

VARNDEAN COLLEGE

MINUTES OF

THE SEARCH & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING

HELD ON TUESDAY 24TH NOVEMBER 2020 VIRTUAL MEETING VIA GOOGLE MEETS

Present: Donna-Marie Janson, Simon Lindfield, Janice Robinson, Richard Seager

In attendance: Louise Pennington

Apologies received: None

In the Chair: Janice Robinson

1) Welcomes and Apologies for Absence

As above.

2) Declaration of Interests

None.

3) Minutes of Meeting held on 24th September 2020

The minutes of the meeting were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

4) Matters Arising – Action Point

The Committee considered the various actions within Appendix 1 and noted those items which had been completed. The following matters arising points were discussed:

- Link Governor for International Department – carry forward post pandemic. **ACTION: Donna-Marie Janson**
- Strategy Event – this has been moved to 3rd December 2020 at 6.00 p.m.

5. Corporation and Committee Membership Review.

The Committee was reminded that there was a Parent Governor election process underway and that additional Corporation had approved at its last meeting, that Paul Herridge, the current Parent Governor, should be appointed as an External Governor (succeeding Andy Breckenridge) with effect from 1st January 2021, when his Parent Governor term of office comes to an end.

The Committee made reference to the skills audit summary included in item 6 c and reviewed the various Governor membership and Committee schedules. It was noted that on the whole the skills and experience were well-balanced at the moment, subject to no other resignations/retirements but it was noted that following the departure of Dawn Howard (Parent Governor) and Jane Alderton (external Governor), the Corporation had lost its Governors with University based employment history. It was note that although Andy Breckenridge had resigned (Blatchington Mill School), the Head teacher of Patcham High School, John McKee, had joined the Governing Body earlier this year.

The Committee considered whether it would be useful, when there is another vacancy, to seek someone with business experience and in this regard, it was suggested that it may be possible to seek prospective Governors via the Business Studies Mentoring Programme. It was agreed that this should be taken forward, with the aim of finding someone with experience of a medium to large business if possible. **ACTION: Janice Robinson/Louise Pennington**

The Committee was reminded that Jill Arnold (retired Deputy Principal at Varndean College) had also expressed interest in becoming a Governor should there be a vacancy and Louise Pennington had updated her on the discussions held earlier in the term, noting that there were no vacancies at present. It was noted that when another vacancy arose, consideration would have to be given regarding the skills/experience required, taking into account the business area identified above. Jill Arnold's extensive educational and also Ofsted knowledge and expertise was recorded, noting that if a vacancy left the Governing Body short of expertise in this sector, then Jill would make an excellent appointment.

It was agreed that Jill Arnold should be kept informed of the latest situation. **ACTION: Louise Pennington**

6. Corporation Annual Reports

- a) **Attendance 2019/2020** – noted, with the majority of Governors achieving good attendance levels. The contents of the Corporate Governance Statement within the Annual Report and Financial statements, was included for information and was noted by the Committee.

Following a suggestion from the Committee, it was agreed to add a second note to the schedule to explain that all Governors had been invited to join the EGC.

It was noted that Brendan Ward's record for attendance at Audit Committee should be revised to read 100%, representing 1 meeting, his first since being appointed.

ACTION: Louise Pennington

Regarding any Governors' lower than benchmark attendance levels over the year, the circumstances and apologies for missed meetings were noted and accepted.

Since lockdown, attendance at Meetings has improved probably as a result of the fact that for those that work, it can be easier to join a remote meeting, compared to a meeting held on site.

Regarding the Corporate Governance Statement, it was agreed to amend the pronouns in respect to all references to "the Principal". **ACTION: Louise Pennington**

Also in respect of the terms of office record, it was agreed that some of the entries should be checked for accuracy. **ACTION: Louise Pennington**

- b) **Training 2019/2020**. – The contents of the records were noted and the Committee was pleased to see various training opportunities being taken up by Governors. It was noted that there had been less internal training this year, but that there had instead been additional external training offers, such as the new SFCA Governance webinar programme. The Committee discussed how it would be possible to measure the benefit of training and it was noted that the Chair in her 1 to 1s with Governors, could discuss this with each Governor as part of the self-assessment process. **ACTION: Janice Robinson**

- c) **Skills and Experience Audit 2019/2020** – The scheduled demonstrated a good balance of skills and experience.
- d) **DBS record of existing Governors.** The records were noted and that the record would be revised to include all Governors and that the “checked” heading should be revised to read “re-checked” to avoid any confusion. **ACTION: Louise Pennington**

7. Freedom of Information Review

- a) The Summary of FOI requests was noted.
- b) FOI Publication Scheme reviewed and endorsed, noting that there were only housekeeping changes from SLT. The scheme was recommended to Corporation for approval and that the website version would be updated. **ACTION: Louise Pennington**

8. Confidentiality Review of Corp and Committee minutes and meeting papers.

The Committee approved the record provided for the last year, noting that a full historical report was available on request. **ACTION: Louise Pennington**

9. Self Assessment

a) Individual Governor Self-Assessment.

The Committee noted that last year’s return was included in the papers and that as several returns had not yet been received, and the up to date version would be presented at the next meeting. **ACTION Louise Pennington**

In response to a question from the Committee regarding following up actions from the various Governor responses, it was recorded that depending upon the subject matter and points raised, either Louise Pennington followed up by e mail and/or Janice Robinson would follow up in her annual Chair’s 1 to 1s. **ACTION: Chair/Clerk**

b) Committee self-assessment summary – refer front sheet paper.

The feedback recorded from the Audit Committee was noted and that its membership had been strengthened over the year following new Governor appointments.

c) Governance SAR.

The Committee approved the draft assessment subject to the changes recorded below and noted that the SAR document was based on the new Education Inspection Framework (EIF) Leadership and Management questions. It was also agreed that it would be useful next year to compare the governance SAR with the template used by Management and to incorporate aspects of this if possible to produce a more consistent cross college approach. **ACTION: Louise Pennington**

Other changes agreed:

- Remove any duplication in wording to avoid repetition.
- Ensure that commentary in relevant columns and particularly review the Evidence of Performance Requiring Improvement Column and Yet to Achieve column etc

- Bring the action plan to the Spring Term S & G to check progress.

In future it was also agreed that the SAR should include more specific evaluation of how the Board operations and carries out assessment and to also seek more input from Governors themselves. **ACTION: Louise Pennington**

10. Governor Link Arrangements for 2020/2021 – deferred until post Covid

The Committee noted the decision made previously to defer on site link visits during the pandemic and also considered what else could be done to ensure that Governors receive assurances regarding the teaching and learning, without coming on site. In response Donna-Marie Janson suggested that Governors could watch a lesson as there were cameras in each classroom, but it was thought that this might create unnecessary stress for Staff during this difficult time and would be too intrusive. The Principal offered to seek volunteers for this process and then further thought could be given to providing this option to some Governors. **ACTION: Donna-Marie Janson/Janice Robinson**

11. Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 16th March 2021 at 10.30 a.m.

12. Any Other Business

None.

Chair.....

Date.....

Janice Robinson 24/11/20