

Present:

Jackie Flynn (Chair)
Rebecca Parks, Group Principal
Adam Fidler
Roger Cunliffe
Sally Kells
Adrian Connell
Lucy Robinson
Natalia Dimitrova
Jesper Foster
Dr Martin Toner
Martin Townsend
Ann Gavin-Daley
Paula Summersfield
Michael Sharples

In Attendance:

Karen Hollins, Chief Finance Officer
Kimberley Cash, Deputy Principal
Kelly Mason, Director of Human
Resources
Debbie Ward, Director of Business
Operations
Allan Milne, Director of
Apprenticeships and Employer
Engagement
Martin McNeill, External Reviewer of
Governance (AoC)
Ashley Newell, Interim Clerk

23/10 Introduction to the Meeting

The Chair started the meeting by welcoming all governors and senior Leaders to the meeting; Especially the new Student Governor, Jesper Foster, and Martin McNeill, External Reviewer of Governance (AoC). The Chair requested everyone introduce themselves.

She thanked everyone for their contribution to a successful Autumn term, and recognised the contribution of the Group Principal; the SL, and all of the staff. The Chair reflected on the input of the experienced governors and thanked all new governors for making such an effort to get up to speed.

Ashley Newell, was thanked for his help and support as the interim Clerk during the Autumn term.

The Chair reported that Tony Redmond has sought permission for leave of absence for 2024, and confirmed that this will be considered by the Governance & Search Committee at its meeting on 6 February 2024. She advised that Dr Martin Toner has resigned from his role as a governor and will be taking up the post of Clerk to the Corporation/Corporate Governance Officer from 1 January 2024.

Finally she wished all present a happy and restful Christmas, and invited attendees to stay on for Xmas dinner, prepared by the College's Hospitality students, immediately following the meeting.

23/11 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Sam Butler, Ruth Osborne-Thompson and Tony Redmond.

23/12 Declarations of Interest

Governors made no declarations of interest in items to be discussed at the meeting.

23/13 Minutes of the previous Meeting

It was agreed that the minutes were an accurate reflection of the business undertaken at the meeting.

Resolution 23/13a: the minutes of the previous meeting held on 19th Sept 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and approved for signature by the Chair.

23/14 Matters Arising

Reported : that there were no matters arising.

23/15 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.

External Engagement

- i) The Chair reported that she, along with the Vice Chair, Group Principal and Deputy Group Principal had attended the AoC Conference in November 2023. They were very proud of Student Choir which had performed at the pre dinner reception, and of the College receiving the Award for Student Apprentice of the Year.
- ii) The Chair has continued to convene meetings of the GM GFE Chairs Advisory Group, which has been discussing how the different colleges intend to try to implement the recommended 6.5% pay award for 2023/24.

23/16 Strategic Plan 2022-25

The Group Principal gave a comprehensive report on progress with the Strategic Plan from which the following points were noted:

- She outlined progress (Year 2 of 3) of the Strategic Plan and reminded members of the College's vision, share purpose, values and curriculum intent.
- She highlighted the Teaching and Learning objective and reported on achievement rates for 2022-23, noting the following achievement rates; 16-18 74.7% (-4.8%), 16-18 M&E 58.3% (-2.6%), 19+ M&E 68.5% (+2.3%), 19+ 83.6% (-1.2%), HE 68.8% (-0.7%) and Apprenticeships 60.9% (+4.6).
- The initiatives for 2022-23 were presented and included: responsive curriculum offer to meet local and national needs, student standards, CPD programme – Rosenshine, College Intent and Deep Dives for every curriculum area in the College.
- She explained the Curriculum Reform challenges and impact on staff and space with T levels; the Greater Manchester Baccalaureate and the Advanced British Standard; and the perceived views of the Conservative Government and Labour party.
- In relation to Ofsted, she reported that a new data dashboard (FESIT) is available to providers, to review the data that Ofsted can see. Sir Martyn Oliver will start in Jan 2024. It was noted that more colleges in the North-West are being graded at Grade 3.
- She indicated that the College was self-assessing as good for all areas, with the exception of the Local Skills judgement, which is self assessed as strong.
- In relation to the objective – Resources and Business Operations - she reported that funding pressures continue; although schools/colleges will receive an additional £2.3 billion in funding for this year and 2024-25. Externally funded fundamental building works had been completed and will improve the energy efficiency of the College, and make savings. It was noted that the RAAC continues to pre-occupy the Department of Education.
- In relation to the objective – External presence - she explained that for all the key recruitment streams, student recruitment was strong this term and on target.
- She listed the key achievements and developments in the College, which included: Commended in AoC Beacon Award for Mental Health & Wellbeing/Employer engagement; Student Choir invited to perform at both the AoC conference and Manchester Utd Football Club; Christopher Ademola won AoC Apprentice Student of the year; Norah Nwikonzor achieved a Bronze medal in the World Skills Foundation Hairdressing; students participated in GM Student Question Time at the Bridgewater Hall; and Remembrance Silhouettes were designed and created by Pendleton and Cityskills students.

