

**MINUTES OF THE  
CORPORATION MEETING**

**HELD ON WEDNESDAY 10<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2018 AT 6.00 P.M.**

**MEETING 18/01**

Present: Jane Alderton, Robert Bridges, Ayas Fallon-Khan, Jane Farrell, Philip Harland, Simon Lindfield, Billy McInally, Janice Robinson, Richard Seager, Simon Waters, Aldona Wheeler

In Attendance: Peter Bailey, Elaine French, Donna-Marie Janson, Louise Pennington

Apologies received: Randall Anderson, Halima Begum, Callan MacEwan, Cathy McDonnell, Katharine Travis

In the Chair: Janice Robinson

**1. Welcomes and Apologies for Absence**

Welcomes – Donna-Marie Janson (Vice-Principal)

Apologies – as recorded above.

**2. Declaration of Interest**

None recorded.

**3. Minutes of the Meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> July 2018 Part I**

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

- Developing a card with the Strategic Aims – this has been completed and new Photo ID cards have been issued to Governors, with the Strategic Aims on the reverse.
- Memorandum of Accord – awaiting revision from MET; Janice Robinson and Philip Harland will sign this on behalf of Varndean. **ACTION: Philip Harland/Janice Robinson**
- Data Protection/GDPR – The Corporation was informed that the Data Protection and other related policies were in the process of being revised and would be presented to Governors for formal approval at the next Meeting (October 2018) – Deferred until December 2018 Corporation. **ACTION: Elaine French**

- Benchmark Data – Philip Harland confirmed that he would send this to Simon Lindfield tomorrow. **ACTION: Philip Harland**
- Curriculum and Standards – It was confirmed that Jill Arnold had informed the new Vice-Principal about the need to include electronic records for 2018/2019 in respect of referrals made to the LA.
- Confidential Minutes action – recommendations from Remuneration Committee to be agreed by Corporation.

The action schedule will be updated to reflect any changes detailed above. **ACTION: Louise Pennington.**

**SIGNIFICANT RISKS 2018/2019**– the risks for 2018/2019 were noted and would be taken into account, where appropriate when considering various items on the agenda. As this was the first meeting of the new academic year, the Corporation reviewed the risks and reminded themselves of the details.

**5. Chair's Report** – nothing to report for this Meeting.

## **6. Principal's Report**

### a) Staffing Update

The Governors noted the contents of the paper prepared by the Emma Rich, HR Manager for which thanks were recorded. Philip Harland drew Governors' attention to the key points within the Report, noting that the Annual HR Report had been presented to Governors at the July 2018 Corporation meeting. Referring to the penultimate paragraph in the executive summary, Philip Harland confirmed that the pay costs' figure of 71.3% should in fact be 74.5%.

### b) Remuneration

Philip Harland explained the annual SFCA pay negotiation process involving Teaching Unions usually held in the Autumn Term, following which recommendations made were reviewed and approved by Corporation, subject to budgetary constraints. It was noted that the process was more complicated this year owing to the fact that School Teachers' pay awards had been agreed at a 3.5% (in 2 parts – 1 paid for by the Schools and the balance met by the Government for the next 2 years). This has created tension within the education sector and affected negotiations for the SFCA. This has been further compounded by the fact that the membership of the SFCA has changed recently with 3 types of member – traditional SFCs such as Varndean College, SFCs which have become academies and Schools which have a significant element of sixth form provision. Philip Harland explained that the 3.5% pay award for the Schools' sector had initially been awarded in respect of pre-16 age group only but as this was inequitable as some Schools taught both pre-16 and post-16 Students, the award was finally agreed for all Schools regardless of age group. Academies will also benefit from the 3.5% pay rise, whilst the SFCs operating within the FE sector, would not benefit from this. Further discussions are underway with the Department of Education in order to try to resolve the inequality.

### c) Local issue

Philip Harland updated Governors on the SFC provision in Haywards Heath, since the collapse of the Haywards Heath Sixth Form College. Varndean has gained some Students arising from this but following political pressure in the Haywards Heath area, Ann Milton, the Secretary of State for Education had accepted a proposal to take forward an initiative to re-introduce sixth form provision in the area, using the existing Haywards Heath College buildings. The initiative has reached the investigation stage and Varndean, along with MET and BHASVIC, have been asked if they would be interested in exploring further collaboration to re-introduce Sixth Form provision in the area. The Accord Colleges have discussed the initiative and all have decided to confirm their interest in further exploration. The Corporation agreed that the College should respond accordingly to the Mid-Sussex Council and Sussex Learning Trust so that Varndean would be kept informed, without commitment. The Corporation discussed the implications of a new Sixth Form provision in Mid-Sussex noting that to be successful, a new provider would need a minimum of 1,200 Students within 5 years. Other issues were discussed including the potential impact upon Varndean College's enrolments. The investigation process would probably take about 3 months, comprising the structural prospects appraisal, after which the Council would make a decision about whether to proceed.

