Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held at 2.00pm on Monday 4 July 2022 at Eccles Sixth Form College



Present:

Jackie Flynn (Chair)
Charles Davies
Tony Redmond
Amy Vaughan
Michael Sharples (on Teams)
Paula Summersfield (on Teams)
Adam Fidler
Sam Butler
Dr Martin Toner
Janet Ndungu
Lia Chamma

In Attendance:

Karen Hollins, Chief Finance Officer Debbie Ward, Director of Operations Management Kimberley Cash, Deputy Principal Ruth Osborne-Thompson, Vice Principal Kate Rogerson, Vice Principal Denise Hark, Clerk

The Chair welcomed Sam Butler, Janet Ndungu and Dr Martin Toner to their first Corporation meeting and introductions were made.

The Chair took the opportunity to thank all staff and governors for their strong support and effective performance during the 2021/22 academic year. She described how the recovery from Covid 19 had presented new challenges; and current problems associated with high utility and fuel charges, together with the increased cost of living more generally have made providing a good service to learners more difficult. She was therefore grateful to all who had contributed to the continued good performance of the College in such trying circumstances.

21/57 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Shane Thompson, Lucy Robinson, Allan Milne and Rebecca Parks (Group Principal).

21/58 Declarations of Interest

Governors made no declaration of interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

21/59 Corporation Membership

The Chair reported that Amy Vaughan had now completed her 4-year term of office as Staff Governor, and Lia Chamma had completed her term of office as Student Governor. The Chair thanked both Amy and Lia on behalf of Corporation for their contribution as governors. She advised that from September 2022 revised arrangements were being put in place to appoint 2 Staff Governors and 2 Student Governors in order to provide greater representation.

The Clerk reported that elections for the two new Staff Governors had taken place and Roger Cunliffe had been elected as the Staff Governor (Academic) and Martin Townsend as Staff Governor (Professional Services). They will take up their roles in September 2022.

The Deputy Principal reported that the Student Govenor elections had taken place. One A- Level student from Pendleton had been elected, along with one apprentice based at Future Skills.

Appointment of Chair of Audit

The Chair reported that she had received a resignation from Paul Johnson, who had served the Corporation as Chair of Audit for the past 10 years. She thanked Mr Johnson for his commitment to the College and advised that, as was the usual practice, a formal letter and a gift would be sent to him to thank him for his input over the years.

Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held on 4 July 2022

In line with the recommendation agreed at the previous Corporation meeting, the Chair advised that the new procedure to appoint a Chair of Audit by the Corporation would now be enacted.

(Sam Butler left the meeting whilst this item was discussed).

The Chair presented a formal report recommending Sam Butler for the position of Chair of Audit (tabled).

It was noted that SB had an appropriate background, skills and experience and had shown a significant interest in the role. Governors concluded that this was an appropriate appointment.

Resolution 21/59/a: Sam Butler is appointed as Chair of Audit.

Confirmation of Written Resolution

It was reported that Dr Martin Toner had been interviewed by the Governance & Search Committee on 16 June 2022 and had been recommended for appointment as an Independent Governor. Following this recommendation a written resolution to appoint MT was agreed by Corporation.

Resolution 21/59b: to confirm the written resolution that Dr Martin Toner is appointed as Independent Governor for a 4-year term of office.

Appointment to Lead Governor Positions

Documentation describing the proposed revised Lead Governors role was provide for governors, and details of the areas to be covered was reported to Corporation. It was noted that during the recent annual governor development interviews the Chair had taken soundings on governors' areas of interest and experience.

The following proposals for appointment to the Lead Governor positions were made and approved:

Safeguarding (Staff) - Charles Davies

Safeguarding (Students) – Adam Fidler

Welfare - Tony Redmond

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion - Janet Ndungu

Health & Safety – Tony Redmond to continue with this role as Chair of HR&OD temporarily.

Higher Education – Dr Martin Toner

SEND - Paula Summersfield

Business - Michael Sharples

The Chair reported that the appointment to the Sustainability Lead Governor position would be deferred until early in the next academic year as it was hoped that this role could be a joint role with one of the new student governors.

