

Meeting of the Corporation

Tue 10 October 2023, 18:30 - 20:30

College

Attendees

Board members

Dave Vasse (Principal), Angela Foster (Member, Non-teaching Staff), Tim Stockings (Member), Kwame Amoako-Atta (Member), Maurine Lewin (Member), Andy Boucher (Chair), James Gould (Vice Principal), Jamie Davies (Member), Marian Orafu (Member), Natalie Firth (Member), Moshir Rahman (Student Member), Anastasia Dufie (Student Member), Rosali Pretorius (Member)

Absent: Nazia Shah (Member - Teaching Staff), Sara Whittaker (Member), Kay Sandford-Beal (Director of Governance)

Meeting minutes

1. Apologies for Absence and Quoracy

Information

To accept apologies and confirm that the meeting is quorate

Andy Boucher

AB welcomed all attendees of the meeting. AB shared that he was delighted that Professor Pauline Odulinski had joined the meeting. Professor Odulinski completed the External Governance Report in May 23 and was attending to present her findings in relation to the report. AB expressed formal thanks on behalf of all governors to Professor Odulinski.

AB noted apologies this evening from Nazia Shah, Richard Boulton and Sara Whittaker. Kay Sandford-Beal was unwell with Covid and unable to attend as Clerk. CB had agreed to take minutes in her place.

2. Declarations of interest for this agenda

Information

To identify and declare any items on the agenda that present a conflict for Governors

Andy Boucher

AB asked members whether there were any declarations of interest against any item on this agenda. There were no declarations of interest declared.

3. External Governance Review

Presentation And Discussion

To present the findings of the External Review of Governance to the Corporation and discuss an action plan for improvement

Pauline Odulinski, Andy Boucher And Kay Sandford-Beal

External Governance Review

AB provided some background context to the External Governance review before PO began the presentation on her findings. This is an annual review and is not static, it is a review that is evolving constantly.

Chair Q to members: 'what is good governance?' Members confirmed that it is about understanding an organisation, transparency and inclusivity to name a few key areas. AB explained that he views good governance as being vital in a number of ways, in particular creating a framework and a structure within which to operate. Good governance protects the college and governors. It facilitates the smooth and efficient operational running of the college in order to enable time to focus on strategies.

Professor Odulinski delivered her presentation on the work she had completed on the External Governance Review.

PO asked the members if they had read the ERG report. They confirmed that they had. PO expressed her thanks to all members for their co-operation in the last year while PO has been working with them. She noted that governors had handled the many changes in the college and governance team very well and that they are now in a good position to drive through the change required to make further improvements. The forward-facing remit is to move from good to outstanding as governors.

PO outlined the 4 main recommendations of the External Governance Review.

Recommendation 1 – Enhancing the development process of the Strategic Plan and Governance Business Planning. Standards and compliance are key and the governors are starting to get ahead on this by implementing this review. Everything starts with the strategic plan – it is considered the ‘golden thread’ running through everything. If something isn’t in the strategic plan, governors need to question why it is being done. Students are at the heart of the plan. PO stated that governors were looking at the short-term, but the aim now is to look at medium to long-term.

AB highlighted that at the point when PO was working on this review, the new strategic report had not been published.

DV had collated a new strategic report, linking activity with key areas of the strategic plan. DV expressed his appreciation that in the medium to long-term there is an increasing level of uncertainty. There will be a need for an increased provision of 16-18 education. DV stated that the college needs to continue to focus on moulding excellent learning habits and personal development; adding that these core values will not change. As long as excellent teaching and learning are provided, the college will be able to deal with any uncertainty.

PO stated that it is important to build good business connections and for governors to have a twin track approach to supporting the college: bringing knowledge of brand and reputation into the college and building good business connections. Governors need to have a triangulated approach to governance and the Strategic Plan and the Governance Business Plan need to be dynamic.

Recommendation 2 – Develop a comprehensive Governance Quality Assurance and Improvement Plan, including Succession and Membership Strategy. Governors need to protect themselves and the college. It is important to know if governance is working effectively and to plot the governor journey. A comprehensive annual process is needed. Governors need to ensure intersectional representation within the Corporation. Succession is an area that Kay Sandford-Beal will be working on with governors for the future. This recommendation helps governors understand their roles and how they can contribute to quality assurance and improvement plans, along with succession and membership strategies.

