



SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE AND STROUD COLLEGE
FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

Approved minutes of a meeting of South Gloucestershire and Stroud College
Further Education Corporation
Held on 25 March 2021, via Microsoft Teams

Present:

David Hagg	(Chair)
Louise Bright	
Lynne Craig	
Mike Croker	
Carly Dyson	
Phil Eames	
Roger Ellis	
Catherine Green	
Sophie Green	
Kevin Hamblin	(CEO & Executive Principal)
Dave Merrett	

In Attendance:

Rich Aitken	(Head of Finance)
Gavin Murray	(Vice Principal, Performance, Standards & Effectiveness)
Jude Saunderson	(Chief Financial Officer)
Sara-Jane Watkins	(College Principal)
Sharon Glover	(Clerk)

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Matt Davis, Moira Foster-Fitzgerald and Sophie Chester-Glyn. Alicia Chappell, Nicole Clark, Ben Short and Rick Sturge did not attend the meeting.

Members were informed of the birth of Sophie-Chester Glyn's daughter and congratulations were provided. It was agreed that it should be recognised, for the purposes of recording members' attendance, that Sophie will be absent until the start of the new academic year.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

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

- a) New declarations of interest for Catherine Green:
 - Director of WSP Solicitors Limited.
 - Chief Executive of Action on Pre-eclampsia (connected person – husband).
 - Director Bowbridge Green Limited (connected person – husband)
 - Council Member Friends of Gloucester Cathedral (connected person – husband)
- b) New declaration of interest for Lynne Craig:
 - Paid consultancy work for Nottingham College.
- c) As Directors of SGSCSL the interests of Carly Dyson, Kevin Hamblin and Dave Merrett were declared in agenda item 12.
- d) Lynne Craig’s interest was declared in relation to her re-appointment as part of agenda item 13.

At this point Catherine Green joined the meeting and was welcomed to her first Corporation meeting and introductions were provided.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held 28 January 2021 were approved as a correct record, ready for signing.

4. **Matters Arising From Those Minutes**

Actions on the action log were monitored and confirmation was received that they were all completed.

5. **CEO & Executive Principal’s Report**

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

However, the CEO & Executive Principal presented to Phil Eames a 5-year service award and he was thanked for his excellent contribution to SGS and SGS Academy Trust.

6. **Principal’s Report**

The Principal reported the following:

- a) Since January the country has been in lockdown with the majority of learners off-site until 8 March 2021, with only the vulnerable learners on site. From 22 February 2021 the College invited certain learners to attend College to pilot the approaches put in place and test the lateral flow process. Members were

informed that an additional 42 staff have been appointed to support the lateral flow testing and brilliant support has been provided by this team, members of staff and learners. Over 10,000 tests have taken place with only 6 positive results. The behaviour, attitude and nature of learners was commended together with their adherence to the guidance. Support from staff was also commended with many staff now having been vaccinated. Weekly meetings are taking place with the Unions to review Health and Safety measures and they are comfortable with the measures in place.

- b) Staff absence data was presented and a surge in absence was reported due to the vaccination.
- c) Safeguarding – weekly panels are being held with mental health on the increase. Staff have noticed how passive some learners are and that they lack confidence having not had the opportunity to develop friendship groups. Attention was drawn to the safeguarding data appended to the report.
- d) FE Choices: Learner and Employer satisfaction surveys will not be going ahead this year due to Covid-19.
- e) Apprenticeship performance – overall success is projected to be 73%-75%, remaining at around 10% above national benchmarks. This area has performed well and is forecast to be “outstanding” in the next College Self-Assessment Report.
- f) 16-18 recruitment is very positive for next year, which will have a significant positive financial impact next year.
- g) Tenders – an application has been submitted, as a partner organisation, for DfE Digital Skills Bootcamps and an outcome is now awaited. Although the report also made reference to an application to the ESFA FE Capital Transformation Fund, following review of the funding conditions the College has decided not to pursue with this tender.

