# Solihull College and University Centre

# Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held on 30 November 2020 online by MS Teams, starting at 5.30 pm

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**Present**  Barbara Hughes (Chair)

Paul Assinder

Stan Baldwin

Scott Beasley

John Callaghan (Principal)

Carol Harvey-Barnes (Staff Governor)

Paul Large

Lucy Lee

Tony Lucas

Sukhy Nijjar

Geraldine Swanton

Sally Tomlinson

**In Attendance**  Lindsey Stewart (Deputy Principal and Stratford Chief Operating Officer)

Heather Evans (Vice Principal Finance)

Rebecca Gater (Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum)

Pete Haynes (Vice Principal HR and Student Services)

Sam Bromwich (Director of Risk, Control and Compliance)

Theresa Lynch (Clerk)

*The meeting was recorded*.

The Chair welcomed all and explained that there had been some late papers, but that this had been due to the sequence of events required in closing of the year-end audit. A set of papers had been released early to allow a longer period of access.

The top 3 key risks were included with the agenda to highlight for Governors’ areas to consider when discussing the business for the meeting.

## **1. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Badri Gargeshnari.

## **2. Declarations of Interest in relation to this agenda**

There were no new declarations of interest.

## **3. Minutes of the meeting held on 4th November 2020, matters arising and actions from previous meetings**

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th November 2020 were **agreed** as a true and accurate record and signed with the Chair’s e-signature.

A list of actions had been prepared for the current term and 2019/20. For the next meeting it would only include outstanding items.

## **4. Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 20th October 2020**

The Chair presented the minutes of the meeting held on 20th October 2020.

### 4.1 Risk Management

#### 4.1.1 Strategic Risk Register and Board Assurance Plan

The Chair presented the Strategic Risk Register and Board Assurance Plan for discussion.

Q. The risk matrix balances ‘impact’ and ‘likelihood’ when assessing risk. A COVID pandemic would have been considered unlikely. How prepared were we and what lessons have been learnt?

A. The Director of Risk, Control and Compliance explained that few organisations would have been prepared for the impact of a global pandemic, so initially it was a mixed picture. However, the College rapidly introduced COVID-19 measures in response to lockdown, including reinforcement of the IT infrastructure, purchase of IT devices and software, teaching and resources online and safeguarding throughout. This was followed up with a detailed plan, in line with government guidelines, for re-opening in September 2020. Feedback was received about the quality of online learning and staff and student concerns via online surveys. The lessons learned have been extensive and have been embedded into practice going forward, particularly in relation to online learning. Further, it was noted that as part of the College’s incident management planning there had been a scenario discussed at CMT in 2018 about the College’s reaction to a global pandemic, so some elements had already been considered. There had also been a business impact plan created for each area of the College should they have to close-down for a period of time, so it was likely that the College was in a good position, as they could use these as a basis for managing the College closure in March 2020.

The Chair noted that the Reset and Recovery Plan was still on the Governors’ Dashboard. It was probably timely to replace this with the Strategic Risk Register and Board Assurance Plan. It was confirmed that this would be updated. **Action.**

**Resolved** to approve the Strategic Risk Register and Board Assurance Plan.

#### 4.1.2 Merged Risk Management Strategy and Policy

The Chair presented the Risk Management Strategy and Policy for discussion.

**Resolved** to approve the Risk Management Strategy and Policy.

#### 4.1.3 Annual Report 2019/20

The Risk Management Annual Report for 2019/20 was received.

Q. There is a reference to insurers validating the College’s Reset and Recovery Plan – was this correct?

A. The Director of Risk, Control and Compliance confirmed that Hettle Andrews, the College’s insurers had worked with the College to review the Reset and Recovery Plan in detail to ensure it covered all key risks and elements of compliance. They also reviewed the format of risk assessment process for College areas to ensure all risk areas were included, as well as, reviewing a sample of the plans developed.

**Resolved** to approve the Risk Management Annual Report for 2019/20.

#### 4.1.4 Timetable 2020/21

The Risk Management Timetable for 2020/21 was received.

### 4.2 Data Protection and GDPR

#### 4.2.1 Data Protection Policy

The Chair presented the Data Protection Policy for discussion.

Q. Is the Data Protection Policy in line with requirements during the COVID-19 period. Some organisations, including the NHS had found that they had to implement arrangements slightly outside of the normal Data Protection Policy – was the case for the College?

A. The Director of Risk, Control and Compliance explained that the Data Protection Policy and related documentation had been reviewed in light of COVID-19 and that the College had continued to adhere to the guidance on the use of personal data in line with the Data Protection Policy. The Policy and related documents had been updated to reflect the increase in the recording of sessions and increased used of online learning. This ensures that any GDPR related issues have been incorporated into the College’s policies and statements.

The need for greater security during COVID-19 was highlighted, but it was also noted that some organisations had wider public health duties that they could rely on when sharing personal data, that would not necessarily apply to the College.

