



SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE AND STROUD COLLEGE
FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

Approved minutes of a meeting of South Gloucestershire and Stroud College
Further Education Corporation
Held on 30 April 2020, via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Moyra Pascoe	(Chair)
Sophie Chester-Glyn	
Lynne Craig	
Mike Croker	
Matt Davis	
Carly Dyson	
Phil Eames	
Roger Ellis	
Sophie Green	
David Hagg	
Kevin Hamblin	(CEO & Executive Principal)
Joe Lamonby	
Dave Merrett	
Richard O'Doherty	
Ben Short	

In Attendance:

Moira Foster-Fitzgerald	(Chief Group Services Officer)
Gavin Murray	(Vice Principal, Performance, Standards & Effectiveness)
Sara-Jane Watkins	(College Principal)
Sharon Glover	(Clerk)

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming Lynne Craig to her first Corporation meeting and introductions were provided. The Chair also thanked Richard O'Doherty for his service to the Corporation as this would be his last Corporation meeting.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Martin Jones and Jude Saunderson. Charlotte Argust and Juno Sharrock did not attend the meeting.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

As Directors of SGS Commercial Services Limited, declarations of interest from Kevin Hamblin and David Hagg in agenda item 13 were noted.

3. **Other Items of Urgent Business**

There were no other items of urgent business received.

4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The written resolution dealing with the business of the 26 March 2020 Corporation meeting was noted.

5. **Matters Arising From Those Minutes**

- a) Actions from the action log were monitored and updates provided. The CEO & Executive Principal reported that minute 9 from 30 Jan 20 Corporation meeting had been followed up and the case for development of the College estate continues to be promoted.

The Principal confirmed that the IMFC had been submitted and, due to COVID-19, is now being re-worked for presentation at the July Corporation meeting.

David Hagg confirmed that he had raised concerns about the IMFC with the Deputy CEO of the AoC, at the AoC Governance Conference, but this had made no difference. The Chair raised that following her previous contact with the ESFA they had not responded to the questions raised.

The Chair reported that there would be no CEO & Executive Principal's report this month but that there would be verbal updates from the CEO as part of the Principal's report.

6. **Principal's Report**

The Principal reported that the College is undertaking quality checks on online delivery and support is being provided to the teaching staff. Confirmation was received that the College has done everything possible to equip staff and learners for online learning. Having used Microsoft Teams across the curriculum staff and learners are fully equipped to use this software. At the beginning of the College closure there was 85% engagement of full-time learners but subsequent to Easter there

has been a decrease, which is not untypical at this time of year. One of the Staff Members confirmed that he had been teaching IT via Teams for the last 4 weeks and that attendance had been variable and concurred that there had been a reduction evidenced post Easter. Use of Teams has scored highly with learners but staff are concerned about the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Although the College is leading on online delivery it has been recognised that further work is to be undertaken on pedagogy. The Vice Principal reported that the College is looking to re-introduce Voice of the Learner forums and many governors intimated that they would like to be invited. The Vice Principal agreed to liaise with the Clerk in this respect.

The Corporation congratulated the College on being invited to deliver a global webinar as part of Microsoft's new Edu Day series of events in recognition of the speed and success in which the College was able to respond to COVID-19 using Microsoft Teams.

The Principal reported that one of the Staff Members has been involved with the engagement of new starts for adult learning. This had been a great success, with an overachievement of targets and the Staff Member was thanked for his contribution. A process has now begun to develop online hairdressing.

Members sought, and received, clarity of the meaning of the RAG ratings on the table of learners with safeguarding concerns pre-lockdown. Members were informed that there are a far greater number of individuals that are new to the team and there has been an increase in domestic abuse and mental health issues, in particular at Stroud campus. The College is looking at extending its offer of support where parents need respite and to those learners with greatest concerns. Members questioned whether there were any students the College was concerned about but had not received the level of contact needed. The Principal reported that the Safeguarding Team has done a fantastic job and only two individuals could not be contacted but are being dealt with by the Police. Members asked for an update on safeguarding concerns that SGS are working with the Police in the next Principal's report. Members were informed that the College can only share what they are permissible to share.

Members were informed that the College is recording a low number of absence and a reduction in sickness. This reflects the same position as City of Bristol College. Members sought clarity in relation to the staff absence levels table in that it looked like one individual was classified at Self-Isolating and working from home but then underneath it said authorised paid leave. The Principal agreed to seek clarity and report back.

Members congratulated the College on their support of the NHS and questioned whether there are cost implications for the College relating to the PPE equipment

distributed to the NHS. Members were informed that this was purchased using this year's recurring budget and in normal circumstances would have been used this year and replaced next year anyway.