- In relation to the objective – Welfare and People - she reported that student safeguarding cases have increased significantly; however the Welfare Portal was helping build student resilience. A new Wellbeing Group of Wellbeing Champions for Staff had been established across the College; and 2 Jan 2024 will be a Staff Wellbeing Day. In relation to the Teacher Wellbeing index 2023, it was noted that 78% of all Teaching staff feel stressed, 55% of staff said their organisation's culture had a negative effect on their wellbeing, and 81% of staff experienced symptoms of poor mental health due to their work. 1/6 of education staff feel isolated at work and 73% of staff think inspections are not fit for purpose. However, when compared with SCCG's Stagf Survey results showed that 82% of our staff agreed that our leaders are considerate of their well-being; 89% feel they are treated with fairly and with both dignity and respect; and 91% of our staff say they are proud to be a member of staff at the College. #WELLSTAFF has been established to support staff, along with staff briefings, local and team meetings and coffee and chat meetings plus information and guidance on well-being activities.
- The Group Principal concluded that favourable progress has been made with the College's Strategic Plan, considering the key internal and external challenges which the College had faced.

Governors discussed a number of issues arising out of the presentation, and governors raised some queries.

- A governor asked about the SAR validation event on the 16 Jan 2024, and the Group Principal explained that the SLT would present the College's draft SAR with managers' judgements. Governors would then have an opportunity to review, consider, agree and sign off the SAR as in previous years. She emphasised that the meeting represented good external validation of the SAR process and document.
- Governors commented that the #Wellstudent/#Wellstaff were very strong, and visible on the recent Link Governor visits.
- The GP reported that a number of GM colleges had been graded 3.
- Data now seems to be significant again in Ofsted inspectors making judgements.
- A governor asked about staff well-being activities, and the Director of HR explained that the HR Dept had emailed all staff highlighting a range of Well-being activities and suggestions. The Dept had also arranged a staff screening programme for health checks to support staff at the College.

The Chair thanked the Group Principal for her very thorough and full presentation.

23/17 Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 July 2023.

The Chief Finance Officer reported on the Annual Report and Financial Statements 2022-23, and the following points were noted:

Financial Statements 2022-23

- Audited financial performance – in line with draft position as reported to Corporation in Sept 2023, surplus of £987k excluding pension adjustment and surplus for the year of £237k
- Outputs -Outstanding financial health, should be confirmed by ESFA early next year, all FEC benchmarks met and no breach of covenants, we will be advised by banks early next year if not in agreement with assessment.
- Audit Opinion – accounts and regularity – Clean audit report (no recommendations, no audit adjustments, unmodified audit opinion (no material uncertainty in relation to going concern and no emphasis of matter paragraph included. Unqualified opinion.
- Statement on Regularity, Propriety and Compliance
The Group Principal made the following statement:
“As Accounting Officer, I confirm that the Corporation has had due regard to the framework of authorities governing regularity, propriety and compliance, and the

requirements of grant funding agreements and contracts with ESFA. I confirm on behalf of the Corporation that after due enquiry, and to the best of my knowledge, I am able to identify any material irregular or improper use of funds by the Corporation, or material non-compliance with the framework of authorities, including the “Dear accounting officer” reclassification letter of 29th November 2022 and ESFA’s bitesize guides. I confirm that no instances of material irregularity, impropriety or funding noncompliance, or non-compliance with the framework of authorities, have been discovered to date.”

- Following recommendation by Audit Committee and SF&R Committee, the CFO sought Corporation approval for Annual Report and Financial Statements 2022-23 incl. treatment of defined benefit pension asset, which has been curtailed and reflects accounting policy
- Management letters of Representation – accounts and regularity.
- Once approved, Documents will be signed by Chair and the Accounting Officer. Submitted to W&B for final approval and signature, for return by 13 Dec 2023.
- Subsequently, full signed documentation will be submitted to ESFA. Signed Annual Report and Financial Statements 2022-23. Related audit documents. ESFA Finance Record for 2022-23 outturn. Banks. Signed Annual Report and Financial Statements 2022-23. Covenant compliance certificate / calculations as at July 2023

The Chair thanked the Chief Financial Officer for her presentation.

Resolved: that Corporation should approve the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July.

