

THE COLLEGE OF RICHARD COLLYER

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY HELD ON Tuesday 26 March 2024 at 10.30

Present: Steve Allen, Karl Banister, Ann Donoghue, Graham Lawrence, Dan Lodge (Principal), Susan Martineau, Tanishka Mehra, Paul Mittendorfer, Dr Grant Powell, Will Power, Clare Ruaux, Helen Smith, Dom Valente, Bev Valley, James Yandell

In attendance: Members of SMT - Ian Dumbleton (FD), Rob Hussey (VP Curriculum), Andrea John (VP Pastoral), Russha Sellings (Director of Governance), Linda Macleman (PA to the Principal)

In the Chair: Graham Lawrence

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Governors as follows: Rev'd Lisa Barnett, Teddy Bridges and Barbara Hobday. Steve Martell, Deputy Principal, also gave his apologies.

The Chair wished to record thanks to the Mercers' Company for hosting the meeting and for Governors and SMT taking a day out of their schedules to attend.

The Chair referred to the consent items in the committee updates which would be approved where there had been no comments in advance.

2. Urgent Business

None to report.

3. Declarations of Interest

None declared with respect of the items on the agenda.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on the 6 December 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved without amendment.

5. Matters Arising

Item 7(iii) Reserves Policy – the FD reported that he referred to some exemplars and planned to present this to Governors in the summer term.

Item 17b(ii) Safeguarding reporting – there would be a full update from the Safeguarding Governor under Item 16. In summary, the Chair said there had been a recent meeting with relevant Governors and key personnel to discuss reporting requirements and improvements to the cycle of information presented to the Governors through the Q&C Committee.

6. Written Resolutions

None to record since last meeting.

7. Student Governor

Paper: Student Governor termly report

This was the current Student Governors final report and they thanked staff at the College for the support offered during their tenure. Questions were invited. A Governor asked about study and social spaces and how this would be addressed following the feedback in the students' report. The Principal referred to the updates to be covered under Item 11; planning had started to address this since the new café area was already full during peak periods. Integral to the planning was a proposal to utilise existing space in anticipation of new buildings.

The students were thanked for the report and by the Chair for the contributions over their terms.

8. Principal's Report

Paper: Principal's spring term report

The Principal provided a brief summary of the current challenges and opportunities, the progress of key strategies around formal collaboration and the newly agreed People Strategy. Questions were invited. In reference to Ofsted update, Governors asked about the planning for the next inspection and whether a similar process to the previous inspection was expected. There was a follow on question about the arrangements for the Strategy Day and Governors' preparations. The VP (Curriculum) commented, referring to the recent updates shared with the Q&C Committee and he was pleased to report good progress on the areas identified for improvement with some further developments planned around tracking. The enhanced EIF included a skills assessment, the current focus of the Skills Agenda working party and would also likely scrutinise the College's Quality Assurance processes. The engagement of an experienced consultant was an opportunity for a review of Ofsted readiness with Directors and some Heads of Subject and the Strategy Day would report on this and include training for Governors, which was particularly important for those that may participate in the inspection. Any impact on inspections due to recent policy changes including wellbeing of senior staff was discussed but it was not thought that the process would be substantially different.

A question on growth and future demographics was deferred to Item 11.

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

9. Progress to academy conversion

Paper: AWP minutes 22-01-24 Part IIa&b, new MAT prospectus

The Chair referred to the live situation with partnership engagement. The feedback from the DfE and resulting actions related to the resubmission of the application form which was hoped to reach the Advisory Board in May. The Principal said momentum was building with Forest preparing to submit their application in tandem and a launch event for proposed Trustees had recently taken place led by a consultant from the Confederation of School Trusts. There was a brief update on the landscape and other SFCs who were also at various stages of conversion. Governors heard that the DfE were planning to make changes to the issuing of the £25,000-per school academy conversion grant which would, in future, be linked to groups of schools of 3 or more converting together, however, it was hoped the application would be approved before this point.