21/60 Minutes of the previous Corporation Meeting

In response to a question from a governor regarding minute 21/41, it was clarified that although there had only been one nomination received from a governor for the Vice Chair position the self-nomination had been seconded by another governor.

Resolution 21/60: the minutes of the previous meeting held on 21 March 2022 were agreed as an accurate record, and approved for signature by the Chair.

Matters Arising

It was noted that a fuller explanation of the links between the bus service costs and the bursary fund; and the use of the funds from the sale of land at Worsley, a number of years ago, had been provided to governors.

21/61 Report from Strategy Day

A written report was provide detailing the content and outcomes of the recent Governors' Strategy Day in May 2022. Governors were in agreement that this had been a very positive day with good interaction between governors and the Senior Leadership Team. The Chair reported that during the strategy day the Group Principal had reported that an external candidate, Mark Compton, had now been appointed as the new Head of Corporate Business.

21/62 Chair's Report

The Chair provided an oral report, from which the following was noted:

College Seal

The Chair reported that she had not used the seal since the last meeting of the Corporation.

Greater Manchester GFE Chairs' Advisory Group

The Chair reported that she had recently convened, and attended a meeting of GM GFE Chairs Advisory Group on 30 June 2022. Topics of discussion had included rising energy bills, student recruitment, and the retention of staff.

21/63 Deputy Principal's Report

The Deputy Principal gave an institutional presentation on behalf of the Group Principal from which the following points were noted:

- The challenges faced by the College include residual Covid, generalised anxiety leading to mental health issues and teacher assessed grades.
- Safeguarding and pastoral logs have increased by 100% on the previous year.
- Colleges had been provided with advanced information from the exam awarding bodies.
 This had caused some issues and feedback would be given via the SFCA.
- Results would be compared against other providers this year rather than using Alps as the starting points are not realistic.

A governor asked for clarification over whether the College would still be using Alps as a measure of academic development. The Deputy Principal confirmed that Alps would still be used but not as an overarching benchmark at this time because of the effects of the Teacher Assessed Grades in the past two years.

Student Recruitment

Recruitment at 4553 is just short of the target allocation of 4603, however, contract
partner numbers have been reduced by 55. It was noted that the latter was planned and
was a directive from the ESFA. If the numbers of partners had not been reduced the
target would have been achieved.

- 113 High Needs students have been retained this year to meet the target. There is planned growth in this area for the next academic year.
- There has been strong recruitment in apprenticeships which is 10% over the target head count.
- Adult Education and HE provision fall short of their recruitment target
- There had been a planned shortfall of 400k in the AEB budget, however, this will only be £290k
- There is also a planned shortfall of £374 in HE recruitment.

Welfare & People

There has been significant investment in staff, and considerable measures have been put in place to support staff wellbeing. The College has signed up to the AoC Mental Health Charter and has trialled social prescribing. It was noted that this is non-medical intervention which provides enrichment and enhancement activities. From September 2022 there will be a Social Prescriber based in College who will be jointly funded by the AoC and Salford City Council.

The Staff Survey results will be discussed in detail by the HR&OD Committee at their next meeting. However, it was noted that there had been 326 responses which represented an increase in 10 from the previous year. The following headline outcomes were reported:

- 95.4% of staff agree that Safeguarding arrangements are effective at the College
- 92% believe that the College has a reputation for the high quality of its provision.
- 92.1% are proud to be a staff member at the College.
- 91.4% of staff say that their line manager gives them the support they need to do their job effectively.

A governor asked what percentage of staff had completed the survey and it was confirmed that this was just over 50%.

Resources

The Annual Strategic Conversation with the ESFA took place in March 2022. This had been a positive meeting and the ESFA had subsequently provided written confirmation that the strategic plans are robust and that no interventions are required.

There are Increased financial pressures on the budget, particularly around the increased cost of utility bills. The College will be moving to essential spend only. It was noted that the finance position will require careful monitoring, with rising costs being a key focus, alongside increasing student recruitment.

It was reported that some teaching unions in the sector were balloting staff to take action against Government. The Chair of Corporation commented that two local colleges had awarded an increased pay award in order to avert strike action. It was thought that this had been around 3%. The Director of HR added that the SFCA Unions are asking for an 11.7% settlement and the AoC is asking for a settlement of 2.25%.

