

**MINUTES OF THE
CORPORATION MEETING**

HELD ON WEDNESDAY 7th FEBRUARY 2018 AT 6.00 P.M.

MEETING 17/03

Present: Jane Alderton, Ramy Danial, Ayas Fallon-Khan, Jane Farrell, Philip Harland, Simon Lindfield, Cathy McDonnell, Billy McNally, Janice Robinson, Richard Seager, Zenobia Thomas-Atkin Simon Waters, Aldona Wheeler.

In Attendance: Jill Arnold, Peter Bailey, Louise Pennington

Apologies received: Randall Anderson, Robert Bridges, Katharine Travis, Elaine French.

In the Chair: Janice Robinson

1. Welcomes and Apologies for Absence

Apologies – as recorded above.

2. Declaration of Interests

None recorded.

3. Minutes of the Meeting on 6th December 2017 Parts I and II (Confidential)

The minutes of the Part I and Part II minutes were approved by Corporation and the Chair authorised to sign these as a correct record of the meeting.

4. Matters Arising and Action Points – Progress Report and Significant Risks Schedule

The contents of the action points' schedule were considered and the actions completed were noted, including those which were on this meeting's agenda. The following additional points were recorded:

- Bid for CIF capital investment – complete financial analysis validation exercise to determine the impact of costings on the College's financial forecasts/discuss with Chair of Finance Working Group and bring analysis to Corporation: Simon Lindfield confirmed that although work on this had been delayed, he had met with Elaine French last week to discuss the information available to date and that a sensitivity analysis had been completed in relation to capital expenditure and the effect upon the current asset ratio. Once further work has been completed this will allow a better understanding of the effect upon the College's finances of any capital spend; the impact of predicted student numbers for 2018/2019 will also be taken into account and a paper will be presented to the March Corporation meeting. Philip Harland also advised that a further update would be made to Governors once the outcome of the bid was known (expected last week March/first week of April), which should also tie in with the latest funding allocation update. **ACTION: Elaine French/Philip Harland**

- Explanatory note for Governors re pensions – Elaine French has updated Simon Lindfield (Chair of Finance Working Group) regarding progress with this and a report will be made to the March 2018 Corporation Meeting. **ACTION: Elaine French**
- Strategic Plan – Develop Card with 5 Strategic Aims for circulation to Governors/SLT for ease of reference - aim to have this ready for the Summer Term 2018. **ACTION: Philip Harland/Martin Bentley (IT Manager).**
- Governor training: - the information circulated to Governors regarding various training options was noted and Janice Robinson confirmed that she had completed the online Safer Recruitment training, noting that at least one member of any College's Appointment Panel had to have completed this.

The action schedule will be updated to reflect any changes accordingly for the next meeting.
ACTION: Louise Pennington.

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS/VACANCY ON FINANCE WORKING GROUP – Further to discussions held at the last Search and Governance Committee and briefly reported at the last Corporation meeting, in response to the Chair's proposal, the Corporation approved Billy McNally's appointment to the Group with immediate effect, replacing Anton Pruden, who retired in January 2018. **ACTION: Louise Pennington**

SIGNIFICANT RISKS 2017/2018– the risks for 2017/2018 were reviewed and would be taken into account, where appropriate when considering various items on the agenda.

5. Chair's Report

Janice Robinson referred to her written paper and reported on the two issues detailed therein:

GOVERNOR LINKS' DAY

- The event was a very interesting and successful day which was much appreciated by Governors, involving visits to various curriculum, vocational and support areas including Adult Education and HR. It was recognised that this was an integral and important part of a Governor's duty and offered assurance to Governors regarding the educational experience. Thanks were recorded to all the staff and students involved and it was noted that Janice Robinson had already written to those involved to thank them for their time.
- Some of the issues raised by Students during the lunchtime meeting were already known by Governors including social space, IT access and catering. The Student Governors said that the Students had found the meeting with Governors very useful and would be interested in meeting again for further discussions should opportunities arise for this.
- Janice Robinson recommended the annual Links visit to all Governors who were free to attend in future.

