

Solihull College & University Centre

Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held on 31st March 2021 online by MS Teams starting at 5pm

Present

Barbara Hughes (Chair)
Stan Baldwin
Scott Beasley
John Callaghan (Principal)
Tasleem Chaudary
Sarah Horton-Walsh
Lisa Jones
Neil Ladwa (External Member)
Paul Large
Lucy Lee
Tony Lucas
Stuart Lyons (Student Governor)
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)
Theresa Lynch (Clerk)

The meeting was recorded.

Student Executive Presentation

See appendix 1 for details of the Student Executive Presentation.

The Director of Student Services, the Student Enrichment Officer and members of the Student Executive were thanked for their presentation and they left the meeting.

The Chair welcomed all Members to the meeting and noted that it was Paul Large's last meeting. She thanked him for his contribution since joining the Corporation in 2016. She noted the extensive experience, excellent challenge and support he had provided was of importance for the Corporation and the Audit Committee, as was his role as Chair of the recent Compliance, Value for Money and Risk Special Interest Group. Paul thanked the Corporation for the card and gift he received and noted that he had had a long relationship with the College through his role at Oxford Brookes University and as a Governor. He noted the depth of quality of staff at the College and the strength of the Governing Body, whilst also celebrating the impressive students that the College are supporting and developing in terms of education and personally.

The overarching strategic risks were noted and the additional risk in relation to the College re-opening on 8th March 2021 was highlighted. The Principal confirmed that the College had opened in line with the detailed plans and through the operation of the testing processes, supported by Public Health England. Students and staff would be continuing to carry out home tests twice weekly.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Carol Harvey-Barnes (Staff Governor), Paul Assinder and Badri Gargeshnari.

2. Declarations of Interest in Relation to this Agenda

There were no new declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of previous Meetings, Actions and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd February 2021 were **agreed** as a true and accurate record and signed with the Chair's e-signature.

The minutes of the extra-ordinary meeting held on 16th March 2021 were **agreed** as a true and accurate record and signed with the Chair's e-signature.

The contents of the actions report were noted. Clarity was sought regarding the action relating to a video being produced by the Student Executive President and it was noted that if it was proving difficult the Corporation did not want to put pressure on him, but if this was available that would be useful. The Vice Principal HR and Student Services noted that it would be proposed to the Learner Voice Committee that the current President's appointment be extended to 2021/22.

The Clerk noted that any items showing as amber would be followed up before the next meeting and if not completed by the deadline, highlighted as red.

4. Quality, Curriculum and Teaching and Learning

4.1 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the Quality Improvement Plan and highlighted the progress and impact identified by mid-Spring term. She noted that the College had been closed since the last report but had managed to continue to make good progress. Attendance and apprenticeship did not have a green RAG-rating. Further she noted that impact would be demonstrated more clearly after the end of the year when final assessments had been completed and destinations were known. There would be a further update after the end of the Spring term and a final update at the end of the academic year.

Q. There is a lot of information contained in the QIP and it is a really useful document. How is impact measured?

A. The measurement depends very much on the area for development and is indicated in the KPI column. It could be retention, achievement or destinations. For each area there is a clear indicator for impact identified. Further, the progress and impact may change throughout the year, with the autumn term often relating more to retention rather than achievement.

The Chair requested that the QIP be uploaded to the Governors' Dashboard and previous versions be archived. **Action.**

4.2 In-Year Progress Report

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the In-year Progress Report and explained how progress was shown throughout the year.

Q. There is some extremely useful information – to assist with interpretation would it be possible for analysis to be given relating to STEAM level 3, particularly in relation to Motor Vehicle and Visual Art and an explanation about what can be done to improve the picture?

