



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

Approved minutes of a meeting of South Gloucestershire and Stroud College  
Further Education Corporation  
Held on 10 June 2021, via Microsoft Teams

**Present:** David Hagg (Chair)  
Louise Bright  
Lynne Craig  
Mike Croker  
Phil Eames  
Roger Ellis  
Catherine Green  
Sophie Green  
Kevin Hamblin (CEO & Executive Principal)  
Ben Short

**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)

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming those present and informing that he will be unstaring item 15. Members were also informed that, depending upon the timing of the meeting, there may be a need to bring forward item 12 due to the early departure of the Chief Financial Officer.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Carly Dyson, Sophie Chester-Glyn (maternity leave), Matt Davis, Dave Merrett and Rick Sturge. Alicia Chappell and Nicole Clark did not attend the meeting.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Roger Ellis's interest in agenda item 5 relating to the appointment of his successor was noted. The Clerk advised that Roger would need to refrain from this resolution in accordance with Corporation Standing Orders.

3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held 29 April 2021 were approved as a correct record, ready for signing by the Chair.

4. **Matters Arising From Those Minutes**

Actions on the action log were monitored and confirmation was received that one action is to be carried forward and the other actions have all been completed.

5. **Appointment of Staff Governor and Student Governors**

The Clerk reported that one nomination had been received from Gary Parsons for the appointment of Staff Governor, therefore he would be elected unopposed. Following Student Union elections, two new Student Governors had been nominated.

Roger Ellis refrained from resolution a) below.

**It was resolved:**

- a) **To appoint Gary Parsons as the new Staff Governor, to succeed Roger Ellis, with effect from 1 August 2021 for a 4-year term of office.**
- b) **To appoint Steph Brooks and Izzy Cosh as the new Student Governors, with effect from 1 August 2021 until 31 July 2022.**

6. **Annual Teaching, Learning & Assessment report & Review of the Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategy**

The Vice Principal informed that, following publication of the report, there has been an increase in staff having received a joint lesson observation of up to 87% and the percentage of support required has not altered. It is anticipated that there will be completion close to 100% planned by the end of the current academic year. The Chair commented that the College had done remarkably well and that the report reflects the scale of the pandemic and of the opportunity for governors to participate, in particular at Voice of the Learner meetings.

Members questioned whether the delivery of sub-contracting provision is reflected upon. Confirmation was received that the team managing the DISE provision employ

coaches in the community and do undertake quality assurance checks with termly best practice meetings held. All feedback is then provided to the Vice Principal. In relation to work based learning, due to Covid-19, desk top analysis is undertaken.

Members asked for further information on the digital teaching studios. The Vice Principal explained that when consulting with learners it highlighted fatigue with the streaming of lessons and these studios have state of the art equipment to try and remove access barriers and alleviate delivery issues for staff. Although a supplementary expenditure, this has been financed from the additional funding received from Covid-19 testing for the benefit of learners and staff.

When asked, confirmation was received that deep dives are planned for October 2021 and for those governors that wish to participate they are to contact the Vice Principal.

Members raised that of the two pie charts in the report the top one had been incorrectly labelled. The Vice Principal agreed to up-date the report.

**The report was noted and it was resolved:  
To extend approval of the current Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy until September 2022.**

#### 7. **Learner Destination Data and Progression (including HE)**

The Principal presented the report and confirmed that an external company was again used for data collection and analysis in order to enhance response rates. Although the completion rates for full time learner destination was 4% down on the previous year this was to be expected during a year of the pandemic. However, the level of completion still makes the data statistically valid and Apprenticeships and Higher Education demonstrated pleasing results. There will be a continued focus on ethnic minority learners and those with a disability and is an area to be investigated due to the increase in NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) learners from this group.