The Chair congratulated the College Principal and her team for the extraordinary work undertaken and for the management of it. The Staff Member concurred with the College Principal’s report, in particular the My Concern system and support provided was commendable and that the lateral flow testing had gone incredibly well. He commended the College on how well it has been managed and was very proud of what has been achieved.

The Chair endorsed the tremendous efforts from staff to engage the learners and that he had evidenced this at his attendance at voice of the learner meetings. The CEO & Executive Principal raised that all staff had pulled together and wanted to flag the need to consider a pay award for staff in order to do whatever was possible to recognise everyone’s efforts. Members were informed that proposals for pay are being considered with a detailed proposal to be presented to the Corporation. The Chair

concurred that serious consideration needs to be given to a pay award and as a Corporation Member he was very proud to be associated with the College.

The report was noted.

7. **Management Information**

a) (i) Financial Planning Framework – Confidential Item.

(ii) Investment Strategy – The Chief Financial Officer presented the Investment Strategy, that sets out the key priorities that the College and its subsidiary company should consider when investing surplus funds or when obtaining additional financing, both in terms of financial investment and in investing in buildings, facilities and equipment. The Chief Financial Officer questioned the need for a separate strategy as it duplicates other key strategic documents already within the organisation. In addition, no other Colleges appear to have a strategy of this nature in place.

Following discussion it was agreed that the investment strategy forms part of the Treasury Management Strategy and there are other various components in other College Strategies therefore it was agreed that, going forward, the Investment Strategy is no longer required.

The report was noted.

b) Management Accounts exception report - The Head of Finance reported that the overall forecast had improved. The management accounts also now recognises a release of the We-Link lease premium previously held on the Balance Sheet, totaling £163k, following the surrender of this lease in December 2020. Due to 16-18 growth and lagged funding the financial position is looking positive for next year.

It was reported that the main risk area in this forecast is the adult funding (both WECA and ESFA) where both organisations will not currently relax the 97% tolerance levels. However, since writing the report confirmation has been received that ESFA has reduced its tolerance level to 90%. The Principal confirmed that the adult strategy is to still hit allocation, national and WECA, as the College has bids for growth in both of these areas for next year.

The pay costs are favourable to budget and includes provision for new Covid-19 testing and marshalling staff and budget has been ring-fenced for a potential pay award with various options being modelled through.

Members were informed of the cash flow forecast, with cash balances higher than planned at this point of the year, with March traditionally being the lowest point of the year.

Members questioned the level of student debt and noted that there is a significant amount of prior year debt as well as the current year. The Chief Financial Officer concurred that it was a concern for 16-18 and Adult debt however due to the quick lockdown the online payment system was not in place. A decision was taken to enroll learners without payment and the introduction of online payment was implemented swiftly thereafter resulting in the debt now reducing quickly. Members were assured that contingency has been built into the planning and the debt is being closely monitored. The Principal added that some income lines have not yet been included and a number of learners are questioning the material fees level so if possible the College will look to refund.

Members queried the EBITDA figures in the executive summary versus the management accounts as they differed. The Head of Finance agreed to investigate. However, the Chief Financial Officer advised that the management accounts data will be correct as they are formula driven. Later in the meeting the Head of Finance confirmed that the management accounts EBITDA figure is the correct one.

Members also queried differences in the budget for the year. Confirmation was received that the executive summary was reflective of the budget set by the Corporation and the target is to achieve that budget.

The report was noted.

8. **Teaching, Learning and Assessment Report**

The Vice Principal reported that there had been a longstanding commitment to observe all teaching staff each year. Despite the impact of a national lockdown 94% of all teaching staff have been visited on a learning walk and 62% of all substantive teaching staff have now received their annual joint lesson observations. The College is on track to hit the targets set to visit all teaching staff with Deep Dives commencing after the Easter break.

