

Solihull College and University Centre

Minutes of the Meeting of the Search and Governance Committee held on Wednesday 15 September 2021 at 4.00 pm

Present Barbara Hughes (Chair)
Tony Lucas
Geraldine Swanton
Lindsey Stewart (Acting Principal)

In Attendance

The Chair welcomed Lindsey Stewart to her first meeting.

1.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Theresa Lynch and Joan Smith.

1.2 Declarations of Interest

Tony Lucas declared that one of the applicants for a Governor role, Christine Abbot, was a friend.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 25th May 2021, Actions and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 25th May 2021 were **agreed** as a correct record and signed by the Chair. It was noted that actions were progressing.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

3. Membership Report

The Chair presented the Membership Report and noted that there was currently one vacancy on the Corporation.

Attendance

Q. Is there a minimum threshold for attendance at Corporation?

A. The Chair noted that there was not currently a minimum threshold, but it was something that the Committee could consider. It was, however, important to consider attendance in the context of overall contribution on an individual basis. Discussion took place regarding levels of attendance and it was noted that there were some Governors with relatively low levels. Where this was the case the Chair discussed this with the Governor in their annual self-assessment meetings, alongside their wider contribution. It was noted that it was useful to have criteria against which to judge contribution and performance, particularly in the event of removing a Governor, but that the criteria needed to be flexible enough to allow for wider contributing elements.

It was noted that there had been attendance targets in the past that were about 75% and that there was an option to request leave of absence for Governors who had an issue for a period of time, that could be put in place to address attendance issues in relation to a specific issue. It was suggested that guidance be provided that suggests that Governors are expected to attend all meetings, but with a minimum threshold applied. The Chair suggested that having confirmed current guidance a minimum threshold recommendation could be put to Corporation.

Corporation Vacancy

Two applications had been received from Candidate 1 and Candidate 2. Discussion took place regarding Harrison Thompson's contribution and it was noted that he was currently an external member of the Corporation.

Consideration was given to maintaining the current external member role on the Corporation. The Chair noted that at the current time there was a need to stabilise and to support the two new governors that were appointed in the summer: Anne Potter and Amirun Nehar. Discussion took place regarding the experience of the two applicants and it was noted that Candidate 1 had extensive strategic roles in HE and the Candidate 2 had good experience, but possibly at a lower management level. Neither had FE experience specifically. It was **agreed** that the Chair interview both applicants and feedback to the next meeting, as appropriate. **Action.**

Discussion took place regarding Harrison Thompson and his role as an external member of the Corporation. It was noted that he had shown good commitment to his role since joining the Audit Committee and Corporation. It was recommended that he be invited to become a full member of the Corporation.

Induction of New Governors

The Chair presented the report regarding progress for the new Governors in terms of their induction. A recommendation had been made that where Governors did not have their DBS within 3 months of appointment, their membership be suspended. The Chair noted that Anne Potter had completed her DBS (subject to providing the certificate to confirm), whilst Amirun Nehar had not submitted her application yet. Discussion took place about why there was a delay in the DBS process and it was noted that the Governor had not yet applied. The Chair confirmed that she would check whether it was DBS-related delays and if so an extension could be considered. However, if it was not DBS-related it was important to apply the regulations and therefore the deadline would not be extended beyond 31st August 2021, and the Governors membership be suspended until the DBS was complete. **Action.**

It was noted that the induction process and sessions had been very good and that it would be useful to re-run some of them on a regular basis based on request. It was noted that the induction and briefing sessions had been recorded and could be made available to and promoted to Governors, as appropriate. It was confirmed that the sessions presented a really useful and comprehensive programme of CPD for Governors.

It was suggested that discussion of the Skills for Jobs White Paper would be useful on the Governors' Development Day on 6th November 2021.

