



SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE AND STROUD COLLEGE
FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

Approved minutes of a meeting of South Gloucestershire and Stroud College
Further Education Corporation
Held on 5 November 2020, via Microsoft Teams

Present: David Hagg (Chair)
Louise Bright
Alicia Chappell
Sophie Chester-Glyn
Nicole Clark
Lynne Craig
Matt Davis
Carly Dyson
Phil Eames
Roger Ellis
Sophie Green
Kevin Hamblin (CEO & Executive Principal)
Dave Merrett
Ben Short
Rick Sturge

In Attendance: Gavin Murray (Vice Principal, Performance, Standards & Effectiveness)
Jude Saunderson (Chief Financial Officer)
Sara-Jane Watkins (College Principal)
Sharon Glover (Clerk)

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming Louise Bright, Nicole Clark (Student Governor) and Rick Sturge to their first Corporation meeting. A one minutes silence was held in memory of Moyra Pascoe (former Chair of the Corporation).

The Chair advised that he would be bringing forward item 11 to allow the Assistant Principal - HE and Adult to present the report and then leave the meeting.

1. **Higher Education (Agenda Item 11)**

The Assistant Principal presented the reports setting out the achievements for the year in order to provide assurances to the Corporation. The annual report is positive,

despite COVID-19 challenges, with increased higher grades and the positive outcomes are a credit to the team.

Reference was made to Quality Development Plan which is in its final year of a three year plan. The majority of actions have now turned green although recruitment has not increased as much as it was hoped, due to a challenging market place. However there has been improved recruitment this year. Degrees have been refreshed for next year and it was felt timely to start the development plan afresh.

Also presented were OfS targets and progress, financial investment and future targets, which highlighted how improvements have been made. Reporting covered the progress made towards the targets and milestones agreed in the College's OFFA Access Agreement. This will require the completion of a monitoring return in 2020/21 and delegated authority was sought for the Group CEO & Executive Principal to approve the OfS Access and Participation Plan impact monitoring return in 2020/21. Members were informed that this will be the final return regarding the OFFA targets as the transition period between OFFA and the OfS will be complete.

The Assistant Principal and her team were congratulated on the positive outcomes. Members questioned the recipients of the annual report and were informed that the report is shared with the Steering Group, wider College teams and students via student forums. When asked, confirmation was also received that the annual return against targets is for OfS external quality use.

Although excellent results, members questioned why Sports retention/achievement is lower. Members were informed that there is a link between the Sports Academies and these students commitment to learning. Members were informed that all courses have their own action plan and that policies have now been put in place relating to delayed assignments and attendance by the Sports Academy learners. There is now a closer working relationship between the curriculum and Sports Academies with a member of staff focusing on statistics from that area. The sports degrees are being rewritten as they are due a refresh to enable an improved curriculum route from Further Education.

Members noted that there is a clear picture of the outcomes and that the response rates for graduate outcomes is a longer lead in. Members asked about alumni engagement and were informed that as there are very few learners it is more cost efficient to use OfS engagement. However the intention is to invite alumni to the College's Next Steps conference, together with employers and links to FE events to highlight progression routes. There is also the aim to create a package of employability courses which forms part of the ambition for a dedicated Higher Education centre at WISE campus.

Following the outcome of the Higher Education strategic review and the ongoing strategic relationship in place with the University of Gloucestershire members' questioned how the relationship was going. The Assistant Principal confirmed that the relationship was moving in a more positive direction helped by regular meetings

between the CEO & Executive Principal, College Principal and Vice-Chancellor of UoG.

The Assistant Principal also offered to meet with the Student Governor (HE Officer) to invite feedback to the reports. The Chair also advised that a KPI Group will be established to review the current suite of KPIs and that the HE KPIs would feed into this.

The Chair congratulated the Assistant Principal and her team for the positive reports presented.

The report and appendices were noted and it was resolved:

- a) **To note the Higher Education Annual Review and Quality Improvement Plan 2020/21 and that this will be made available if requested.**
- b) **To delegate authority to the Group CEO & Executive Principal, as the Accountable Officer for OfS, to approve the OfS Access and Participation plan impact monitoring return in 2020/21.**
- c) **To note that the 6 targets presented will be included as part of the KPI reporting for governance monitoring.**

At this point the Assistant Principal left the meeting.

