



SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE AND STROUD COLLEGE
FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

Approved minutes of a meeting of South Gloucestershire and Stroud College
Further Education Corporation
Held on 3 November 2022
Conducted via Microsoft TEAMS

Present:

David Hagg	(Chair)
Douglas Blackstock	
Louise Bright	
Sophie Chester-Glyn	
Lynne Craig	
Mike Croker	
Phil Eames	
Kevin Hamblin	(CEO & Executive Principal)
Dave Merrett	
Irene Molodtsov	
Khadija Nisar	
Gary Parsons	
Ben Short	
Rick Sturge	

In Attendance:

Gavin Murray	(Deputy Principal)
Jude Saunderson	(Chief Financial Officer)
Sara-Jane Watkins	(College Principal)
Sharon Glover	(Clerk)

When asked by the Chair, it was agreed to un-star item 16.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Moira Foster-Fitzgerald, Catherine Green and Rick Sturge. Matt Davis did not attend the meeting and Sophie Green is on maternity leave.

As this would be Ben Short's last Corporation meeting, the Chair, on behalf of the Corporation, asked that thanks be extended to Ben for his service.

The Chair also congratulated the Clerk on achieving her 15 years' service to the Corporation, which was recognised with flowers from the Corporation.

Gary Parsons and Becky Riddell (Heads of 6th Form) were welcomed to the meeting for their presentation on A Levels.

2. **Presentation – A Levels**

The presentation covered the following: Position Statement, Challenges, Key Goals, Subject Areas, the wider curriculum, Academies, Aspirations for outcomes, Aspirations for TLAF, building challenges and marketing, brand and outreach.

Members were informed of the difficulties to align with College open events as A Level provision is viewed by learners as standalone. The College is competing against secondary schools in relation to learners and staff with A Block accommodation at capacity. A plan for the next 5-years has been developed with the College being the destination of choice for the North of Bristol with a wider curriculum offer comparable to outstanding Colleges being the College's USP. The aim is to provide a modern teaching concept based around the WECA priorities by developing its brand and outreach. Members were informed of enrichment provided and how best practices are shared within the team. However, there are limitations faced with accommodation as it is full to capacity and capital bids are being submitted. An invitation was extended to governors should they wish to have a tour of A Block.

Gary and Becky were thanked for a very informative presentation. Members noted the aspiration to push learners towards Russell Group Universities but made the point that the focus should be to target Universities that suit each individual learner. The presenters agreed that the Russell Group was not suitable for all learners but the message related to maximising learner aspirations.

Members observed that the subjects offered were very humanities based and lacked curriculum on data, science and technology and of the need for more females to enter these sectors. Members were informed of the need to pay a market supplement to attract tutors to deliver these subjects. A review of other types of education was raised as the IT world is changing rapidly and the need to offer a range of languages of the future, rather than the norm, to attract learners of the future.

Members were supportive of the aims of the 6th Form and questioned how best practices are shared across departments/subjects. Members were informed that the business academies had taken a different approach to other College departments in that it provides staff time off for enrichment and although started, further collaboration is needed, with the additional engagement of Higher Education staff.

The Chair thanked Gary and Becky for their presentation and how it fitted with the longer term aims to grow the College, recognising that A Levels are an important part of the College.

At this point, Becky Riddell (Head of 6th Form) left the meeting and Khadija Nisar and Ben Short were welcomed to the meeting.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

As SGSCSL Directors, the interests of Louise Bright, Kevin Hamblin and Dave Merrett were noted in agenda item 9.

4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held 6 October 2022 were approved as a correct record, ready for signing by the Chair.

5. **Corporation action log**

Members received an update on the action log. On behalf of the Chief Group Services Officer, the Clerk reported that she could not find any safeguarding information provided by the AoC and that it was something that the College Principal or CEO & Executive Principal could raise with their AoC contacts. The Clerk agreed to follow up on the second part of the action.

6. **Stakeholder Engagement report**

Members received the annual Stakeholder Engagement report, including the College's approach to stakeholder engagement.

The report was noted.

