



THE SIXTH FORM COLLEGE COLCHESTER

MEETING OF THE CORPORATION BOARD

HELD AT 5.30PM ON MONDAY 20<sup>th</sup> MAY 2024

AT THE COLLEGE

## MINUTES

### Meeting 149

*The core functions of the corporation board include:*

- *Preserving and developing the college's educational character*
- *Setting and communicating the college's strategy and goals*
- *Holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance and quality of the college, and for the performance of staff*
- *Exercising effective control to ensure that funds and assets are protected, the organisation remains solvent and legal obligations are met*

Business commenced at 5.30pm.

Meeting closed at 7.20pm.

The meeting was quorate.

#### **Governors Present:**

**Community Governors:** Mike Atherton (Chair), Susan Coding (Vice Chair from 5.49pm), Kevin Finnigan (Vice Chair), Joanna Johnson, David Morran, John Owens, Lindsey Russell, Joanne Tallentire, Ian Vipond, Ian MacNaughton (Principal), Mike Sherer.

**Staff Governors:** Jane Sadler, Dan Stebbings.

Student Governor: Bill Midzi (from 5.35pm)

#### **In Attendance:**

**Assistant Principals:** Jo Cadman, Graham Rayner, Adrian Frost, Ian Fraser, Sarah Prince Sarah Williams, Senior Manager (HR and Administration)

Naomi Goldsmith (Finance Manager)

Sophie Gardiner, Wigan Governor Services, Clerk to the Corporation (Virtually).

### **1. Apologies and consideration of consent to absence**

Apologies were **received** in advance of the meeting from Sarah Gratorex (Parent Governor), Gyorgyi Callegari, (Community Governor) and Chinedum Onunkwo (Student Governor) and were **accepted** by the Corporation.

Susan Codling was expected to join the meeting.

June Leslie was not in attendance.

Apologies had been received from Scott Townsend (Observer).

## 2. Any other Urgent Business

There were no items of additional business to be included on the agenda.

## 3. Declaration of Interest

No declarations were made.

## 4. Minutes of the previous meeting held on the 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024

**Approved** and **Authorised** for publication.

There were no matters arising.

## 5. Committee Meetings (*minutes shared if available*)

**Audit Committee** – 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

It was agreed to return to this item later in the meeting.

## 6. COLLEGE ITEMS

### 6.1 Ofsted Report (May 2024 publication)

The Principal confirmed that the Ofsted report had been published. It was noted that the report had received local and regional press coverage and also attention from national forums. The report had also been circulated to prospective students and parents.

Q Had there been any specific tangible feedback from stakeholders?

A The College had received positive emails, including from local education establishments.

The Corporation Board received the published report.

### 6.2 Principal's Update

The Principal drew the Corporation Board's attention to the following:

- A Level exams had commenced. So far, the feedback was that the papers were deemed to be reasonable and fair.
- Resourcing – the College had previously been promised a government grant for the additional employers' pension contributions (Teachers), from the 5<sup>th</sup> April, however the College sector had only been allocated 90% of the grant (this equated to approximately £36,000 per year less than expected).
- Staffing appointments for 2024/2025 were reported. The Corporation Board was advised of further prospective appointments.
- Defunding – the current government policy would not affect the College's offer for 2025. The current government was not expected to change its position. Other political parties had however confirmed that they intended to suspend the changes and instigate a 16-18 review. The proposed Advanced British Standard may also be affected. There may

be larger ramifications in larger Colleges (the impact of the withdrawal of BTech may impact on progression to University).

- INSET – would be used to deliver a middle management training programme in conjunction with SFCA (Sixth Form College Association). 20 middle managers would take part. This was at a reasonable cost and would be good quality training.
- Local/national forums – a former member of staff had been through a DfE tribunal and had been struck off from Teaching for three years. They had worked at the College for three months and the offence had taken place before their employment. The College was not aware of the incident and the Teacher had resigned when they had been arrested and charged. A formal disciplinary had taken place in College and documents forwarded to the Teacher Regulation Agency. Local reporting was correct, but the national press had made errors in the report which was subsequently addressed and corrected within 24 hours.

The report was noted.

*5.45pm Susan Codling joined the meeting.*

### **6.3 Strategic plans & Priorities**

#### **a) QIP review (Spring term)**

Jo Cadman reported that Ofsted feedback and comments had been included. Generally speaking, leaders were happy with the outcome of the Spring term QIP. Governors would note the challenges within the report. Leaders were confident that improvements had been made. There were no areas of concern to report.