SECONDARY SCHOOL CATCHMENT AREAS

- Governors were reminded that the Local Authority (LA) had announced that it had withdrawn its proposals for implementing the new secondary school catchment areas. It was also noted that the LA had also decided to withdraw its support for a new 11-16 free school (Brighton Hospital site) as there was no longer a need for this,

owing to the fact that each of the local Secondary Schools had agreed to accept an additional class (30 places) to accommodate the demographic increase. The Corporation noted the timing of the predicted increase in the numbers of 16-18 Students which would impact upon Sixth Form provision in the local area, post Secondary School.

6. Principal's Report (and also refer to items 8a, c, d, below)

Philip Harland gave his report to Governors on the following items:

- Teachers' Pay negotiations – notification received today advised that Teachers' unions and SFCA were due to meet soon. SFCA has reiterated that the total package of 1% on offer is its last offer (although noting that Colleges would have some flexibility regarding the distribution of the 1% overall offer amongst Teaching staff). The Unions have responded stating that the offer is unrealistic when taking into account the national pay negotiations in respect of School Teachers which is likely to reach 2%. If no further increase materialises, the Unions may contact their members to consider whether industrial action would be appropriate.
- Funding – Before Christmas, the annual Department for Education (DfE) letter regarding funding criteria was issued to Colleges and Philip Harland advised that there were no unexpected proposals within this and that therefore funding per student would be unchanged compared to the current year. The individual College funding allocation letter is expected to be issued in March 2018.
- Recruitment of new Vice Principal – the advert was issued 2 weeks ago with the closing date being Friday 9th February. Philip Harland has had several informal telephone conversations with interested external candidates; there are also likely to be a number of internal candidates. Janice Robinson, will be involved in the interview process.
- College Power Outage – there have been 2 days of power outage; the first instance resulted in a return of power by 5.30 p.m. on the same day, although staff and students had been sent home. The second instance occurred which was slightly longer with the College being closed on the following day in order to enable action to be taken to resolve the problem in the short term. UK Power has been involved and has advised that the sub-station feeding power to the College was inadequate to cater for the all of the College's requirements owing to an insufficiency within the fuse boxes. In the interim the College has lost 25% power capacity so in the short term the College has had to make adjustments in its power usage and priorities. In the longer term, the fuses boxes will have to be replaced and an external consultant is completing an assessment for submission to UK Power; the cost of any upgrading will have to be met by the College. At all times, the Chair of Corporation was kept up to date with the matter and it was noted that the College had managed the situation effectively.

The Risk Group should discuss the matter at its next meeting. **ACTION: Elaine French**

- Update against Strategic Plan – Philip Harland referred Governors to the papers within Items 8 and 9 below which related to progress against various criteria within the Strategic Plan.

7. Student Governors' Report

Zenobia Thomas-Atkin and Ramy Danial gave the Student Governors' Report noting the following:

- SU Constitution changes – The constitution has been reviewed and proposed updates regarding the election of the SU executive will be brought to the March Corporation meeting for approval, once the changes have been considered by the Student Council.
- Zenobia Thomas-Atkin confirmed that she would be a member of the Student Panel in respect of the forthcoming Vice-Principal appointment, which would also comprise a Level 2 Student, an IB Student, an A Level Student, a BTEC student and 2 Students from the SU Executive. A question bank has been established and the final questions from the Panel will be decided nearer the time.

8. Curriculum and Standards

Philip Harland, Jill Arnold and Peter Bailey presented the various papers and the following points were recorded.

i) Student Outcomes

a) Projected Student Numbers

The contents of the paper presented by Philip Harland was noted by the Corporation and the increase in applications from East and West Sussex was highlighted along with a decrease in applications from both Dorothy Stringer and Vardean School compared to last year, whilst increasing numbers have been received from the Hove secondary schools. This was the first year of on-line applications which to date appears to have worked well, although there remain a number of spoilt applications which have not been taken into account in the analysis.