Members questioned whether the observations had been remote and/or physical. Members were informed that there had been a mixture depending upon the status of lockdown. A joint lesson observation lasts 45 minutes whilst a learning walk lasts 20 minutes and the College has worked with the Unions to agree how to make fair judgements. From 30 April onwards the majority of observations will be on a face-to-face basis. Members raised that there is a big difference between online and physical observations and questioned whether the online observations will be repeated face-to-face. The Vice Principal advised that observations are undertaken on a risk-based approach and it has been recognised that lessons are challenging to deliver online. Going forward the College will be looking to create a more blended approach and to consider the impact on learners.

Members commented that the outcome of observations was good and it was pleasing to see that interventions make a difference. Members raised the importance of revisiting the interventions to ensure that improvement is sustained.

The report was noted.

9. **Curriculum Conference and Education Strategy, including the Higher Education Strategy**

The Vice Principal reported that the Education Strategy had not been radically updated but had now included reference to sustainability and the College improvement plan. Ofsted's Education Inspection Framework had also been considered, together with the strategy's fit with the FE White Paper.

Members raised that the Curriculum Conference had been very well received and Corporation Members welcomed presentations from staff across the College. The Principal reported that the staff involved had enjoyed the opportunity to present direct to governors.

The Chair extended the Corporation's thanks to the College Principal and Vice Principal.

**The report was noted and it was resolved:
To approve the Education Strategy.**

10. **Quality Strategy**

The Vice Principal presented the report and confirmed that there are no significant changes to the Quality Strategy as the current iteration was designed to last until 2022. The intent was to continue with the three key improvement drivers to deliver quality as they are clear for staff to remember and retain their focus with links to the College's strategic priorities. The aim being to empower each area to take action in support of these improvement objectives. The Chair congratulated the College on the use of posters to clearly promote the improvement outcomes for staff and members considered these to be examples of excellent practice and the finesse of these documents were appreciated.

**The report was noted and it was resolved:
To reapprove the Quality Strategy 2020-2022.**

11. **Progress against College Improvement Plan, including the Higher Education Improvement Plan**

The Vice Principal reported on progress against the College's Improvement Plan and HE Improvement Plan. Taking into account Covid-19 and the sheer amount of effort being put in by staff the College is in a good place to achieve the headlines.

Members congratulated the Vice Principal on progress made and for the clear presentation. The Vice Principal reported the good team ethos in place and that he would pass on the Corporation's thanks to the team.

The report was noted.

12. **SGS Commercial Services Limited**

Confidential Item.

13. **Search Committee**

Minutes from the meeting held 2 Mar 21 were noted. Sophie Green (Vice-Chair of the Search Committee) reported the following:

- a) Due to the absence of Sophie Chester-Glyn, due to maternity leave, Sophie Green had taken on the role of Vice-Chair of the Search Committee.

As Carly Dyson had taken on the role of Child Protection, Safeguarding, Special Educational Needs & Disability, Equality & Diversity Advocate the Search Committee suggested that, subject to Carly and Corporation approval, she is invited to join the Search Committee on an interim basis until the return of Sophie Chester-Glyn.

It was resolved:

To appoint Carly Dyson as a member of the Search Committee, on an interim basis, until the return of Sophie Chester-Glyn.

- b) Following a first year review of Lynne Craig's attendance and contribution the Search Committee were recommending her re-appointment for a further 3-years to complete her first 4-year term of office.

Lynne Craig refrained from the following resolution.

It was resolved:

To approve the re-appointment of Lynne Craig for a further 3-years to complete her first 4-year term of office, with effect from the end of her current term of office.

- c) There is one vacancy on the Corporation to fill and there was a good discussion on considering reaching out to a wider pool of potential members. It was decided to revisit the current advertisement as well as how and where it is advertised to appeal to a more diverse pool. It was recognised that although the age and gender split of the Corporation is balanced more could be done to reach out to BAME and disability groups for potential membership. It was reported that there are no immediate gaps or rush to recruit a new member.
- d) The Search Committee will also be supporting SGS Academy Trust with interviewing potential trustees once identified.

