



**SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE AND STROUD COLLEGE**  
**FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION**

Approved minutes of a meeting of South Gloucestershire and Stroud College  
Further Education Corporation  
Held on 27 January 2022, via Microsoft Teams

**Present:** David Hagg (Chair)  
Douglas Blackstock  
Louise Bright  
Steph Brooks  
Sarah Cartlidge  
Lynne Craig  
Mike Croker  
Phil Eames  
Catherine Green  
Sophie Green  
Kevin Hamblin (CEO & Executive Principal)  
Dave Merrett  
Irene Molodtsov  
Gary Parsons  
Ben Short  
Rick Sturge

**In Attendance:** Gavin Murray (Vice Principal, Performance, Standards & Effectiveness)  
Sara-Jane Watkins (College Principal)  
Sharon Glover (Clerk)

The Chair welcomed Douglas Blackstock to his first meeting of the Corporation.

The Chair also asked whether members wish to un-star any of the starred agenda items and no requests to do so were received.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Sophie Chester-Glyn and Jude Saunderson. Matt Davis did not attend the meeting.

## 2. **Presentation – Adult provision**

The Assistant Principal, Apprenticeships and Adults, was welcomed to the meeting. Members received a presentation from the College Principal covering funding, types of study, concerns faced and actions being taken. Key points raised and discussed:

- Enrolments down on last year, in particular in higher value areas. This is a costly provision to deliver per learner, especially as they are spread across many courses.
- Changes to WECA delivery requirements has negatively impacted on SGS delivery and prevents engagement of learners. Members suggested that this is raised with the WECA Chair.
- Nationwide concern that there has been a decrease in adult enrolments.
- Members questioned whether there are concerns that SGS have to repay funding if delivery is not face-to-face. Members were informed that 16-18 provision has been face-to-face all year. WECA are insistent that adult learners also attend face-to-face and for this type of provision more flexibility of delivery is needed or there is a risk that delivery of this provision will be lost to other training providers.
- When asked about the impact of Covid on this provision type, members were informed that there had not been the mass unemployment expected and as a result of Brexit there are fewer adults and employers are struggling to fill vacancies. Therefore, training is lower on their priorities, although ethnic groups are particularly worried about Covid, the employment situation is having a greater impact than Covid, with online courses lower than this time last year.
- When asked how the Corporation could lend their support, they were informed to be mindful of the current situation when planning budgets and resources and for any governors with contacts at WECA to communicate the challenges being faced. It was also suggested that the employer community are engaged to raise concerns with WECA and Rick Sturge offered to speak with the Assistant Principal about this outside of the meeting. The Assistant Principal raised the need for Corporation to recognise that the College has to be very reactive and although currently curriculum and budget planning is taking place there is a need to have an immediate reforecast.
- Members raised that as part of the Skills Bill/Lifelong Learning entitlement there will be a new funding regime but government agencies are standing in the way of government ambitions and the AoC need to pick up on this. There is also a need to start listening to market demands in relation to course requirements and delivery methods. In order for change to occur there will be a need for government systems to greatly change and for the points raised to

be taken up nationally; with the Leader of the Council; and raised at the next ESFA meeting with the College.

**Action: Rick Sturge.**

*At this point the Assistant Principal, Apprenticeships and Adults left the meeting.*

### 3. **Declarations of Interest**

The following declarations of interest were raised and noted:

- a) New declarations of interest for Douglas Blackstock:
  - President, European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
  - CEO, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education until 31/10/2021
  - Board Member, Qualifications Wales
  - Board Member, Cilex Legal Regulation
  - Trustee, Wynstones Ltd
  - Board Member, Stroud and Cotswold Alternative Provision School
  - Commissioner, Lifelong Education Commission
  - Douglas also raised at the meeting that he was now a Board Member, The University of Law
- b) New declarations of interest for Louise Bright:
  - Fellow Learned Society of Wales
  - Director of SGS Commercial Services Limited
- c) Change to declaration of interest for Kevin Hamblin:
  - Resigned as a Trustee of SGS Academy Trust
- d) Change to declaration of interest for Laura Boutle (Co-Opted Member and external Chair of the Search Committee):
  - Resignation from Avison Young on 30 December 2021 and no ongoing interest in the company.
  - Employed by Montagu Evans, a property advisory, as a Salaried Partner on 10 January 2022.
- e) Interests in the following agenda items were also noted:
  - Catherine Green in agenda item 13 relating to her re-appointment.
  - Lynne Craig, Phil Eames and Kevin Hamblin in agenda items 13 and 15 relating to SGS Academy Trust.

4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held 2 December 2021 were approved as a correct record, ready for signing by the Chair.

5. **Matters Arising From Those Minutes**

Actions on the action log were monitored and updates provided.

