

THE COLLEGE OF RICHARD COLLYER

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY HELD ON Tuesday 10 December 2024 at 16.30

- Present:** Steven Allen, Teddy Bridges, Roisin Buckley, Ann Donoghue, Barbara Hobday, Graham Lawrence, Dan Lodge (Principal), Dan Griffin, Paul Mittendorfer, Clare Ruaux, Helen Smith, Dom Valente, Julian Rooney, Lauren Smith, Bev Valley
- In attendance:** Members of SMT - Ian Dumbleton (FD), Rob Hussey (VP Curriculum), Andrea John (VP Pastoral), Steve Martell (DP)
- Russha Sellings (Director of Governance/GD)
- Shachi Blakemore (External Audit Partner, Buzzacott)
- In the Chair:** Graham Lawrence

Prior to the opening of the meeting, Governors were invited to ask questions about the academy conversion process since the recent approval at the South East Advisory Board meeting. The Deputy Chair chaired this section of the meeting until the Chair arrived.

It was agreed to move Item 7 forwards on the agenda and the agenda was reordered from this point.

[16.32 - Shachi Blakemore joined the meeting online]

1. Report & Financial Statements 2023-24

Papers: Post Audit Report, Letter of Representation, Report and Financial Statements 31 July 2024

i) Audit Findings Report

The External Auditor confirmed that the funding reconciliation had now been received and the statutory and regulatory reports with both clean audits. The Auditor wished to highlight to Governors the future plans commentary and the resulting impact on the going concern assessment. The distinction between legal and financial going concern was explained. The Auditor confirmed from a financial perspective that the College with an outstanding rating was well positioned to meet all its obligations and liabilities, however, due to progressing to academy conversion, legally speaking, it was likely the College would not exist in its current legal form within 12 months of signing the annual report and financial statements. Therefore overall, the accounts could not be prepared on a going concern basis where either aspect was not satisfied. Governors understood and accepted the Auditor's update which had been discussed together with the F&GP and A&R Committees. In terms of the target conversion date of 1 September 2025, if this was achieved, only one set of College accounts would need to be prepared, however if not, two sets would be required, however this was not uncommon in these scenarios. Following a question about costs of preparing additional sets of accounts, this would depend on how the budget was structured but likely the College would meet the costs.

Governors appreciated the rigorous audit process, noting in particular the recommendations and observations that would be implemented and followed up. The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee wished to thank the Auditors for their audit work.

It was noted that the operational surplus on page 7 was incorrect in the commentary and should match the table and this would be corrected prior to submission to the ESFA. **(Action: FD/Auditor)**

ii) Letter of Representation

There were no further comments on the letter prepared by the auditors.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Letter of Representation.

iii) Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2024

There were no further comments on the report and financial statements year ending 31 July 2024.

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

[16.45 - Shachi Blakemore was thanked for the updates and left the meeting]

The ordering of the agenda resumed from this point.

2. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Karl Banister, Rev'd Lisa Barnett and Will Power. The meeting was recorded as quorate from the outset.

3. Urgent Business

None to report.

4. Declarations of Interest

None declared with respect of items on the agenda.

5. Minutes of the meeting held on the 1 October 2024

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without amendment.

6. Matters Arising

(Item 6iv) People Strategy survey – the Principal said that the feedback received so far had been useful and the full survey results would be shared with the F&GP Committee at their next meeting.

7. Written Resolutions

None to record.

8. Principal's Report

Paper: Autumn term report

The Principal introduced his report. It was pleasing to note, with respect of Item 10, that applications were up again this year in advance of the closing date in January. There was an increase in the additional numbers from out of area students. Governors queried the conversion rate from application to enrolment and it was confirmed that in terms of local applications this was around 80%, however for out of area it was less at around 40-50%. More would be known after the deadline which would also inform estates planning including possible contingency plans. Governors asked about future impacts of demographic trends and the Principal spoke of the Educate data which provided reliable analysis. It was observed by Governors that some local primaries were consulting to reduce their Planned Admission Number (PAN) in response to falling numbers on roll which may lead to considerations on joining a MAT thereby ensuring financial sustainability. It was recognised that there were imminent decisions to be made in the local plan would impact the longer term position such as the town's house building targets and strategy.

The Principal referred to the update on the academy conversion consultation process starting in January and encouraged Governors to participate once launched. In terms of collaborative working, an initial joint Flexible Working project with the Forest School was underway.

The impact of academisation on international provision was discussed and what was possible in the future. Timings had been raised by the Principal with the relevant body (UK Visas & Immigration) and further considerations would come from this. **(Action: Principal/DP)**

Another key development was the Estates Masterplan and timings of the project were under review. It was positive that there was some flexibility in the draw down of the loan from the Mercers' Company.

The Principal referred to correspondence on park safety from Councillor Sam Raby that had been shared recently with the Governing Body. Further updates from stakeholders would be made in the spring term newsletter. Thanks were recorded to Horsham District Council for all their efforts to keep the community including Collyer's students safe.