The College has been successful with the bids to the Further Education Capital Transformation Fund; however a significantly higher level of contribution than had been initially anticipated is required (increase from 10% to 40%).

External Presence

The Deputy Principal reported that the College has increased its efforts to enhance its external profile and that there were a number of reasons for celebration. At the Annual Strategic Meeting the FE Commissioner had advised that the College needed to celebrate and make its achievements known externally.

As evidence of this it was noted that the College has been successful in achieving the following awards in the past academic year:

- AAC Send Apprenticeship Champion Award
- Open Awards Respect and Integrity Award
- Educate North Student Experience –Winner
- Educate North Business & Industry Collaboration -Highly commended
- Pearson Teaching Awards –FE Team of the Year –Winner(SFWL Dept)
- Pearson Outstanding Contribution Award –Winner (Neil Bennett, Bronze award)
- SFCA Social Mobility Award –Winner
- SFCA Independent Learning Award –Runner Up
- AoC Beacon Awards –Best Collaboration Category –Highly Commended
- AoC Beacon Awards -RCU Award for Support to Students -Finalist
- BTEC Student of the Year -Overall BTEC Young Learner of the Year & BTEC Science Learner of the Year award, Bronze Award -Performing Arts Student of the Year and Silver Award -BTEC Science Learner of the Year (embargoed until September)
- World Skills Centreof Excellence(embargoed until September)

The Chair remarked on these achievements and commented that it was all the more commendable because the College is funded as a GFE College when it is actually run as a hybrid 6th Form College/ GFE College. Most significant is its recent achievement in winning a national 6th Form College Award (SFCA) for Social Mobility where it competed against sixth form colleges. The Chair congratulated all staff involved in winnhing these awards and recorded the governors' pleasure in receiving this news.

Strategic Plan

The 3-year Strategic Plan is being finalised and will be launched in September 2022, following input from all stakeholders. Sustainability will be a key part of the plan. The SLT Lead for this area is currently working on a programme to educate staff and students on Sustainability, and working towards achieving carbon net zero and the integration of green skills into the curriculum.

More T-Levels will be introduced following the change in the FE landscape.

Work is ongoing in preparation for an Ofsted inspection which is expected to take place in the academic year 2023/24. This will be a full inspection with a focus on skills.

<u>AoC</u>

The cost of the annual membership contribution to the AoC is £34,613. This allows the College to join the network, and attend various meetings. It also allows for the opportunity to put the College's voice across as AoC representatives lobby government on behalf of colleges. The College has also signed up to the AoC Mental Health Charter and has been part of their mental health project for the last two years. This has generated £95k funding, including hosting a Social Prescriber. SCC has been a finalist in the AoC Beacon awards this year, and this additional promotion helps with the recruitment and retention of staff.

The Chair of Corporation added that the College also pays a contribution to GM GFE Colleges' Group, which is circa £12k per year. Membership of this group allows the opportunity of accessing collaborative bids and working in a corporate way with other GM GFE colleges

Questions from Governors

A governor asked why two of the biggest schools in Eccles are not in the top five feeder schools for the College. The Deputy Principal replied that some analysis was being carried out on how

many applications convert into starters. College staff are now getting back into the schools to do more liaison work following the pandemic restrictions. Part of the College strategy is to build relationships with teaching staff in the local schools, particularly where lower numbers have been recruited, with a view to increasing recruitment for the following academic year.

A governor asked whether the College had developed relationships with any of the local private schools. It was confirmed that this did not happen because the schools concerned have their own sixth forms and did not welcome approaches from the College.

A governor asked whether any students were recruited that had previously been home educated. The Deputy Principal explained that the College has links with the Local Authority and added that there are around 250 home educated students living in Salford. Some of these students follow a bespoke programme provided by the College starting at either 14 or 15. This had been established over 3 years ago and it was reported as working well.

21/64 Finance/Resources

The Chair reported that the Strategy, Finance & Resources Committee had held an in-depth discussion, at a lengthy meeting in the previous week, wherein detailed questions had been raised and answered. As a result the Committee had recommended that all documents presented be approved by Corporation but she added that she welcomed any additional questions from governors who were not present at that meeting.