Members noted that failure to collect destination data was reported as a major risk and questioned whether this was really considered to be major. Members were informed that Ofsted will want to see the impact therefore this data is very important and SGS has given this significance. Also taking into consideration the Post-16 education bill the focus is about employer improvement plans and providing positive destination data to the ESFA. The Staff Governor raised that he had seen a reduction in his learners of those wishing to progress to University due to costs and the perception that the experience is not as good as it used to be. The Principal advised that the College is seeing an increase in its Higher Education provision as more learners want to remain local. In addition, during the pandemic SGS endeavored to deliver face-to-face lessons, which has been a positive step for its HE provision and had set the College apart from other providers.

Members questioned whether there are any targets set for any of the data and if there were any national benchmarks. The Vice Principal advised that it is difficult to set

targets due to the HE labour market and also benchmarking data tends to be lagged and therefore in the first instance the measure is internal. The Principal advised that there will also need to be a recalibration of data post pandemic and it could be questioned how relevant benchmarks would be due to grade inflation across the sector and the same applies to labour market post pandemic. The CEO & Executive Principal concurred with the Principal in that it would not be possible to compare against previous data as the students starting College in September would not have received the same GCSE experience. In the first term there will be a need to understand each learners' ability for Level 3. There is also a future impact that the pandemic will have on the College as learners may decide to remain at College for an additional year. The future NEET situation is also an unknown and a considerable rise is occurring across the general population. At the current time there is a lack of understanding of the impact of the pandemic over the next 12 months and nationally there is different labour market data. However, this request could be revisited next year when hopefully out of the pandemic.

Members questioned whether the overall data on destinations can be broken down by faculty. Members were informed that faculty managers receive detailed destination analysis which is used to plan the curriculum. Members questioned the rise in NEETS and whether this related to a particular area of study and requested to see NEET data broken down by faculty.

**The report was noted.**

**Action: College Principal.**

8. **Fees, Charges and Refunds Policy 2021/22**

The Head of Finance presented the report and informed members that there are sections of the policy which require information from the ESFA, which is currently unavailable. In order to minimise any further delays delegated authority was sought for the Chief Financial Officer to approve the required amendments once the relevant information is available.

Members questioned whether the impact on the level of refunds, especially for Higher Education, needs consideration in terms of the policy and confirmation was received that it does not. Members also raised that on social media there is a Maths and English course for the over 50's which included a visit to Hampton Court and whether this needed to be covered by the policy. The Principal explained that this related to engagement activity to encourage the over 50's to undertake Maths and English qualifications and the trip was used to entice interest. During the pandemic a National Trust voucher is provided as visits not permissible. This engagement provides an 80% contribution, is fully funded and achieves government targets.

Members questioned whether other College policies are reviewed. Although not reviewed, benchmark and market analysis are undertaken to understand the positioning of the College against others. The outcome is comparable and for areas of

expertise higher charges apply and if the College wants to break into a particular market then the fees would tend to be lower.

**It was resolved:**

**To approve the Fees and Refunds Policy 2021/22 and provide delegated authority to the Chief Financial Officer to approve the required amendments to the policy once the relevant information is available from the ESFA.**

9. **Review of KPIs for 2021/22 (including targets)**

Members received a report covering the work of the KPI Working Group, which was established to address an action in the 2019/20 Governance Self-Assessment action plan. Included within the report was a draft KPI dashboard, proposed targets, financial KPIs and financial information for inclusion in the Executive Summary of the Management Accounts, Strategic Risk Reporting, a revised approach to the Human Resources annual report and revisions of the Corporation reporting template, accompanied by reporting guidelines.

Members were informed that the aim was to simplify the suite of KPIs so that members can quickly assess headline College performance on a periodic basis.

Following consideration of the report members concurred that the proposals appeared to be very comprehensive. The Chair thanked those members involved and suggested that the proposals can be trialled and reviewed at a later stage if felt needed.