7. **Treasury Management annual report and strategy**

The Chief Financial Officer presented a similar strategy to previous years and reported that one of the loans held with Lloyds TSB Bank is due for repayment in August 2023. Following cashflow profiling, and taking into consideration the increase in interest rates, it was proposed that the College looks to repay the loan earlier to save on interest payments in the current year. Members were supportive of this approach as it was financial prudent to do so.

Members were informed that a high interest account had been opened to ensure funds available to cover the usual dip in March. Members raised that there is a lot of money

in 0% interest accounts and were informed that the Finance Team are being challenged so that any surplus funds can be saved in the Nationwide account earning just over 2% interest. There is no investment in stocks and shares thereby no investment risks.

Members questioned the impact of the rise in cost of living on students and whether there is more demand for bursaries. A note to the Corporation on the impact the wider economic issues are having on the College was requested to be circulated outside of the meeting.

It was resolved:

- a) **To note the Annual Report on Performance and Treasury Management for 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2022.**
- b) **To approve the strategy and plan to be pursued during 2022/23.**

Action: Chief Financial Officer.

8. **Estates Strategy**

The CEO & Executive Principal provided a position statement on the development of the Estates Strategy, which will incorporate the master planning work currently being undertaken.

The report was noted.

9. **John Huggett Engineering Hall & Ground Floor C11, Berkeley**

Confidential Item.

10. **CEO & Executive Principal's Report**

Confidential Item.

11. **Principal's Report**

Members received the Principal's report and were informed that this term was calmer than the last. Members requested an update on staff mandatory training and were informed that there is a high completion rate for safeguarding whilst Prevent/GDPR are the focus at SLT meetings. The Principal was also asked to share press releases with the Corporation to keep them updated.

The report was noted.

Action: Principal.

12. **Management Information**

The Head of Finance presented the management accounts exception report and apologised for a formatting issue in the Executive Summary narrative and informed that the accounts will be replaced on Convene. Members were informed that reforecasting had been brought forward due to the tight budget in 2022/23 as well as the impact of current economic climate. There are concerns over the cost of gas, which has now been fixed for 11 months. This provides more certainty of costs until March 2023 when the government introduced cap expires. Electricity costs are currently being reviewed as there may be savings on original budget. There has been a pay underspend driven by a high number of staff vacancies, and overall the financial position is not a concern for this time of year.

Following scrutiny of the accounts, members questioned where agency costs sit in the accounts as pressure on staff was recognised. Confirmation was received that these costs feed into the non-pay costs with direct delivery pay budget vired to cover any such costs. There are currently large agency costs within the Additional Learning Support area and pay budget has been vired to non-pay. This can result in agency transfer costs if agency workers transfer to the College's employment. There is an HR budget specifically for this type of recruitment. Staffing is under constant review as there is such a large volume of vacancies that are hard to fill. The most challenging areas for churn and growth being English and Maths and Special Educational Needs where 1-1 support is needed. One member raised that his brother-in-law owns an agency that supplies staff to Further Education Colleges and the Chief Financial Officer agreed to establish if the College uses this company to ensure there are no potential conflicts.

Members raised concern about the increased pressure on staff, which is being recognised by the College and staff are being supported wherever possible. This view was endorsed by the Staff Governor. Members also questioned whether delivery and educational outcomes are affected through the use of agency staff. The Deputy Principal advised that it is difficult to support individuals and with six subject updating days it is currently a challenging time.

Members questioned whether consideration had been given to the rationalisation of the curriculum offer. The Principal advised that if the curriculum is retracted then the whole organisation would need to shrink. Assurance was provided that action is being taken to address the vacancies. Maths and English is a mandatory requirement but challenging to fill and impacts on funding. The College is being managed as best it can against a complex situation affecting the whole sector. On the positive, the College has not moved to remote delivery, unlike some other Colleges, and is the only College in the South West to have no union action.

The CEO & Executive Principal added that there is a strategy of growth and of the need to keep pace with non-discretionary spend. In addition, it is challenging to

predict on a yearly basis where there will be issues. The Staff Governor advised that they had to cease the offer for accounting qualifications in the 6th Form as they couldn't find the staff to teach this subject. Every year the College doesn't know what students will be studying until the enrolment date. It was suggested whether a 1-page disaster recovery plan with options for the College should be produced. The Chair advised that at the January Corporation meeting there will be strategic discussions and it would then be timely to consider the points raised. In the meantime, the CEO & Executive Principal and College Principal are closely monitoring the situation and mitigating impacts where possible.

