

SOLIHULL COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY CENTRE

Minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 26th May 2022

PRESENT: Barbara Hughes (Chair)
Stan Baldwin
Scott Beasley
Tasleem Chaudary
Sarah Horton-Walsh
Lucy Lee
Tony Lucas
Donna Poole (Staff Governor)
Lindsey Stewart (Acting Principal)
Harrison Thompson
Sally Tomlinson

IN ATTENDANCE: Heather Evans (Vice Principal Finance)
Pete Haynes (Vice Principal HR and Student Services)
Rebecca Gater (Principal Designate/Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum)
Lee Jamieson (Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum wef 1/9/22)
Sam Bromwich (Director of Risk, Control and Compliance)
Theresa Lynch (Clerk)

Risk Tolerance and Risk Appetite Exercise

The Director of Risk, Control and Compliance represented an exercise for Governors to reflect on risk appetite and tolerance with regard to specific scenarios. Small groups considered each scenario and provided feedback to inform overall views of appetite and tolerance of risk. The following areas were discussed:

- It would be useful to have a mechanism to inform management and governor decision-making in relation to risk.
- Whether an overall risk appetite was appropriate and, rather that would it be more appropriate to have a mechanism for addressing each decision.
- Weighting of risk based on the categories within the risk may be useful.
- It would be good to have a structure, but maybe with a series of variables would be appropriate.
- The mechanism/framework for assessing risk appetite/tolerance could be included in each report for Governors.
- Triangulation of information provided a tool for governors to test evidence and information provided.
- Reputational risks were particularly important, and it was key that managers reported any risk relating to the college's reputation. The Chair noted that this kind of discussion took place regularly between the Chair and Principal and any concerns would be communicated to the Corporation, as appropriate.

Discussion took place regarding the recent Ofsted inspection and whether there were any further measures that governors could have put in place to raise the issues identified by inspectors.

The Chair explained the current top risks identified. She also welcomed Lee Jamieson, new Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality with effect from 1st September 2022.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Paul Assinder, Christine Abbott, Zane Richter and Geraldine Swanton.

2. Declarations of Interest in Relation to this Agenda

There were no new declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 6th April 2022

3.1 Minutes of 6th April, Matters Arising and Actions

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th April 2022 were agreed as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

3.2 Matters Arising

3.2.1 Early Withdrawals Report

The Acting Principal presented the report for information and comment following previous discussions about early withdrawals.

3.2.2 Fees Policies Update

The Vice Principal Finance presented the amended fees policies and explained that following information from Geraldine Swanton on the requirement to have a written terms and conditions was being explored, particularly for HE students. It was noted that universities tended to have written terms and conditions, whilst the college information for students was on the website.

It was **agreed** to approve the HE Policies and Policy excluding HE students.

3.2.3 Ofsted Classroom Visits

The Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum presented the information and it was noted that there were over 40 classroom visits and interaction with students by inspectors.

3.2.4 Gender Pay Gaps

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services presented the report and explained that this item had been raised following the previous Corporation meeting at which the Equality and Diversity Annual Report was presented, containing the pay gap figures for March 2021. The March 2022 were now available, and these were presented. He explained that with regard to pay rates for males and females in the same job roles there was no gender pay gap. The overall ratio of male to females for the college was around 67% female to 33% male. In the upper quartile of pay rates this ratio changed to closer to 60/40. This creates a pay gap as reported.

Q. Is there an issue in relation to a gender pay gap?

A. The Vice Principal HR and Student Services replied in as much as the fact that the management gender profile does not reflect the overall college profile. A lot of work had been done to remove unconscious bias from the application process, but efforts would be on-going to ensure equality in all appointments and levels of staff.

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services explained that he would continue to discuss this and other issues with the Women's Employee Group, who were helping to address any implicit bias in processes and systems.

It was suggested that it would be useful to review the impact of part-time working and parental responsibilities on women and the impact on career progress.