The Principal made reference to the MAT prospectus drawn up by the Marketing Alumni & Development Officer and there was a corresponding website under development. Project management activity was continuing and structures and systems were being considered in the overall scope. Subject to the issuing of the Academy Order, preparations would be made for the formal stakeholder consultation and progression of other legal matters. It was confirmed there was support locally for the project from key stakeholders.

Governors asked about the timing of the project and possible impact in the period leading up to the next general election. The date of conversion was to be determined. It was not certain whether the election presented a risk to the project overall, however it was likely the approval of conversion was a business as usual matter for the DfE in the pre-election period. There was a question on admissions locally and how this may impact the growth strategy. The Principal believed this was an evolving position. It was recognised that there was a decline in numbers in the primary phase, particularly in some areas of the country putting a great deal of pressure on primary school budgets, especially smaller schools which may find it more challenging to remain financially viable.

The Principal had been invited to join meetings of a new soft federation which included three primaries in the east of Horsham and The Forest School who were working on a collaborative curriculum project between Years 6 and 7. The 'golden thread' of education was a core aspect of the vision of the new

MAT. The prospectus was well received by Governors, especially the vision which had been co-created with cross phase education leaders. It was considered important that any new partners in the early stages were able to have some input into the development of the MAT.

A Governor queried whether the requirements of the DfE to enhance education skills on the new MAT Board had been met, and the Principal spoke of the recent recruitment activity referenced in the papers as well as the importance of divergent skills and developing the new Board. The Deputy Chair reiterated the need to ensure in parallel that current governance arrangements were robust, and Collyer's remained well governed during the transition and into the new governance model.

10. Skills Agenda

Paper: SWP Minutes 20-02-24, link to new DfE guidance

The Chair of the working party highlighted the statutory guidance and key issues to be addressed as documented in the latest working party minutes. The requirements for a newly combined Accountability Agreements would simplify the reporting, although initially there would be some additional preparation for SMT. The deadline for Governing Body approval and submission to the ESFA was 30 June and was funding dependent. The intention was to circulate this to Governors for approval at the Strategy Day in June, prior to Q&C.

The Chair spoke of the review process and the small number of objectives that would be documented as a result of the mapping exercise and reviewed annually. There would be consideration to new courses for example Carbon Literacy. Governors should be assured of the investment of staff in developing enrichment and the Careers programme which was a strength of the College as demonstrated by the Gatsby benchmarks.

It was queried whether there had been any external validation as part of the Skills review. The working party had considered other SFC Accountability Statements and the Chair had collaborated with Governors from other colleges. The VP (Pastoral) added that there had been a strong outcome from a recent Progression EQR and an independent advisor was involved with the Gatsby benchmarks through the Careers and Enterprise Company.

There was a question relating to Adult Education income and how this might be managed in respect of academy conversion. The VP (Curriculum) had presented the latest position to the F&GP Committee this term, although the projections would need to be revisited to ensure viability of some courses since the allocation statement was not as estimated. The College was committed to the provision which would continue if the College converted to academy status. The Chair of the working party suggested allowances for L1 courses in key subjects such as Maths and English should be made whether funded or not. This would need to be a strategic consideration and was a matter to be for SMT in terms of prioritisation and budgetary impact.

The Chair of the working party was thanked for the updates and all her work.

11. Growth and funding

Papers: Top sheet (growth and funding), Masterplan update (Estates)

The Principal referred to the context in terms of short and long term planning for growth. It was confirmed that there would be no additional funding for sports and leisure facilities in the district and due to numbers being ahead of predictions, sequencing of plans and utilisation of current space was considered from a multi-channel perspective which the Chair of the Estates Committee agreed was essential also from a student wellbeing perspective. Thanks were recorded to the Mercers' Company for the support in considering a loan which would enable appointment of the design teams for the new Tech Centre. The Deputy Chair and Chair of F&GP said the Committee was fully supportive of the proposals and emphasised the holistic view in terms of growth and workforce planning which was already underway.