## 7. Student Governors' Report

As both Student Governors were absent, there was no formal report to the Meeting. However Donna-Marie Janson advised Governors that the Students would report next time on the various Freshers' activities and other events organised this term.

## 8. Curriculum and Standards

### a) Student Performance Reports/Data Dashboard

Philip Harland introduced the Data Dashboard in respect of Student Performance which included indicators reflecting the College's performance. The following key aspects were highlighted:

- A Levels – progression as measured by the ALPS comparator is good, although it had been outstanding for the previous 3 years, noting that the latest result was in respect of the new A2 examinations. Approximately 72% of Students achieved their target grades, which compared to 82% in the previous year. There has been a reduction in the overall level of A-B and A-C grades achieved.
- AS Levels – not included in the dashboard as this now formed a small proportion of the College's overall examinations.
- BTECs - Student progress is currently below average, although this was actually an improvement from the previous year where the outcomes had been classified as less than satisfactory. The Corporation welcomed this improvement and congratulated staff and students for this.
- IB – average score is 5.74 (previous year being 5.64) and compares to a global average of 4.68. Governors were reminded that the IB results were not included with the A Level outcomes, having a negative impact when looking at SFC rankings.

- More analysis will be made available to Governors at the next meeting within the College SAR, including details in respect of the subject areas which have seen the greatest downturn in achievement compared to previous years. The Corporation questioned and discussed the reasons for the reduction in achievement, particularly in respect of the more academically able students including learning styles, support provided, guidance on homework and transition from Secondary School learning etc

## **b) Student Enrolment and Class Sizes**

Peter Bailey introduced the paper and highlighted the following points:

- Enrolments have increased by 50+ Students compared to last year with the overall total currently being 1,657 (excluding International Students). The set size average has reduced slightly though for a number of reasons including a deliberate intention to reduce tutorial/core studies to 1 period this year, also increasing the number of groups. Regarding IB Students, there has been an under-recruitment this year which has been disappointing. This reflects the fact that some Students who applied for the IB, had failed to achieve the required Science grade element; those Students have enrolled on A level courses instead (44 Students on roll, compared to 56 last year).
- Some subjects including Music have very small class sizes (5 Students in both of years 1 and 2). This reflects the national decline in Students enrolling on this more specialist subject.
- Photography class sizes and health and safety issues – Philip Harland explained that certain health and safety issues had been brought to his attention this year and were being investigated – class size leading to an increased workload for staff; safe working practices in photography areas including dark room. He confirmed that these were in the process of being resolved but would involve a re-distribution of work between the departmental staff and a re-allocation of Students within the space available to ensure that the health and safety rules were not being breached.

## **c) Careers Strategy**

Donna-Marie Janson presented the new Careers Strategy document to Corporation which was endorsed. The following points were highlighted:

- New requirement introduced so that Colleges would meet the good practice guidance of the 8 Gatsby benchmarks of Good Career Guidance, with which Colleges (and Schools) were expected to comply by 2020.
- The final version will be placed on the College's website.
- Simon Waters has been appointed in the new role of Work Experience Champion and he will be focusing on developing employer links and improving work experience opportunities.
- An audit is being undertaken of the current work experience provisions so that a detailed record may be established and this will then be monitored and developed going forward. The importance of providing employability skills for Students will also be addressed, particularly for non-UCAS students. Regarding the latter point, Ayas Fallon-Khan's offered to help with this and he agreed to liaise with Donna-Marie Janson (**ACTION: Ayas Fallon-Khan/Donna-Marie Janson**). All teachers will be involved in developing this and an inset training day in January 2019 has been scheduled.

- Mock interviews will be introduced for all Students.
- Following a suggestion from Governors, it was agreed that an additional column should be added to the Careers programme, giving details of where the responsibility rests within the College for each item. **ACTION: Donna-Marie Janson.**
- In response to a question from the Corporation, it was confirmed that the STS system recorded each Student's careers development activities.
- Financial implications – the cost element was discussed and it was noted that a grant had been awarded to the College to contribute towards any relevant expenses.
- It was suggested that a Governor may wish to be involved in providing assistance and guidance within the Careers Strategy area and in this regard Ayas Fallon-Khan agreed to liaise with Donna-Maria Janson to discuss this. **ACTION: Ayas Fallon-Khan/Donna-Marie Janson.**

## 9. Finance

### a) Financial Update including Management Accounts, Financial Dashboard

Elaine French introduced the various papers to Corporation, the contents of which were noted and the following points were recorded:

#### 2017/2018

- Budgeted surplus £245,260; projected year end surplus as at July 2018 is £147,443, giving a negative variance of £97,817. Income and Expenditure have exceeded budgeted figures by £93,784 and £191,601 respectively. Major variances given on page 32, were noted by Corporation and in particular noting that the main expenditure variance has arisen from staffing costs reflecting the additional teaching costs required at the beginning of the year following student growth.
- Year end bank balance is £1.2M.
- Final update for the year will be reported to Corporation at its December meeting and the surplus is likely to reduce further to reflect various accounting adjustments (depreciation in respect of the capitalisation of new leases following a change in treatment). However the EBITDA (earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation), will remain good. Predicted overall financial health score will be good.
- Following a question from Governors regarding the additional staffing costs of £85,000 in respect of increased staffing needs for additional students, the lagged funding effect improving the following year's income was noted.

