

THE SIXTH FORM COLLEGE, COLCHESTER

**Minutes of Corporation Meeting No. 137**

Monday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2022

(Hybrid Meeting – Held in person and via Microsoft Teams]

Members M Atherton (Chair) J Tallentire. I Vipond, I MacNaughton (Principal), M Sherer  
Present: H Hallworth, D Morran, D Stebbings, K Finnegan, S Coddling.  
[<sup>R</sup>remote] A Beatty<sup>R</sup> J Leslie<sup>R</sup>, O Pearson<sup>R</sup>, Liu Bingxing<sup>R</sup>

In Attendance J Cadman, S Townshend, I Fraser, N Goldsmith

Acting Clerk S Williams.

Meeting announcement prior to convening meeting.

Clerk is unavailable so S Williams will take minutes and the meeting will be recorded. The meeting is a hybrid meeting with 4 governors joining on line via Teams.

Welcome extended to new governors – BingXing Liu, Mike Shearer. N Goldsmith (Finance Manager)

137.1 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from governors J Owens, J Johnson, H Skeggs

Apologies were received from attendees A Frost, S Prince

137.2 **Any Other Business**

The Chair reported that he had written and emailed to Robert Halfon – Chair of Parliamentary Education Committee. A copy of the letter will be circulated to all Governors.

137.3 **Declaration of Interest**

None declared

137.4 Minutes of the previous meeting

137.4.1 It was requested that minutes 136.8.3 be amended where a full stop should be replaced by a comma in second paragraph.

Item 4 – Standing Orders. wording of the minutes questioned. The minutes should reflect the decision of governors to approve standing orders not that governors had agreed to explicitly limit governors to only 2 terms of office. The wording should be altered to reflect this.

An additional sentence to remedy this was proposed by the chair. This was agreed by governors. Sentence to read 'in exceptional circumstance, this limit may be waived'.

Minutes were approved subject to above amendments.

#### 137.4.2 **Matters arising**

A discussion was had regarding the summary papers relating to the discussion regarding mission and vision statements. The lead governor - Strategy suggested that although governors had voted on the previous mission / vision proposal he would suggest, in light of the summary paper, that the decision taken at that meeting be reversed. The discussion is complicated and whilst important, it is more important to ensure we have a declared mission and vision in place. Further discussion can then take place.

This was agreed by unanimous vote.

There were no other matters arising from the previous minutes.

#### 135.5 **Principal's update**

The Principal's report, circulated in advance of the meeting, was taken as read. The Principal provided updates on the following matters and answered governor questions in relation to a number of items within the report:

**Results:** The Principal informed governors that the college was pleased with September results. ALPS analysis now in gives the college an overall provider grade of 4. This is higher than average, 2 higher than at our previous OFSTED inspection and higher than 2019 (pre covid). The Principal gave a short explanation of the ALPS methodology including how it is relatively unfair to inclusive colleges so this result is very good. The Principal however expressed his reservations at relying on value added measures this year because of the exceptional circumstances over the past two years and the continued impact of covid on data.

The Principal also informed governors of the 6 Dimensions retention report that was received today. This provided a further positive report for the college and shows 20/21 college retention in a centralised benchmarked way we are well above national average. Retention last year was lower than previous years but given the impact of Covid and increase in student mental health issues this report shows our retention levels are very strong This will be reflected in the draft SAR report.

**Pay negotiations:** SFCA reported that an award has been made to teacher's unions. This was informed by the SRB teachers pay award in the school's sector. This was for a 5% increase across the board with some larger increases at the lower spine points. Unions have been asked to put this offer to members. It has been rejected by unions who are now likely to ballot for strike action. The outcome of any consultation with members and a strike action ballot are unclear. It is also unclear if the SFCA will suggest that in light of an inability to reach agreement whether they will recommend that the award be simply impose and agree to disagree.

It is also clear that the government will not provide any additional funding for increased pay awards beyond the 2% they have already funded. The full cost of a pay award is therefore

unfunded and will be an additional expense to schools and colleges. We have budgeted for a 5% pay award but many other providers have only provided for 3-4%.

**Energy costs:** Influenced by the contents of the recent fiscal event the college will be given some support, the detail of which will not be clear for several months. This support is likely to be for just 6 months. It is hoped that it will enable the huge 2022/23 cost of energy to be held at the £470k budgeted for. The bulk of energy use in the college is for electricity i.e. lighting/ IT. Governors questioned on the use of smart technology i.e. light sensors to switch lights when rooms empty and use of LED and energy savings products. The Principal responded in the positive but pointed out that this also comes at a high capital cost. The college has previously put in re-carbonisation bids for some of this energy saving work to be carried out but although successful no money was then forthcoming. We have now been advised not to repeat these bids in 2022/22 bid cycle as it would require a change of energy supplier cash contracts which would lead to higher costs as well as spending substantial 'matched' funding for the capital works..

**NI Increase reversal.** The college will benefit by approximately £78,000 p.a. with the reversal of NI in the latest fiscal review. This is in effect not a saving but a removal of an additional cost imposed from April 2022.

**Political changes** - with the recent ministerial reshuffles we are now on our 7<sup>th</sup> education minister in 8 years. Changes are continuing and we are concerned that the new team, on paper, have little understanding of the SFC sector and of 16-18 education generally. We understand that the 2022, Education Bill that was passing through Parliament may not be advanced further and a new one will be produced. It is anticipated this is likely to promote an increase in the size of selective sector and may go more neutral on further academisation.

The Principal reported that Will Quince, our local MP, has been moved from his junior minister role in DfE but is now in Health and Social Care department. Whilst this is disappointing he may still continue to have some involvement in arrangements for mental health care for children and young adults.