Resolved to recommend to the Corporation:

- **Tasleem Chaudary's** term of office be extended to the full 4 year term of office, ending 30th November 2024.
- **Neil Ladwa's** term of office be extended to the full 4 year term of office, ending 30th November 2024.
- **Harrison Thompson's** term of office be extended to the full 4 year term of office, ending 30th November 2024 and that his membership be changed to a full Governor to replace Lisa Jones.

4. Register of Interests for Governors and EMT at 31st August 2021

The Chair presented the Register of Interests and the contents were noted.

5. Search and Governance Annual Assurance Report

The Chair presented the draft annual assurance report and the contents were noted. It was noted that the Report would be updated to reflect the changes, regarding the Principal, in due course.

Discussion took place regarding evaluation of the effectiveness of the Committee and the focus for 2021/22. It was noted that the aim to ensure a wider diversity of Governors was on-going, even though representation had improved markedly over recently years. Further objectives were considered including supporting the Remuneration Committee and Corporation in the recruitment of a new Principal from January 2022 and the use of benchmarking and FE comparison data with regard to governance performance. The Chair noted that comparison data had been used during the Compliance, Risk and Value for Money SIG process and that the College aligned with the AoC's Code of Good Governance in terms of ensuring compliance with FE sector requirements for Governors. She also noted that there was a lot of additional requirements included in the Skills for Jobs Bill relating to governance and this would be reviewed in relation to the College's processes once the Bill came into law in Spring 2022. Peer support had been identified as good practice in the White Paper, but it was noted that until it was clear what would be included in the final Bill it was difficult to determine which elements to focus on and to change.

The Chair noted that one element that had been raised by the Government was for local Governors to collectively consider whether the local skills needs were being met. She noted that she had discussed with the Acting Principal the possibility of speaking to Chairs of colleges where the College had shared projects, to initiate this kind of shared discussion. **Action.**

Clarity was sought regarding where discussion would take place relating to training about Ofsted for Governors prior to the expected inspection. The Chair noted that the Governors' Development Day on 6th November 2021 would address Ofsted training. The Acting Principal noted that the Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality would have done some Ofsted visits by the Development Day and this would be helpful in preparing Governors for the inspection.

6. Student Governor Appointment Process

The Chair presented the report and the content was noted. It was noted that when interviewing students for the role last time, it was clear that students had very limited experience and knowledge about the College and whether there was a way of addressing these limitations. It was noted that the induction process was very important. The motivation for becoming Governors had been explored with the students and there was a range of wanting to help the college and others mentioning that it would be useful on their CV. It was noted that Scott Beasley had been a really good HE Governor, who had gone on to become a Governor offering a range of skills and experience from his professional life.

It was noted that it would be good to insist on the Student Governors working with a mentor, particularly for the initial period of being a Governor. **Action.**

The Chair confirmed that the appointment and induction process was very robust about preparing the Student Governors in taking on the role, although no formal workshop was in place to support them.

7. Staff Governor Election Process

The Chair presented the report and the content was noted.

8. Equality Report

The Chair presented the report and noted that there had been a 75% return rate so far. Returns would be followed up. Equality data had always been collated, but this now aligned with the College's categories. It was hoped that this would be incorporated into the Equality and Diversity Annual Report in 2021/22. Discussion took place regarding declaration of disabilities and potential reticence by some.

The Acting Principal noted that colleges would submit a return to the DfE regarding equality data. **Action.**

9. Self-Assessment Process 2021

The Chair presented the data collated to date regarding the meetings and questionnaire returns. She noted that Governors were overwhelmingly positive about the arrangements and engagement with management. Points for development would be addressed and taken forward in an action plan, as appropriate. Discussion took place regarding the questionnaire returns and the comments made. The Chair would use the results of the questionnaire and one to one meetings to inform the Governors' self-assessment report for 2020/21. **Action.**

10. Cycle Of Business 2021/22

The Chair presented the indicative cycle of business for 2021/22 and the contents were noted for information.

11. Any other business

There was no other business.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was scheduled for 3pm on 16th November 2021.

The meeting ended at 5pm.

Signed



Date **16 November 2021**