



THE SIXTH FORM COLLEGE, COLCHESTER

**Minutes of Corporation Meeting No. 129
12 July 2021**

[Virtual Meeting held via Microsoft Teams]

Chair: K Finnigan

Members Present: A Beatty, M Atherton, S Codling, C Goldsworthy, P Barker, H Hallworth, M Hyslop, J Leslie, I MacNaughton (Principal), D Morran, J Owens, H. Skeggs, I Vipond, M Waring, J Tallentire, D Stebbings, J Johnson

In Attendance: Assistant Principal's: J Harker, J Cadman, A Johnson, G Rayner, A Frost.
E Gibson (Finance Manager),
A Durling (Student Health & Welfare Co-ordinator) excluding items 129.6 onwards

Clerk: T Johnson

The minutes reflect the order of discussion

129.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from observer, S Williams.

129.2 Any Other Business & Chair's Action

No other business was requested.

The Chair confirmed that he had not been required to implement Chair's action since the last meeting.

It was noted that the student governors' report would be discussed at 129.8(iii) - pastoral matters

129.3 Declarations of Interest

No interests, recorded on the registers, related to any of the matters proposed for discussion.

No governor or attendee declared any interests.

129.4 Minutes of Previous Meetings

129.4.1 The minutes of corporation meeting No.128 held on 17 May 2021 were agreed, as a true record of the meeting.

129.4.3 Matters arising

Due to the impact of the ongoing coronavirus (COVID19) situation on workload, it was agreed to defer the following matters;

- strategic plan, mission and vision statements annual review – to be actioned autumn 2021

All other matters arising were identified on the agenda

129.5 Coronavirus (COVID-19)

129.5.1 Outbreak Management Plan [government's contingency framework: education and childcare settings]

The Assistant Principal (Risk, Examinations, Assessment and Reporting) provided the Corporation with an overview of the outbreak management plan. Governors were satisfied that as had been previously shown, the College's plans would in the event of an outbreak, operate effectively. Governors agreed that the plan sufficiently detailed of how the College would ensure every student received the quantity and quality of education and care that they would normally be entitled to, in the event the College was again required to limit onsite attendance,

129.5.2 Coronavirus (COVID-19) updates

The Principal's update report was considered, the Principal responded to governor questions on the following points:

Vaccinations: governors asked if the vaccination scheme will make a difference to staff and student attendance. College management were disappointed by the decision of the Government not to include 16-18 year olds in the current vaccination programme. Without an extension to the vaccination programme the potential for further disruption to teaching and learning is 'huge'; the College could see significant numbers of students off ill and staff members required at home to look after their own children.

Data: governors asked if the positive COVID cases were internal cases and what the anticipated impact will be. As of the date of the meeting there were 17 students and 2 staff members confirmed COVID positive and as a result, 46 students and 4 staff members had been required to self-isolate. In addition, 15 students and 10 staff members were self-isolating due to external contacts. It is expected that these figures will continue to rise as the term continues. Some local secondary schools have closed year groups with all students undertaking remote learning.

Testing: governors asked how the college will manage the requirements for testing. The government announcement that from September 2021 schools and Colleges will be required to offer 2 on-site lateral flow device tests suggests that the College will be required to deliver over 6,500 flow tests in an 8-day period. Drawing on the College's previous experience of running an asymptomatic testing site, no issues are anticipated. Governors welcomed the reassurance the testing will provide for the college, students and parents

Track and Trace: from 20 July 2021 the responsibility for track and trace will no longer reside with the College. Governors were pleased that staffing resources would no longer be expended on this administrative task.

Summer 2022 - awarding of qualifications: Governors asked for the College's view on summer 2022 qualifications. The DfE & Ofqual have launched their consultation re the awarding of grades; summer 2022. The college expectation is that the outcome will be examinations with a series of adjustments at subject level.

Governor's thanked the Principal and contributing staff members for the updates and for providing the responses to their questions.

129.6 **Principal's Strategic Matters**

Governors considered the report, prepared by the Principal, including detail regarding the ongoing impact of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on teaching & learning, staff and student wellbeing and the impact on the wider College community.