A governor commented that only 10% of Ministers in the cabinet were educated at state schools.

**Student Survey:** as a result of feedback from LSQ undertaken with students at the end of year 1 a further short survey was undertaken on re-enrolment which had a much higher engagement level. This showed that only 4 students (out of approx. 1,000 who completed the survey) had concerns for their safety whilst on site. In order to improve site security, it has been proposed that students should wear lanyards whilst at College. This was put to members of the college student council and then through Personal Tutor system to students and was positively supported. It has been agreed to introduce after half term – students requested black lanyards and this has been agreed.

Governors requested more information re the LSQ and student survey. The AP- pastoral responded with information regarding the additional information requested. And Governors were advised that more detailed information would be available in the full College SAR.

## Governor questions:

Governors raised questions regarding potential ONS move of FE sector colleges back into the public sector i.e. is it likely we would be able to reclaim VAT? The Principal reported that the SFCA are of the view that the discrimination in VAT payment will remain.

Governors also requested that AP - ~Teaching and Learning give a presentation to Governors. And that the new ED&I co-ordinator be invited to give a presentation in the Spring term meeting.

Governors also requested perspective on the financial impacts of current cost of living crisis on students. AP: pastoral informed of the changes to bursary arrangements to provide more targeted support to students. We are now not allowed to apply a flat rate but rather give support to students dependent upon need. The college is also committed to ensuring there are affordable food options in the refectories. The use of wise pay and ability to 'load' money onto student cards has helped with the administration of the bursary.

At end of Principals report the presence of governors at the forthcoming Open Evenings was discussed. It was agreed that Governors would attend and it was a good opportunity to meet both staff, students and potential community members and was very much welcomed.

### 137.6 **Strategic Priorities**

The AP – Quality updated on the final review of the 2021/22 strategic priorities. These were developed during covid period and were related to the issues and concerns highlighted during this period. i.e. student resilience, attendance at exams etc. In reality the exams season, results and post results went incredibly smoothly. Last year was challenging but the college saw successful outcomes for students.

In months to come it was proposed that the SAR be written to show the college is self-assessing as Outstanding, in line with the new inspection framework.

Governors asked if there were any issues that may impinge on the move to outstanding that they need to be aware of. AP – Quality informed that a context of results being very consistent nonetheless we have mentioned a couple of subjects that we wish to focus on improvements.

The Principal commented that in general success is clearly linked to levels of student attendance. In a covid context retention last year was very good and this year we are having a big push on attendance.

One of the Lead Governors – Quality and Curriculum commented that termly meetings that have been arranged and these will be helpful in improving her understanding of college data and will help her to monitor areas of weaknesses identified by self-reflection.

Questions were asked by Lead governor regarding;

- the college's approach to assessment now that it is back to full face to face teaching and normal exam mode.
- What are disadvantaged students doing in rates of progressing (should we have more explicit targets for disadvantaged students)?

- Using UCAS application KPI's Does the college map potential and actual progression for disadvantaged students i.e. are they going to universities that matches their attainment (or are they going to less prestigious institutions).

The Principal responded that this level of information is included in college quip. He further commented that there is a lot of detailed information available but there is also a limit on what we can do to identify or analyse this information as we don't have the resources to exclusively research and analyse. The college increasingly needs to focus on the 'core business' of providing teaching and learning.

With regards to exam assessments we are now scaling back on Covid assessments that were needed for CAG's/TAG's processes but we do have assessments in place. The AP-Curriculum did do a presentation in the spring/summer although for governors and this could be repeated and more information re assessment strategy be circulated.

Vice Chair concurred with the Principal that we need to be aware that we have less resource and we need to be sure we are using them properly and not just produce reports because it is interesting to do so.

The Principal commented that it is important to focus on the financial impact of the Strategic plan, i.e. can we afford to do what we want to do. Has the economic crisis meant that we need to change our plans due to the rise in costs?

### **137.7 Operational & Statutory Reports**

#### **(i) Pastoral**

Child Protection Policy

Information was given regarding the e-vote for approval. The policy was approved by a majority. (11 voted. 9 in favour, 2 abstentions).

#### **(ii) Finance**

The Finance Manager reported on the July 2022 Cost Centre review. This forecast was prudent and the college has performed better than forecast.

A finance Lead Governor commented that it is crucial to ensure that we set a prudent budget going forward given the current economic pressures.

The Principal commented that the he didn't anticipate any need for major or significant changes for 22/23 budget. If these prove to be required adjustments will be made and governors will be informed.

The audit regularity self-assessment questionnaire was received and unanimously approved.

19:35 At this point the observers were thanked for attending the meeting and invited to leave.

### 137.8 **Governance Matters**

(i) The Chair requested that Governors give a timely response to complete and return forms requested by the Clerk. These need to be in sooner rather than later.

(ii) Governor Visit Day

This has been scheduled for either 17<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> November. A request was made to let the Chair and Clerk know of the preferred date for these visits so that a decision can be made as to which day.

Within the plans for the day it is planned, as usual, to invite a group of students to a meeting with governors as this was found to be more effective than governors stopping students to ask questions. The AP-Pastoral will deliver a safeguarding update and some time will be allocated to discuss the strategic plan as although there is one in place it is due for an update.

It was also suggested by a governor that it would be useful to have a briefing on the new OFSTED inspection framework as Governors need to be up to spec on this. In particular to focus on the question 'we are outstanding – how do you rate yourself as a point of focus.

It was further suggested that the meetings with HOD's are a useful and important part of the day's schedule.

Any other Ideas/ suggestions for the day should be passed to the Chair.

*There being no other business the Chair closed the meeting*

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*These minutes were approved by the Corporation on 17.10.2022 Minute No. 138.4*

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