Governors considered capacity in terms of the Admissions Policy and challenged the accuracy of predictions and conversion rates due to students increasingly submitting multiple applications. The Principal agreed some S7 colleges were full, however primarily because there was no additional space or funding available to expand. The subsequent capping of numbers would likely have caused an uplift in applications for Collyer's. The VP (Curriculum) referred to previous modelling on conversion rates including at a subject level and was confident it provided an indicator suitable for resource planning, albeit the accuracy was less reliable a predictor out of area. A recent meeting with the Chair of the Estates Committee had given full reassurance in this regard. The Principal referred to the agreed resource strategies where it was imperative to maintain the growth for financial sustainability where there was still space to enable it and staff had been readied for this. The question of when to limit growth may eventually resolve itself as demographics changed over time, due to the drop in primary numbers previously discussed beginning to impact the secondary phase.

Governors asked how capacity might be impacted in a MAT model and the Principal said any longer term strategic planning would be fully considered at the appropriate time.

Assurances were sought by Governors on limiting the impact of the removal of the RAAC. SMT were grateful for staff and students' flexibility while contingency plans were put in place and the Principal said that to ensure minimal disruption, the RAAC would likely be removed in the summer break and the remedial work carried out separately, however this would take some time. It was confirmed that the area would be returned as teaching space by 2025 since investigations revealed that it was unfortunately not possible to expand the auditorium which must remain within the plans for the Tech Centre. A larger auditorium would also be vital space for exams as the College grew. The need for interim mobile classrooms was discussed and it was agreed Music Practitioners and Music would be moved into this area temporarily from the new academic year.

Governors asked about grant funding and the Principal had heard the next round of bids could start after the Election with the launch of the next capital funding programme, although without the loan or appointing a design team, the College would not be in a position to apply.

The Chair concluded the item by informing Governors of the opportunity to continue the discussions at the Strategy Day in the summer term. Governors were requested to ratify the costs of the RAAC removal in lieu of claiming reimbursement from the DfE (as endorsed by F&GP) and the rephrasing of the Masterplan to bring forward the Tech Centre (as endorsed by the Estates Committee).

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the costs circa £250k of the RAAC removal and the rephrasing of the Masterplan.

12. Report – Estates Committee

Papers: Minutes Parts I & II 11-12-23, 19-02-24

a) *Minutes inc Part II

The Committee Chair referred to the minutes of the meeting.

b) Updates

There had been a good response to the tender process for the appointment of the Masterplan architects and the applications would be moderated as part of the shortlisting process. The Committee also focussed on finalising current building projects and the sustainability programme.

13. Report – Governance & Search Committee

Papers: Minutes 26-01-24, 26-02-24, Governance updates, draft G,S&R ToR, Governor application, Governor roles descriptions

a) *Minutes

The Committee Deputy Chair reported to Governors in the absence of the Chair and referred to the minutes.

b) Consider Recommendations:

i) Updates for Governing Body

The recommended change in appointing body of Steve Allen from an independent Governor to a Mercer appointed Governor required confirmation by the Governing Body before being referred to the Mercers' Company Standards & Appointments Committee for approval.

Resolved: The Governing Body agreed the transfer of Steve Allen to a Mercer appointed Governor for consideration by the Mercers' Company.

ii) GS&R new Terms of Reference

The Committee wished to endorse the merger of the Governance & Search and Remuneration Committees and the combined Terms of Reference.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the merger of Committees w.e.f the start of the summer term and the corresponding Terms of Reference (within the Rules & Byelaws).

iii) Governor appointment

The application to fill the current Governor vacancy was considered and a local business person with relevant skills to the Estates Committee was proposed.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the appointment of Julian Rooney as Governor to join the Estates Committee w.e.f from the date of the meeting [subject to the relevant checks].

iv) Updated role descriptions

The updated Chair, Deputy Chair, Governor and Co-optee role descriptions were noted. There were no further comments.

v) Strategy Day

Discussed under a previous agenda item.