In response to governor questions the Principal and relevant senior managers responded as follows:

129.6.1 **Safeguarding - peer-on-peer abuse/sexual harassment:** Governors noted that Ofsted's rapid review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges had been published. Governors discussed the safeguarding inspection outcomes of a local school, (triggered by multiple allegations made on the Everyone's Invited website). Governor attention was drawn to the government publication, sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges which will come into force from 01.09.2021. It is expected that safeguarding will feature very strongly in future Ofsted inspections.

129.6.2 **Governors asked the college how confident they are that students at the college feel safe and what barriers there may be to students reporting incidents or seeking support.** The Principal reported that the College's safeguarding arrangements historically and currently, remain on the high end of effective [Ofsted terminology for safeguarding is ordinarily 'effective' or 'inadequate']. Within this the ethos and culture of the College is key and has contributed to some important factors which, despite having large numbers of potentially vulnerable students, make the college a very safe environment.

[See also minute No. 129.7 Pastoral report]

Governors asked the Principal to relay their continued thanks to the staff, for their work and dedication to the College and its students.

17.50 S. Codling joined the meeting

129.7 **Pastoral Report:**

It was agreed to discuss the Pastoral Report and associated agenda items at this point

129.7.1 The Assistant Principal (Pastoral) introduced the College's Student Health & Welfare Co-ordinator to the meeting. The Health & Welfare Co-ordinator provided governors with an overview of the co-ordinator role, the work of the College's welfare team and the resulting positive impact for students presenting with mental health and wellbeing concerns. Governors were also advised on the wider work undertaken by the welfare team, including staff specialisms.

In response to **governor questions regarding the impact of the welfare teams work** and the benefits of referrals made through the Student Health & Welfare Co-ordinator to WARMS (NHS funded mental health support team), governors were provided with examples and informed that the priority is always to ensure student safety. Where appropriate for the student, the aim will be for them to remaining in college and engaged with their learning.

Concerns raised in past 365 days: in the context that the College is an academic college promoting academic rigour, **governors queried the numbers of students presenting with mental health concerns due to academic pressures.** The Assistant Principal highlighted the support in place for students and the types of concerns that may be raised and recorded under this heading and that this may represent multiple reports from the same students.

Governors asked how the data for the number of reported suicide attempts is derived. The Assistant Principal explained that in these cases the figures may represent multiple reports for the same student.

Governors were satisfied that in both instances this did not represent a statistically significant number of students. Governors requested that the next report includes numbers of students represented in each category.

Action: College

18.10 I. Vipond joined the meeting

Governors were pleased to note the progress and successes of the welfare hub, despite the challenges of Covid. The Welfare Hub had to date supported 599 (519 students - 2019/20) students a total of 3908 visits/sessions during the academic year to June (although the work of the Welfare Hub is largely supporting mental health and emotional wellbeing, these figures also include visits about other matters.)

Governors asked for further information on the main risks to the work of the welfare hub. The Assistant Principal (Pastoral), reported that the work of the hub has been transformative and appreciated across the College. However, as with all areas of the College the biggest risk is funding, but this is not an issue at present.

A governor asked the College to comment on the pastoral structure implemented by some colleges; where the establishment of a dedicated (non-teaching) pastoral team has presumably removed some of the burden from teachers.

The Assistant Principal (Teaching & Learning) informed the meeting that the College's personal tutor /senior tutor structure is instrumental in facilitating an holistic approach to student's academic and pastoral needs, whereby personal tutors are able to guide each of their students academically and pastorally. The personal tutor system had also provided an invaluable mechanism for maintaining an overview of both student progress and welfare during periods of lockdown. Additionally, where remote learning had been necessary, personal tutors have provided a focal point and acted as liaison between subject tutors, students and parents.

Governors thanked A. Durling for attending the meeting. Governors asked that thanks be passed to all the welfare hub staff, for their contribution to the wellbeing of the College's students.