**It was resolved:**

- a) **To adopt the revised suite of KPIs.**
- b) **To approve the proposed targets for 2021/22.**
- c) **To approve the headline financial information for inclusion in the Executive Summary of the Management Accounts.**
- d) **To adopt the Financial KPIs.**
- e) **To adopt the Strategic Risk reporting.**
- f) **To adopt revisions to the Corporation reporting template.**

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

As there was nothing to bring to the attention of the Corporation this item is to be carried forward to the next meeting.

## 11. Principal's Report

The Principal reported on the following:

- a) Staff absence - remains low this year and home working has been a positive addition to the way in which the College operates.
- b) Safeguarding – the impact of the pandemic has seen a 27% increase in safeguarding concerns on this point last year. Appended to the report was the recent detailed safeguarding report.
- c) Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) – A significant focus currently is on completing learners and obtaining qualification sign off. The Principal thanked the Vice Principal for the hard work undertaken.
- d) Bids – There are a large number of opportunities however these are within tight timeframes and short spending windows.
- e) Post-16 Capital Growth Fund – DfE issued a tender 17<sup>th</sup> May for up to £4m for providers to respond to growth in 16-18 numbers, with a very tight turnaround of 14<sup>th</sup> June. The College is creating a submission proposing additional accommodation to support growth at the Filton campus focussed on Construction. If successful the monies would need to be spent by 31 August 2022 ready for full use by September 2022. Corporation support of this bid was sought. One member raised that she had heard that the DfE had moved the submission deadline to 21<sup>st</sup> June. The Principal had not heard this officially from the DfE and would continue to work towards the deadline date of 14<sup>th</sup> June.

In the light of recent news about sexual harassment in education members questioned how the College is investigating this. The Principal advised that consideration is being given to engaging internal auditors to investigate this topic and although there is no process currently in place, there will be in the future.

In relation to the repositioning of Stroud campus, members questioned the financial impact and how this is being reflected in the financial plan for 2021/22. Members were informed that Stroud campus is below capacity, which was anticipated at merger, but this campus merged without any debt, therefore, more financial pressure is on the South Gloucestershire campuses. Members requested to receive some contribution analysis. Members were informed that curriculum planning is developed by faculty and not campuses and the repositioning of Stroud campus is about growing provision. Members asked what the absolute minimum learner number has been determined as if this were a school then consideration would be given to its closure. Members were informed that planning is from a College wide perspective and one of the points for merger was to safeguard the Stroud campus as learners in the area need an offer of provision. It was known at

merger that there would be a decline in student demographics and other opportunities to attract alternative income streams are being sought, including further work with the University of Gloucestershire. Members raised that if numbers continue to decline then some hard decisions are to be made. Members were informed that there is a difference in funding that certain learners attract so it's not just down to the number of learners. Members wanted to understand the high-level position in relation to number of students per campus and the income that they will bring to the College. Members also questioned whether Berkeley campus is having a negative impact on Stroud campus. The CEO & Executive Principal confirmed that it is the other way around in that students from SGS Berkeley Green UTC are leaving to go to SGS. The population in Stroud has declined and ONS figures show that the population will remain static therefore the focus is on the curriculum mix at Stroud campus and the Principal will be bringing to Corporation a curriculum plan for this campus. The Chair clarified that the population in Stroud is increasing but it is the student population that is decreasing. It was agreed that the approach to look at alternative uses for this campus was the right approach. The CEO & Executive Principal also raised the need to take into account social and political considerations as well as the finances. The CEO & Executive Principal agreed to provide the information on contribution in the first term back as this would be after the financial planning has been presented.

Thanks were extended to the Vice Principal for the work undertaken by him and his team. Thanks were also extended to the Principal for the work undertaken on the Post-16 Capital Growth Fund bid, in ridiculously short timeframes. The Chair raised the need to engage with the AoC so that they can ensure that the DfE is made aware of the pressure Colleges are under and that the nature of bids need a requisite time to prepare. The Chair agreed that the College Principal and himself would take forward with the AoC.

Members were pleased with the number of bids the College was involved with and of particular note was the DfE agreement for the term "University" to be used in the brand for the WISE Campus, which was considered to be a big achievement.