### b) Capital Developments including Property Matters/Update

Governors received the Report prepared by Philip Harland and the following details were recorded:

- 3 planning applications in process of being determined by the Local Authority – STEM centre was due to be determined in October but is now likely to go to the November Planning Committee meeting. The application has been positively received by the Planning Officer. Bearing in mind that ESFA grant funding has been awarded with a time limit attached, works urgently need to commence. Contractors have been

identified but no formal agreement will be signed until planning permission has been agreed.

- The other 2 planning applications (residential development and the 3G pitch) are predicted to be considered at the December 2018 Planning Committee Meeting. Regarding these, Governors were informed that Green Varndean had submitted an application for asset of community value which if successful would give them first option on the land sale. The bat survey has been completed in respect of both planning applications and some bat activity was shown to exist near where the 3G pitch location. However as the impact on the bats in this area was anticipated to be minimal, with other land available for the bats, this was not thought to be a major issue.
- The recommissioning of the Teaching space as reported at the last meeting, has been completed over the summer which has provided essential teaching space taking into account additional students enrolled.
- Other Summer works which have been completed include the 2 storage blocks which was brought on to the site. However a third block intended to be used as a temporary toilet block was not put in place owing to a tree being in the way. The College is in the process of reviewing the location of the latter block and it's likely to be placed near the music rooms. At this point thanks were recorded to the Site Team for their work over the Summer in connection with this.
- New power station will be in place in November.
- Next round of CIF bids are due shortly (closing date deadline first week of December). Likely submissions from Varndean College would relate to the need to refit the existing kitchen area and consideration will also be given to whether to submit a bid for a Student Welfare centre which would include a brick built toilet block.
- Green Varndean – Governors were reminded that 2 members of Green Varndean met with the Chair and Vice-Chair of Corporation last term and following a request from the Group, a further meeting (to discuss communications between the College and Green Varndean and to give them an opportunity to see the outline Master Plan) has been scheduled for 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2018. Governors queried whether the local community was represented and suggested that any general communications regarding the College's building and other plans should be made to the wider community.

### **c) Health and Safety Annual Report**

Elaine French introduced the Report prepared by the Health and Safety Office, Nick Stubbs and summarised the main issues. She also informed Governors of an HR insurance issue and potential claim which had not been included in the H & S Report regarding an alleged first aid incident which occurred in April involving a day time cleaner in the College's kitchen area.

Referring to page 45 and the comment regarding an unidentified intruder, the Corporation queried whether there was a need for increased security as the College was an open site. In light of the forthcoming building works, Elaine French confirmed that the College was investigating options for access controls being implemented in respect of the main building and also reported that the recent Inset Training from Sussex Police regarding Counter Terrorism issues, also recommended that greater security be implemented. Further information on security and ID badges will be given to Students via the Tutorial system.

## 10. Policies and Other Documents

### a) Health and Safety Policy

The minor changes to the policy document were approved by Corporation and the Chair authorised to sign this. **ACTION: Elaine French**

### b) Financial Regulations and business Procedures – changes recommended at Finance Working Group

The revisions to the documents were endorsed by the Corporation and Elaine French agreed to upload these to the website. **ACTION: Elaine French**

### c) 19+ Admissions Policy and Procedures

The revisions to the policy/procedures were noted and approved by the Corporation, noting the minor housekeeping changes and also the removal of Access Students as the reduction in grant funding made this unviable going forward. **ACTION: Philip Harland**

## 11. Date of Next Meeting

**Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

## 12. Any Other Business

- a) Accessing examination results by Students – in response to a question from one of the Governors regarding the fact that external examination results were made available from 11.00 a.m., whilst other local Colleges provided these from 7.30 a.m., SLT agreed to investigate this, noting that early access would assist those Students who needed to seek assistance from the clearing process at the earliest opportunity. **ACTION: Peter Bailey**
- b) Governors were reminded that the Corporation met twice per term but that over the last year, Governor attendance had dropped and that for the last two meetings, quoracy had not been achieved for certain confidential business, requiring only external Governors to be present. Governors were encouraged to improve their attendance where necessary over the next year.

There was no other business.

## 13. Confidential Business

**Refer to Part II Minutes (separate versions for External Governors and Staff/Student Governors/SLT Members.**

The Part II minutes from the July 2018 Corporation meeting were approved and actions recommended therein endorsed.

Chair.....

Date.....

Louise Pennington 10/10/18