SLT's proposal to plan a curriculum for 2018/2019 based upon about 1,670 students was recorded, having been assessed based upon the historical conversion comparison information from previous years and also taking into account adjustments affecting the staffing budget. The minimum number of Students required to balance the budget and take into account any expected additional costs, would be 1,650. In response to a question from Governors, it was confirmed that with the proposed increase in student numbers compared to the current year, there will be a need to recruit additional teaching staff. SLT is in the process of considering various options taking into account the student teacher ratio and currently predicts that based on the proposed numbers, an additional 4.5 (but from last year's budget figure) teachers may be required, subject to the budget and students' course choices.

Governors queried the management of applications and offers and noted that those Students who had applied by the December deadline, would be guaranteed a place at Vardean, subject to meeting the entrance criteria regarding examination results. Any additional numbers recruited will be carefully managed by SLT and the Admissions Team later in the year with a focus upon maximising set size.

Governors were also reminded about the lagged funding process whereby funding for additional students recruited, is received in the following year from the ESFA.

In response to a question regarding retention of Students, Jill Arnold confirmed that the College's retention levels were above the national average. SLT are investigating certain retention figures highlighted where there has been a decline in order to see if there is more which could be done to support Students and ensure that they complete their courses. The College has a focus upon providing a service to the community which means that a broad range of Students is recruited, including those who may be less academic; this inevitably has some impact upon retention levels.

The impact of increasing Student numbers upon the site was also discussed, including social space and catering issues.

b) Student Destinations 2016-2017

Jill Arnold presented the Student Destinations' Report to the Corporation and the contents of the front sheet and accompanying analyses prepared by the Careers' Team were noted by Governors.

The following key points were highlighted:

- Comparative report with previous 3 years and includes all Students who have left the College at any point.
- Slightly higher proportion of Students have gone to University in 2016/2017 compared to previous years and overall approximately two thirds will go on to Higher Education (noted reference in Executive Summary re the recording of Students moving from pre-advanced to advanced courses which impacts the percentage of Students going to University).
- The new apprenticeships have had a limited impact which is indicative of the UK.
- NEETS (Students who are "Not in Education, Employment or Training") numbers have reduced at Varndean.
- The Support Staff make phone calls to all Students to acquire the information required for this report, although there remain some unknowns.
- The College's destinations figures compare in the same way to other Colleges of a similar nature, although there is no national database to enable a detailed comparison to be made.

c) Equality Duty Annual Data Report

Philip Harland summarised the key points from the analysis and answered questions from the Governing Body arising from the Report. Governors noted the contents of the Executive Summary and also the supporting analysis.

A revised table "By Deprivation Age and Gender" was tabled as a replacement for the table included in the existing meeting paper.

The following points were recorded:

STUDENTS

- Achievement of females reduced slightly in 2016/2017, whilst the achievement of males improved which may reflect the change to linear examinations and also taking into account fewer qualifications (4 to 3 AS/A Levels). Course retention for females also reduced slightly for the same period. There is also a correlation between 16-18 female success and deprivation.
- Size of the sample should be taken into account when interpreting the figures as where the sample is small, this may be misleading e.g. deprivation age etc
- IB Students' outcomes distort the analysis as each Student's success is reported as one outcome.
- In response to a question from the Corporation regarding any areas of improvement, Philip Harland reported on the work being done to improve male achievement and that SLT were in the process of analysing this with the intention that details would be reported via the SAR later in the year.
- Following a question regarding assisting Governors to understand the analysis, it was noted that the key objectives arising from the equality analysis completed by SLT, was listed on page 39 of the papers (item 7) and Jill Arnold also explained the various issues and difficulties arising from interpreting the information.

STAFF

- Staff age profile has got older, especially within the 51-60 age range. External advertising was used over the last year, although this hasn't had any impact on the profile. Within the Support Staff area there are several staff which fall within the under 20 age range, mainly being Student cleaners.
- There has been no improvement in ethnicity which is not representative of the local community, although there has been little opportunity to change this owing to there being a fairly static workforce.
- It was suggested that further explanatory notes could be provided within the Executive Summary in future reports, to assist Governors' understanding and to avoid unnecessary questions. **ACTION: Philip Harland**
- Regarding gender pay gap, there are no particular surprises and in the highest paid quartile (Assistant Head of School and above) males are over-represented by +4. As expected, there are more females in the lower quartiles of hourly rates of pay, by virtue of the fact that there are more females employed. Further work will be completed by SLT, particularly regarding the distribution on remuneration and effect upon part time and full time employees.
- In response to a question regarding Ofsted Inspectors' likely viewpoint, Jill Arnold gave assurance that the College mainly reflected within the usual levels of expected outcomes. It was also noted that within the S7 Group (of which Varndean College is a part), there is an Equalities Group which considers this information.
- A significant number of staff do not declare when invited, their sexual orientation, so any interpretation of the available information, is unlikely to be accurate.