2. **Apologies for Absence (Agenda Item 1)**

Apologies were received from Mike Croker and Moira Foster-Fitzgerald.

3. **Declarations of Interest (Agenda Item 2)**

The following declarations of interest were raised and noted by the Corporation:

- New declaration of interests received for Louise Bright:
 - Director, University of South Wales Commercial Services Ltd.
 - Governor, University of South Wales.
- As Trustees of SGS Academy Trust, Phil Eames and Kevin Hamblin, interests were declared in agenda item 14.
- As Alicia Chappell (Student Governor) is under the age of 18 the Clerk reported that, in accordance with the Instrument and Articles of Government, she would not be able to participate in the recommendation for agenda item 3 (Item of Urgent Business) and the recommendation in the Principal's report.

4. **Other Items of Urgent Business (Agenda Item 3)**

The Chair advised that there is one item of urgent business that he will be taking after consideration of the management accounts exception report, agenda item 8.

5. **Minutes of Previous Meeting (Agenda Item 4)**

The minutes of the meeting held 8 October 2020 were approved as a correct record, ready for signing.

6. **Matters Arising From Those Minutes (Agenda Item 5)**

Actions from the action log were monitored and updates provided.

7. **CEO & Executive Principal's Report (Agenda Item 6)**

Members noted that there was nothing to report and that this item would be carried forward to the next meeting.

8. **Principal's Report (Agenda Item 7)**

The Principal reported on the following:

- a) The Country has now entered its second lockdown and the report was written prior to this. Members were informed of the number of cases of COVID-19 across the College and although there has been an increase only three sets of cohort have needed to isolate. The half term break helped to act as a “fire-break”. Members were informed of the actions being taken following the second lockdown; the wearing of mandatory face masks and working from home where possible being some examples of actions taken. However, there still remains a focus on face-to-face teaching. Due to the “fire-break” in Wales there are staff and students affected by this which the College is trying to accommodate. There is also an increased number of learners concerned about coming into the College campuses.

One of the Student Governors reported that as a dancer she is struggling to wear a face mask on her dance course and this has been raised by other students on her course. The Principal advised that she is working closely with the Learning Area Manager, Creative, to consider other health and safety measures that can be put in place whilst doing physical activity.

Members were reassured that measures are being taken and the Principal was thanked for the leadership taken about the wearing of face masks. Members asked about compliance with the wearing of face masks and were informed that the students had been excellent, with few students exempt from wearing a face mask. The Chair commended the excellent communication in place by the Principal and the College was felt to be in a strong position to manage the

challenging situation. The Staff Governors' feedback was invited. One Staff Governor advised that there was a lack of clarity on Day 1 regarding medical exemptions but this was quickly clarified and compliance had been very positive. The other Staff Governor didn't work directly with students but concurred that College communication had been exemplary. The College Principal was thanked as members considered the College to be well prepared.

- b) The Principal provided an update on staff absence, which is reported daily to the DfE. Absence was no higher than this time last year. Due to home working absence has been lower over the last 6 months with some staff isolating due to family members having COVID-19.
- c) Members received an update on safeguarding and mental health. The College is in the process of purchasing "Together all" a digital mental health support service for both staff and students which can be accessed 24/7 all year round. My Concern referrals have also increased compared to this time last year. However this is a new system and the focus has been on embedding it. As there is now more reliance on blended learning a concern is raised if an individual is not heard from within 7 days. There has also been a significant increase in enrolments of students with educational health care plans which need additional support and the College is lobbying for additional funding to support these learners. Members questioned whether the safeguarding team has sufficient support and resource. Members were informed that all teams have been affected by the pandemic and the volumes are not disproportionate in the safeguarding team. There is monthly supervision taking place and access to support is available.
- d) GCSE resits have been taking place, involving over 500 resits in Maths and English. External buildings have been hired to allow social distancing measures to be introduced. Attendance has been positive and thanks were provided to the Vice Principal and his team. Members questioned the recruitment of staff, especially in construction. The Principal advised that the College has gone to market for four additional staff and anticipate that the full time posts will be filled by the end of this term.
- e) Members received an update on annual conversation completion rates. Members questioned why the creative faculty was lower in comparison to other faculties. Members were informed that this faculty has a lot of fractional staff whereas other areas have more full time staff. Members asked if all fractional staff had appraisals and were informed that it was dependent upon their hours and those with minimal hours would not have an annual conversation completed.
- f) Adult funding is a great concern and poses a great risk. Currently the College is well above the thresholds to secure the full allocation. However, WECA/ESFA have no tolerance levels this year and assume that the adult

