

CORPORATION BOARD

Minutes of a meeting held on Monday 11th December 2023 at 5pm

Present

Gavin Maitland-Smith (Chair)
Jacqui Canton (Principal & CEO)
Alan Bark, Governor
Edward Collett, Staff Governor
Nick Handy Governor
Adam Mumford, Governor
David Walker, Governor
Lucy Butler, Governor
Mackenzie Howe Nordal, Governor
Astrid Schloerscheidt, Governor
Sam Wolfe, Governor
Carole Kitching, Governor
Kathryn Schutterlin, Staff Governor
Jessie Weavers, Student Governor

In attendance

Olivier Cognard, Vice Principal
Mark Lay, Finance Director
Jo Milsom, Deputy Principal
Jack Price, Vice Principal
Scott Gray, Vice Principal
Howard Stamp, Clerk & Governance Advisor
(minutes)
Melissa Drayson, External Governance
Reviewer (observing)

1. Apologies and items to be raised under AOB

There were apologies received from Ben Haxton and Nicolas Pages. No other apologies were received.

The Chair welcomed Carole Kitching who has been appointed as an external governor and is in attendance for their first meeting. It was also noted Amanda Tilley had also recently been appointed with the appointment commencing in March 2024.

The Chair also welcome Melissa Drayson to the meeting who has been carrying out the External Governance Review (ERG) through this committee cycle.

The Chair also expressed their thank you to the Board and SMT as this was their last Board meeting with the college after 8 years on the Board.

There were no items raised for AOB.

1.2 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 12th October 2023

The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

3. Matters Arising, Written Resolutions & Action Points

The Clerk presented the paper highlighting the actions that are currently outstanding. It was noted there are a number of actions in progress with the Clerk of which the outcome of the external review will support these to completion.

One written resolution had been circulated since the previous meeting to recommend the appointment of two new governors; this has now been completed and the governors appointed.

4. Safeguarding Update and Refresher Training

The Head of Student engagement presented a safeguarding update and refresher training to all those present. The slides of the presentation would then be circulating to all governors.

The training covered a number of key areas and there was positive discussion from the Board members. The update including information on the below areas.

- Key messages from Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE).
- Changes and updates in terminology used.
- Filtering and monitoring to meet digital and technology standards. Including the key element of this standard.
- In addition, the cyber security standard for schools and colleges to consider.
- An update was provided on the casework data at the college. Noting the high levels of mental health and emotional wellbeing support required.
- The three-year trend was presented with an increase in previous year, this is also reflected in increased student numbers
- Key points were also shared from Oxfordshire Safeguarding Childrens Board
- The expected upcoming changes were also presented.

The board engaged well with all points and were supportive and thank full to the student engagement team and wider colleges for providing the high level of commitment to the college's students.

5. Strategic Overview – Principal's Report

The Principal presented the report. Highlighting key points including, the increase in 16-19 student numbers with now a settled picture that will ensure the college receives the ESFA in year payment to support the growth. The timing of this to be received is still to be confirmed.

Other updates included the development for a new media suit at Abingdon to support the development of T levels. The developments at Common Leys are more ongoing due to issues with Bats and therefore a redesign of the proposed developments ae currently underway and discussion with the DfE.

The different project income streams were highlighted, it was noted these all require specific delivery to secure the grant being paid.

- I note staff are being briefed regards Ofsted, should there be briefing for governors?
We ae not specifically preparing staff for Ofsted but providing ongoing briefings in readiness. We could provide information to governors at the next Board Meeting

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Ofsted Briefing for governors to be added to the next meeting agenda.	Clerk	March 2024

6. Curriculum Quality and Students – Committee Update

The Chair of CQS provided a verbal update to the board following the recent meeting. This included an update on the presentation of the Technology curriculum area presented. The committee looked at the HE SAR and QIP. The development of the AEB budget and potential new funding conditions expected in coming years.

The quality health checks had been started in the first term with positive outcomes and good support for quality of teaching and learning. The student report also highlighted the positive support in place and the feedback received from the student voice activities.

The Board noted the verbal committee update.

6.1 Annual Equalities Report

The Deputy Principal presented the annual equalities report. Highlighting the key points around the student demographics, noting that these are more in line with the local demographic for 16-19 year olds. The small pockets of lower achievement for students in minority groups, some of this data is already known by the college and there continues to be work to breakdown any barriers for these students.

Equality objectives relating to staff were outlined, there have not been many changes from previous years, and it was noted that some topic areas can be quite difficult to get movement on. Often where staff feel this is sensitive information, they may not feel necessary to share.

- What have you tried so far regards recruitment a more diverse workforce? *This year is the first year where we have two years of full data so allows us a comparison for the first time, we are now able to build this into our people strategy.*
- You mentioned caring responsibilities for those in receipt of free meals, has there been a change in this? Has there been an increase at lower levels? *We have seen an increase and yes these can often be at the lower levels of which has been recognised in the SAR and QIP.*
- Regards achievement gaps for Looked After Children (LAC), if its lower are you connected with the virtual school? *Yes, these students are categorised elsewhere, but we ensure they are flagged to ensure we keep them on our radar and provide appropriate interventions where needed.*

The Board noted the report.

6.2 Student Engagement and Feedback – 5th December

The Board carried out a student engagement meeting in the week prior to the Board meeting. The Governor in attendance provided feedback to the Board about feedback given by the group of students. Comments were provided that it was an interesting activity to undertake and would encourage all governors to take up the offer. Thanks were provided to the Student Voice Coordinator for their support in arranging and hosting the event.