18.20 A. Durling left the meeting

129.7.2 **Equality Duty:** Governors reviewed the 2020/21 objectives and the progress made. The 2021/2022 objectives were discussed and agreed as follows:

2020/21 Objective	2021/22 Objective
Reset financial disadvantage project, focusing on better identification of those students in need	Develop and implement Financial Disadvantage Project initiatives
Support BAME students in the context of COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter movement	Develop initiatives to promote engagement of BAME students
All teaching staff to complete E&D training	Develop and embed resources to promote healthy relationships and mutual respect within all curriculum areas
Analyse and respond to any trends developing in incidents of bullying/harassment	

Action: college

129.7.3 **Safeguarding policy:** the Safeguarding policy had been rewritten to reflect how students are treated in a post 16 environment. The safeguarding lead governor reported on their recent visit to the College to consider the ECSB audit. The lead governor reported that the audit confirmed that safeguarding provision and procedures within the College are good and working well. Governors noted the plan to induct and train a second Deputy DSL, to share response to incidents and take responsibility for specific safeguarding areas e.g. looked after children, child exploitation. **The Safeguarding policy was unanimously approved.**

129.7.4 **SEND policy:** having received assurance regarding how SEND in the context of the policy is monitored and quality assured, **the Special Educational Needs and Disability policy incorporating the accessibility plan was unanimously approved**

129.7.5 **Prevent policy:** The updated Prevent policy was received. It was noted that all governors complete Prevent training at induction and at least every 3 years thereafter. **The Prevent policy was unanimously approved.**

129.8 **Student Report**

The student governors presented their report on planned student council activities. Governors were pleased to hear that a Winter Ball, was being planned. Students explained that the event is expected to be very popular as most students had their year 11 school prom cancelled due to the coronavirus. Several governors offered to help with the Ball.

M.Hyslop and M. Waring left the meeting

129.9 **Strategic Plan and Priorities**

Governors reviewed the draft strategic priorities for 2021 to 2022, including the mission and vision statements.

The strategic priorities for 2021 to 2022 were unanimously approved.

Action: college

129.10 **Cross College Operational & Statutory Reports**

129.10.1 **Finance**

May 2021 Financial report: The finance lead governors gave an overview of the current budgetary position as provided in the supporting papers.

The May 2021 Management accounts informing the 2021/22 budget were considered. The finance lead governor reported that despite the financial challenges and resource restraints the finances have remained strong and secure. However, due to the ongoing impact of Coronavirus (COVID19) pandemic, there remain significant uncertainties and risks.

Governors queried the financial impact of the pandemic on the College and any recovery strategies that may be required. The lead governor advised the meeting that the College's finances place it in a good position to manage any shocks and any unexpected consequences of the pandemic.

Budget 2021 to 2022: The finance lead governor presented the 2021 to 2022 budget and provided governors with an overview of the key assumptions used to inform the budget which included; salary and cost of living rises and expected increase in lagged funding due to the predicted increase in student numbers.

A governor asked whether there were projects, beneficial to current and future students that could be funded from the cash reserve. The Principal clarified that in the context of the guidance given to the sector the cash reserve would not be considered 'large'. Match funding expectations and the need to self-finance capital projects will require the use of some of the reserves.

Governors asked for clarity regarding the financial impact of the Covid testing required on site in September. The Principal informed the meeting that in the summer staffing the testing centre and associated administration was undertaken by college staff (deployed from other roles) and a bank of volunteers. It is not known whether any funding will be forthcoming for the testing in September – an update will be given at the next meeting.

Action: college

Governors queried whether the College had received any refunds from the exam boards and if this was included in the budget figures.¹

The Principal explained that so far only the Welsh Board had confirmed a refund, the other examinations boards are not expected to release information until August - this may be a credit against future years' exams – an update will be given at the next meeting.

Action: college

Governors unanimously **approved the 2021 to 2022 budget.**

College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR): in response to governor questions the finance lead governor reported that the College's finances place it on the cusp of an 'outstanding' ESFA health grading.

Governors unanimously **approved the CFFR, including the 2022/2023 forecast and financial health grades** for submission to the ESFA.

129.10.2 Personnel

Following concerns raised by a governor, consideration of the Staff Code of Conduct was deferred to the next meeting.

Action: college

129.10.3 Cross College

The **complaints and compliments** report was introduced by the Assistant Principal (Teaching & Learning). Governors were pleased to note that very few complaints had been received and all had been resolved satisfactorily.

In response to governor questions regarding student appeals relating to the 2021 summer teacher assessed gradings, the Assistant Principal explained that the College will be managing any appeals on behalf of exam boards. An update on any appeals will be given at the next meeting.

Action: college

Communication with external stakeholders - impact of the website, in the context of ease of navigation re engagement with stakeholders /accessibility regulations.