Members questioned the approach being taken by the College in relation to the moderation of grading qualifications. The Principal reported that Ofqual communications are currently being reviewed and the detail of how this will work is awaited. The College is currently trying to rank learners but further clarity is needed and with a large institution such as the College this is challenging. There is also a lack of clarity for those qualifications that require a licence to practice and whether there may be a need for learners to return to College for end assessments. The Vice Principal added that subject teams have to meet to go through formal assessments following the 3-step approach from Ofqual. These teams have a standardised meeting approach to ensure commonality. Members raised that they wanted to ensure that the College has standardisation and moderation. When asked, confirmation was received that the College has been communicating with other Colleges and meetings with the WECA Mayor had also taken place. The College has also been sharing communications with City of Bristol College in order to build relations. Discussions about furloughing staff had also taken place and the general feeling is that furloughing of staff is not appropriate in the main but it was recognised that there are niche areas that are not government funded. SGS has made a commitment to staff of its best intentions not to furlough staff and the College has put in a lot of effort to lobby for funding.

Members questioned whether there are any sub-contracting issues to consider. It was confirmed that the College does not undertake sub-contracting for adult provision and the only area sub-contracted is the Diploma In Sporting Excellence (formerly AASE) provision. A watching brief is being maintained on the College's sports partners and they are all secure, with sub-contracting forecasts better than ever.

Members questioned the College's approach to refunding learners and were informed that all Higher Education learners had been written to and there are two mature students requesting a refund. The College is doing all that it can to get these students back and access the workshops. The Vice Principal also confirmed that the College has reviewed its complaints policy, which had already included a provision about global pandemics.

The CEO & Executive Principal flagged concerns in relation to the impacts next year. The College had previously grown its apprenticeship provision and there is an expectation that the same level of apprenticeships will not be supported next year. A reduction in apprentices will translate into the need for learners to look for full time

education and 16-18 growth is not funded until the following year. Demographics are also increasing putting pressure on the Bristol campus, especially with the housing development at Filton Airfield. Members were informed that there are many unknowns ahead and the College will be looking at increased use of Teams for blended learning to increase teaching capacity.

It was reported that the new Brunel building at WISE campus is 16 days behind schedule which is a remarkable achievement in the current environment. The building frame has been manufactured in Switzerland and having no learners on site has provided more space for its delivery. There is an expectation by WECA that the funding is allocated by March 2021. There is concern that the building will not be completed by then and it is hoped that there will be some flexibility around funding. The College Principal confirmed that in a meeting with WECA it was recognised that all combined authorities are in the same position and they have put in a request to the Treasury for leniency. It was reported that the College has been successful in its recent audit and the next batch of £1m is in the College's account this week.

The CEO & Executive Principal reported that he continues to meet with South Gloucestershire Council about future growth and how the College can support this growth with the development of SGS Challenger. However, there is concern that any future recession will impact on the availability of funding. Planning of capacity at WISE campus continues and the various options for its development are being considered, one such option is the development of student accommodation for HE learners.

The CEO & Executive Principal reported on the development of a Cyber Central initiative in Cheltenham and the consideration of a complementary Eco Central, with Berkeley campus being at the centre of this initiative. A proposal is currently in development. The College is also looking to secure a deal with Active Building Centre who deal with replacing eco-friendly technology into old houses and the building of new houses with zero carbon foot print. The company is interested in renting out part of the ground floor of building C11 at Berkeley and would provide the College with additional income over the next 3 years.

Based on the content of the Principal's report, the College was congratulated.

The report was noted.

**Action: College Principal.
Vice Principal.**

7. **Management Information**

- a) Exceptional financial report in light of Covid-19 - The College Principal reported that the exceptional financial report is presented at the COVID-19 bi-weekly meetings. Members were informed that the accounts are looking positive this year but there is concern with next year in relation to apprenticeships and Higher Education. Members asked for an update on how £800k savings had been achieved. Members were informed that the College has been fully funded for adult and apprentices and additional costs not incurred this year and income lines looking better. There has been a reduction in estates running costs although estates staff are on site to ensure security and Filton campus is being redecorated now that the students are not on site. Once the budget has been resubmitted and the cash flow has been reforecast the College will consider whether additional estates work at Filton campus can proceed.

Members noted that the low point of March 2021 on the cash flow and it was commented that this is traditionally a low point. Members were informed that the reforecast is positive and cash flow is being reviewed and it is believed that there will be no issues.

Members asked when the College would be in a position to prepare the usual management accounts and were informed that following the recent reforecasting there is more certainty now and the management accounts will be produced next week.