There were a number of negative comments received from the students, this was discussed as a Board and SMT as these were relevant comments to the student voice survey and start of term. There was some frustrated feedback from students around some of their initial weeks when starting the college. The SMT members recognised the comments received and agreed it matched the known issues in some of these subject issues at the Witney campus of which were all being addressed appropriately. The comments did not come as a surprise.

It was discussed and noted that different campuses will mean different courses and therefore different feedback on experience and subject area. This engagement highlighted the topic discussed at previous Board meetings around the recruitment of staff and the challenges currently faced. Following discussion, the board agreed the engagement helped to focus the importance of the issue previously raised through committee matters.

Students did comment positively that they all felt they know how and where to get support from the college if needed and in particular this was felt important by the board during the key weeks during the start of term.

Students feedback around the feeling of inconsistency if the buses are late, of which almost all of them got the bus. The comments outlined how they felt some staff would approach the issue in different ways and students would welcome a consistent approach. SMT members

agreed the buss are a challenge and were aware of the need to help remove any anxiety in those key starting weeks noting the buses are out of the college control but the approach how this is managed could be reviewed.

The Governor who attended felt the engagement was hugely beneficial and gave a really good insight to the college, helping to put the committee and Board papers into perspective. The Governor thanked again the support of the Student Voice Coordinator presented who was able to help challenge some of the comments made to ensure it was a fair representation provided by students.

There is another student engagement due to be carried out in March at the Common Leys campus.

7. Financial Statements to 31st July 2023

The Chair outlined that the Financial statements had been reviewed both by the Finance committee and the Audit Committee extensively of which is usual practice for the college.

The Finance Director presented all the below listed reports as one item. Reiterating the commented made that the F&GP committee had worked through the accounts throughout the year and more recently these documents to confirm the numbers. The Chair of F&GP was also in attendance at the Audit committee who have reviewed the systems and processes that support the accounts.

The Finance director outlined each of the below documents individually to the Board.

- 7.1 External Auditor's Findings Report (AFR) 2023
- 7.2 External Auditor's Letter or representation
- 7.3 Draft self-assessment of financial propriety and Regulatory 22/23
- 7.4 Internal Auditors' Annual report
- 7.5 Audit Committee Annual report
- 7.6 Board Assessment of Fraud Risk
- 7.7 Annual Strategic Report

There were comments received from the Board to support the approval of all the documents received. There was a discussion regards the current use of the college Audit teams recognising it may be good proactive to seek new auditors in the coming years, the college currently has a two-year commitment, and it could be reviewed at this point.

The Board supported the work of both the F&GP and Audits committees and approved all the above documents.

8. Finance & General Purposes

8.1 F&GP committee update

The Chair of F&GP provided a verbal update to the board following the recent meeting. This included an update on the financial statements that had just been received to the board. Further updates included highlighting reports received such as the HR report and staff survey outlining the discussion held by the committee around actions to be taken following the staff survey.

There had been a report received on the estates and capital development, providing an update on progress against capital projects and the estates management programme. A new Health and Safety manager had been reported to be starting in January.

Updates to the enrolment numbers were provided to the committee and the positive outcome particularly to 16-19 numbers that would result in an in-year payment for student number

growth. This then would be reflected in the management accounts that were also presented to the committee. A positive position with no concerns raised by the committee.

8.2 Management Accounts to 31 October 2023

The Finance Director presented the current management accounts to 31 October 2023. This outlined an early variance to budget too reflect the changes to 16-19 income and the increases to the pay award. This still provided a positive position for the management accounts.

The Board approved the management accounts.

9. Audit committee update

The Chair of Audit provided a verbal update to the board following the recent meeting. This included an update on the approval of the financial statements of which have been reviewed by the Board at this meeting.

Other items included an update on a condition survey and updates from the internal Auditors identifying 3 minor actions to be completed by the Clerk. There were no items raised by the external auditors. There were no new items highlighted on the High-Level Risk Register. Subcontracting controls were reported to the committee.

There were no questions raised by the Board, the Board noted the verbal update.

9.1 High Level Risk Register

The Finance Director presented the report and an overview of the risk register noting minor changes since previously presented at the previous Board meeting.

The Board approved the High-Level Risk Register.

10. Nominations, Remunerations & Governance

10.1 NRG committee update

The Chair of NRG provided a verbal update to the Board following the recent meeting. This included an update on progress of the External Governance Review with the draft report to be available at the end of December. An update was provided on governor recruitment and the two current vacancies that had now been filled. The Chairs of committees had been discussed with appointments currently in progress.

There was a discussion on the Standing orders that were due to be reviewed following the external review, the Clerk is currently undertaking a comprehensive rewrite of the standing orders to be approved in the next committee cycle.

The Board noted the verbal update.

11. Policies – Cover sheet

The Chair outlined the cover sheet and the policies that had all been reviewed through the committee cycle. There were no further question raised regards the group of policies being presented recognising the work carried out by committees and noting these policies did not include significant changes.

11.1 Freedom of information policy

11.2 Expenses Policy

11.3 Senior Post Holder Remuneration Policy

11.4 Governor Induction and Development Policy

11.5 Policy Framework

All policies were approved.

12. Future Business

There were no items raised out of the usual cycle of business to be added to the next agenda. It was reminded the marketing update would be added again to the next meeting.

13. Any Other Business

There were no items raised under AOB

The meeting was close with comments from the Vice Chair. To thank the Chair Gavin Maitland Smith for all the commitment and dedication provided to the Board over the last 8 years and more recently as Chair. The Board all expressed their thanks to Gavin and wished him well for the future.

Approved for signature:

N Handy
03/Mar/2025 10:08:52

Signature
Nick Handy

Date 03/03/2025



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