provision will be spent. It is challenging to secure funding when adults are not on site and there is no provision in this year's budget for under delivery.

- g) Reference was made to the recruitment update appended to the report however this is not the final return.
- h) Attendance is a concern, with campuses feeling very quiet. Learners need to appreciate that the College is not running a pick and mix model and it is not possible for staff to run lessons with half the learners on site and half online. One of the Staff Governors confirmed that he is evidencing reduced attendance in his classes. The Principal advised that attendance data is being recorded for government but it is hard to engage learners when they are not at College.
- i) Diploma in Sporting Excellence (DISE) – Corporation approval was sought for a subcontracting arrangement with London Irish Rugby Football Union Club in order to sub-contract 10 Rugby DISE learners. Confirmation was received that the College has undertaken due diligence on this club and this arrangement is low risk.
- j) Members were informed that at the last meeting a lease with The Galleries, Bristol was approved. However, this is no longer to be a lease arrangement but a Tenancy at Will which will no longer require Corporation to sign and seal.
- k) Article 127 Audit – Members asked whether this audit has yet been completed. The Chief Financial Officer reported that the ESFA has been slow at addressing this audit and it is not a priority for them. The Clerk advised that she had chased up the audit for the November Audit Committee meeting but was informed that it would not be available in time and would need to come to the following Audit Committee meeting. Members asked that if the findings were adverse to share the report as soon as possible with the Audit Committee and as a minimum share with the Chair of the Audit Committee.
- l) Members noted the update on the Self-Assessment process and asked how much of the December Corporation meeting would be dedicated to its consideration. The Principal advised that it had been discussed at the pre-Corporation meeting and due to the annual accounts being a significant agenda item for the December Corporation meeting it was agreed to carry forward the College Self-Assessment report to the January Corporation meeting to allow more time for the consideration it deserves. The Clerk also advised that a presentation is usually held just before the start of the Corporation meeting in support of that agenda item.

The Principal was thanked for her leadership during this challenging time.

Alicia Chappell refrained from the following resolution.

The report was noted and it was resolved:

To approve the sub-contracting arrangement with London Irish Rugby Football Union for the 16-18 DISE Rugby programme.

9. **Management Information (Agenda Item 8)**

Management Accounts exception report – The Chief Financial Officer apologised for the late receipt of the management accounts that would now be added to the document library on Convene as received too late to present at this meeting. Following their review questions were invited direct to herself or the Head of Finance. The reasons for their late production was referenced in the report together with the fluid situation faced and the priority to ensure that appropriate staffing budgets are provided to enable students to be taught. Following the first re-forecasting exercise of 2020/21 the budgets are tight, there are a number of risks and no pay award has been included. Regular meetings are being held to review and monitor the forecast.

The Chair commented that the College has evidence of historical good financial planning which is reassuring, especially as other Colleges are facing financial difficulties.

The report was noted.

10. **Other Item of Urgent Business (Agenda Item 3)**

The Chief Financial Officer reported that the College has received payment of the full capital funding, with all works to be completed by the end of March 2021. Appended to the report was a breakdown of the works against the proposed capital spend. It was reported that the College has submitted the first monitoring form to the ESFA and, although acknowledged, there has been no formal approval granted for the proposed spend. There is also a lack of clarity whether Colleges are to just proceed with the works.