Q. What are other colleges like – is there any benchmarking information?

A. The Vice Principal HR and Students confirmed that most colleges would have to publish their gender pay gap information. He would explore whether some summary data available.

Action. It was also suggested that increased feedback from female employees may be useful.

Q. Have you profiled applicant data?

A. Yes, that information is in the annual report, but management posts do not arise very often, so this year has been unusual. Ethnicity, gender and profile matches the college profile. However, management posts will be reviewed.

Discussion took place regarding gender neutrality and the basis of getting the information to ensure it is the information up to date and it was noted that employees are asked, annually to update their personal information.

4. Draft Strategic Plan 2022-5 and Annual Priorities 2022/23

The Principal Designate explained that the strategic plan was currently being reviewed, including a review of mission, vision and values. She noted that there had been an internal strategy day on 11th May 2022 and strategic goals, KPIs had been aligned, incorporating stretch targets. Output from this day would be shared with the wider management team and then lead into a draft Plan for discussion at the Governors' Strategy SIG on 20th June 2022. The final Plan would be approved at Corporation on 6th July 2022.

An exercise would be undertaken to involve all staff in re-defining the college values – the last exercise had been some years ago.

5. Financial Planning and Financial Objectives and KPIs for 2022/23

The Vice Principal Finance presented the report and explained that objectives and KPIs had been considered at the recent Finance SIG to take account of new KPIs from the FE Commissioner. A meeting with Bob Smith (FE Commissioner's adviser) was being set up to discuss KPIs that would obtain a rating of good financial health, whilst also avoid the on-going increases in cash balances. It was noted that the college aim for:

- Outstanding Financial Management
- Good Financial Health

The Chair explained that the FE Commissioner had set up a Governors' dashboard for financial benchmarking information that Governors could access.

It was noted that the Chair of the Corporation and the Chair of the Audit Committee had met with the college's external auditor (KPMG) and the importance of maintaining financial sustainability had been re-iterated.

The notes of the Finance Special Interest Group that took place on 18th May 2022 were received for information.

It was **agreed** to approve the Financial Objectives and KPIs for 2022/23.

6. Sub-contracting Termly Update and Draft Strategy for 2022/23

The Acting Principal presented the report and confirmed that the strategy had not changed and was in line with ESFA guidelines that had also not changed for 2022/23, to date.

The reliance on RMF was discussed and it was noted that they were the largest sub-contractor, but that the relationship was very good, and they had performed well during the Ofsted inspection (the college's and RMF's own inspection), which was very good for the college. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality confirmed that RMF were a good quality provider, with good employment and destination rates, as well as their work with disadvantaged students. They are also WMCA's preferred provider.

Discussion took place regarding the VEET that had been put in place in 2021. It was noted that this was in place for a 3 year period and would enable the college to continue to work with RMF without going to tender.

The Sub-contracting Strategy was currently being reviewed by WMCA, so would be re-presented in July 2022, following their approval.

Q. Is it wise to depend so heavily on one provider?

A. RMF were going to be supporting the college to train staff at Woodlands (and maybe Stratford in due course) to be able to deliver part of the programme. A new manager was being appointed to deliver the adult element of the Construction programmes for the college. It was noted that the main risk was if WMCA decided to fund RMF directly. Further, it was hoped that in the future contractor partners would be increased.

It was **agreed** to approve the draft Strategy for 2022/23, in principle, subject to approval and confirmation by WMCA.

7. Quality and Curriculum

7.1 Careers and Guidance Report

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services presented the report and noted that the Careers Service Manager had provided a careers briefing for Governors at the January 2022 Corporation meeting. The report being presented provided assurance regarding performance against the Gatsby Benchmarks.

7.2 Feedback from Ofsted SIG and notes from the meeting on 10th May 2022

The Chair explained that the Group had met on 10th May 2022 and that the notes would be made available. **Action.**

8. Freedom on Information

The Clerk presented the report and discussion took place. Clarity was requested regarding the time commitment to FOI requests, and it was noted that some could be quite time-consuming. Many were related to the purchase of IT equipment and HR data.