**Resolved** to approve the Data Protection Policy.

#### 4.2.2 Data Retention Schedule

The Chair presented the Data Retention Schedule and discussion took place.

Q. Would it be useful to add a rationale for why records are kept for the length of time stated or is this kept elsewhere?

A. This information is kept elsewhere, for example, in the privacy statements. The timelines are in line with JISC guidance. The College should be able to justify any challenge regarding timescales.

**Resolved** to approve the Data Retention Schedule.

#### 4.2.3 Data Archiving and Retention Policy

The Chair presented the Data Archiving and Retention Policy for discussion.

**Resolved** to approve the Data Archiving and Retention Policy.

#### 4.2.4 Privacy Policy Governors

The Chair presented the Privacy Policy for Governors for discussion.

**Resolved** to approve the Privacy Policy for Governors.

#### 4.2.5 Privacy Policy College Staff

The Chair presented the Privacy Policy for College Staff for discussion.

**Resolved** to approve the Privacy Policy for College Staff.

#### 4.2.6 Privacy Policy College Students

The Chair presented the Privacy Policy for College Students for discussion.

**Resolved** to approve the Privacy Policy for College Students.

#### 4.2.7 General Privacy Statement

The General Privacy Statement was presented for discussion.

**Resolved** to approve the General Privacy Statement.

### 4.3 Health and Safety Annual Report 2019/20 and Policy Review

The Vice Principal Finance presented the Health and Safety Annual Report for 2019/20 and noted that the Policy had been reviewed.

Q. The report notes that overall responsibility for the Policy lies with The Head of Estates. Have the changes in this area caused any problems?

A. The Vice Principal Finance explained that a new Head of Estates, Lyn Russell, had been appointed in June 2020. She explained the bigger issue was the demands for increased health and safety arrangements due to the COVID-19 crisis. There had been additional work for the College in terms of re-opening and this had put pressure on the Health and Safety team, Estates and managers more widely in ensuring all areas adhered to guidance and legislation to ensure the environment was safe for staff and students.

**Resolved** to approve the Health and Safety Policy.

### 4.4 Conflict and Declaration of Pecuniary and Personal Interests Policy

The Chair presented the Conflict and Declaration of Pecuniary and Personal Interests Policy and explained that it had been identified as a gap in the College’s policy framework by the Compliance, Value for Money and Risk Special Interest Group.

**Resolved** to approve the Conflict and Declaration of Pecuniary and Personal Interests Policy.

### 4.5 Annual Report of the Audit Committee and Principal

The Chair presented the Annual Report of the Audit Committee and Principal for discussion. It was noted that this was assurance provided by the Audit Committee and Principal to the Corporation regarding their work during the year. The Clerk confirmed that this report formed part of the submission to the ESFA alongside the annual accounts.

**Resolved** to approve the Annual Report of the Audit Committee and Principal and confirmed that it be signed by the Chair of the Audit Committee and Principal.

### 4.6 Regularity Questionnaire

The Clerk explained how the Regularity Audit Questionnaire was produced and used in the annual external audit process in providing assurance around regularity, propriety and compliance.

**Resolved** to approve the Regularity Audit Questionnaire and confirmed that the Chair of the Corporation and Principal sign on behalf of the College.

## **5. Property Report**

The Vice Principal presented the Property Report and explained that layout of the plans were included in the report to explain what the land would be used for in liaison with the Stratford High School.

Discussion took place regarding whether the College would be able to use the pitches and it was noted that it may be difficult to confirm as the timing of use was likely to clash with the needs of the School, but the relationship was good and it was anticipated that this may be possible subject to the School’s needs.

**Resolved** to approve the sale of the Stratford Campus Car Park to Warwickshire County Council, as set out in the report.

## **6. Human Resources Annual Report**

The Vice Principal presented the Human Resources Annual Report, which had been deferred from the last Corporation meeting, and explained that it set out activities during 2019/20 including the harmonisation of staff policies.

Q. Long-term Sickness - a significant number of absences relate to 'mental health' and 'stress'.  Could we hear more about this issue, notably in the context of the current challenging COVID-19 situation?

A. There had not been significant long-term sickness in relation to the pandemic, but in terms of mental health illness nationally the figure was 55%. The data reported to the Health and Safety Committee in November was 33% overall, with 63% of that total relating to stress and mental health. The issues are varied and generally do not tend to relate to the work environment. They tend to relate to external issues, including bereavement, family issues, long term disciplinary issue etc. Staff are demonstrating some concerns about COVID-19 generally and in terms of being in College recently. Overall sickness levels continue to reduce.

Q. Staff Age profile - a high proportion of our teaching and learning staff are in the 51+ age range.  Is this likely to present challenges in the medium term?