23/18 Financial Headlines:

- Financial position as at October 2023 - Surplus of £938k excluding pension adjustment – fav. variance of £795k - Cash balance of £14.635m - Quarterly loan covenant compliance certificate submitted to Lloyds.
- Year-end Forecast Outturn as at Quarter 1 - Surplus of £938k excluding pension adjustment – fav. variance of £568k - Entirely driven by anticipated bank interest receivable (repayment of loan) and delayed depreciation charges (non-cash movement) - Cash balance of £8.701m – increase of £485k - Solely due to the forecast receipt of bank interest - Internally calculated Financial Health rating of Outstanding - Loan covenant calculations indicate not in breach of covenants overall - Position utilises Lloyds fall-back Minimum Cash Balance covenant - No pay award for 2023-24 included, but £1.6m ESFA funding in Contingency.

23/19 Risk Management:

- Following recommendation by Audit Committee, the CFO sought Corporation’s approval.
- Annual Risk Management report 2022-23; updated following annual review.
- Paper includes current summary Risk Register.
- External audit service contract extension - two years from August 2024.

Loans update:

- Meeting held with Barclays to discuss options for updating covenants
- Step by step approach agreed.
- Relationship Director has requested credit team to establish overarching and ongoing agreement that repayment of Lloyds loan would be excluded from covenant calculations. Complete paperwork in house at no charge to avoid requiring DfE consent.

- Once outcome of request is known, DfE approval will be requested if required. Corporation approval's approval for the updated agreement will be sought. Review Barclays' appetite for amending debt service cover covenant in some form, without increasing interest rate.

Following the Finance presentations and papers, governors discussed a number of points. One governor praised the clean set of accounts and thanked the Finance team for very positive internal and external audit reports.

Another governor sought further details about the strategy in place regarding the loans, and the Chief Finance Officer reported that this was being continuously reviewed with the aim of paying off the loans as soon as the College was able.

Another governor commented that risks have declined. The Chief Finance Officer highlighted that there was still one Red risk. The importance of succession planning, and targeted recruitment of staff will need to be kept under review. These risks are being continuously reviewed and evaluated as the College faces numerous challenges.

The Chair thanked the Chief Finance Officer for her reports and assurance.

Resolved: that Corporation should approve all the specified items in the Finance reports.

23/20 Health, Safety and Wellbeing – Health & Safety Statement.

The Director of Business Operations requested approval for the Health & Safety statement, and reported that the policies had all been recommended by the HR&OD Committee.

She briefly outlined the Health and Safety Policy Statement renewal and the following points were noted;

- The General Statement.
- The Organisation.
- The Arrangements.
- The Review.
- Financial Implications.

The SCC Group Health and Safety Policy 2023/24 was tabled to so members could note its contents.

Resolved: that Corporation should approve the Health & Safety Policy statement as recommended by the HR&OD Committee.

23/21 Safeguarding Annual Report (including Prevent duty)

The Deputy Principal outlined the key items in the Safeguarding Update report, and the following points were made:

- Safeguarding and welfare arrangements continue to evolve in response to residual Covid implications. The Pastoral Team has been increased to include a cross college Safeguarding Lead and an additional Head of Pastoral Support.
- #WELLSTUDENT is now embedded and encapsulates the vast range of interventions on offer making them more accessible to all (covering physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health) The Welfare Portal continues to expand allowing easy 'one click' access to a range of safeguarding and wellbeing resources.

- A large-scale consultation with a number of external partners took place during the Summer term 2023 to investigate the ways in which the tutorial programme could be responsive to the needs of the young people in Salford. The collaboration with colleagues from organisations including Connexions, 42nd Street, The Anna Freud Foundation, GM Higher, GMP, Youth Justice Team, Wellbeing Matters, Salford Foundation and Talk, Listen Change resulted in the production of a fully revised tutorial programme for all students at the college.
- A second Head of Pastoral studies has completed the Mental Health First Aid 'train the trainer' programme allowing an extension of the internal training plan. There are now 40 Mental Health First Aiders and 29 Mental Health Champions and plan to deliver further sessions this year.
- The Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2023 Guidance has been fully understood by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Safeguarding Team. The Safeguarding Policy has been updated accordingly and the October INSET day has been used to train all staff to ensure compliance with legal requirements.
- An upward trajectory of safeguarding incidents had begun before Covid 19; however, the impact of the pandemic has caused safeguarding cases to increase fourfold.

