

## THE COLLEGE OF RICHARD COLLYER

### MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY HELD ON Monday 25 September 2023 at 16.30

**Present:** Steven Allen, Karl Banister (via Zoom), Rev'd Lisa Barnett, Teddy Bridges, Barbara Hobday, Graham Lawrence, Dan Lodge (Principal), Susan Martineau, Paul Mittendorfer, Dr Grant Powell, Helen Smith, Dom Valente (via Zoom), James Yandell

**In attendance:** Members of SMT - Ian Dumbleton (FD), Rob Hussey (VP Curriculum), Andrea John (VP Pastoral), Steve Martell (DP)  
Russha Sellings (Clerk)

**In the Chair:** Graham Lawrence

*The Chair opened the meeting at 16.30 which began with a governance safeguarding briefing presented by the VP (Pastoral).*

#### Annual Safeguarding briefing for Governors

The VP (Pastoral) explained the updates to KCSIE 2023 which formed the basis of revisions to the College's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy reviewed by Governors in the summer term. There were also some points to note with regards to the local context in the county since the suicide cluster was identified in 2021-22.

The updated statutory guidance emphasised the importance of keeping students safe online, in particular ensuring adequate filtering and monitoring systems were in place. The IT team shared the responsibility of maintaining a secure network as well as keeping students safe from online harms while in college. Governors were assured the Safeguarding linked Governor would be making the necessary checks that the College met the required DfE filtering and monitoring standards.

Some anonymised examples of online monitoring were shared to illustrate where activity was flagged by the College's filtering system and the appropriate referral and level of intervention made. Governors heard that the link between student behaviour and being safe online was also important and staff were challenging negative online incidents as soon as they arose.

There was also new Prevent Guidance coming into effect with a revised template for risk assessments. The VP (Pastoral) referenced a short video on SharePoint which Governors may find useful to understand how the risks were changing over time.

In terms of staff, safeguarding training had taken place at the start of the academic year. The new Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy encompassed initiatives for staff and there was a dedicated library on SharePoint for staff to access specific resources.

The VP (Pastoral) invited questions. A Governor asked about students' views on being monitored while online. It was confirmed students were asked to sign an IT acceptable use agreement during the induction period so expectations were clear from the outset. Governors commended the arrangements that were in place and asked whether there were any additional risks that they ought to be aware of. The VP (Pastoral) said that while the College endeavoured to mitigate harms to students ensuring all systems and procedures were robust and there was support in place, they could not control what happened when students were offsite and not using college systems.

Governors would be required to undertake annual training following the meeting and the materials referenced were available on the Governance SharePoint area. *(Action Clerk)*

## **1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from the following Governors and Co-optees - Stephen Avery, Ann Donoghue, Bev Valley, Sarah Ediss and Dom Wakefield. Student Governor Cristina Smeu was not present at the meeting. Karl Banister joined the meeting by Zoom and Dom Valente joined during Item 8 also by Zoom. The meeting was recorded as quorate at the outset.

## **2. Declaration of Interests**

None to report.

## **3. Minutes of the 11 July 2023**

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved subject to an amendment to remove a sentence in Item 8 on T-Level provision raised by a Governor in advance of the meeting.

## **4. Matters Arising**

The Chair referred to Item 9 on the agenda where specific matters were to be covered.

## **5. Written Resolutions**

There were no resolutions passed since the last meeting.

## **6. Presentation from the Principal Report**

The Principal thanked Governors for their support over the previous year as there was a great deal to celebrate. The 2023 results were the best to date; a testament to the work of students and staff. The new Shelley building was officially opened this month and the event positively received by the community. The College was now entering into the first year of the new Strategic Plan and next phase of its key resource strategies, some elements of which would inform this and future Governing Body agendas.

### **i) Examination Results**

The VP (Curriculum) was invited to update Governors on the headlines of the 2023 results. The College were delighted with the 61% high grades (A\*-B) which was a strong performance against the best comparison point of results pre-pandemic. Results were also pleasing against national performance at over 8% higher for B grades and this also positioned well with S7 colleges. Governors understood Level 3 Value-Added data would not be published this year and it was noted the Alps grading had dropped slightly to 3. It was recognised some subject areas still had areas for improvement which would be addressed through a rigorous approach to quality assurance planned for the coming academic year.

### **ii) Curriculum**

Governors were informed of the Level 3 courses being defunded from, 2025-26. In addition, the VP (Curriculum) advised an updated list was expected this term of those Level 3 qualifications that crossed over with any further wave 4 T-Levels. It was considered essential to prepare for the withdrawal of courses, despite potential changes in the political landscape.

### **iii) Enrolment**

Governors heard from the Deputy Principal of the record 1A enrolment of 1300 students plus 35 international. The intake aligned with the predicted WSCC demographic data. There were notable gains from some secondaries outside of Horsham town and thanks were expressed to the student ambassadors who supported the wider marketing events. Work was continuing to ensure students were enrolled onto the appropriate courses.

### **iv) HR update**

The main focus this year centred on the development of the new People Strategy, the theme of the forthcoming Planning Day on 30 October, which Governors would be invited to attend.

#### v) Estates / Property Strategy

Some Governors joined a tour in advance of the meeting to see first-hand the works that had been completed over the summer. The Principal said it was hoped the flat roofs would be finished by half term. In respect of the Property Strategy, it was evident by 2026 with continued growth and increasing demographics, more space would be needed on campus.