A. For some areas timing is important in terms of assessments that have been done. It may be that some students have a referral and will be re-submitting work to achieve the required grade, so these areas will be showing as red at the current time, but this will change when the assessments are re-submitted and the standard achieved. Also in relation to arts and media, University of the Arts, London (UAL) have a final major project, eg, an exhibition or a performance and this is where the grade indicator is likely to increase markedly. In terms of actions, progress will be scrutinised during the MOTs, which are part of the annual quality cycle. Detailed discussion will take place regarding the mark book and all related data, as well as reviewing what assignments have been done and what are due to be undertaken - and where students are identified as 'referral' this will be explored with the Head of School to ensure appropriate action is being taken. During this academic year it has also been difficult for students undertaking vocational and practical subjects

to demonstrate their achievement and obtain higher grades due to College closure, but the catch-up fund is being used to ensure there is time for them to do relevant assessments.

Q. Could you say a little more about the problems relating to in-year progress for apprenticeships and what action is being taken?

A. The main issue relating to progress for apprenticeships are end point assessments (EPA). Using hairdressing as an example – only 40% of students are on track, but this is understandable given that hairdressers were closed in Spring 2020, for a short period in November 2020 and have now been closed since January 2021. The Faculty Health Check showed that some EPAs may be delayed by up to a year. As salons will be open from April there is a plan in place to support students to prepare for their EPAs, which will be scheduled for May and June, with booster sessions during the Easter break and on-going. Where students have been furloughed, the College has aimed to front-load their College based theory and English and maths sessions, so that they can then get back to the practical and vocational when furlough ends.

Q. Are you able to take a view as to how the Spring term census data for the progress report compares with the same point last year, to be able to get an understanding of the 'COVID-effect'?

A. A difficult year was anticipated, and planning ensured that curriculum and progress was sequenced to ensure online learning continued. Further, there is now time to catch up with assessments etc, and Faculty Health Checks are underway showing good levels of predicted achievement.

4.3 Deep Dive Report

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the Deep Dive Report and confirmed that deep dives had continued during the College closure, so all Schools would have received a deep dive visit and 2 follow up reviews by the end of the academic year. Where there are areas for development, these are being targeted through the CPD offer, working groups and action skills research projects. Good progress was being made in Retail and Commercial and Motor Vehicle. Changes were being made in Engineering to support further progress.

Clarity regarding acronyms was requested:

P/M/D – Pass/Merit/Distinction

PPD – Progress and Personal Development (was previously Tutorial Programme)

Q. The Chair requested a reminder regarding how deep dives fitted into the Quality Cycle for Governors?

A. They reflect what would happen in an Ofsted inspection. A team visit a department and scrutinise a range of performance measures to identify areas for development. It is important to prepare for inspection, but also to review the quality of education for a whole department, covering all provision types.

The Chair noted that with an Ofsted inspection likely during 2021/22 it would be necessary for Governors to review performance at the end of the academic year in detail and to be aware of the College's strengths and areas for improvement and action that has been taken to ensure improvement.

4.4 Student Focus Groups – March 2021

The Chair thanked Governors who met with student focus groups in March 2021 and noted that there would be opportunities to undertake further sessions in May 2021. It would be a helpful opportunity for Governors to speak to students about the progress they have made during the year and how they feel they will achieve going forward. She noted that the feedback following the March 2021 sessions was available on BoardEffect.

5. Tuition Fee Policies for HE and non-HE Students

The Vice Principal Finance presented the Tuition Fee Policies and fees for HE and non-HE students for 2021/22 and noted that only minor changes were recommended. Fee structures reflected funding agency guidance and changes due to Brexit.

Q. Competition from more established universities is getting even keener. How is this affecting our approach to tuition fees and are there other ways in which we are able to respond to this competitiveness?

A. Tuition fees for 2021-22 are competitive, we have not increased. For the second year in a row, the use of predicted and teacher assessed grades have allowed a group of students to enter universities that would have otherwise applied to the College. The College is continuing to use the unique selling points of being cheaper than universities and closer to home to attract students, as well as using the 'supportive' and 'individualised' learning approaches to differentiate between universities and the College.

Q. What income is generated from both HE and non-HE fees?

A. FE fee income is relatively small, whilst HE is over £1m. For full costs fees the income is about £600k.

Q. Brexit – does that mean that EU student fees can be increased? Are there any EU students?

A. No, there are no EU students, but it was important to reflect that EU students would no longer receive fee remission and therefore the fee would increase if they did come to the College.