9. Agile Working Report

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services presented the report and explained that the aim was to provide flexibility for staff, particularly following the pandemic and the experience of home-working. This reinforced the policy statement (October 2021) which allows managers to manage staff flexibly. It was hoped that this would support parents and carers etc.

Q. When is the next Staff Survey?

A. The next staff survey will be during the Autumn Term, and it will be interesting to see the impact of the agile working statement.

Q. Are there any risks in relation to this?

A. There is a risk to having a standardised system that does not reflect the variety of services and departments around the college – this would be unlikely to work. The variety allowed via the Agile Working Statement may be that there will inconsistency and where it isn't applied effectively it could have an impact on that service area. If applied appropriately there is minimal risk and it is not anticipated that there will be a drop-in service, but it was hoped that it will improve staff well-being and therefore ability to offer students an excellent service.

Q. How are you checking that managers are being accountable?

A. The way of checking is to assess the quality of provision to ensure it continues to be good.

Q. Have any issues been escalated in relation to the application of the scheme?

A. The only issue that has been received is a request for flexible working. In this scenario the response was to try to get the manager and staff to work together to have a flexible approach.

Discussion took place regarding the possibility for staff of working abroad and it was noted that there could be IT implications for this, but they had not yet been explored.

Q. Has there been any negative impact on student experience?

A. To date there has been no evidence that agile working is impacting negatively on the student experience. Student surveys have not raised any issues and teachers and support staff continue to be there for their students.

10. Policies

10.1 Maternity Policy

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services presented the Policy and explained the identified changes. Discussion took place and it was noted that the Policy was very female-specific, and that it may need to be reviewed going forward from an equality perspective. The Vice Principal HR and Student Services noted the comments made and suggested that the terminology would be reviewed for related policies.

Agreed to approve the Maternity Policy.

10.2 Menopause Policy

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services presented the Policy for information. He noted that the College Women's Network were having an impact and that it was likely that Employer Resources Groups would grow, which would be really helpful when developing and reviewing policies.

11. Property Report

The Vice Principal Finance presented the report and provided an update regarding:

11.1 SUAC Re-Development – she noted that the DfE wanted some form of restricted use on the title deeds, but details were to follow. Whilst it was not unusual for the DfE to apply restrictions on large projects, it was hoped that as this was a relatively small project it may not be necessary. Updated project costs were included in the report. The tender for demolition of Blocks E and G was in progress so demolition could take place in June 2022.

Q. There had been some concern expressed by staff – could this be explained?

A. Concerns had been expressed about the amount of space that would be available and for expansion of curriculum in future years. The diagrams set out a lot of space available and there should not be any issue in the future. Further, it will be high quality and up-to-

date accommodation, rather than the current situation where there was a lot of space, but of poor quality. There was likely to be a difficult period over the next year as there would be a lot of changes. It would be key to maintain good communication channels with staff and students and to regularly demonstrate and explain about the new equipment and facilities that will be in place and to keep people engaged and reassured. The planned re-development will incorporate spare capacity and space for growth.

The Chair explained that she had met with the 3 unions to understand their concerns. She had also met with about 30 performance arts students when doing a learning visit. The Acting Principal and the Principal Designate had spent the day meeting with lecturers and support staff to hear and discuss their concerns. Following this input the Chair, Acting Principal and the Principal Designate have done a tour of the site to address and resolve these issues, as appropriate.

The editor from the Stratford Herald had visited the college and had a tour to discuss the developments taking place. He was very excited about the planned developments and would meet with managers regularly for an update.

It was noted the communication with all stakeholders would be on-going to ensure developments and improvements were understood during the difficult stage of demolition and refurbishment. The Chair confirmed that she would feedback to the unions to provide reassurance that the re-development was progressing in line with Governors expectations.

11.2 Residences at SUAC - the Vice Principal Finance explained that 4 bids had been received and they were currently being followed up. Full and final offers were expected by 26th May 2022. They would be reviewed, shortlisted and interviewed in June 2022.