6. **Voice of the Learner**

The Vice Principal presented the report, which included outcomes from the 2021/22 First Impressions Survey. In response to a governor question relating to response rates, confirmation was received that it had been higher when compared to Higher Education and FE Choices response rates. Assurance was received that there is high confidence in a fair spread of responses across differing groups with the focus being on where improvements can be made. When asked, confirmation was received that results are fed back at department level and via Voice of the Learner meetings. Governors raised that the positive outcomes should be used to promote the College.

The Chair invited the views of the Student Governors, who felt that the results were reflective of the views of the students and were a good reflection on the quality of staff who are having to teach during challenging times with staff absences due to the pandemic. The possibility of more communication to promote this survey was raised.

Members questioned whether the positive feedback had had a positive impact on retention rates and were informed of the “swap, don’t drop” initiative which ensured that there hadn’t been a significant drop in retention rates. Members also asked how the results compared with other Colleges. Confirmation was received that comparisons with AoC South West data is undertaken and that next week there is an AoC meeting and results will be included in the next report.

Members questioned whether feedback at the Voice of the Learner meetings is consistent with survey outcomes. Confirmation was received that in previous years there had been consistency but difficult to confirm this year as the Student Union are now responsible for the surveys. However, Voice of the Learner outputs are shared with the Senior Leadership Team, who oversee action implementation.

Having attended Voice of the Learner meetings, members were pleased with the exceptionally good report and asked that their thanks be passed onto staff and for governors to be invited to future Voice of the Learner events.

**The report was noted.**

## 7. **Inclusion – Policy & 2020/21 Annual Report**

The Vice Principal presented the report, including an updated Annual Diversity and Inclusion report, for publication, based on stakeholder feedback. Attention was drawn to progress achieved against the outgoing objectives and three new equality objectives were presented. Also appended to the report was the outcome of an Equality Charters mapping exercise and having taken this into consideration together with the Diversity and Inclusion annual report no changes to the policy were being proposed.

One of the recently appointed Child Protection, Safeguarding, Special Educational Needs & Disability, Equality & Diversity Governor Advocates confirmed that following recent training she had no concerns with the documentation provided. Members noted that there was better achievement for disadvantaged students compared to averages across the College. Members questioned whether the Welcome banner in the report was sufficiently diverse and the Vice Principal agreed to review this, in addition to the College's welcome signage from which this had derived.

Members were impressed with the pictorial data and asked whether the ethnic mix of the wider management population can also be included. Members questioned whether the level of detail towards progress against the Inclusion Objectives would be better suited as an internal report with a summary of the high-level changes for further development. Members also questioned the process in place to take forward these actions. Confirmation was received that the actions will be progressed by the Inclusion Committee and members suggested that the Governor Advocates provided oversight of the actions and, if needed, raised concerns with the Corporation.

Members questioned whether the policy should be re-named Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging in order to promote the culture of SGS being “next generation” employer and organisation. Following discussion, it was suggested that this is discussed by the Inclusion Committee. Members also sought clarity of SGS's definition of neurodiversity. The Vice Principal explained that this relates to thinking and learning in different ways and how the College can assist learners. It was suggested that the Inclusion Committee also determines the definition for the College.

**The report was noted and it was resolved:**

**To approve the SGS Inclusion Policy and annual Inclusion and Diversity report, subject to changes discussed, for publication on the College website.**

**Action: Vice Principal, Performance, Standards & Effectiveness.**

8. **Human Resources Policies**

The Chief Group Services Officer presented revisions to various HR policies. When asked, the Staff Governor commented that they were helpful reading and the more managers can be trained on them the better.

Clarification was also sought, and received, on the new Director of People & Organisational Culture role and how it fitted with the role of the Group Services Officer.

**It was resolved:**

**To approve the Disciplinary Policy (Staff including Senior Post Holders), Grievance (Staff including Senior Post Holders), Investigation Guidelines (Staff), Capability (Staff including Senior Post Holders) and Redundancy Policy and Procedure.**

9. **Management Information**

The Principal reported that the management accounts were in a positive position. Members sought, and received, clarity over the contribution to the bottom line from Adult provision, which contributed well. Members asked how this compared to other types of provision and the Principal provided an indicative breakdown for comparison purposes. The Principal also offered to have a separate detailed conversation to share the curriculum planning for those interested.

Members questioned the reason for the bad debt provision for SGS Commercial Services and although it was thought to refer to We-Link, clarification would be provided.

Reference was also made by the Chair to the financial KPIs included in the Management Accounts.

**The report was noted.**

**Action: CEO & Executive Principal.**

10. **KPI Report**

The Vice Principal presented the newly developed KPI report, relating to the December ESFA returns, and feedback was invited. Members felt the KPIs were easy to review and recognised the areas of concerns, which mirrored common themes across the sector.

**The report was noted.**

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

Confidential.