Recommendation 3 – Develop a comprehensive framework for the Scheme of Delegation and ensure standardised documents and processes are written to meet the needs of the Board. The Corporation has standard documents such as terms of reference, instruments and articles, however this recommendation focuses on bringing all of this into one document for all – the ‘golden thread’. Out of that comes the business plan.

AB noted that Kay Sandford-Beal had started work on the drafting of a schedule of delegation, but it is a very complex and detailed document and work is continuing.

TS asked for expansion on point 3, regarding consideration of referring to members, the chair or other titles in minutes and records, rather than actual names. He asked this in light of data protection regulations (GDPR) and the fact that minutes are published as part of the public record.

PO mentioned that with the event of social media, governors needs to think about this as a discussion point. It could be a barrier for entry into governance if some people do not wish to have their name in the public domain or are worried about social media attention.

DV noted that the practice of recording conversations in minutes and naming those who speak within meetings was a response to an Ofsted recommendation from a few years ago. Ofsted had commented that the minutes of meetings were too bland and that it was not possible to work out who had said what in a meeting.

TS expressed that good governance is not determined by whether someone has been named in minutes or not. RP noted that some people may wish to be named.

Recommendation 4 – Improve Governance effectiveness through communications. This focuses on building effective communication and the use of inclusive language. PO encourages governors to be more aware of using inclusive language e.g. using they instead of he or she.

PO referred to a quote from Simon Perryman, Chair of the National Chairs Council, regarding good governance. There is a new set of guidelines for Governance Principles outlined in the new FE Code of Good Governance. At the front of the guidance, it states that ‘Good Governance is fundamental to a college’s success. It sets the strategic direction, promotes a positive culture, prioritising the use of resources and provides assurance for legal and regulative compliance.’

PO referred to the importance of link governors. Governors with links to certain business, subject areas etc. Outstanding colleges have good links. It may be possible for governors to shadow a student for a day to learn about the student experience, come into the college for a coffee and a chat with students and ask if they are getting what they need from the college. This all links back to the need for triangulation. Independent triangulated information is important for feedback to governors.

DV shared that he would like to strengthen link governors.

AD referred to the 'golden thread' metaphor used by PO and the view that if something is not in the plan, it shouldn't be used. AD asked if an advanced strategic plan would be an advantage.

PO confirmed that it would be an advantage but the route map can change along the way. The business plan that emerges from a strategic plan would be for that academic year specifically and the plan may need to change next year. Governors determine the ends and leadership determine the means.

AB thanked PO for her care and diligence with this review. The findings had been clearly set out and the Corporation is keen for governors to get the most out of their experience. Good governance is a part of this. It would be useful to have an update around progress in the middle of the academic year.

With regards to governor recruitment, all agreed that there needs to be a pipeline and a good pool of talent to tap into.

DV thanked PO for her work on the External Governance Review. He noted that it would be good for bespoke visits to be arranged for governors to come to the college to strengthen governor links with students.

MO asked if the recommendations from the review will be broken down into an action list for governors.

AB confirmed that this will be the case.

Action: KS to create Governance action plan to be agreed by Governors

It would be good for governors to think about how they wish to go forward with the recommendations and for a review mid-year or towards the end of the academic year. What governors do must be useful in discharging their roles and being effective governors.

RP noted that the ERG report has a number of paragraphs with questions for governors. AB confirmed that these will be addressed in due course.


DV suggested possible development sessions on a Saturday to address these questions.

TS would welcome a discussion about how governors use the information they are given, how they scrutinise and triangulate information. He would welcome a discussion in the coming year regarding committee structure.

DV noted that it is important not just to measure but to ask how prepared governors must be and to stretch themselves.

There were no further questions or comments.

 3. ERG Report for Sir George Monoux College 23-05-06.pdf

 3. Monoux Strategic Plan 23 to 27 1.6 Compressed Version.pdf


4. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Corporation on the 4.07.23

Decision

Andy Boucher

To approve the minutes of the previous meeting on the 4th July 2023 as a true record

There were no comments or queries from governors regarding the minutes of the previous meeting on 04 July 2023. Minutes of 04 July 2023 were approved as a true record.

 4. Minutes_Meeting of the Corporation_040723..pdf

5. Matter arising from the minutes of the meeting on the 4.07.23

Information

AB noted that the one outstanding action had been completed - see 5.1


Andy Boucher

 5. Action log Corporation 04 07 23.pdf

5.1. Budget approval paper

Members acknowledged the formal approval of the 23-24 Budget by Chair's action with formal acceptance of the Budget approval paper.