Senior Leaders addressed questions and comments.

Q Leaders say that they are confident in the improvement but not in RS, why was this?

A We were not confident that the target of 94% pass rate for RS would be met. The target had been increased from 74% last year, improvements had been made but the pass rate was expected to be 84%.

Q Could you please clarify the intention of this part of the report?

A In some courses, within some departments, there was still room for improvement.

Q Students seemed confident in the subject and were unaware of struggles, what was the RS department doing to make sure the required improvement was made?

A Last year's results were a dramatic dip and the Head of Department was undertaking work to address this including ensuring that one to one support and interventions were in place to help students achieve. Visiting speakers were invited into College and second year students were closely mentored.

The Chair summarised that the Quality Improvement Plan highlighted the areas of focus and evidence demonstrated the positive impact of the plan.

Governors agreed that they had been confident throughout the QIP meetings that improvements were being made and that the correct level of support was in place. It should be noted that there was a genuine challenge to meet the 94% pass rate. The cohort was small and some students had left the College.

Q Was there anything further on Attendance to report?

A Attendance was reviewed closely and monitored throughout the year. The figures in the report may be affected by study leave and end of year when only first year students were in College. The new CEDAR data reports provided an 'at a glance' for students and allowed Teachers to review attendance across other subjects to identify areas of concern. Further analysis was planned.

Q Had there been much change in the level of parental engagement?

A CEDAR also allowed parents to see 'live' reporting which had also been impactful. Students were now invested in their own attendance.

Q Nationally, there was concern over absence due to term time holidays, was there any sense of this happening?

A We do not feel the impact as keenly as primary and secondary schools do due to the age of the students. There was no sense that the College was impacted by this. Average attendance for sixth form Colleges was lower than mainstream schools but statistically there were no shocks. Mental health issues were having a greater impact.

Q What explanation was there for attendance dropping for Maths GCSE compared with Year one A Level?

A GCSE programmes and re-sit attendance was always lower. Colleges shared attendance information, and this mirrored the local picture. Students who had to re-sit, had to do so for various reasons which could include things that affect attendance such as lack of motivation, this was noted particularly around Maths.

The report was discussed and received.

## 6.4 Operational reports

*Items 6.4 a, b and c were taken in the following order:*

### a) Sustainability Report

The Principal reported that the programme of conversion of lights to LED lights continued. It was likely that the lights in the multipurpose hall would be upgraded during the summer. The current lighting was estimated to cost £8 per hour to run. LED lighting would reduce energy consumption by around a half.

Governors commented that the report could be strengthened if it included data for the electricity usage as evidence of the benefit of the impact of the changes. The Principal explained that pressures on the staffing resources would not permit the time to enhance the report at the expense of the core business. The government did not require this information reported.

Q Were the electric car charge points used?

A There was a high tariff on the electricity contract from 2021. The Government subsidy ended in April and at present the costs of energy were too high and the College could not compete with more favourable rates. The College must pay VAT (domestic customers, schools and academies do not pay VAT on electricity). From the 1<sup>st</sup> October, when the new contract commenced, it was anticipated that the charges would be halved. The take up of electric or hybrid cars had not been what it had been anticipated due to the cost of the vehicles and those staff with these vehicles could buy electricity for charging, cheaper elsewhere.

The report was noted.

### c) Gender Pay Gap Report

The Senior Manager (HR and Administration) spoke to the report and responded to questions and comments.

It was noted that the Median Gender Pay Gap was 20.2% and the Mean Gender Pay Gap was 10.6% which evidenced that, women, on average, earned 80p for every £1 that men earned comparing median hourly rates of pay and that women's mean hourly rate was 10.6% lower than men.

The report concluded that due to the College having a relatively small workforce, small changes would have a larger impact. More women were employed under the catering contract. There were more female managers than male managers. Those staff on Maternity leave were not counted within the report as the details were taken from the payroll at the 31<sup>st</sup> March. Disparity was noted in report by quartile. Interestingly, the report for Long Road was also reviewed, they reported a zero gender pay gap, primarily explained do not employing catering staff directly. The cleaning crew were predominately female.

Q Does this report have an impact on how you hire staff?

A No. If males apply for posts and meet the selection criteria in the where females were predominate then we would be keen to interview them.

Q Do you have as sense of how the College compared with the rest of the sector?

A Yes roughly the same and slightly under the national average and reflective of other similar institutions around one third male employees and two thirds female employees, this was inline with the education sector. To conclude, it was very difficult to implement strategies. When determining salary, a points system was used for each criteria and was equally applied to males and females. Leaders were confident that pay was equally awarded across genders.