Resolved to approve the Tuition Fee Policies for HE and Non-HE Students for 2021/22.

6. Finance and Resources

6.1 Framework and Procedure for Terminating Contracts by Agreement

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services presented the Framework and Procedure for Terminating Contracts by Agreement and confirmed that no changes were required following the regular review.

Resolved to approve the Framework and Procedure for Terminating Contracts by Agreement.

6.2 IT Strategy

The Vice Principal Finance presented the strategy and explained that the current strategy had been reformatted to present a high-level document with key elements included, underpinned by a more detailed plan. This reflected the changing nature of IT and security and allowed the plan to be more flexible, whilst the IT Strategy identified the approach to the key themes. There had been an informal meeting to discuss the detailed elements of the strategy to allow more technical questions to be considered and IT had been discussed in detail at the Audit Committee.

Q. One of the main risks listed is being 'Unable to recruit and retain suitably qualified staff'. What is the current position in this respect?

A. There is currently a good team and all posts are filled. A good resource for recruitment is through students on placement, who are taken on and developed, whilst also employing some external people too. Investment in IT is planned and constant scrutiny takes place.

Q. In terms of out of hours support, there is a plan for a third party to provide this support. How quickly can this be done?

A. This is something being planned all the time. For some time there has been an increase in demand for support out of office hours, so this is being developed.

It was noted that the education sector is a target for cyber-attacks, with institutions with good levels of security systems in place being victims of cyber-attacks. The Vice Principal noted that managers had undertaken an incident planning session to consider the impact of a cyber-attack and it had really highlighted a range of vulnerabilities and concerns of what this would mean for staff and students at the College. She noted that a local college had had a cyber-attack recently and it had meant that the college had to close for a period of time. Cyber-attacks were a constant threat, but the College is proactive in planning and continuing to improve and manage controls to respond to security issues as they arose. It was noted that the National Cyber Security Centre had been

working with the College over the last couple of year following introduction by a Governor and this had been very helpful in the on-going battle against cyber-crime.

Q. Are there any plans to outsource IT?

A. No, there are no plans to outsource IT.

Q. How robust is user training?

A. There are 2 main elements to training for users. The Learning Technologies team work with staff to develop and improve skills to use the College's software. There is also an online cyber security course that all members of staff undertake at regular intervals, as well as regular briefing notes from the IT team reminding staff about security issues.

It was noted that some organisations were 'testing' staff responses to phishing emails that reflected how a cyber-attack might be conducted and this was extremely helpful in raising awareness, as well as identifying patterns of behaviour that could then be addressed. The College had run a phishing email exercise, but it may be useful to re-visit this.

Q. The investment pattern seemed to be decreasing – was this due to the issues raised like the desktop re-refresh and COVID-19 and was the investment identified in 2022/23 more representative of the 'normal' levels of investment?

A. Yes, there did need to be a higher level of investment at the current time to replace the HIVE that currently ran the virtual desktop infrastructure, as it did not fully support curriculum requirements or Teams. This had become particularly apparent during the College closures with more reliance on remote working but would also require replacement of some desktop machines in College.

Q. The strategy states that there is 1GB for all campuses – with so much more use of cloud services, does the College have adequate bandwidth to support the future IT requirements and increased remote working?

A. The Vice Principal Finance confirmed that this was being reviewed regularly as it is a main element of the strategy for the future. This was also part of a LEP project currently underway. The Principal noted that independent links had now been put into each campus to improve the infrastructure and remove reliance on one campus. Fibre optic capability was also being increased. He noted that being part of JISC provided good IT infrastructure support for the College.

Q. Has the College undertaken a cyber-attack scenario exercise to test the incident management processes and plans?

A. Managers had had a session and were currently producing a response plan for each of their areas. IT were also working on their incident management plans and would discuss with the college that had a recent cyber-attack about lessons learned.