With reference to the sector update, the F&GP Committee had considered the latest position with regards to the pay award. Governors remarked on the challenges of maintaining staff morale with the number of students missing lessons.

There was a question on L3 curriculum reforms and whether there were updates to share, however it was confirmed that the announcement had not yet been made.

9. Academisation – update from AWP

Thanks were recorded to the Principal and GD for the progress to date.

i) Academy Order

The Chair said this was a technical point to be resolved and he would keep Governors updated.

(Action: Chair)

iii) Consultation timeline

The working party had considered the detailed project plan as well as the importance of integrating two organisations both practically and culturally. An important next step was the public consultation starting in the new year. The new HLA website was being finalised. There would be a period of continued due diligence with quite a lot of this work underway.

iii) Legal advisors

Governors heard that the working party had supported the appointment of a sector leading law firm who had supported academisation in the formative stages and would manage the legal process for both Collyer's and Forest.

10. Admissions Report

Paper: Admissions report Autumn 2024

The DP commended the College approach and the important role of student ambassadors who supported another strong campaign and who acted as role models.

There were no further questions on the report.

11. Student Voice

Paper: Autumn term report

The Student Governors commented on the enhancements to the Progress Review system and reporting which were well received and the VP (Pastoral) said this was helpful feedback.

Posters reiterating that vaping was not permitted on campus was also starting to have a positive impact although issues remained with students congregating around the entrance/exit points.

It was raised that the social space available across the campus had increased considerably, however, it would be beneficial if additional solutions could be found with some input from the RCU. The Principal acknowledged that inside space was still a challenge in the winter months. The DP added that the relevant RCU officer had been involved in the recent planning that included the café annex and the new canopy. The Chair of the Estates Committee agreed that social spaces were as important as learning spaces and this was factored into the Estates Masterplan. Following the discussion, Governors were keen to consider practical solutions to support the welfare of students. Options

discussed and currently discounted included timetabling changes which created further implications and outside heaters which students would find a deterrent as not environmentally friendly. The Principal referred to a contingency plan with additional classroom space and this would be taken up with the Estates team. **(Action: Principal/DP)**

12. College Quality Assurance

Papers: College SAR-QIP 2024

The VP (Curriculum) had presented the relevant sections to the F&GP Committee and the whole document to the Q&C Committee and feedback had been included from both. The data was enhanced and the structure more aligned to Ofsted judgements therefore easier making it easier to monitor and track progress. The Chair of the Q&C Committee spoke of the scrutiny by the committee; while there were quite a number of targets included, this reflected the focus on incremental gains in quality improvement, and the outcomes were starting to be observed in progress reviews particularly for subjects that did not perform as well as others.

It was noted that students with EHCPs outperformed their peers nationally which reflected the work of the Student Support team, however, the smaller than average cohort in receipt of Free College Meals required additional focus to ensure they were sufficiently engaged.

Members had also spent some time considering Adult Education data and the challenges in recruitment of evening tutors which could have a direct impact on outcomes.

Governors were assured that the processes were robust and thanked the VPs for all their work on revising and drafting the new SAR-QIP.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the revised SAR-QIP 2024.

13. Report – Governance & Search Cttee

Papers: Minutes 21-10-24, Governor SAR KPI's 23-24 & QIP 24-25, Collyer's SPH Remuneration Annual Report 23-24

a) *Minutes

The Committee Chair referred to the minutes of the meeting and reminded Governors of the merged committee responsibilities. This was her first meeting as Committee Chair.

b) Consider Recommendations:

i) Governance SAR (23-24) QIP (24-25)

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

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

ii) SPH Annual Report 23-24

Governors received the updated report, there were no further questions. The report would be published online as required by the code.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the SPH annual report for publication.

iii) Committee membership change

The Committee regularly considered capacity and membership. Since the retirement of a member of the Audit & Risk Committee, the numbers were small and therefore reaching a quorum was challenging. Governor Helen Smith had agreed to switch from Estates to Audit & Risk and had relevant experience.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved Helen Smith to join the Audit & Risk Committee from the Estates Committee with immediate effect.

iv) HLA Board succession and transition

The Committee Chair explained a recent additional meeting had taken place to consider executive and governance structures for the new MAT. Members had also considered working together with the Forest School during the HLA formation.

Governors were encouraged to speak to their relevant Committee Chair, the Deputy Chair or the Chair about future plans and succession during the transition period.

14. Report – Estates Committee

Papers: Minutes Parts I & II 23-10-24

a) *Minutes

The Committee Chair referred to the minutes of the meeting.

b) Consider Recommendations:

i) Estates masterplan update

The Committee's main focus had been progressing the masterplan with BDP. Teachers of the relevant faculties had been engaged to provide feedback as part of the client brief. There were no further decisions to be taken at this point although the Governing Body would be asked to consider the budget at a future meeting.

ii) RAAC project

The funding process remained challenging and timing was key for to ensure the works completed according to the schedule. This was being managed by the Estates Masterplan Manager.

iii) *Policies: Health & Safety Policy

The updated policy was received and it was noted the Committee had discussed an appropriate level of first aiders. It was questioned whether a Student Governor should be a member of the College Health & Safety Committee and the DP referred to the consultation process with the RCU on health and safety matters which was considered more appropriate. There were no further comments.