d) Student Performance against Target Grades – Autumn Term Data Dashboard

Philip Harland introduced the paper and referred Governors to the Executive Summary page together with the supporting analysis. He drew Governors' attention to the following points:

- No particular concerns have been identified by SLT at the moment with performance against target grade for AS and A2 is in line with last year and for A1, this is much better than last year and in line with A2. IB remains strong although performance against target grade overall is 10% below that of previous years. Level 2 performance shows a significant improvement against target grade compared to last year and Level 3 vocational performance is below the position last year.
 - Attendance for Autumn 2017 is good (above 95%) and absence/lateness is comparable to last year.
 - Course retention is slightly lower compared to last year and College retention although similar to last year, remains below the average for SFCs.
- The Corporation discussed the various issues and areas for improvement, noting that to improve from a good grade at Ofsted, the College would need to improve its vocational courses value added position. SLT assured Governors that despite this, Students on vocational courses were still achieving and progressing. Governors were also reminded that various strategies had been put in place to improve the vocational courses including a BTEC EQR (External Quality Review).

9. Financial Update

In the absence of Elaine French, Philip Harland reported on the following items:

a) Dashboard 2017-2018; Management Accounts (period 5) including Executive Summary

Health grade is good with 210 points – refer spread sheet in accounts

The Corporation had a brief discussion about borrowing issues and the impact upon the College's financial situation, although it was noted that currently the College had nil borrowing. Philip Harland advised that having discussion the matter with Elaine French, she had advised that based on the current financial position, the College could invest £490,000 on capital whilst at the same time ensuring that it maintained its current health grade.

The need for additional facilities to cater for an increase in Student numbers was reported including additional bathroom facilities, noting that the College was in the process of identifying suitable sites for this.

At this point Simon Waters left the meeting.

b) Property Matters Update

- New Laboratory space: Governors were reminded that the new science rooms had been opened recently by Caroline Lucas, providing much needed additional laboratory space. Thanks were recorded to the site team for their work, particularly over Christmas, which ensured that the works were completed on time.

- Student Social Space: Further efforts are being made to improve facilities for Students owing to the limited social space, including introducing more benches in common areas.
Planning Applications: awaiting determinations from the Local Authority regarding the 3G Sports Pitch (13th February) and proposed Residential Development (26th February). Both applications have received opposition from the local neighbourhood in response to the official consultation. The 3G Pitch application has received support from Sport England. However regarding the residential development, there may be issues relating to the LA's policies regarding open spaces. The next Planning Committee meetings will be on 6th March and 7th April at which the applications may be considered. Further feedback is also awaited from the Planning Officer.

c) Financial Update re Pensions

Governors were referred to Matters Arising item above, noting that this update would be given at the next meeting. **ACTION: Elaine French**

d) ESFA Financial Plan 2017-2019

The ESFA dashboard was tabled, forming part of the ESFA's financial planning letter and the contents of which were noted.

10. Policies

The Annual Report from Principal on changes to Policies/New Policies processed via SLT over the last year was noted.

In response to a question from Governors regarding the use of Mobile Phones' policy, SLT confirmed that further work would be done on revising the policy wording.

11. Date of Next Meeting - Wednesday 21st March 2018 at 6.00 p.m.

Mid-term Seminar – Wednesday 14th March 2018 at 6.00 p.m. – 7.30 p.m.

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

13. Confidential Business

a) Part II Minutes from Meeting held on 6th December 2018

Refer to separate Minutes and it was noted that these were approved within agenda item 3.

Chair.....

Date.....

Louise Pennington 07/02/18