Q. With the move to more flexible working, it is necessary to invest so much in on-site desktops?

A. There are about 3,000 desktops across the College and 600 laptops were purchased for staff during the pandemic. A lot of the desktops are used by students. It is part of the plan for staff to be able to use their laptops more onsite, but largely it is about resourcing classrooms and learning and Open Access centres. Further, some areas require specialist software, it is important to ensure appropriate devices are available. There is also a focussed exercise to assess utilisation of devices in classrooms and re-deploy machines, as appropriate.

Resolved to approve the IT Strategy.

7. Sub-contracting Report

The Deputy Principal presented the report and noted that the ESFA was aiming to reduce the level of sub-contracting in colleges. She noted that the College's approach was very specific in identifying areas that add value and enhance opportunities for students. She noted that it was suggested that the College continue to work with the current sub-contractors with a formal proposal being considered at a future meeting. It was noted that the relationship with RMF was currently set up as a sub-contract, however, the College was reviewing whether it would be possible to make this a partnership that would more reflect the positive relationship with them. The Principal noted

that the WMCA could waive the ESFA rules on sub-contracting, it appropriate, but it was important to future-proof the provision.

Q. How many sub-contractors does the College currently have?

A. There are currently 4 sub-contractors including Colebridge Trust, Skills Wise Training, Learning Curve and RMF.

Q. If ESFA are suggesting that no provider will have more than 25% of sub-contracting, how does this affect the College?

A. The College had well below the 25% limit and this was clearly shown on the Dashboard, however, it was difficult to clarify a % because some courses were very short and others were longer.

8. Audit Committee minutes of the meeting held on 16th March 2021

The Chair presented the Audit Committee minutes of the meeting held on 16th March 2021. She thanked Paul Large for his contribution to the Committee and wished him all the best.

The Committee considered risk management and had reviewed the Overarching Strategic risks. It was noted that the Internal Auditor had noted the need for the College to consider risk appetite. The Director of IT had attended the meeting and a detailed discussion had taken place regarding the actions to protect the College with regard to IT and potential cyber-attacks.

8.1 Value for Money Policy and Report

The Value for Money Policy and Report was presented and the report was noted for information.

Resolved to approve the Value for Money Policy.

8.2 Business Continuity and Incident Management Plan and Business Continuity Policy

The Business Continuity and Incident Management Plan and Business Continuity Policy was presented.

Resolved to approve the Business Continuity and Incident Management Plan and Business Continuity Policy.

8.3 Whistle-blowing Policy

The Whistle-blowing Policy was presented.

The Clerk confirmed that the issue raised regarding contractors had been addressed and the phrase was changed to 'workers'.

Q. How many whistle-blowing cases have been brought forward at the College in the last three years?

A. There have been no whistle-blowing cases at the College in the last three years.

Resolved to approve the Whistle-blowing Policy.

8.4 Recruitment of Internal and External Auditors

The Chair of the Committee noted that a rigorous tender process had been undertaken to appoint both internal and external auditors.

The detail of this item was deemed confidential.

8.5 Health and Safety Report

The Chair noted that the Health and Safety Report had not been included in the pack. The Clerk confirmed that she would ensure the report was uploaded to BoardEffect and circulated. **Action.**

9. Search and Governance Committee Minutes of the Meeting held on 24th March 2021

The minutes of the Search and Governance Committee meeting held on 24th March 2021 were received. It was noted that the new members of the Corporation had completed the DBS process.

9.1 Membership Report

The Clerk presented the membership report and it was noted that the Chair, Principal and Clerk would meet with the following applicants for the role of External Member of the Remuneration Committee:

- Amirun Nehar
- Anne Potter; and
- Hasan Zaidi

Q. What is the difference between external members and full members?

A. On a committee an external member would be a member of the committee, but not a member of the Corporation. They bring independence and expertise with regard to that specific committee. On the Corporation, the external member provides flexibility in relation to the set number of Governors, which is currently 18, whilst having the same rights and responsibilities as full members. It provides a good way of ensuring people with good expertise can join the Corporation and take part in induction until a full role becomes available.