12. **Principal's Report**

The Principal highlighted the following key points from her report:

- a) Covid impacts – Learner attendance is an ongoing concern due to covid, which is also having an impact on staff absence. 16-18 delivery continues face-to-face but latterly there is a reduction in covid cases.
- b) Horizon 38 – If this building is not secured then there will be significant issues for construction curriculum in the new academic year due to the ongoing demand for apprenticeships.
- c) Safeguarding – There continues to be an increase in support requests and the College is struggling to obtain external support. Members asked whether there is sufficient support and training provided for staff dealing with these concerns. Members were assured that the safeguarding team is fully resourced with a budget set aside for staff investment, however, external agency support is lacking. Members concurred that they were aware of significant external resource support with a lack of social workers and a wait for mental health support. The Principal advised that due to the lack of this support, learners are turning more to the College for support. The Chief Group Services added that the external support services cannot cope with the volumes faced and the rise in suicide attempts and self-harming are cries for help with young people being let down by society.
- d) 16-18 funding – Although the Department for Education has announced an increase to the 16-18 budget, non-pay increase challenges still remain. There is also a need to consider a pay progression policy to support retention. Members asked how the proposed pay award compares with other Colleges and were informed that other College have not yet confirmed details about pay awards and the Unions are requesting 5%, which is unrealistic. There is an expectation to review staff pay but there isn't sufficient funding provided. The Chair raised that non-consolidated pay is of concern and that he has encouraged the CEO & Executive Principal and College Principal to consider consolidated pay awards but the long-term financial impact and affordability are key considerations.
- e) Confidential Item.

**The report was noted and it was resolved:  
To support the presentation of a 3-year financial analysis for Queen's  
Road in July 2022.**

On behalf of the Corporation the Chair asked that their thanks are passed onto all College staff for the fantastic job that they are doing.

13. **Search Committee**

The minutes from the Search Committee meeting held 13 Jan 22 were noted. In the absence of the Vice-Chair of the Search Committee the Chair of the Corporation presented the following recommendations:

- a) Following consideration of the criteria set by the Search Committee, the re-appointment of Catherine Green, at the end of her 1-year term of office, for a further 3-years to complete her first 4-year term of office was recommended.
- b) Following consideration of the criteria set by the Search Committee, the re-appointment of Sophie Chester-Glyn, at the end of her first 4-year term of office, for a further 4 years was recommended.
- c) Members were informed that the Corporation had been invited by SGSAT to search for a new SGSAT member. Following the Search Committee meeting, the Chair of SGSAT suggested that, due to external sensitivities about Corporation decision making, the Members make the appointment upon recommendation from the Corporation. Members were reminded that the Chair of the Corporation acts as a Member on behalf of the Corporation.

Following discussion by the Search Committee, Neill Ricketts was recommended for appointment to become a member of SGSAT. Confirmation was received that Neill would be happy to be considered for this appointment.

Lynne Craig, Phil Eames and Kevin Hamblin refrained from resolution c).

**It was resolved:**

- a) **To re-appoint Catherine Green, at the end of her 1-year term of office, for a further 3-years to complete her first 4-year term of office.**
- b) **To re-appoint Sophie Chester-Glyn, at the end of her first 4-year term of office, for a further 4 years.**
- c) **To recommend to the Members of SGS Academy Trust the appointment of Neill Ricketts to become a Member of SGSAT.**

14. **Governor Development Event**

Members noted the report of the Governor Development Event held 13 January 2022.



14. **SGS Academy Trust**

Lynne Craig, Phil Eames and Kevin Hamblin's interests in this agenda item were noted.

The SGS Academy Trust Annual Report and Financial Statements and Operational Review report were noted.

15. **Items of Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

16. **Confidentiality**

Members agreed that due to business sensitivities the CEO & Executive Principal's report (item 11), confidential part of the Principal's report and confidential appendices (item 12), SGSAT Annual Report and accompanying appendices and minutes 11a-d and 12e should be treated as confidential.

17. **Assessment of meeting**

A summary of feedback in relation to the meeting held 2 December 2021 was received. Members were reminded to complete the feedback forms.

18. **Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 24 March 2022 at 5pm, Stroud Campus.

The Chair extended his thanks to the Executive Team members for their contribution and to governors for their comments.

Members were reminded of the Curriculum Conference scheduled for 17 February 2022 and members' attendance at this event was encouraged.

The meeting commenced at 4.02pm

Sophie Green joined the meeting at 4.05pm (during item 2)

Dave Merrett joined the meeting at 4.10pm (during item 2)

Ben Short joined the meeting at 4.13pm (during item 2)

Rick Sturge joined the meeting at 4.14pm (during item 2)

Pat Mcleod left the meeting at 4.44pm (after item 2)

Catherine Green left the meeting at 6.01pm (during item 12)

Moira Foster-Fitzgerald left the meeting at 6.23 (after item 19)

The meeting closed at 6.25pm.

The meeting was quorate.