The report was noted and approved for submission to the DfE and for publication on the College website.

### b) Careers/Progression Update

Graham Rayner provided a verbal synopsis of the College's offer around advice for careers and apprenticeships. Second year students were encouraged to create Linked In profiles to help them to make connections. The profiles also allowed the College to keep in touch and to track, to some extent, destinations. First year students are provided with the employment and progression fair and with support to complete UCAS application forms.

Q Are you hearing any resistance to the cost of university from parents?

A No. The number of applications had been as expected and parents seemed resigned to the costs. There may have been a few more applications to places where students could travel to from home to help reduce the cost of living. UCAS was scrapping the UCAS fee for those students who had been on free school meals for any time during the previous six years.

Q The programme on offer to encourage student aspirations was very interesting – was this being closely monitored?

A Sarah Prince explained that this was a three-year project and would be closely

monitored (it was for looked after children or those who had ever had a social worker). It was hard to engage some students, but the College would do everything it could to continue to try to raise aspirations.

Q What were the number of students involved?

A Approximately 85 students.

Q Do you find out if these students remain in university after a year?

A HISA data suggested, as a general rule, that retention data was strong but there was no data to evidence this. Those on lower incomes tended to stay local. The project was for students known to social care (students were very well monitored by the Local Authority and the Virtual School teams) but those on child protection plans may not be as equally closely monitored.

The report was noted.

## **6.5 Finance**

### **a) March Management Accounts**

The Finance Manager confirmed that there had been a larger rebate on energy than Expected (due to the energy company claiming 20% VAT instead of 5%). The rebate was for £167,000.

The forecast was a deficit of £250,000.

The new software was in place and the chart of accounts would be aligned with that from Long Road.

The year end had been confirmed as 31 Aug (13 months). This was expected to be confirmed by the DfE given the academisation, However the accounts must still be filled by the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024 reporting deadline.

Q Could you request the interest be repaid from the overpayment of the VAT?

A This could be requested.

The report was noted.

### **b) Annual Financial Regulations**

It was noted that the Financial Regulations were unchanged since reclassification and these would become obsolete upon academisation when the Trust would have to follow the processes set out in the Academy Trust Handbook.

Q Had the comments from last years' meeting been incorporated?

A The Audit Committee Chair confirmed that if conversion to academy status did not take place the Financial Regulations would be reviewed.

It was noted that the financial regulations remained unchanged.

### **c) Charges & Admissions Fees Policy**

The increase in room hire charges were noted.

Q Do we have any overseas students?

A No, partly due to the changes that the government had made.

On behalf of the Corporation Board, the Chair recorded a vote of thanks to the Finance Manager for the work undertaken to prepare the accounts, oversee the installation of the new software, manage staff and complete the required returns for the due diligence process.

*The Chair returned to item 5.*

## **5. Committee Meetings**

**Audit Committee** – 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024.

Committee Chair, Susan Codling reported that the Committee had potentially met for the last time under the Corporation's terms of reference as accountability and the audit function would be the responsibility of the Trust Board. External Auditors had confirmed that a 13-month accounting period would be permitted. It was anticipated that the accounts would be signed off by the new Local Governing Body and the Trust Board. Further clarification was required on whom the report would be addressed to.

Regarding internal audit, the Committee had agreed that this was not required. Internal audit would however be required in accordance with the Academy Trust handbook. It would be important for the Trust to maintain a proportional and risk-based plan.

The minutes and verbal report were noted.

## **6.6 Audit**

The Corporation Board noted the outcome of the Audit Committee's review of the Board Assurance Map.

There were not changes. The Committee Chair reported that the cyber security and associated mitigations had been discussed. The Committee agreed that cyber security must remain a high priority as it remained the largest risk.

## **6.7 Policies**

### **a) Health and Safety Policy**

The Audit Committee Chair summarised that it was important that Governors were presented with information that supported their strategic function. It had been agreed that it would be beneficial for a Governor to be appointed with specific responsibility for Health and Safety and, to assist with seeking assurances, a meeting could be arranged with the College Health and Safety lead member of staff, for the next Governor visit day.

Q In terms of how contractors are managed when on site, what would happen if there were any transgressions by contractors?

A The Health and Safety lead member of staff would remove the contractor from site or, following risk assessments, would deem the work to be safe to be carried out.

The Health and Safety lead meets with contractors prior to work commencing and would need to be satisfied that working practices were suitable before allowing works to be carried out.