 5.1 FIN-Outline Estimates of Income and Expenditure 23-24-16Jun22-vF.docx.pdf

 5.1 Budget Approval Paper 31.07.23 KSB.pdf

6. Governance updates - Board nominations and approvals

Decision

Andy Boucher

To approve the appointment of Governors as recommended by the Governance and Remuneration Committee

ML and KSB have been working on continued monitoring that there are an adequate number of governors and timely succession planning

ML explained that there had been six applications for the current governor vacancies. One person withdrew their application and is only interested currently in being a co-opted governor. With regards to the remaining four applicants, one was a parent governor last year and the other three are new applicants. CVs were considered new shortlisting and interview question templates had been created to ensure a consistent process. The recommendation is for all four to be appointed as governors, subject to DBS and reference checks.

NF noted that the CVs were impressive.

AB confirmed that it is nice to welcome back Usha Puri-Dewage. He asked all governors to vote for approval of Usha, with a show of hands. All members voted Usha Puri-Dewage as appointed.

AB asked governors to vote for approval of Tracey Inverary. All members voted Tracey Inverary as appointed.

AB asked governors to vote for approval of Phillippe Chaudhry. All members voted Phillippe Chaudhry as appointed.

AB asked governors to vote for approval of Pat Morton. AF declared that she knows Pat Morton on a personal basis. All members voted Pat Morton as appointed.

JG queried whether the DBS and safeguarding check process could be started any sooner once governors are recommended. If they start straight away HR could do a risk assessment, pending DBS. This can be discussed with KSB and HR.

Action: Discuss DBS process timeframes - KS and JG

ML suggested that there should be a constant, standing advert published to ensure that we do not have vacancies within the Corporation. AB wants to evolve this process.

Action: Becoming a Governor text to be posted to Corporation website - KS

JD suggested a skills audit of current governors and looking at gaps to fill.

Action: Skills Audit to be conducted, together with skills sets gathered from new governor application forms - KS

ML agreed that this could be part of the process and that there also needs to be a written process for governor recruitment.


Action: new shortlisting and recruitment templates to be shared on Admin Control - KS


AB suggested looking at matching skill sets of governors to committees

Action: Consider skills match with Committee make up post skills audit - KS

 6. CV Usha Puri-Dewage CV Sept 2023.pdf

 6. CV - Tracey Inverary.pdf

 6. CV - Philippe Chaudry.pdf

 6. CV -Pat Morton 2023.pdf

7. Principal's Report

Information And Discussion

To present the report to members. Questions are invited in advance of the meeting via the Clerk

Principal's Report

Dave Vasse

DV invited questions regarding the Principal's report.

TS asked if there are any major course corrections that need to be looked at.

DV stated that the recent view from current government of 16-18-year olds not having enough time in the classroom and increasing it, will work in favour of students. The risk will be in the uptake of T levels and promotion of T levels. Nationally T level recruitment is low. The college has revised its figure and will only be penalised if it doesn't run T levels at all. There is no penalty for under recruitment of T level students. Getting T levels up and running is now the issue. The Labour party have said that they will pause de-funding of other qualifications if they are in power.

TS asked what would be the indicators and warnings.

DV explained that the college needs to market T levels, starting from September 24. The specific market strategy will include identification of the unique qualities of T levels. T levels will be up and running but not in huge numbers. The other issue is that we are limited on room availability and staffing for T levels. It is not all negative as we are going to see some improvements in the future to our buildings. DV felt that there may be a shorter technical qualification that students can study with a mix of A levels, but this may far into the future.

AB asked how the college can set a strategic plan when uncertainty makes it very difficult. He noted that the focus needs to remain on high quality teaching and learning.

DV stated that there will be challenges when course are de-funded and T levels replace them. However if standards of education are high and the college can attract students who have good attendance, are interested in reading, want to improve their oracy and work hard, then the college can remain stable. Many young people want to attend a college at which the standards are high and SGMC is continuing to work hard to improve standards.

AB asked the student governors, AD and MR how the start of term has been for them.

AD noted that standards have improved since the last academic year. She likes starting lessons earlier at 9.30am. This has motivated AD and her peers. Standards risen.