Financial Position to April 2022

The Chief Finance Officer reported on the financial position to April 2022. The following points were highlighted:

- The surplus to budget at Month 9 was £1,790k
- Financial Health Rating Outstanding
- Cash Balance £11.196m

2021- 22 Forecast Outturn as at Quarter 3

- Surplus of 635k representing a favourable variance to budget of 200k.
- The main risk to the forecast is increasing energy costs.
- £9.73m cash balance at the end of the year.
- The cash balance is predominantely dependent on capital expenditure and bursaries.
- Internally calculated financial health rating as Outstanding.
- Provisional calculations indicate no overall breach of covenants.

Partnership Activity

The partner contract values for 2022-23 have a total funding value of £702,019 with the maximum total partner income totalling £561,615.

Group Principal's Expenses

There had not been any expenditure since the last report to the Corporation.

Key Contracts & Contracts over £100k

The Strategy, Finance & Resources Committee had received a report detailing key contracts which were due to expire in the next 6 to 12 months.

Annual Treasury Management Report 2021-22

The Annual Treasury Management report 2021-22 had been reviewed by the Strategy, Finance & Resources Committee.

Approval of Draft Budget 2022-23

The Chief Financial Officer presented the draft budget for 2022-23, which has been recommended for approval by the Strategy, Finance & Resources Committee.

The following points were noted:

- There is a surplus of £166k excluding pension adjustment.
- There is a total deficit of £2.162km including pension adjustment.
- The pension adjustment remains as per the 2020/21 actuarial report.
- The cash position will reduce to £1.2m to £8.6m by July 2023 following capital investment, and on the assumption that all bursary monies are paid.
- Energy costs have been based on the known price with an increase of 50% built in to allow for April 2023 price increases.
- The budget does not currently include a pay award. This is the normal practice as it is assessed annually on affordability.
- Contingency has been reduced to £287k.
- Partner contract funding value from the DfE is £702k, from which £562k will be paid to partners.
- The College would still be assessed as having Outstanding Financial Health.
- Provisional calculations indicate that there would not be any overall breach of the loan covenants.
- The Lloyds Cashflow Cover covenant forecast breach would be overridden by the fallback Minimum Cash Balance covenant.
- Capital expenditure is £4.235m, of which £3.735m is for the work outlined in the Capital Transformation fund, with the remaining £500k allocated to the internal capital plan to be allocated across Curriculum, IT and estates requirements.

Approval of DfE College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR) July 2022

The Chief Financial Officer reported that the CFFR takes account of the current year and the following two years. The current year must be in line with the approved budget. This will be signed off on approval of the budget.

ESFA finance assessment letter and dashboards for 2020-21 Finance Return

Following a review of the College's financial statements and associated documentation for 2020-21 and a finance record for 2020-21, the ESFA have confirmed in writing the 2020-21 grade as Outstanding. A copy of the letter received from the ESFA had been included in the papers for the meeting, along with the financial dashboard outputs from the submission.

Questions from Governors

A governor raised a question in relation to the work to be carried out under the Capital bid. He pointed out that the cost of the work could increase due to the rising cost of materials and asked if this were the case would the cost be shared between the DfE and the College. The Director of Operations Management explained that any increased costs would have to be absorbed by the College or the scope of the work would have to be reduced.

A governor asked whether the policy would be to charge capital costs to the individual college centres. It was confirmed that the five Colleges and sites are managed as a whole college cost centre with finances not being devolved to the individual colleges. The Chief Finance Officer said that the organisation was not large enough to to do this, because of the additional cost which would be incurred to appoint all the extra staff required. There is only one SLT and Corporation for the whole organisation. She added that the best way to ensure value for money from each of the College sites is to educate and engage more with colleagues about financial matters. A governor asked whether there is parity of budget between the Colleges. The Chief Financial Officer explained that there are cost centres for different subjects and professional services data. When

setting the budgets the SLT review all income lines and other available data. It was noted that there is now greater accountability in each of the departments and functions, with progress having been made in the past two to three years. The Deputy Principal added that the curriculum budget is set by linking it to the curriculum plan so that all students get an equal experience. A governor noted that because SCC is one organisation it has the benefits of a merged entity which allows for collaboration between the college centres.