The Assistant Principal (Admissions and Marketing), introduced the communications report which included; detail of the traffic across the college website, YouTube videos

¹ Minute 128.5 Examination fee refunds: in a normal year the majority of the examinations and awarding of grades work would be undertaken by the examination boards. However, due to the exceptional circumstances this is again being undertaken by teachers and managers in individual institutions. Therefore, it is hoped that a higher level of reduction in the exam and assessment fees compared to the 25% reduction awarded by examination boards in 2020 will be made.

developed by the College, the work undertaken to improve the website functionality and user experience, the College's Instagram account and future plans.

The Assistant Principal also provided governors with a verbal overview of the limitations of the college website and the College's views on the use of social media platforms as a means of stakeholder engagement.

A governor suggested, that as parents and carers are reported to be in the top 3 biggest influencers in where the child undertakes their post 16 study, investment in developing the website, as key stakeholder engagement tool, should be given further consideration. The Principal informed governors that in the College's experience it is the students themselves, who are the biggest influencers.

Governors discussed the merits and pitfalls of engagement with social media.

Governors indicated that although they understood the College's reservations, they would like the college to consider engaging with stakeholders via the more popular social media platforms such as Twitter. In response, the Assistant Principal reported that despite the general rise in social media usage, the College had not, in recent years received many requests for the College to engage with social media platforms, therefore balancing resources (expended on developing and maintaining social media), against perceived benefit needs to be carefully considered.

A governor expressed concern that the main method of communication with students is via email, whereas at the SFCA conference other colleges had identified that students don't read emails and social media platforms were key student engagement tools, particularly during the recent lockdowns.

It was agreed that a communications working group would be formed, to consider some of the issues raised. H. Skeggs, H. Hallworth and D. Stebbings volunteered and were appointed to the working group, to be led by the Assistant Principal. The terms of reference for the group would be agreed at the first meeting.

At this point all observers left the meeting.

129.11 Governance Matters

Search and Governance Committee report

- 129.11.1 **Lead governor structure:** as detailed in the agreed protocol, lead governors are appointed to focus on one of the key areas of the Corporation's responsibilities and are an integral part of the Corporation's operational structure. Lead governors have a strategic role and do not hold any operational responsibility. Lead governor posts and functions are included within the risk management framework and identified in the relevant documentation. The Clerk, has a statutory (non-delegable) duty to advise the Corporation with regard to procedural matters and matters of governance practice, this includes providing advice and guidance to lead governors.

Support Governors: Following a review of the lead governor structure and approval of terms of reference for individual posts, the Search and Governance Committee developed a revised framework, with the aim of ensuring all governors were included within the structure, through a network of support governors. As a minimum support governors will be expected to join the lead governors in championing the relevant key area and where required attend the lead governor /college manager meeting(s). The role of support governors will form part of the Search and Governance Committee's annual review of the lead governor structure.

The terms of reference for each post had been included in the meeting papers. Governors not currently assigned to a post on the structure, were asked to contact the clerk and will be allocated to a post by the Chair.

Action: governors/chair

Governors were informed that the structure may need further revisions, as and when the anticipated guidance documents, relating to the strengthening governance reforms, are published. New governor appointments (to be made in the autumn/spring term) will be expected to fill the vacant roles and those currently undertaken by lead governors from other areas.

129.11.3 The lead and support governor structures were agreed.

Statutory and operational committee membership: the membership and terms of reference for the following statutory and operational committees were agreed:

- Search & Governance
- Audit
- Remuneration
- Disciplinary and Disciplinary appeals [senior post holders]
- Appeals

129.12 Confidential Minutes

129.12.1 Confidential minutes of meeting No.128: The Chair will arrange for the circulation of the confidential minutes [128.12]

Action: chair

129.13 Senior Post Holder Matters

The Corporation were informed that further to the confidential minutes of meeting No.128 and in accordance with the previously agreed succession plan, J Harker will be assuming the role of Acting Principal with effect from 14.07.2021. The Clerk advised on the requirements of Article 12. It was therefore, noted that a manager deputising for the Principal, for an extended period would therefore, be a senior post holder and take on the role of accounting officer.

See also confidential minute 129.13

There being no other business the Chair closed the meeting at 20.02

These minutes were approved by the Corporation on 27.09.2021

[Minute No 130.4]