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

The Committee Chair sought consent from Governors to approach a former Co-optee regarding rejoining Estates and Governors were happy to support this.

15. Report - Finance & GP Committee

Papers: Minutes Parts I & II 19-11-24, Business KPI's, Management Accounts Sept 24

a) *Minutes inc Part II

The Committee Chair referred to the minutes of the meeting. This was her first meeting as Committee Chair and she thanked the team for the support. It was pleasing to note the College's continued outstanding financial health rating.

b) Consider Recommendations:

i) Business KPIs

The Chair referred to the position with international in respect of academy conversion where it was discussed that further clarity was needed.

ii) Q1 Management Accounts

The Governing Body received the most recent accounts. It was understood that the small Barclays loan would need to be paid off prior to conversion. **(Action: FD)**

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

16. Report - Audit & Risk Committee

Papers: Minutes 26-11-24, College wide risk assessment and controls for 24-25, External Strategic Risks Oct 2024, Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report 23-24

a) *Minutes

The Committee Chair referred to the minutes. Members had scrutinised the audit reports both internal and external. The observations arising from the external audit process had been carefully considered including the materiality and the Committee Chair assured Governors, key actions would be addressed.

b) Consider recommendations:

i) College Risk Registers annual review

In reference to the College Financial Handbook, the risk registers would be shared with the Governing Body once drafted and there would be termly updates thereafter. Following challenge by the Committee, cyber sector had been elevated from the relevant operational risk register to the College wide risk register and this approach was reinforced on advice from both sets of auditors.

ii) Committee Annual Report 23-24

Based on the updates, the Governing Body were content that the level of assurances over the previous year as detailed in the report ensured a robust framework for controls and governance and they agreed with the statements in the report.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the annual report subject which would be signed electronically by the Chair of the Governing Body prior to being submitted to the ESFA.

iii) Final Internal Audit Plan 24-25

Following discussion with the Internal Auditors Committee recommended that risk management was the third review.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved final annual internal audit plan for the year 2024-25.

17. Report - Quality & Curriculum Committee

Papers: Minutes 27-11-24, Education KPI's PR1 Oct 2024, Student Support SAR-QIP 2024

a) *Minutes

The Committee Chair referred to the minutes. This was also her first official meeting as Committee Chair and new members had been welcomed to the Committee. In reference to updates earlier in the meeting, members had focussed on the SAR-QIP.

b) Consider Recommendations:

i) Education KPIs

There were positive signs of continued student engagement with activities such as tutorials and enrichment which would be beneficial over time. It was noted that early interventions were having a positive impact for example on attendance where permanent absence had been reduced by half.

Governors welcomed these updates and asked how Adult Education provision was monitored. The VP (Curriculum) referred to the quality assurance process and the adapted approach. As evening students were not registered on the College's management information system, the summative outcomes were tracked using a specific spreadsheet and the VP (Pastoral) added key metrics such as attendance were also monitored.

ii) Safeguarding annual report

The revised process had led to a more streamlined approach involving the newly appointed Safeguarding Governor. The VP (Pastoral) spoke of the termly dashboard presented to the committee following each term's monitoring visit covering key compliance with the Safeguarding Governor to provide assurances on the processes specifically on the areas of governance oversight.

The annual update to the Governing Body was comprised of the Pastoral SAR-QIP which had also been reviewed by the Pastoral linked Governors (Safeguarding, Mental Health and Wellbeing and SEND) in the autumn term. There were a number of updates which reflected the commitment to supporting students. Governors appreciated the insightful data and recognised that mental health concerns were still prevalent. The VP (Pastoral) referred to capacity of the Student Services team which had been recently expanded and the risk based approach to support. While higher level risks were reducing, there were specific concerns such as eating disorders which were complex and access to external specialist support was limited. It was also noted that more students had accessed bursaries over the past year.

Following the discussion, Governors requested that information be made available in the event of an Ofsted inspection and this would be added to SharePoint. **(Action: GD)**

iii) *Policies: Adult Ed suite

There were no comments or questions on the policies.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Adult Education suite of policies.

18. Chair's Report

i) Governor visits

The Chair wished to thank Governors who had taken the time to come into College this term and shared written reports on their visits. Governors were encouraged to visit other faculties, and the GD highlighted the new immersive suite and work with foundation students in January which may be of interest to Governors. There was a reminder to pre arrange all visits with the governance team.

ii) Community safety

Covered under Item 8, there were no further updates.

19. AOB

Nothing to report.

20. Meeting Assessment

The Chair took the opportunity to thank Governors for all their support over the year.

21. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting would take place on Tuesday 1 April 2025, 10.45am at Mercers' Hall and Governors heard that the Head and Chair of Forest would join the meeting.

The meeting closed at 18.27

Chair

Date

RRS 13-01-2025