Members asked if there is any update relating to College audits and were informed that the Chief Financial Officer has a meeting planned with the auditors. Concern was raised that for non-educational establishments there has been a 3 month extension to accounting deadlines and this could impact on auditor's resources but the College is still planning for its end of year cycle.

The report was noted.

- b) Primary Risk Registers (including SGSCSL) and COVID-19 risk register – Members raised that the deferment of the Filton campus estates works were included in the primary risk register and asked that this risk is either increased or date in the risk register extended.

Members asked that the RAG ratings in the COVID-19 risk register for the College closure are revisited in the light that the College is now closed. The Principal advised that this was an oversight and subject to further review but

assurance was provided that the College had done as much as it could pre lock-down.

The report was noted.

Action: College Principal.

8. **SGS Academy Trust Statement of Assurance**

Members noted that this agenda item is to be carried forward to the next meeting.

9. **Learner Charter, Behaviour Policy, FE & HE Learner Code of Conduct and Associated student rules and procedures**

The Vice Principal reported that the Disciplinary policy and procedure has been simplified, in consultation with curriculum managers and learners, in the hope of making it more accessible to learners and easier for staff to implement. In addition, to encourage reform, incentives have been included in the policy. Members were also informed of the addition of one change raised by learners to the FE Learner Charter and Code of Conduct and that no further changes are recommended. Similarly, significant changes are not recommended to the HE Learner Code of Conduct and the changes were referenced in the covering report. Following review, a typographical error was raised in the Disciplinary policy.

Members were informed that the College's Compliments, Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure required early review due to the impact of COVID-19 and in recognition that the sector anticipates an increased number of complaints and appeals from learners who will have their grades estimated by their teachers.

The Vice Principal advised that these documents will no longer be printed but available via Teams and learners will digitally sign.

The report was noted and it was resolved:

To approve the Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, subject to the typographical change raised, the FE Charter and Codes of Conduct, Higher Education Learner Code of Conduct and the Compliments, Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedure.

10. **Benchmarking / Trend Analysis**

Members received a report outlining the benchmarking and three year trend analysis of SGS performance data, compared with regional competitors. The College was congratulated on its performance and it was requested that cohort numbers are included in future reports. The Vice Principal confirmed that although this information can be included it will not be possible to produce this report next year as there will be no data available.

The report was noted.

11. **Chair's Action**

In response to COVID-19, an annex to the safeguarding policy (a government requirement) needed to be in place and published as a matter of urgency. In order to expedite the publication of this annex Chair's Action was taken in accordance with the Corporation Standing Orders. Ratification of Chair's Action was sought and received for the approval of the Annex to the Safeguarding Children, Young People & Vulnerable Adults Policy & Procedure. The College's action plan was also presented noted.

12. **Staff Engagement Survey**

Members received a report from the 2019 SGS Employee Engagement Survey. Members were informed that against a challenging backdrop the engagement scores have shown a retention of solidly positive scores across the board. Members were informed that Survey Lab was again used which it is believed contributed towards a strong response rate. Overall, the College scores favourably to public sector scores.

Members questioned how action plans are communicated and shared with staff. The Chief Group Services Officer advised that the College is geographically diverse and managers are encouraged to disseminate and discuss the results with their staff and also discussion at staff forums in order to focus on the practical actions that can be taken.

Members invited the views from the Staff Governors and whether the results mirror their views of the College. Both Staff Governors concurred that the results were representative and positive feedback about College management was provided. If anything, it was considered that the ratings did not do the College justice.

The report was noted.

13. **SGS Commercial Services Limited**

Confidential Item.

14. **Review of Governance SAR action plan**

Members received a progress report against the Governance action plan.

The report and progress against the Governance action plan was noted.

15. **Corporation Seal**

The application of the Corporation Seal to the Delivery Agreement between SGS and Willmott Dixon for the new STEAM Centre at WISE Campus was reported by the Clerk and noted.

16. **Confidentiality**

Members agreed that due to business sensitivities the report for agenda item 13, SGS Commercial Services, and minute 13 are to be treated as confidential.

17. **Date of Next Meeting**

The Chair asked if the revised time of 4pm was convenient for attendees and confirmation was received that it was.

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as; Thursday 4 June 2020 at 4pm, via Microsoft Teams.

The Chair reminded members that the next COVID-19 bi-weekly meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 5 May 2020 and that any questions for this meeting should be raised in advance to the Clerk.

The meeting commenced at 4.05pm

Dave Merrett joined the meeting at 4.25pm (during item 6)

Ben Short left the meeting at 4.31pm (during item 6 and returned to the meeting at 5.05pm during item 9)

Sophie Chester-Glyn left the meeting at 5.32pm (during item 13)

The meeting closed at 5.50pm

The meeting was quorate.