Safeguarding and Pastoral Incidents 2022/23

- In 2022/23, 3263 safeguarding and pastoral incidents were recorded against 1276 students. This is a significant increase from the previous academic year when 1706 safeguarding and pastoral incidents were recorded against 603 students.
- An upward trajectory of safeguarding incidents pre-dates Covid 19; however the impact of the pandemic has caused safeguarding cases to increase four-fold.
- The most frequently recorded safeguarding and pastoral incidents continue to be mental health (360*) Children's Services involvement (351*) and domestic circumstances (156*)

Safeguarding and Pastoral Incidents at each College

- The majority of safeguarding and pastoral incidents were recorded at Worsley College, which is a shift from recent years when Eccles Sixth Form College had the highest number recorded.
- Worsley College continues to have the highest proportion of the student population being supported at 59%.
- The types of incidents recorded are similar for all 5 colleges.

Counselling Service

- The College Counsellor continues to provide varied support to suit individual needs. This includes, one to one, small group sessions and remote one-to-one counselling appointments as appropriate.
- As a result of #WELLSTUDENT and the vast range of varied and flexible support now on offer at the College, the demand for counselling has significantly decreased. Learner voice suggests that traditional counselling methods are not as popular as some of the newer initiatives.

Links with External Agencies

- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Heads of Pastoral are continuing to comply with inter-agency guidance and fully discharging their duty of care by liaising with young people's social workers, the local authority virtual school head for cared for and previously

cared for children, personal advisors for care leavers and any other relevant safeguarding and welfare partners

Training

- A second Head of Pastoral studies has completed the Mental Health First Aid ‘train the trainer’ programme allowing an extension of the internal training plan. There are now 40 Mental Health First Aiders and 29 Mental Health Champions and plan to deliver further sessions this academic year.
- 30 members of staff, across all areas of the college, have now received the Chats that Matter training. The feedback has been excellent and the new skills are supporting staff to have meaningful conversations to support the prominent spike in generalised anxiety.

Welfare and support

- Safeguarding and welfare arrangements continue to evolve in response to residual covid implications. The pastoral team has been increased to include a cross college safeguarding lead and a second Head of Pastoral Support at Pendleton.
- #WELLSTUDENT is now embedded and encapsulates the vast range of interventions on offer making them more accessible to all (covering physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health) The Welfare Portal continues to expand allowing easy ‘one click’ access to a range of safeguarding and wellbeing resources.
- All students have been provided with a lanyard sticker, containing a QR code for easy and instant access to the welfare portal from their mobile devices.

Keeping Children Safe in Education - September 2023

- The Safeguarding Policy has been updated to reflect the new guidance, updates are highlighted for the Corporation’s reference and approval.

Resolved; that Corporation should approve the updated Safeguarding Policy as recommended by the Q&S Committee.

23/22 **Governance**

Committee meetings

Governors received the minutes of the undernoted committee meetings for information:

Committee	Date
Audit	Monday 20 November 2023
Human Resources & OD	Tuesday 17 October 2023
Governance and Search	Tuesday 3 October 2023
Quality & Standards	Tuesday 7 November 2023
Strategy, Finance & Resources	Tuesday 28 November 2023

Governors raised queries which were addressed by the various committee Chairs.

Resolved: that Corporation should approve the minutes of the committee meetings.

23/23 Link Governor Visits

Link visits were carried out at all centres in the Autumn Term 2023.

Written reports were subsequently submitted.

The Chair reported that Link Governor visits provide opportunities to triangulate information provided in management reports.

The Chair invited governors to provide oral feedback from their visits and the following points were noted:

- Very informative and useful visits across the Colleges.
- Good to see the curriculum offer, range of courses and facilities
- Aided understanding of operational issues.
- Very positive meetings with both staff and students.
- Good to see the facilities.
- Governors enjoyed meeting students and staff.

23/24 Annual Self-Assessment Governance Report 2022-23, including Audit Committee Report

The interim Clerk reported that the Annual Self-Assessment Governance report for 2023-24 had been reviewed by the Governance & Search Committee. The interim Clerk noted the role of governance in the context statement; progress on internal targets regarding attendance at Committees; comments on relevant sections from the Education Inspection Framework including meeting Local Skills; regulatory requirements; highlighted the new AoC code of governance (6 principles); and recommendation that governance should be mapped on the new code of governance.

The interim Clerk highlighted the Committee membership changes; Committee activities and recommendations; and governor training and development. He also referred to the Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2022-23, which was approved by the Audit Committee on 20 November 2023.

23/25 Meeting Evaluation Form

The Interim Clerk reminded governors to complete and return the meeting evaluation forms provided in the Corporation papers..

23/26 Any Other Business

There was no additional business.

23/27 Date of Next meeting

Reported:

- (i) that the next meeting will be held on Tuesday 16 January 2024 to review the SAR document;
- (ii) that the next quarterly meeting will be held on Tuesday 26 March 2024.

(Staff Governors, Student Governors, and SLT members then left the meeting - 4.15pm)