11.3 Brick Workshop at Woodlands – this would be to accommodate planned growth. It was anticipated that a new building would be placed at the back of the site. Planning permission had been submitted.

Q. How long will planning permission process take?

A. It normally takes between 8 and 12 weeks.

11.4 Summer Projects – the budgeted works planned for the summer, particularly at the Woodlands and Blossomfield campuses were noted.

11.5 Heat Network – it was noted that it would be necessary to sign the contracts for this soon. There were some further pricing and terms and conditions to be confirmed with SMBC. An update would be provided at the July Corporation meeting. Discussion took place regarding the details of the provision of electricity and the impact on carbon efficiency.

11.6 Tudor Grange House Overage and Deeds of Covenant – the Vice Principal Finance explained that there had been an oversight by MACC Group when completing the original agreement, and this now required a deed of covenant be entered relating to the sale of individual units in the development.

Q. What does the covenant cover?

A. There will not be overage payments for sale of individual units in the development, but there was a need for the college to sign when sales are made. Any financial implications due to legal costs would be met by MACC Group. Additional information was requested regarding this issue and on-going implications. **Action.**

The notes of the Property Special Interest Group that took place on 18th May 2022 were received for information.

The following were **agreed**:

- the revised Project for Phases 4 and 5 Stratford Redevelopment (with updated costs) subject to DfE approval of the FECTF bid.
- that the demolition contract for blocks E and G be awarded by 7th June subject to DfE approval of the FECTF bid.
- the next steps with the sale of the student residences.
- to build a brick workshop for the delivery of construction programmes on the Woodland's Campus.
- a deed of covenant is entered into to protect the overage position for apartments sold by Macc Group on a long lease.

12 Bids and Projects including Termly Review

The Vice Principal Finance presented the report. She noted that the project identified at section 3.8, DfE/WMCA – DSF EOI was complex as it had a number of organisations involved, but if approved it would be led by Halesowen College.

Discussion took place regarding the KPIs for the Coventry and Warwickshire LEP (CWLEP) – Stratford upon Avon College Assets B229 and it was noted that there had been some outcomes in 2021/22, but some would be due later in the project (2025).

13 Bank Mandate

The Vice Principal Finance presented the Bank Mandate. It was **agreed** to approve:

- Lloyds - to remove Lindsey Stewart and add Lee Jamieson with effect from 1st September 2022.
- Barclays – to remove staff who have left and replace with just list A (Lindsey Stewart to 31st August 2021 and Rebecca Gater from 1st September 2022)
- Santander – to remove John Callaghan and replace Lindsey Stewart with Rebecca Gater from 1st September 2022)
- Barclays – to remove staff who have left and replace with just list A (Lindsey Stewart to 31st August 2021 and Rebecca Gater from 1st September 2022)
- Jackie Small is removed and replaced with David Falp (Finance Office Manager) as the Administrator for Barclays, Santander and Natwest.

14 Staffing

14.1 Curriculum Structure and Staffing Changes 2022/23

This item was deemed confidential.

14.2 Pay Item

This item was deemed confidential.

14.3 Senior Staff

This item was deemed confidential.

15 Regular Reports

15.1 Use of the College Seal and E-Signature

The contents of the Use of the College Seal and E-Signature report were noted for information.

15.2 Tender Update

The contents of the Tender Update report were noted for information.

16 Date of the Next Meeting

A Strategy SiG was scheduled for Monday 20th June 2022 at 5pm on Teams and the last meeting of Corporation for 2021/22 would take place Wednesday 6th July 2022 at 5pm at Blossomfield campus.

Signed



Date **06 July 2022**

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Staff Governor left the meeting

14.1 Curriculum Structure and Staffing Changes 2022/23

14.2 Pay Item

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Theresa Lynch (Clerk)

Senior Staff left the meeting, as appropriate.

14.3 Senior Staff

14.3.1 Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum

14.3.2 Deputy CEO

14.3.3 Director of Governance