MR noted that students are in college earlier in the day due to the 9.30am lesson start. They come in before that and are on time for lessons. This has improved. The teacher talk tactics strategy helps students when discussing ideas in class too.

AF noted that students are arriving at college earlier to start the day and they seem much more prepared and ready to work.

JG expressed that the breakfast on offer in the morning in the Zone before lessons start has been very successful. It is set up like a café area and encourages students to come in a little earlier, have some breakfast and catch up with friends before they start the day.

AD noted that college activities and committees are more student led this year. Staff are also utilising students to challenge other students.

AF stated that there has been a big uptake for the student ambassador role. The standard of interviews has been good.

DV noted that these are all good measures of student engagement. Student leadership and engagement in activities has increased. For example, around 20 students from the podcasting club are visiting The Guardian newspaper in half term.

DV explained that there is a new coaching programme for curriculum managers. They are participating in training on live instructional coaching. This training is a direct result of the visit to Boston. Student engagement is vital, however the consistency with which staff is also important.

MO asked if the governors could be provided with figures on student attendance mid-year this year with comparison to mid-year last year.

DV confirmed that this is on the schedule of work for the QP committee. There will be a mid-year review with appropriate senior managers.

AB stated that it may be worth considering the creation of a dashboard of key metrics for governors to view throughout the year.

JD would also like to look at student attendance for this point in the academic year compared to the same time

last year to look at the base line attendance rates.

ML noted that there is a college trip to Vietnam taking place during the October half term. ML asked how many students are attending.

DV confirmed that there will be twelve students and three staff.

ML asked whether this was the ratio needed for staff to students.

DV confirmed that the college would only need to take two staff, however three staff are attending. This is because if a student is hospitalised while in Vietnam, one member of staff would need to stay with them and there can be two staff with the rest of the student group at all times.


ML asked if the Vietnam trip was open to all students.

DV confirmed that it was not. It was available to those in student leadership and some spaces were protected for leisure and tourism students.

ML asked how the trip was funded.

DV explained that the funding is from the Drapers' Company the charitable organisation who support Monoux. The funding was originally for a trip that was due to take place in 2020, but had had to be postponed. The hotel honoured the deposit. Students are contributing £350 each to their place on the trip.

There were no further questions.

 7. Principal Update 10 Oct 2023.pdf

8. Committee Report - Governance and Remuneration Committee

Information

Verbal update on recent business, excluding Board nominations and approvals (agenda item 6) -

Maurine Lewin

ML has spent a great deal of time looking for governors to recruit. She stated that it would be a good idea to keep an open advert on the college website. Another idea is for governors to move to different committees during their time as a governor to enable experience across the governance remit. ML is considering whether each committee should have a deputy as well as a chair.

AB feels that a Vice-Chair of the Corporation may be needed.

ML noted that a Vice-Chair could be appointed from someone who is chair of a committee.

ML explained that going forward there will be a written process in place for appointing governors to enable transparency. This is being worked on with KSB.

There were no further comments.

9. Safeguarding Policy

Decision

To review and approve the Safeguarding Policy

James Gould

JG explained that there have been two rounds of the draft safeguarding policy. Each year the college looks at the draft Waltham Forest policy for safeguarding and adapts it to include the contextual information needed to make it relevant to the college.

JG noted that the key changes are the section of adultification, the clarification on 14-16 provision and the different safeguarding responsibilities for this (similar to those of schools for this age group) and the law against marriage at 18.

JG stated that more staff and some governors are participating in safer recruitment training.

JG explained that there have been some small changes to the DSL role. If there is a someone visiting the college on behalf of an organisation and there is an allegation, it is now the responsibility of the college to investigate this allegation.

Governors agreed and approved the Safeguarding Policy. They thanked JG for his work on this.

 9. SGMC Safeguarding Policy 2324 draft.pdf

10. AOB

To discuss any items identified as other business

AB shared that it is Black History Month. He stated that his great-great grandfather was the first black person to graduate from a UK university. His great-great grandfather was a famous West African politician who joined the army and narrowly escaped slavery. He had published many books.

JG asked if AB would be interested in talking to students about his great-great grandfather and AB expressed that he would like to do this.

AB asked if there is any other business. No other business.

Discussion

Andy Boucher

11. Date of next meeting

To confirm the date of the next Corporation meeting - 12th December at 6.30pm

The next meeting of the Corporation was confirmed as 12th December at 6.30pm at the College

Information

Andy Boucher