor of a reserves policy. Shachi said while it was only currently mandatory for academy trusts, this was more widely encouraged by the ESFA. The FD said this would be considered with the view of proportionality to income and Shachi advised Governors that for academy trusts there was a set parameter of a minimum of 5% and up to 20% of total income and it would be advisable to take this into account. The Principal agreed that it would be helpful to document the rationale which would mitigate the challenges with capital funding. Timescales were discussed and the FD committed to drafting and finalising the new policy in time for the draft budget to be considered by Governors in the summer term. **(Action: FD)**

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the annual Report and Financial Statements which would be signed electronically by the Principal and the Chair.

8. Principal's Report

Paper: Principal's autumn term report

The Principal provided a brief introduction to his report. There was a robust response to Ofsted recommendations and the resulting plan was fully embedded. The development plans for the estate were progressing well. The College was in the early stages of the next strategic cycle, however there was a cautionary note about the level of uncertainty facing the sector. Questions were invited.

There was a request for a staffing update to be included in future reports as this was important in periods of uncertainty. The Principal referred to the community update and would consider this further.

In terms of the College's current financial position which included the significant legacy donation, a Governor asked about maintaining the current payroll level as a percentage of income. The FD referred to the 25 year forecast. The current underlying figure in the low 70s was comparatively mid-range in terms of other S7 colleges, although the FD urged caution in terms of benchmarking.

A question was raised on the possibility of any further S106 funding and the timing of any such funds. The Principal said that the funding typically took some time while the occupancy of new housing developments was confirmed, however it was expected to be reported to the Estates Committee a sum of around £1-2 million in the next 2 years.

There were no further questions and the Principal was thanked for the thorough report.

9. Updates from Working Parties

Papers: Minutes Skills Agenda WP 07-11-23, AWP 24-11-23

Skills Agenda

The Chair of the Skills Agenda working party, Helen Smith, was invited to give an update. Helen referred to the latest minutes and the work undertaken by the VPs on the mapping of the current provision against the LSIP sector areas and the development of relationships with Employer Representative Bodies (ERBs). The Chair had also begun collaboration with Skills Governors from other colleges. The VP (Curriculum) gave a brief update on the LSIF bid and the funding that would be put towards immersive classrooms. The working party had also considered the new Ofsted requirements and preparation for an inspection under the enhanced EIF. Governors observed that the creation of a new ERB database should provide useful evidence for Ofsted. The Clerk further advised that new DfE guidance was imminent and it was expected that the accountability statement and the statutory review would be merged into one document. Governors asked about the recent FEC Annual Strategic Conversation where some insights were provided and the Principal said the College was in a strong position. The Principal had also explained to the ESFA the timelines for academisation at this meeting.

Academisation

Following the earlier briefing attended by most Governors and SMT, the Chair of the Governing Body provided a recap on key activities including the submission of the application, the successful bid for TEG funding and the latest developments with partnership activity. It was acknowledged that more time would be needed for some schools' considerations, especially where capacity was an issue, and lessons had been learnt in the early due diligence phase which would be important for future partnerships. The Principal said it was important to maintain the commitment to the vision. Further meetings were scheduled in the coming weeks including with the RDfE and working party members would discuss the next steps. There was an agreed action to share the letter from the primary schools that had been circulated to the working party at their recent meeting. **(Action: Principal/Clerk)**

10. Admissions Report

Paper: Admissions report autumn 2023

The DP was delighted to report to Governors the smooth enrolment of a record number of students and thanks were recorded to the Admissions team. The messaging at recruitment events was strong especially around enrichment opportunities and the format with student ambassadors was popular. Submitted applications for the next round were also up by over 10% YoY. Governors heard that retention rates were also improved which was positive. There had been an issue with international recruitment numbers identified and discussed by the F&GP Committee and the DP was preparing a detailed action based report in response. The Chair wished to thank the DP for all this work.

11. Student Voice

Paper: Student Governor termly report

New Student Governor Taniskha Mehra spoke to the report provided.

A Governor asked about capacity on campus in respect of increasing numbers discussed in the previous item and Tanishka commented on study opportunities in the library areas, however these areas had been recently expanded.

12. College Quality Assurance inc:

Papers: College SAR 22-23 and QIP 23-24 combined, Ofsted summary (tabled)

i) SAR 22-23 and QIP 23-24

The VP (Curriculum) circulated a College SAR summary that he planned to share with Ofsted before the end of term which was confirmed as optional but recommended. Governors were invited to provide any comments in writing before the submission.

There were no further questions.

Thanks were recorded for all the work undertaken by the VPs on the SAR-QIP.

13. Report – Estates Committee

Papers: Minutes Parts I & II 16-10-23

a) *Minutes inc Part II

The Committee Chair reported that the first meeting of the new full Committee had gone well. Links between the F&GP Committee in respect of financial endorsements and Audit & Risk with regards to Health & Safety or other risks would exist. There was a brief update on the completion of the Shelley building in terms of snagging and the estates masterplan tender process. The Committee would meet again the following week. There were no questions.

b) Consider Recommendations:

i) *Policies: Health & Safety Policy

The updated policy was received, there were no questions raised.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Health & Safety Policy.

14. Report - Remuneration Committee

Papers: Minutes Parts I & II 03-11-23

a) *Minutes inc Part II 03-11-23

The Committee Deputy Chair who had chaired the meeting, made reference to the minutes. There were no questions.

b) Consider Recommendations:

i) SPH Annual Report 22-23

The report was received, there were no questions raised.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the SPH annual report.

15. Report – Governance & Search Cttee

Papers: Minutes 03-11-23

a) *Minutes

The Committee Deputy Chair also reported to Governors. There were a number of items to be endorsed.

b) Consider Recommendations:

i) Governance SAR (22-23) QIP (23-24)

The SAR-QIP was received, there were no questions raised.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Governance SAR-QIP including the revised self-assessment grading.

ii) Update on vacancies and succession

There had been a particular focus on succession with the appointment of a new Student Governor and a Co-optee to the Estates Committee. Some members of the Committee had recently interviewed a prospective Governor and would consider the application further before making a recommendation to the Governing Body. The Governing Body supported and approved the recommendation of Paul Mittendorfer as the Deputy Chair of the F&GP Committee.

iii) AoC FE Governance Code adoption

Governors had previously been briefed on the consultation for the revised code and agreed to adopt it from this point onwards.

Resolved: The Governing Body agreed to adopt the revised AoC FE Governance Code 2023 from the date of the meeting.

iv) Pastoral role descriptions

The rationale for developing the role descriptions was explained and Governors agreed that it would be useful for succession planning. It was understood that that the role descriptions would evolve over time and may be added to as needed.

16. Report - Finance & GP Committee

Papers: Minutes 15-11-23

a) *Minutes

The Committee Chair referred to the minutes of the meeting.

b) Consider Recommendations:

i) ESFA correspondence / dashboard

The recent ESFA letter which referred to the latest output from the dashboard were noted.

ii) Business KPIs

The KPIs were received, there were no questions raised.

iii) Q1 Management Accounts

The Management Accounts were received, there were no questions raised.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved Q1 Management Accounts including Balance Sheet and Cash Flow.

iv) People Strategy

The Committee Chair wished to reiterate the importance of Governors' feedback on the new strategy and the strategy document had been circulated in advance of papers. It was requested that Governors send any comments to the Clerk before the end of term and if there was nothing to add to also confirm by reply. The Chair of the Governing Body had separately commented. The strategy was agreed pending the significance of further comments and the final version would be issued in the new year.

(Action: Principal/Clerk)

Resolved: The Governing Body approved new People Strategy subject to the final version being circulated.

Governors discussed how updates on the progress of the new strategy would be made available. The Principal referred to the action plans arising from the strategy such as the workload action plan which had some specific measurables. Further evidence would be provided via the QIP, although there would need to be a read across between the F&GP and Q&C Committees. Additional sources of evidence may also help to triangulate the effectiveness of the strategy such as retention levels and

staff feedback through surveys, although there weren't any specific KPIs. There was a suggestion the strategy development could be a possible topic at a future Strategy Morning.