Members were informed that should some of the proposed work not fit the ESFA criteria there will be a need to fund these items directly through College resources at a cost of approximately £300k. The Chair advised that the report serves to raise the level of risk to funding, regardless of where the funds will derive. Confirmation was also received that this risk has been added to the College's risk register.

Alicia Chappell refrained from the following resolution.

The report was noted and it was resolved:

To approve the full proposed capital spend on the understanding that some items may be funded directly through College resources should the ESFA disallow from the grant claim.

11. **Single Equality – Policy & 2019/20 Annual Report (Agenda Item 9)**

The Vice Principal presented the Single Equality annual report and introduced a new Inclusion Policy, as a replacement to the current Single Equality policy. Members raised the need for equality and diversity and inclusion to be considered at a strategic level with KPIs filtering to strategy and policy. It was suggested that there could be elements to consider at the next review of the College strategy. The Vice Principal also advised that the Inclusion Committee will be developing an action plan that sits alongside the College Self-Assessment Report.

Members questioned whether Black Lives Matter and race equality has had an impact. Members were informed that there had been a positive impact with staff submitting ideas and a forum has been established for individuals to feed into the Inclusion Committee. This has also been a College theme this year through professional development and links to the People Strategy. There has also been a focus on staff brilliance where individuals who make a difference are identified.

One member raised about One Bristol Curriculum and had mentioned to the College previously about their involvement with this initiative. The College Principal reported that this had been raised with the Assistant Principal, HE and Adult and that she would provide an update at the next meeting.

It was resolved:

To approve the Single Equality Report 2019/20, for publication on the College's website, and the Inclusion Policy.

Action: College Principal.

12. **Teaching, Learning & Assessment Report (Agenda Item 10)**

The Vice Principal presented the report, including a revised Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. The Vice Principal apologised that there had been an error in the report and reference to the Chief Operations Officer was meant to say Chief Executive Officer. Members were informed that the strategy now included further clarity and detail of how staff can practically implement the strategy and are supported with training. The Staff Governors' views on this strategy were invited. In response, Members were informed that the impact indicators were useful and clear and training had been linked to the 3i's – intent, implementation and impact. It was suggested that measures form part of the intended review of KPIs.

Members congratulated the Vice Principal on the revised strategy and for providing clarity to the practitioners.

The report was noted and it was resolved:

To approve the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy 2020-2022.

13. **Governors' strategy event and College Strategy (Agenda Item 12)**

Members received an updated College Strategy, following the Governors' strategy event. The College strategy will next be reviewed in light of the May 2021 Governors' strategy event.

It was resolved:

To approve the College Strategy 2020/21-2024/25.

14. **Chair of the Corporation/Governor 1-1 Report (Agenda Item 13)**

Members received a report covering the Chair of the Corporation/Governor 1-1s, which included four key themes for agreement by the Corporation.

The report was noted and it was resolved:

To endorse the four key themes contained within the report.

15. **SGS Academy Trust (Agenda Item 14)**

The Chair introduced a report from the new Chair of SGS Academy Trust Board. The report informed of the appointment of a new Chair following the resignation of the previous Chair (John Huggett) due to personal circumstances. Members were also informed that John Huggett had been one of the original Members of SGSAT and the Corporation is invited to agree and implement a process to replace John as a Member of the Trust.

Also reported were changes required to the Trust's Articles of Association, at the request of the DfE, as a requirement to secure funding for building improvement at The Forest High School. The changes are largely cosmetic however it has provided the opportunity for the provisions concerning appointment of Trustees to be revisited. A proposed revision being that SGS Corporation acting alone may appoint two Trustees, as opposed to one Trustee in the current Articles. The adoption process and authority requirements were also referenced in the report.

For clarification, the CEO & Executive Principal explained the difference between the role of a Member and Trustee and it was suggested that the Search Committee is involved in the search for a new Member and Trustee(s). Members asked if a Corporation Member could be considered to fill one of the Trustee vacancies. The Clerk advised that in principle this was permissible however, conflicts of interests need to be considered especially as one other Corporation Member and the Group CEO & Executive Principal were also SGSAT Trustees. Also the skills and experience requirements of the Board need to be taken into consideration.