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

**To support the Post-16 capital growth fund application submission to the DfE to respond to growth at the SGS Filton campus focussed on Construction.**

**Action: Group CEO & Executive Principal & College Principal.  
Chair of the Corporation & College Principal.**

## 12. **Management Information**

- a) Management Accounts exception report – Members received financial information and KPIs dated 30 April 2021. The Head of Finance reported that further confidence is gained in the forecast as it approaches year end. The forecast surplus was reported against the budgeted surplus and confirmation was provided that the forecast maintains “Good” financial health.

Following concerns over Covid testing reimbursement a further settlement has now been received and the overall settlement is anticipated to be above the forecast. The Chair was particularly pleased to see reference in the report to the inclusion of staff pay awards. Members questioned whether the external audit issues for Colleges, referenced in the report, will be presented to the Audit Committee. Confirmation was received that this would be raised at the June Audit Committee meeting. In the wake of the new Post-16 Audit Code of Practice this has led to further discussions with KPMG in relation to the level of testing needed on ESFA funding as the assurance previously provided by the ESFA will no longer be available. KPMG are considering whether they can use any work by the Internal Auditors to provide their assurance however the Chief Financial Officer believes the work of the Internal Auditors is not an appropriate fit. The need for sample testing on the Individualised Learner Record (ILR) is being debated and if further work is needed this will come at an additional cost to the College.

Members raised the drop in current ratio and whether this was cause for concern. The Head of Finance raised that this had been a factor of reforecasting and assurance was received that there remains comfort with the current ratio and that there was no cause for concern. Members questioned whether this would affect the financial health rating and confirmation was received that the College would remain in “Good” financial health at year end.

### **The report was noted.**

- b) LIBOR report – Members received a report regarding LIBOR together with notes of the meeting of the LIBOR sub-group and the Transition Confirmation document for submission to Lloyds Bank PLC. The Chief Financial Officer reported that a sub-group of Governors had met to consider a detailed report regarding LIBOR and to consider recommendations. Questions on the report were invited. One member sought confirmation from the sub-group of governors that they were satisfied with the recommendations being made. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Corporation confirmed that there had been a good level of discussion, the amount of money involved was small and that they were satisfied with the recommendations being made. The benchmarking with other Colleges, undertaken by the Chief Financial Officer, had also provided comfort to the sub-group. The Chair extended his thanks to the Chief Financial Officer for the work undertaken.



**It was resolved:**

- a) **To select the following options for transition from LIBOR in relation to College loan facilities with Lloyds Bank; Replacement Reference Rate: Bank Rate and Credit Adjustment Spread: 5YHM.**
- b) **To delegate authority to the Chief Financial Officer to determine the earliest practical switch date for transition with reference to the timing of College and SGS Commercial Services Limited meetings and the timescales provided by Lloyds Bank PLC.**
- c) **To approve entry into the transition confirmation document, with authority delegated to the Group CEO & Executive Principal and Chief Financial Officer to sign the transition confirmation document and that the Chief Financial Officer submits the transition confirmation document to Lloyds Bank PLC.**
- d) **To delegate authority to the Group CEO & Executive Principal and the Chief Financial Officer to review and sign the Transition Agreement, taking appropriate legal advice as considered necessary by the Chief Financial Officer and Group CEO & Executive Principal.**
- e) **To offer the same terms as outlined in resolution a) above to SGS Commercial Services Limited for the £4m loan facility and to delegate authority to the Chief Financial Officer to prepare a transition proposal and subsequent Transition Agreement for the Board of SGS Commercial Services Limited, taking appropriate legal advice as considered necessary by the Chief Financial Officer and Group CEO & Executive Principal.**

The Chair of the Corporation also took the opportunity to remind Governors of the need to complete the basic and advanced counter-fraud training. It was agreed that the Head of Finance should re-send the links to these training modules to governors.