A. Yes, numbers of hourly paid/part time staff was high in the 51+ age range. Salaried staff tended to be highest in the 31-40 category, followed by the 41-50 category, so was very healthy. There had been an increase in the BAME category of staff to 17.5%, which was positive, but this continued to be an area for increase.

Discussion took place regarding the staffing profile of Built Environment.

Q. What additional pressures have been placed on our HR services by the pandemic, and how has the College coped?

A. During lockdown there was general support and then upon return to work there was a lot tailored of support in increasing staff confidence about coming into work and this has been on-going through the term as COVID-19 numbers have increased.

Q. Data suggests that usage of the Employee Assistance Programme has increased, but how effective is it?

A. There has been an increase in usage and is an important resource for staff. Anecdotally staff have fed back to say it has been very useful, both in terms of one-to-one support, but also in terms of resources available including training information, managing stress videos etc. Staff use the service in complete confidence. Levels of absence have not increased.

Q. To address bias, does the College use ‘blind recruitment’ for applications and interviews?

A. The application process is blind in terms of the equality opportunities being removed prior to short-listing. Identifiable characteristics are removed as much as possible. Interviews are more difficult in terms of meeting the candidates. Training highlights the importance of appointing the best person. Discussion took place regarding the use of virtual interviews in promoting blind recruitment. It was noted that this could be discussed by the Equality and Diversity Committee, as virtual interviews had so far been through Teams.

Q. As well as male and female is there a plan to report on non-binary, gender fluid categories of staff?

A. Yes, the Equality and Diversity Committee is reviewing this.

The Principal explained that being able to offer staff a blended approach between working in the office and working from home had really supported staff during this time and had probably limited the number of absences. Care First is anonymous and this is a key element, so important for the College to limit involvement in obtaining data and feedback from Care First, in terms of assessing effectiveness.

## **7. Minutes of the meetings of the Search and Governance Committee held on 7th October and 4th November 2020 and related reports**

The Chair presented the minutes of the Search and Governance Committee meetings held on 7th October and 4th November 2020.

Q.What can Governors do to help fill the vacancy on Remuneration Committee?

A. All Governors were asked to share the information about the vacancy with networks as appropriate. The vacancy would also be advertised in the normal way.

### 7.1 Search and Governance Committee Assurance Report

The Chair presented the first assurance report of the Search and Governance Committee and noted that the production of the report was in line with the Corporation’s other committees and provided an overview of the Committee’s activities during 2019/20.

**Resolved** to approve the Search and Governance Committee Assurance Report.

### 7.2 Cycle of Business 2020/21

The Chair presented the indicative cycle of business for 2020/21.

## **8. Remuneration Committee Annual Report to the Corporation**

*This item was deemed confidential and the Staff and Student Governors left the meeting.*

**Resolved** to approve the Remuneration Committee Annual Report to the Corporation.

## **9. Pay Award 2020**

*This item was deemed confidential and the Staff and Student Governors left the meeting.*

## **10. Minutes of the Remuneration Committee meeting held on 11th November 2020**

The minutes of the Remuneration Committee meeting held on 11th November 2020 were received.

### 10.1 Deputy Principal and Chief Operating Officer at Stratford Targets 2020/21

*This item was deemed confidential and EMT, the Staff and Student Governors left the meeting.*

**Resolved** to approve the targets for 2021/21 for the Deputy Principal and Chief Operating Officer at Stratford.

### 10.2 Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum Targets 2020/21

*This item was deemed confidential and EMT, the Staff and Student Governors left the meeting.*

**Resolved** to approve the targets for 2021/21 for the Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum.

### 10.3 Vice Principal HR and Student Services Targets 2020/21

*This item was deemed confidential and EMT, the Staff and Student Governors left the meeting.*

**Resolved** to approve the targets for 2021/21 for the Vice Principal HR and Student Services.

### 10.4 Vice Principal Finance Targets 2020/21

*This item was deemed confidential and EMT, the Staff and Student Governors left the meeting.*

**Resolved** to approve the targets for 2021/21 for the Vice Principal Finance.

## **11. Register of Gifts and Hospitality Report**

The contents of the Register of Gifts and Hospitality were received for information.

Q. Where is the Register published?

A. The Register is available upon request. The Publication Scheme lists it as one of the documents that the public can request.

## **12. Register of Interest for Staff**

The contents of the Register of Interest for Staffwere received for information.

## **13. Regular Reports**

### 13.1 Use of the College Seal and Chair’s E-Signature

The contents of the use of the College Seal and Chair’s E-Signature were received for information.

### 13.2 Bids and Projects Report

The contents of the Bids and Projects Report were received for information.

**14. Date of the next meeting**

The date of the next meeting was Thursday 10th December 2020 at 5.30pm on MS Teams.

The Governors’ Development Session was scheduled for Saturday 6th February 2021 9.30-1pm (tbc).



Signed Date: 10 December 2020