14. Report - Finance & GP Committee

Papers: Minutes 28-02-24, forecast, mid-year budget, management accounts, Business KPIs

a) *Minutes

The Committee Chair referred to the minutes of the meeting.

b) Consider Recommendations:

i) Financial forecast for 2023-24 (mid-year budget update)

There was a question on whether the budget position included any in-year funding. The FD confirmed the budget reflected the current position in terms of funding and one off costs, however some exceptional costs were being checked with the DfE such as costs of mobile classrooms.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the current financial forecast.

ii) Management Accounts to 31 Jan inc Balance Sheet & Cashflow

There were no further comments.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the Q2 Management Accounts including Balance Sheet and Cash Flow.

iii) Business KPIs

There were no further comments on the KPIs that were received for information.

iv) Policies: *Admissions, Student fees & charges, FoI Publication Scheme

There were no comments on the proposed amends.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the policies.

15. Audit & Risk Committee

Paper: Minutes 06-03-24

a) *Minutes

The Committee Chair referred to the minutes of the meeting and was keen to reiterate the importance of cyber security following advice from the College's audit partners. Regular training on this matter warranted attention of the whole Governing Body.

b) Updates:

i) Internal Assurance

The audit reviews taken place to date with the newly appointed internal auditors had provided strong assurance on safeguarding and the exams processes and now included benchmarks against other education providers which the Committee found helpful. As per the point on cyber security, an audit was recommended for the autumn term once the new IT Manager had settled into post.

ii) Risk Management

The Committee Chair drew Governors attention to the key matters of risk which spanned several areas across the College. There were no further comments.

16. Report - Quality & Curriculum Committee

Papers: Minutes 11-03-24, Education KPIs, Ofsted summary

a) *Minutes

The Committee Chair referred to the minutes. The Chair said the Committee had received the annual EDI report and was pleased to note the progress of students with SEND which was above the national average. The Committee had also considered the DfE draft guidance on gender questioning which had been out to consultation.

b) Consider Recommendations:

i) Education KPIs

The rationale for the PR data was queried. The VP (Curriculum) maintained the College was in a healthy position with regards to predications and the tolerance was considered acceptable based on a proven criteria. The absence of L3 Value-Added data was noted leading to a reliance on raw data - the next available published update was expected in spring term 2025.

ii) Ofsted update

The Committee maintained oversight of the progress on objectives since the last inspection as updated to Governors earlier in the meeting.

iii) Safeguarding reporting

Governors heard from the Committee Chair about proposals to provide clarity to Governors on the safeguarding data following some previous feedback from the Governing Body. It was proposed that the Safeguarding Governor have oversight of the safeguarding data termly including any trends and work through a compliance checklist with the VP (Pastoral) reporting back to Q&C. There would then be an annual update to the Governing Body including the Safeguarding Policy. Governors questioned whether they would be comfortable with one formal report per year. The VP (Pastoral) responded that this would involve enhanced Governor responsibility and Governors agreed the Safeguarding linked Governor role was crucial including the management of a succession plan. Governors were assured the reporting recommendation had been taken from guidance available on The Key for Governors and other S7 colleges had shared a similar process. Key updates could still be shared with the Governing Body where necessary. Governors concluded the quality of the information was more important than the quantity and supported the approach.

iv) Policies: *Behaviour Policy (Student Code of Conduct)

There were no comments on the proposed amends.

Resolved: The Governing Body approved the updated Student CoC within the Behaviour Policy.

17. Chair's Report

i) Updates from Trustees

The Chair reported the focus of Trustees' activity had been scrutiny of the portfolio under new investment management and he was pleased to confirm recent positive signs of an upward trend. Trustees continued with the legal work required to form a CIO. Geoff Bowley had ably stepped into the role of Chair for the interim period since the sad passing of Chris Clementi whose funeral he had recently attended with other representatives of Collyer's.

ii) External meetings

The Chair had participated in several meetings this term including the OCA dinner and the Horsham Secondary Schools' soft federation meeting of Chairs. He would also attend the forthcoming Mercers' Chairs' forum next month which was always a useful event given the diversity of Associated Schools.

18. AOB

Nothing to report.

19. Meeting Assessment

The extensive set of papers was noted and it was helpful to continue to utilise SharePoint for the management of information.

20. Date of Next Meeting

Paper: Summer term dates schedule

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 10 July 2024, 16.30 at Collyer's.

The meeting closed at 12.33

Chair

Date

RRS 19-04-24