- e) The Committee also discussed Unconscious Bias and training for the Corporation and/or Search Committee is being investigated.
- f) The Committee also reviewed the Procedure for the Appointment, Reappointment, Induction and Training of Corporation Members and approved minor changes to this procedure.
- g) Following discussion about the role of Child Protection, Safeguarding, Special Educational Needs & Disability, Equality & Diversity Advocate it was suggested that a review of the skills needed to fulfil this role and whether it should be split or more Corporation Members identified to share these responsibilities. This would be a topic for discussion at the Governors' Strategy Away Day and governors' thoughts would be welcomed.

14. **Strategic Property Group**

Confidential Item.

15. **Warranties in respect of the new Brunel Building at WISE Campus**

Corporation approval to the signing and sealing of the Collateral Warranties, detailed in the report, from the works to construct The Brunel Centre at WISE campus was sought.

It was resolved:

To approve the signing of the Collateral Warranties, detailed in the report, and the application of the Corporation Seal by David Hagg (Chair of the Corporation) and Dave Merrett (Corporation Member).

16. **John Huggett Engineering Hall, Berkeley**

Members received changes to the heads of terms, previously reported to Corporation, following further discussions with ABC to take over space in the Ground Floor of the JHEH at Berkeley campus.

It was resolved:

To approve the Heads of Terms between SGS and Active Building Centres Limited.

17. **Chair's Action**

Corporation ratification was sought to Chair's action taken to sign documentation confirming that SGS is aware that it is entering into a lease for two units at The Galleries Shopping Centre, Bristol that does not have automatic rights of renewal. This is an agreed clause contained within the lease previously approved by the Corporation.

It was resolved:

To ratify the signing of the documentation by the Chair of the Corporation, for and on behalf of SGS, in relation to the lease of two units at The Galleries Shopping Centre, Bristol.

18. **Corporate and Social Responsibility Statement**

Members received minor revisions to the Corporate and Social Responsibility Statement.

It was resolved:

To approve the Corporate and Social Responsibility Statement.

19. **Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth (FE White Paper)**

Members received a note summarising the Skills for Jobs White Paper which also included a resume of the Opportunities and Threats prepared by the College Principal. Further consideration of this paper will be an item at the Governors' Strategy Away Day.

The report was noted.

20. **Gender Pay**

Members received the SGS College Gender Pay Gap report, which will be posted on the College website and be completed on the government portal prior to the deadline of 31 March 2021.

The report was noted.

21. **Streamlined Energy and Carbon**

Members received a report outlining the requirements regarding HM Government Environmental Reporting guidelines which include Streamlined Energy and Carbon reporting guidance, together with a worked example.

The report was noted.

22. **Corporation Seal**

The application of the Corporation Seal to the Underlease of Unit BG-28-BG29, The Galleries Shopping Centre, Bristol was noted.

23. **Other Items of Urgent Business**

There was no other business raised.

24. **Confidentiality**

Members agreed that due to business sensitivities the following items are to be retained as confidential: Financial Planning Framework (item 7 a (i)), SGSCSL report (item 12) and SPG minutes (item 14), together with minutes 7 a (i), 12 and 14.

25. **Assessment of meeting**

A summary of feedback in relation to the meeting held 28 January 2021 was received.

26. **Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 29 April 2021 at 4pm via Microsoft TEAMS.

The meeting commenced at 4.04pm

Louise Bright joined the meeting at 4.06pm (during agenda item 2)

Catherine Green joined the meeting at 4.07pm (during agenda item 2)

Lynne Craig joined the meeting at 4.52pm (during item 7 a) ii)

The meeting closed at 5.47pm.

The meeting was quorate.