The report was noted.

Action: Chief Financial Officer.

13. **Governance Self-Assessment (including Governor attendance data and Training and Development plan)**

Members received a detailed report and the Chair proposed that as there is no formal requirement to validate the grading for the Governance Self-Assessment that it remains ungraded. Following detailed consideration of the outputs by a group of Governors, members were asked whether the draft Governance SAR seemed reasonable. Questions were invited but none received. There were no further training and development needs identified in addition to those identified in the report.

It was resolved:

- a) **To note the collated results from the questionnaires completed as part of the 2021/2022 Governance Self-Assessment process.**
- b) **To note the 2021/2022 Governor attendance data.**
- c) **To approve the 2021/2022 Governance SAR and 2022/2023 action plan.**

14. **External governance review**

The Clerk presented a report on the requirement for College's to have external governance reviews on a 3-yearly basis, together with a proposal for Corporation to establish an informal External Governance Review Group comprising of the Chair and Vice-Chair(s) of the Corporation, Group CEO & Executive Principal, Clerk to the Corporation and two other Corporation Members. Delegated authority was also sought for the Group to undertake a tender for a suitable reviewer and make recommendations to Corporation for approval and to work with the reviewer to determine scope, objectives and plan for the review. Expressions of interest in joining the Group were invited to the Clerk to the Corporation. The College Principal offered to join the Group.

The Chair informed that the Clerk had already undertaken research of companies offering these services and indicative costs and was thanked for the work so far undertaken.

It was resolved:

To establish an informal External Governance Review Group and provide delegated authority to the Group to undertake a tender for a suitable reviewer and make recommendations to Corporation for approval, and to work with the reviewer to determine scope, objectives and plan for the review.

15. **Appointment to Committees**

The Clerk reported changes to Committee membership for Corporation approval.

It was resolved that:

- a) **Sophie Green and Irene Molodtsov join the Audit Committee, with effect from 1 December 2022, to replace Ben Short and provide an additional Corporation Member on this Committee, as requested by the Audit Committee.**
- b) **Lynne Craig remains on the Search Committee and Sophie Green steps down as a member of this Committee, from 1 December 2022, upon her return from maternity leave.**

16. **Teaching, Learning & Assessment Report**

Members questioned whether there are lines of enquiries for future deep dives and how improvements are reported back. Confirmation was received that there are lines of enquiries and liaison takes place with the campus Assistant Principals and the Professional Development team, with actions being monitored by the Quality Department. When asked how Corporation members are to be kept updated, it was reported that updates on deep dives and resulting actions will be provided in the Teaching, Learning and Assessment reports.

The report was noted.

17. **HR Strategy and HR Annual Report**

Members received the Annual HR report for 2021/22 and updated Our People Strategy for 2022-2024.

**The report was noted and it was resolved:
To approve the updated Our People Strategy for 2022-2024.**

18. **Framework of College policies**

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.

19. **Post Implementation Reviews**

Members were informed that this item is to be carried forward to a future meeting.

20. **Assessment of meeting**

A summary of feedback in relation to the meeting held 6 October 2022 was received.

21. **Items of Urgent Business**

The Chair re-iterated the Corporation's thanks to Ben Short for his contribution over the past 4-years. Ben thanked everyone and apologised for his lack of engagement latterly but offered his technical expertise if needed by the College in the future.

22. **Confidentiality**

Members agreed that due to business sensitivities, JHEH (item 9), CEO & Executive Principal's report (item 10), and minutes 9 and 10 should be treated as confidential.

23. **Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 1 December 2022 at 5pm, Stroud Campus.

The Chair asked if everyone had received a hard copy of the Employer Engagement brochure as this provided a good example of external College engagement and the Principal was thanked for its production.

The meeting commenced at 4.02pm.

Khadija Nisar joined the meeting at 4.09pm and left the meeting at 5.15pm.

Louise Bright left the meeting at 4.34pm (during item 2).

The meeting closed at 5.55pm.

The meeting was quorate.