**The policy was approved.**

6.58pm Bill Midzi left the meeting.

## **6.8 Governance Matters**

### **a) Outcome of governance skills audit**

The Corporation Chair thanked Governors for taking the time to complete the skills audit.

The Clerk was invited to summarise the outcome.

The outcome demonstrated a highly skilled Corporation Board. Governors drew on a wide range of professional experiences to support, challenge and strengthen leadership across the College.

The following common themes were sighted by Governors as areas of further development:

- *Understanding my role in a new MAT governance context.*
- *Running and operating in a College Academy.*
- *Introduction to MAT Governance*
- *Strategic decision making*
- *Ongoing awareness of training concerning Academisation*
- *SEND for Governors*

The Clerk reminded Governors that they had access to training through Wigan Governor Services and the SFCA. Dates of SFCA webinars had been circulated via Governor Hub. Dates for specific training for *SEND, An Introduction to Academy Governance, Being Strategic and Effective Monitoring Visits* were also shared.

Governors were further advised to read the *Academy Trust Handbook* and to refer to the DfE *Academy Trust Governance Guide*.

Furthermore, Governors and staff may wish to refer to the comments made around the use of technology to support remote access to meetings, ensuring that agendas, reports and Discussions supported the strategic function of Governance.

The Chair summarised that the exercise had been useful and noted the diverging views.

Due to the academisation process, the DfE had agreed that the College would not be required to undertake the statutory external review of governance for Corporations, however, as the process had previously been commenced by *StoneKing*, an invoice of £2,000 for work undertaken had been authorised. The cost of the full external review had been quoted at £10,000.

The Chair reported that the newly elected Parent Governor, Sarah Gratorex had resigned due to personal reasons. The vacancy would be advertised in the in the Autumn term.

### **b) Upcoming election of Chair and Vice Chairs**

The Chair confirmed that he would be stepping down from the Corporation Board and taking on a role at Trust level. In accordance with the Corporation's Articles of Association, the two-year tenancy for the Chair and Vice Chair was due to end on the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024.



The Clerk was instructed to implement the nomination and election process for the Chair and two Vice Chair positions. Nominations would be invited in advance of the next meeting and the election would take place at the meeting.

**ACTION 1: Clerk to request nomination.**  
**ACTION 2: Clerk to agenda item for next meeting (election of Chair & Vice Chairs).**

c) **Terms of Office**

The following terms of office were noted:

Susan Codling – 14<sup>th</sup> December 2024

Joanna Johnson – 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024

David Moran – 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024

John Owens – 30<sup>th</sup> November 2024

## 6.9 Academisation

a) **Discussion on the Due Diligence reports received:**

- Mazars
- StoneKing

The Corporation Chair, (as Chair of the Shadow Trust Board) shared that the minutes from the last meeting would be circulated as soon as possible.

At the last meeting, the Shadow Trust Board had reviewed the outcome of the consultation process.

The Due Diligence reports had been shared prior to the meeting. There were no areas of concern to highlight. Governors would have read the reports and seen that there was an historical covenant on the land on which Long Road College was built. Assurances had been received that the conversion to an academy status would not breach the terms of the covenant.

b) **Feedback from consultation exercise**

It was noted that the results were in the process of being collated.

Comments had been generally positive but not unanimous. The majority of respondents had been in favour. Stakeholders in Colchester seemed to be more in favour than those of Long Road but Long Road still had the majority of those in favour.

The Principal reported that the prospective Labour MP had provided their full support. Objections at Long Road were likely due to the local educational landscape and the response rate was quite low, suggesting that the large majority of recipients did not have a very strong view either way. There had been over 10,000 notices distributed from Colchester.

Thanks were placed on record to Jo Cadman, Joanna Johnson and Sarah Williams who had prepared the draft scheme of delegation. Thanks were also expressed to Governors for their contributions and comments.

## **STANDING ITEMS**

### **7. Urgent Items**

There were no items of additional business to discuss.

### **8. Confidentiality**

No items were deemed confidential.

### **9. Date and time of next meeting - Monday 24 June at 5.30pm.**

A meeting schedule for the 2024/2025 academic year would be circulated at the next meeting.

The agenda would focus primarily on academisation, the budget and the election of the Chair and Vice Chairs.

### **Search & Governance Committee - Friday 28 June at 11am.**

A meeting schedule for the 2024/2025 academic year would be circulated at the next meeting.

There being no further business to discuss, the Chair thanked all in attendance for their contributions and closed the meeting at 7.20pm.