A governor asked whether there were any longer-term predictions available. The Chief Financial Officer replied that these was not available and in any case would be very unreliable. The 3-year budget provided did allow for a number of assumptions. She added that the budget had been put together prudently but there were many unknowns. However, the College is is in a good position and is in a stronger position than many other Colleges. The main focus will be to cut costs and focus on increasing income through additional student numbers and other means.

A governor asked whether it might be queried that larger pay awards might be affordable given that the College has a sizeable cash reserve. They queried whether there was a communication plan to explain circumstances to staff and unions. The Chief Financial Officer explained that if the College had to pay off its loans it would have very little left in the bank. In addition, energy costs have increased to £1m this year. Managers do understand the situation and honest conversations with the unions have been held. Communication with staff is open and honest. The education and engagement plan is being implemented so that they understand the bigger picture. It was noted that the College offers other benefits to staff in addition to pay.

The Chair reminded governors that it had always been the College's practice to be transparent in its dealing with staff, and that it honoured its agreement to consider every year what pay award was affordable subject to the College remaining financially sustainable.

Resolution 21/64a: the budget 2022/23 and the Partner contract values for 2022/23 are approved.

Resolution 21/64b: the DfE College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR) July 2022 is approved.

21/65 Review of Financial Regulations

The Strategy, Finance & Resources Committee had recommended the updated Financial Regulations for approval.

Resolution 21/65: the updated Financial Regulations are approved.

21/66 Approval of Finance Related policies

The following policies were recommended for approval by the Strategy, Finance & Resources Committee and by the Audit Committee:

- Expenses Policy
- Treasury management Policy
- Tuition Fees Policy
- Sub-Contracting Policy
- Supply Chain & Fees Policy
- Anti-Bribery Policy
- Fraud Irregularity Policy
- Risk Management Policy

Resolution 21/66: the policies listed above are approved by Corporation.

21/67 Minutes of Committee Meetings

Resolution 21/67a: the minutes of the following Committee meetings were received and approved for signature as a correct record:

Audit 16 May 2022 HR&OD 9 May 2022 Governance & Search 25 April 2022 Quality & Standards 13 June 2022 Strategy & Finance 27 June 2022

The following points from the Committee minutes were noted:

HR&OD Committee

The HR&OD Committee had recommended approval of the Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity Policy and the Equality Duty.

Resolution 21/67b: the following policies recommended by the HR&OD Committee are approved: Equality, Diversity Inclusivity Policy and the Equality Duty

Governance & Search Committee

The Chair reported that because of the recent changes in membership, the Chair of the revised Search Committee was yet to be confirmed. She confirmed that there is an intention that governors should not regularly chair more than one committee to aid development of governors.

The Committee will be changing its name to Search Committee, with it focusing on the more operational work, and recruiting and interviewing new governors. Strategic governance matters will be considered by the Corporation.

Quality & Standards Committee

The Chair of the committee reported that the Q&S Committee had looked at the impacts of teacher assessed grades, student mental health, and had received reports on initiatives put in place to support learners. Governors had been made aware that standards were likely to appear to decrease this year. The Committee had also discussed Student Voice and looked forward to hearing from the combined Student Council next year.

The Chair of Corporation added that it would be interesting to analyse results to see how the generalised anxiety manifested during the Covid recovery period has impacted on students' performance. Recent investigations appear to show that this had not impacted on progress in the quantative subjects as much as it had impacted on the qualitative/ creative subjects.

SF&R Committee

The Chair reported that there had been significant discussion at the meeting around the aniticipated raised utility bills. Governors had been given detailed explanations and had ample time to query matters and receive answers. This had lead to the Committee feeling reasured about specific matters.

Governance Documentation

The following documentation was presented for approval by Corporation:

Instrument & Articles 2022/23

The Instrument & Articles had been updated to reflect the changes agreed at the March Corporation meeting to reflect the increase in the number of staff and student governors to two in each category.