17. Report - Quality & Curriculum Committee

Papers: Minutes 20-11-23

a) *Minutes

The Committee Chair referred to the minutes. The Committee had focussed on the annual SAR-QIP process.

b) Consider Recommendations:

i) Education KPIs

The VP (Curriculum) wished to highlight that since publication, he had revisited the T-Level Distinction high grades and the corrected figure was 57%. The data would be recalculated comparatively to national average. There were no further questions.

ii) Safeguarding update

The VP (Pastoral) presented slides with data now including trends YoY. A question was raised about the specific types of risk. The RAG rated column was explained and it was noted that internally, the team were more systematic in recording of risks. The areas of particular concern were eating disorders which had increased significantly over the year and also cases of sexual assault. Suicide attempts had reduced despite ideation levels being high. Currently links between retention and mental health issues weren't tracked, although this may become apparent if a student left the College. Governors were informed of the reduction in funding for counselling from the LA and the criteria for referrals; the updates on provision were covered in the Pastoral QIP.

There was a robust debate about the governance response to the data that was presented termly, the role of the Safeguarding Governors and reporting via the Q&C Committee, particularly in terms of all Governors safeguarding responsibilities. Some further thought on this in the future would be useful. The safeguarding internal audit in the new year may reveal some insights. **(Action: Chair)**

iii) *Policies: Adult Ed suite (new)

The new policy suite was received, there were no questions raised.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the new suite of policies.

18. Report - Audit & Risk Committee

Papers: Minutes 22-11-23

a) *Minutes

The Committee Chair referred to the minutes. The Committee's meeting had covered the Annual Report and Financial Statements that were presented by the external auditor at the start of the meeting.

b) Consider recommendations:

i) Audit Committee Annual Report 22-23

The report documented the activity of the Committee. The Clerk highlighted the need to adjust the going concern aspect following agreement by the Governing Body under Item 7.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the annual report subject to the update on going concern and the report would be signed electronically by the Chair of the Governing Body prior to being submitted to the ESFA.

ii) Internal Audit Plan 23-24

At the meeting, members had received their last report from MHA before the introduction of the new internal auditors, Wylie + Bisset. The transition had been very seamless. A 3 year forward plan was provided and there was some flexibility in the planning. A key area for the sector was cyber security and further reviews would be undertaken to provide Governors with the necessary assurances. This

linked to the recommendation from the external auditor on Cyber Essentials accreditation as it was anticipated this may become a condition of funding as it was for academies. It was confirmed this was underway by the IT Network Manager.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the annual audit plan.

iii) *Policies: Risk Management & Assurance Policy

The Committee Chair wished to highlight the streamlining of the risk management process which now aligns to broader accountabilities. Separately the Committee Chair advised that Health & Safety would be reported annually to Governors in a specific report with a more strategic focus.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Risk Management & Assurance Policy.

19. Chair’s Report

Papers: Hybrid meeting protocol

i) Hybrid meeting protocol

The Chair explained the rationale for the protocol which had been created to extend flexibility to Governors whilst ensuring relevant staff had notice to adequately prepare for meetings. The protocol was accepted.

ii) External meetings (ESFA/Chairs’ forums)

The Chair spoke of his attendance at the termly meeting of the Mercers’ Company Associated Schools and Colleges’ Chairs. The meeting proved useful despite the varied settings of each organisation. The Chair had also attended the College’s Annual Strategic Conversation with the FEC and a copy of the correspondence would follow for Governors’ information.

The Deputy Chair had this term attended the meeting of the Secondary Soft Federation Chairs which had taken place at Bohunt. The focus of which was sharing good practice, although it was acknowledged there was more commonality between the schools.

20. AOB

Nothing to report.

21. Meeting Assessment

The papers were thorough and Governors online appreciated the opportunity to be able to join the meeting remotely.

22. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 26 March 2024, 10.30am at Mercers’ Hall.

The meeting closed at 18.28

Chair

Date

RRS 05-01-2024