**Action: Head of Finance.**

13. **2020/21 Governance Self-Assessment Report process and review of Governance Strategy**

The Clerk presented a report with recommendations in order to progress the development of the 2020/21 Governance Self-Assessment report. The Clerk reported that these were the same questionnaires as used last year. Also received were proposed revisions to the Governance Strategy.

Following consideration of the questionnaires, in light of remote meetings taking place over the last year, it was suggested that this needed to be reflected upon within the Governors' self-assessment questionnaire.

Members also questioned whether the self-assessment process had ever been completed as a Group. The Clerk advised that historically, pre-merger, there had been instances when this had occurred. Members concurred that a collective conversation

prior to completion of the Governor self-assessment questionnaire would be helpful and lead to a more meaningful response.

The Chair advised that following feedback from the last Governors' Strategy Away Day a follow up Away Day was suggested and this forum could be used for governance self-assessment discussions.

Members' views were sought in relation to the Governance Strategy and whether it adds value as it restates a number of areas covered in other governance documents. It was recognised that it is not a statutory requirement to have this strategy. One member felt it had been useful as a new governor and suggested that some of the information could be included in the recently developed New Corporation Member Handbook.

**It was resolved to:**

- a) **Approve the Governor Self-Assessment questionnaire for use in the 2019/20 Governance Self-Assessment Report process, subject to changes agreed.**
- b) **Approve the Executive Team questionnaire.**
- c) **Approve the Chair's Performance Review questionnaire.**
- d) **Dispense of the Governance Strategy.**
- e) **To arrange a Group discussion of Governance Self-Assessment.**
- f) **Approve that the Chair, Vice-Chair and Clerk draft the 2019/20 Governance Self-Assessment Report and action plan for Corporation consideration.**

14. **Strategic Property Group**

The minutes from the meeting held 4 May 2021 were noted and there was nothing further to report in support of the minutes.

15. **Partnership Proposals 2021/22, including Sub-Contracting policies**

Members received a report on partnership proposals 2021/22 and other partnership activity which is not a sub-contract arrangement but is of strategic importance.

The Chair raised that the first recommendation was seeking confirmation from the Corporation that all subcontracting delivery is high quality and low risk. However, it was felt that the Corporation was not in a position to justify this confirmation. Therefore, having sought, and received, assurance from senior staff the Chair proposed that the wording of the recommendation is adjusted to reflect that the Corporation "notes" rather than "confirms" this statement.

**It was resolved to:**

- a) **To note that all subcontracting delivery is high quality and low risk. Where sub-contracting organisations are not rated financially as low risk this is acceptable to the College due to the track record, contingency plan and oversight with the sport National Governing Bodies.**
- b) **Approve the continuation of the subcontract arrangement with Nelson Trust.**

**c) Agree to continue working with existing DISE partners in 2021/22.**

**16. Corporation/Audit Business Plans 2021/22**

Members received the Corporation and Audit Committee Business Plans 2021/22.

**It was resolved:**

**To approve the Corporation and Audit Committee Business Plans 2021/22.**

**17. Other Items of Urgent Business**

There was no other business raised.

**18. Confidentiality**

Members agreed that due to business sensitivities the SPG minutes (item 14) should be treated as confidential.

**19. Assessment of meeting**

A summary of feedback in relation to the meeting held 29 April 2021 was received.

**20. Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 8 July 2021 at 4pm via Microsoft TEAMS.

The Chair advised that if there is a full removal of constraints by the government on 21<sup>st</sup> June there will be a conversation needed in due course about the return to face-to-face meetings.

The meeting commenced at 4.07pm

Ben Short left the meeting at 5.03pm (during item 11) and re-joined the meeting at 5.24pm (during item 13)

Catherine Green joined the meeting at 5.13pm (during item 12a)

Jude Saunderson left the meeting at 5.20pm (after item 12b)

The meeting closed at 5.37pm.

The meeting was quorate.