Discussion took place regarding the following re-appointments and changes to membership, and it was

Resolved to approve:

- Extension of **Stan Baldwin's** term of office to 31st August 2022;
- Appoint **Sarah Horton-Walsh** to the Audit Committee with effect from 1st April 2021;
- Appoint **Tony Lucas** to the Search and Governance Committee with effect from 1st April 2021.
- Appoint **Neil Ladwa** as a full Governor of the Corporation to end of his initial term of office 30th November 2021; and
- Appoint **Harrison Thompson** as an external member of the Corporation to the end of his initial term of office 30th November 2021.

9.2 Compliance, Value for Money and Risk SIG – Financial Oversight Report

The Chair thanked Paul Large for chairing and concluding the work of the Group, which resulted in setting the terms of reference for a Financial Oversight Group and to state indicators that would initiate a discussion of the appropriate structure for the Corporation to underpin the Carver model of governance.

Resolved to approve the terms of reference for the Financial Oversight Group and for these to be included in the Governors' Handbook to reflect the annual Corporation activities that underpin the College's model of governance.

Resolved to approve the indicators and for these to be included in the Governors' Handbook.

9.3 Equality Questionnaire

The Clerk presented the updated equality questionnaire and explained that it now reflected the equality data collected across the College for staff and students. It was hoped that the collated information would be included in the Equality and Diversity report for 2022.

Resolved to approve the Equality Questionnaire.

9.4 Parental Engagement Statement

The Clerk presented the Parental Engagement Statement and noted that it responded to an element of the Code of Governance in relation to the College obtaining the view of parent stakeholders.

Resolved to approve the Parental Engagement Statement.

10. Remuneration Committee minutes of the meeting held on 10th March 2021

Staff and student governors and members of EMT left the meeting for consideration of this item.

The Chair presented the minutes of the meeting of the Remuneration Committee that took place on 10th March 2021 and noted that mid-year reviews for Senior Postholders and the Clerk had been considered, as well as award of the further element of the pay award.

11. Compliance, Value for Money and Risk Special Interest Group (SIG)

11.1 Notes of the SIG Meeting held on 3rd March 2021

The notes of the Compliance, Value for Money and Risk Special Interest Group meeting held on 3rd March 2021 were received for information.

11.2 Final Update Report of the Compliance, Value for Money and Risk Special Interest Group (SIG)

The final report of the Compliance, Value for Money and Risk Special Interest Group was received for information.

12. Regular Reports

12.1 Property Update

The contents of the Property Report were received for information.

12.2 Bids and Projects Report

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

Q. Do we know who was successful in gaining the Solihull MBC level 3 apprenticeship contract?

A. SMBC awarded the contract to their current provider, Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber Training.

13. Date of the Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was Thursday 27th May 2021 at 5pm on MS Teams.

The meeting ended at 7.42pm.

Signed



Date 27 May 2021

Student Executive Presentation

In attendance for this item:

Adam Thomas (Director of Student Services)
 Grace Wynne Wilson (Student Enrichment Co-ordinator)
 Will Pullen (Student Executive - President)
 Fatima Mai Bornu (Student Executive - BAME Officer)
 Becka Drew (Student Executive - Green and Sustainability Officer)
 Annie Figgitt (Student Executive - Stratford Officer)

The Chair welcomed the Director of Student Services, the Student Enrichment Co-ordinator and members of the Student Executive to the meeting and they provided a presentation regarding Student Executive activities during 2020/21.

The Executive President introduced the following updates:

- **BAME** activities including Black History Month online resources, cross-College poster campaign, conference workshops for anti-racism and equality, diversity and inclusion and International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March 2021. The BAME Executive Rep would now be working with the tutorial manager to develop online equality and diversity training materials for students. The Chair noted that following the last Student Executive presentation, Black History Month materials had been shared with Governors and this had been really useful and informative for the Corporation.
- **LGBT+** activities included meetings of the Distance Pride Club on Teams, staff and online training, development of tutorials materials, Rainbow Flag Award achievement and publicity and conference workshops. The Student Executive President explained that the College had recently achieved the Student Voice section of the award.