The Chair invited feedback on revisions to the Articles and none was received. Members were also invited to provide the Chair with the authority to vote on the Special Resolution of the Trust for the adoption of the revised Articles of Association.

Members were asked to provide nominations, to replace John Huggett as a Member of the Trust and to fill the current Trustee vacancy, to the Clerk. The Chair also offered to speak with the Chair of the Search Committee and invite Member nominations. If a Trustee nomination was received from SGS Corporation it was agreed that there would be no need to involve the Search Committee at this stage.

As Trustees of SGSAT, Phil Eames and Kevin Hamblin refrained from the following resolution.

The report was noted and it was resolved:

To delegate authority to the Chair of the Corporation to vote, on behalf of SGS Corporation, on the approval of the SGSAT Articles of Association via Special Resolution.

Action: Chair of the Corporation.

16. **Careers and Employability Advocate (Agenda Item 15)**

Members received a Careers and Employability Advocate role descriptor for approval. Members were reminded that Matt Davis (Staff Governor) had been appointed to this position. Matt confirmed his satisfaction with the role descriptor which fitted well with his current role of Adult Planning and Partnership Coordinator.

It was resolved:

To approve the Careers and Employability Advocate role descriptor.

17. **Stakeholder Engagement Report (Agenda Item 16)**

Members received a report updating the Corporation on Stakeholder Engagement activity during 2019/20, including the impact of COVID-19 on this activity.

The report was noted.

18. **GDPR & Freedom of Information Act report (including any revisions to the Model Publication Scheme) (Agenda Item 17)**

Members received a report providing an update on Freedom of Information requests and data subject access requests received during 2019/20. A one year extension to the SGS Group Freedom of Information Policy (including the approved model publication scheme) and the SGS Data Privacy and Protection Policy was requested.

The report was noted and it was resolved:

To approve a one year extension to the SGS Group Freedom of Information Policy and SGS Data Privacy and Protection Policy.

19. **Framework of College policies (Agenda Item 18)**

Members received a report outlining the current status of the College's Framework of Policies which has been maintained to ensure compliance with the Department for Education guidance on the statutory policies required by Further Education Colleges.

The report was noted.

At this point the CEO & Executive Principal, College Principal, Staff and Student Governors and members of the Executive Team were invited to leave the meeting.

20. **Remuneration Committee (Agenda item 19)**

Confidential Item.

21. **Confidentiality (Agenda Item 20)**

Members agreed that due to business/personal sensitivities the following items are to be retained as confidential: Notes from the Strategy event, Appendix 1 (item 12) and Remuneration Committee (item 19) and minute 19.

22. **Assessment of meeting (Agenda Item 21)**

A summary of feedback in relation to the meeting held 8 October 2020 was received. Members were encouraged to complete the meeting assessment forms and return to the Clerk.

23. **Date of Next Meeting (Agenda Item 22)**

Thursday 3 December 2020 at 4pm via Microsoft TEAMS.

The Chair mentioned that some governors had put themselves forward to form a KPI review group and any other further interest is to be directed to the Clerk. It was suggested that governors are contacted to invite views on the types of KPIs to be considered.

The Chair also mentioned that there are vacancies on various Committees and the Clerk will be emailing governors to invite expressions of interest.

Members were pleased to see attendance by the Student Governors and the additional input from the Staff Governors.

The meeting commenced at 4.03pm

Sophie Green joined the meeting at 4.09pm (just before item 1)

Sophie Chester-Glyn joined the meeting at 4.13pm (during item 1)

Kelly Gillett left the meeting at 4.26pm (after item 1)

Ben Short joined the meeting at 4.29pm (after item 3)

Rick Sturge left the meeting at 5pm (after item 8)

Jude Saunderson left the meeting at 5.15pm (during item 11)

Alicia Chappell, Nicole Clark, Matt Davis, Roger Ellis, Kevin Hamblin, Gavin Murray and Sara-Jane Watkins left the meeting at 5.57pm (after item 19)

Lynne Craig left the meeting at 6.05pm (after item 23)

The meeting closed at 6.08pm.

The meeting was quorate.