#### vi) Budget Outturn 2022/23

Based on the previous academic year's funding, Governors were aware the pay award negotiations presented significant budgetary pressures and the College had planned over time for efficiencies to be made. To reach the required savings necessary to cover the projected award, the Principal referred to the staff consultation started in the summer term which had now been extended. It was anticipated the pay award would be 6.5%, although this was still to be settled with pay negotiations set to start later this month, however it was confirmed before the summer break there would be a new funding allocation for colleges and a more recent update from the ESFA on the specific allocation to the College. It was hoped the new allocation would now cover the increased pay award. The FD referred to the variables in the income and expenditure over the previous year and the unexpected savings accrued. This was largely attributed to reduced payroll costs in terms of support staff roles, the social care levy and the original forecasted costs assigned to cover staff time in delivery of Collyer's 360. The College had benefited from the John Snelling Legacy and increased interest rates and there was a higher than expected cash balance. The Principal considered this in light of the DfE suggested 3% surplus required where colleges were looking to form a MAT.

There were no further questions.

#### vii) Sector update: funding and pay award

Covered in the above item. The Principal also provided a more general sector update on key Government positions in education.

#### viii) News and events

Further updates on arrangements for key events taking place this term would follow.

### 7. Update on the loan from The Mercers' Company

The Principal advised Governors that the consent for the loan had not been granted by the DfE. The consideration of the request over the summer was set against a benchmark of the treasury's 10 year gilt rate. An acceptable suggestion from the ESFA officials was that the loan would be approved if it was offered with zero interest, if confirmed within the next 3 weeks. The Principal had asked for the application to be closed at this stage and referred back to The Mercers' Company. Governors expressed their disappointment at the response and asked whether it would be appropriate to raise the wider issue for colleges, given the pressing need to plan for future growth. The Principal advised that the local MP had written a letter of support to the DfE, however only colleges with projects that were at build stage or those that had urgent working capital requests were approved. The Chair advised this was one of the first applications of this nature since reclassification and the position could become unsustainable as more colleges applied. Alternative options were being considered with The Mercers' Company and legal advice may need to be sought. A Governor asked about the impact of the loan arrangement on the plans to academise. The Principal said there was open dialogue with the RDfE and they were satisfied that this would not progress as a commercial loan at the present time.

### 8. Academisation update (Part II)

*Papers: Top sheet, initial academy application form, MAT governance structure and consent letters*

#### a) Partnership strategy

Recorded under Part II minutes.

**(Criterion h): Information considered to be commercially sensitive**

#### b) Delegated actions including consultation planning

#### c) Initial application form and related documents (see top sheet)

The application form had been progressed and was presented to Governors. Comments received by Governors prior to the meeting had been addressed. The governance structure was discussed. Governors asked about the role of Members in an academy trust and the Clerk explained the importance of the role, which was however limited in scope, with the majority of the decision making at the Trust Board level. Governors were assured that while Members appoint Trustees, this was more of a ratification process on the recommendation of appointments by the Trust Board. Guidance for academy trusts had been formalised as MATs evolved to emphasise the need for robust governance structures.

The Chair drew Governors' attention to the declaration in section 10. The Governing Body supported the submission of the application, subject to final matters being delegated to the Academisation working party.

**Resolved: The Governing Body agreed the declaration and submission of the application to form a 16-19 academy subject to delegation of the final details to the Academisation working party.**

## **9. Chair's Report**

*Papers: Audit Part IIa minutes 22-06-22, link arrangements 23-24, governance training programme 23-24, GB cycle of business 23-24*

### i) Confidentiality report

Governors noted that following the review, including minutes from 2021-22 and 2022-23, a recommendation was made that the set of Part IIa minutes of the Audit Committee dated 22 June 2022, could be released following progression of the relevant action plan and a subsequent assessment that the risk were now actioned and minimised.

### ii) Governor Links

There was an action from the summer term meeting to revisit the links following the agreement to focus on core statutory areas to alleviate pressure on Governor workload this academic year. The links presented were agreed. Relevant Governors would take part in the autumn term SAR-QIP reviews.

### iii) Governor training programme 23-24

The Chair confirmed that the Governing Body would no longer continue with accessing the ETF offering via the FutureLearn platform for the reasons previously discussed. A programme had been documented covering the resources available including access to the NGA Learning Link provided by The Mercers' Company where Governors would be required to complete the annual safeguarding training.

### iv) Attendance 22-23 / future meetings

Attendance dropped slightly from the previous academic year:

Committees: 90%

Governing Body attendance overall: 87%

The Chair reiterated the importance of the wider participation and contribution of the Governing Body which was considered as very strong.

### v) Cycle of business 23-24

Governors noted the work planner for the academic year and the Chair requested any feedback on this to be sent to the Clerk.

### vi) Revised AoC Code 'soft launch'

The Clerk gave a brief update on the imminent soft launch of the revised AoC Code of Good Governance. This linked to the plans for the College Financial Handbook in August 2024. Advice was

sought from the auditors about adherence to the code in the interim phase with respect to the Statement of Corporate Governance. Further updates to follow.

**10. AOB**

Nothing to report.

**11. Meeting Assessment**

The meeting ran to the time and the new technology in the conference room worked well for those joining online.

**12. Dates 2023-24**

Next meeting: Wednesday 6 December 2023, 16.30 at Collyer's

The meeting closed at 18.27

Chair .....

Date .....

RRS 27-09-2023