Q. When the annual Equality and Diversity Report was presented at the last meeting, the Vice Principal HR and Student Services noted that there would be a video produced by the Student Executive President available for the Corporation. Had the video been completed?

A. The Student Executive President noted that the video had not yet been completed, however, it would be possible to circulate a video in due course.

- **Green and Sustainability** activities included working with the College's Sustainability Officer to develop a roadmap for improving the campus' approaches to sustainability. Activities so far had included a Fairtrade interview fortnightly with an SMBC Council Officer, careers opportunity for students, exploring decarbonisation grants and the establishment of Green Champions. It was noted that this was a new role, but very important for contributing to the future development of the College's sustainability agenda.

The Chair noted that the Corporation had recently had a presentation from the Sustainability Officer regarding the College's plans for engaging fully in the sustainability agenda. She would be attending a future meeting to provide a further update for Governors as plans progressed.

- **Stratford** – the Stratford Officer explained that she had been working with colleagues across the campuses to develop awareness of hidden disabilities and had delivered a workshop at the Student Conference in March 2021. She noted that she had attended Student Voice and SLT meetings to represent the Stratford student voice.

The Student Executive President explained that the Student Conference had taken place in March 2021 and was entitled The Future is Bright. A total of 96 students had attended 9 workshops and 2 fun sessions. Feedback had been positive. It was noted that the Student Executive would now be working on the Student Voice Awards and promotion of the Student Executive to find new members for 2021/22, as a number of the team would be leaving the College in summer 2021.

Q. During lockdown how do you feel that communication has been with students generally?

A. It was noted that Teams had been a really useful way of ensuring on-going effective communication between the Student Executive and the student body. It has possibly even enhanced communication and information for students, as it broke down any possible barriers created by students normally being physically at 3 different campuses. Sometimes those at Woodlands and Stratford may not be fully engaged with student voice activities at the Blossomfield campus, but Teams and the Student website removed those physical barriers, whether real or perceived.

Q. Great presentation – it would be interesting to know how engagement was given that the Student Conference was delivered online?

A. The 2019 conference was the last in-person conference and there had been a good turnout, however, the online engagement seemed to have been better, with over 40 students at one workshop. It, as well as the promotion by the Executive Officers, had meant a larger turnout from the other campuses, for example, in 2019 there had been 2 students from Stratford, but in March 2021 there were 14. Teams had also enabled the conference to be spread out across the week, rather than a full morning, which may exclude some students if they have lessons etc.

Q. That was a really interesting presentation – what activities are taking place with regard to some of the current issues taking place, eg, International Women’s Day, vigil for Sarah Everard and the issues that have arisen from her death?

A. The Women’s Officer had put resources online regarding gender equality for International Women’s Day on 8th March 2021 and was working with the Student Enrichment Co-ordinator to continue to plan further events and the development of resources. The Student Enrichment Co-ordinator explained that she had not had feedback from students regarding the specific issues relating to Sarah Everard’s death, but there had been some informal discussions in tutorials.

Q. There is obviously so much energy and enthusiasm as displayed through the activities that have been taking place. It was noted that the College would be working with OFWAT to develop sustainability activities. As some of the Executive Officers will be leaving the College in the summer, what have been some of the most enjoyable experiences of being on the Student Executive?

A. The most enjoyable experiences have included being able to plan events and information for students and meeting with the Student Executive team to work collaboratively to plan the Student Conferences. Due to working through Teams it has also been enjoyable to be able to meet so many people that you wouldn’t normally, including many from other campuses.

The Vice Chair noted that the presentation had been particularly excellent, but what was so impressive was that the Student Executive have done so much during the year.

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In Attendance

- Lindsey Stewart (Deputy Principal and Stratford Chief Operating Officer)
- Heather Evans (Vice Principal Finance)
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The meeting was recorded.

8.4 Recruitment of Internal and External Auditors

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10. Remuneration Committee minutes of the meeting held on 10th March 2021

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15. Pay Award for Senior Postholders and the Clerk