Standing Orders & Appendices 2022/23

The Standing Orders had been recommended for approval by the Strategy, Finance & Resources Committee, subject to the addition of the appointment process for the Chair of Audit position, as agreed at the Corporation meeting held in March 2022.

Code of Conduct for Governors 2022/23

The Code of Conduct for governors is based on the Eversheds Sutherland Seventeenth Edition. It has been updated to include reference to the College's updated mission, objectives and core values.

Resolution 21/67c: the Instrument & Articles, Standing Orders and Code of Conduct of Governors for 2022/23 are approved.

Report from Succession Planning Task Group

The Chair explained the context to the report and confirmed that the role of the Task Group is not to replace the work of the Search Committee which looks at operational matters around governance. The SP Task Group had been created to look at strategic matters involving longer term succession in governance arrangements. This was at a time when there were a number of very long serving governors who held significant posts in the Corporation. However, a number of these governors have subsequently resigned. The Task Group had looked into how potential future problems could be averted once the terms of office of these governors had expired.

Adam Fidler presented a report on the work carried out by the Succession Planning Task Group since the last Corporation meeting, from which the following was noted:

An informal survey on meeting times and dates had been circulated to governors and analysed. The outcome of the survey indicating preferences are as follows:

- Corporation meetings and the majority of committee meetings should continue to be held at Eccles, with the Search Committee meeting at Pendleton.
- Committee meetings to start at 4.30pm to facilitate attendance for working governors, with Corporation meetings being held at 2.00pm.
- There was a preference not to revise arrangements for the Audit Committee which will carry on online for at least the next academic year.
- There was no strong preference either way as to whether Committees should be held online or physically. The Task Group recommended that in general governors should attend meetings physically unless there were any particular circumstances which would not allow them to do so. Remote attendance at a physical meeting should be agreed with the Chair of the committee in advance.

The Chair of Corporation noted that it was good practice to gather governors' views. Different meeting methodologies had been tried out during the pandemic, and it had been found that online meetings are easier to Chair and minute if there is a smaller number of people in attendance. It had not been found to work as well for Corporation meetings. A governor commented that a hybrid model for committee meetings should not be discounted. A governor said that he would have concerns if a governor expects to attend all meetings online as this is not conducive to team development.

AF reported that the Task Group recognised that the overriding consideration that all decisions are taken in the best interest of the College and its learners, rather than what is their own personal preference. He added that the Task Group would like to continue with two meetings in the next

year as there were particular matters which still need to be discussed in order to bring recommendations to the Corporation.

The questionnaire indicated that the majority of governors were interested in reducing the amount of papers provided for meetings. The Task Group had proposed that the Group Principal look at the feasibility of providing laptops for governors for meetings. If the resource is available it could be trialled by a small number of governors and if deemed successful it could be rolled out more fully. The Director of Operations Management confirmed that the College does have resources available for governors. It was noted that there were several aspects to be considered before rolling out the scheme, including the presentation of reports which may need to be more in the format of executive summaries. Other issues which would need to be considered are the lack of ability to annotate the papers in their current online format. It was considered appropriate that whoever was in the Chair should be always be provided with a hard copy of the papers. It was noted that there continues to be an intention that governors' needs will be met and paper copies will be available for any governor if this is their preference. PS said that she would be happy to trial using a laptop at committee meetings and provide a report back.

Annual Meeting Schedule

Resolution 21/67d: the Annual Meeting Schedule for 2022/23 is approved.

21/68 <u>Meeting Evaluation Form</u>

The Chair requested that governors complete the Meeting Evaluation form and return it to the Clerk at the end of the meeting.

21/69 Any Other Business

There were no other items of business raised.

21/70 Date of Next meeting

The date of the next meeting was reported to be Tuesday 20 September 2022.

It was further reported that a short social event with refreshments would be organised to take place after the next Corporation meeting.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and continuing commitment to the College.

(All staff left the meeting at this point 4.45pm.)

(The meeting closed at 5.40pm)

Draft Minutes prepared by Clerk: Denise Hark 6 July 2022 **Draft Minutes Approved by Chair:** Jackie Flynn 7 July 2022

Minutes approved by Corporation:

Minutes signed by Chair: