

Solihull College & University Centre

Corporation Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 23rd May 2024
5.00pm -8.15pm Stratford-Upon-Avon Campus.

Present	Barbara Hughes – Chair of Corporation Paul Assinder – Joint Vice Chair of Corporation Christine Abbott Tasleem Chaudary Ravi Kumar Mehreen Mirza Amirun Nehar Cheryl Pidler Donna Poole – Staff Governor Harrison Thompson
In Attendance	Heather Hunt – Deputy Principal and CFO, Pete Haynes – Vice Principal HR & Student Services, Nancy Buckley - Vice Principal Business Growth, Skills & Partnerships, Sam Bromwich – Director of Corporate Governance, Risk & Compliance, Tina Taylor – Senior Governance Officer (minute taker). Dave Garside – Director of IT, Olly Scholefield – Head of Sustainability.
Apologies	Tony Lucas – Joint Vice Chair of Corporation, Sarah Horton-Walsh, Lucy Lee, Mehak Farooque - FE Student Governor, Jo Moorcroft – HE Student Governor, Sally Tomlinson, Rebecca Gater – Principal & CEO, Lee Jamieson – Vice Principal Quality & Curriculum.

1. Welcome and any announcements.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave an update on the Ofsted inspection which was taking place. She explained that the Principal & CEO and the Vice Principal Quality & Curriculum were unable to attend the Corporation meeting as they were attending the Ofsted debrief meeting. As a result of this, the meeting's agenda had been changed to remove the update on Quality and Curriculum. The Chair noted that a confidential paper regarding the update on curriculum management areas was circulated prior to the meeting for information.

The Chair explained that the Staff Governor would leave the meeting when required to attend the Ofsted feedback meeting and then rejoin. Governors were also advised that the Director of IT attended the meeting as part of his management development.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Sally Tomlinson, Tony Lucas, Lucy Lee, Sarah Horton Walsh, Mehak Farooque, Jo Moorcroft, Rebecca Gater and Lee Jamieson.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no items declared.

4. Membership Update

The Corporation received the recommendation from the Search and Governance committee to appoint Graham McKean as Full Member. It was;

RATIFIED Graham McKean is appointed a Full Member of the Corporation. In accordance with usual procedures the appointment is for a term of one-year effective 1st June 2024, and it is expected that this would extend for a term of 3 years.

The Corporation **NOTED** the membership changes as detailed within the Summary Membership report. Governors discussed how changes to the membership would mean there would be a gap of experience of an education background, which has also been identified through the skills audit. The Chair assured governors that the recruitment campaign with Peridot Partners will ensure the gap is filled. The Director of Corporate Governance, Risk & Compliance informed of the requirement to ensure there is a governor with finance experience on the Audit & Risk committee.

The Director of Corporate Governance, Risk & Compliance provided an update on the outcome of the Chair Designate recruitment campaign.

5. Chair's Action & Seal

There were no Chair's actions to be advised. Governors were informed that a Chair action may be required before the next corporation meeting for the RMF contract. The Chair explained how the approval of tenders was processed via BoardEffect which was in line with the financial regulations.

A copy of the Use of the College Seal report was circulated for information and **NOTED**.

6. Minutes of the previous Corporation meeting held on 20th March 2024

The previous minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 20th March 2024 were received and **APPROVED** as a true record. The Chair's signature will be added to the minutes.

6.1 Matters Arising

An update was given on matters arising:

Pulse Survey

The Director of Corporate Governance Risk & Compliance explained that a copy had been uploaded to BoardEffect for governors' information. **Following a question from a governor**, the Vice Principal HR & Student Services explained that the answers given were quite detailed and the key elements from the feedback were contained within the report.

RK joined the meeting

Equality Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Annual Report

Governors were reminded to review the annual report and provide feedback and comments to the Chair regarding the content of the report by the next Corporation meeting in June. **ACTION**

A governor sought clarification to the nature of the report. In response, the Vice Principal HR & Student Services explained that is a requirement of the Public Sector Equality Duty to show how the college demonstrate, and foster EDI and the objectives were at the front of the document. The Chair noted that the data within the EDI Annual report is also contained within the Quality report; discussions took place to whether there needs to be a summary of the report. Governors were also informed that the EDI annual report is used for the purposes of the tender process.

6.2 Action Report

The actions were reviewed, and an update was provided.

6.3 Top Risks

The Top Key Risks report was received, and a detailed update was provided. The Director of Corporate Governance, Risk & Compliance provided an explanation of the proposed revised risk reporting matrix and noted the approval followed the recommendation of the Audit & Risk Committee meeting on 5th March 2024. She further confirmed the risks will be removed and included in the Strategic Risk Register.

A governor asked whether an additional risk should be added regarding the changes in the government following the general election, and how it could impact on Further Education and capital spending. In response, the Deputy Principal and CFO provided an update on the investment plan and strategic risks within the risk register noting the three items which are a priority which will continue to be focused on. She explained that it was also under review with the Audit & Risk committee and that an update on the investment plan was being presented at the next Financial Oversight Group (FoG) meeting after half term.

Governors were informed that the Property Strategy workshops have taken place. **The Chair commented** that there was good attendance by Governors for the meeting.

With there being no comments or questions, the Corporation **APPROVED** the revised reporting matrix with the Risk Register the revised Strategic Risk Register and Board Assurance Framework 2023/24 (including top risks and Independent Board Assurance)

The Staff Governor left the meeting.

7. Committee Minutes for Information

The draft minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee on 5th March 2024 and Search and Governance Committee on 22nd April were shared for information.

The Chair confirmed that the minutes of the Remuneration committee on 7th May 2024 were not available and would be circulated at the next meeting. **ACTION**

8. Sustainability Update

The Head of Sustainability joined the meeting to present the item. In a change to the order of the agenda items the update was presented under item 8.

The Sustainability update was presented, and a detailed explanation was provided about the following key points:

- Energy Efficiency audit and decarbonisation report – Scope 1 and 2
- Supply chain and procurement – Scope 3
- Green Skills teaching training
- SLT sustainability strategic management workshop and report
- Green Champions
- Governance – Embedding sustainability skills, knowledge and training

It was confirmed that the summary of the SECR (Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting) annual report will be published on the website. The report shows a significant reduction in carbon emissions from gas and slightly smaller reduction in electricity from 2021/22 to 2022/23 and exceeds our annual 10% reduction target towards net zero for Scope 1 and 2. A copy of the presentation will be uploaded to BoardEffect for governors to access. **ACTION**

A governor referred to the Green Champions and asked whether there had been any uptake from students. The Head of Sustainability provided an update following the staff workshop on 10th May which saw 40 staff and students attend and also received positive feedback. The outcome of the workshop enabled focus around the 5 projects which were detailed within the report.

The Vice Principal HR & Student Services noted that student's incentive to be part of the project is having a passion for sustainability. The Chair asked whether Governors were able to meet and discuss their ideas with students who were becoming Green Champions **ACTION**.

A question was asked regarding the governor's survey on sustainability and how it was fed back to the EAUC environment alliance university colleges. It was proposed to review all agendas to include sustainability where appropriate. **ACTION**.

Discussions took place regarding whether the latest Solihull town centre energy network is included within the college's commitments. It was noted that the Turnover and Townsend slides show how energy efficient the college is, and how energy is used with other colleges. The Head of Sustainability advised that although there is no current data for colleges, Solihull College and University Centre were part of the universities data and are in the top 3 in terms of energy efficiency for universities.

With there being no further comments or questions, the report was **NOTED for information, understanding and decision making by governors**.

The Chair gave thanks for the comprehensive and clear update.

The Head of Sustainability left the meeting.

9. Principal's Introduction & Update Report

The Staff Governor joined the meeting.

The Principal and CEO's report was circulated prior to the meeting and provided governors with a midterm update on key areas of the college. In the absence of the Principal and CEO, the Deputy Principal and CFO provided a detailed explanation about the strategic ambitions.

Referring to the application figures, governors were given assurance about the reasons for the decline in applications in some of the subject areas. A taster day was planned to take place at Blossomfield for school leavers in May to get young people into college to see what courses are on offer.

The Vice Principal HR & Student Services confirmed that the culture briefing had been presented to all staff, which included support staff, which was well received.

It was noted that the Quality & Curriculum update had been deferred to the next meeting as the Vice Principal Quality & Curriculum was not present. **ACTION**. Governors received the confidential paper circulated prior to the meeting detailing and update on curriculum management areas.

There were safeguarding actions in the quality reports in areas where referrals are high which need to be addressed. **ACTION**

A governor commented that it was positive to receive the update and emphasis on reputation of the college which was important to have this.

A general sector update was provided and a copy of the Solihull Annual Strategic conversation letter, DfE College financial statements 22/23 and Communications project update PowerPoint were shared for information.

The report was **NOTED for information, understanding and decision making by governors**.

9.1 Greater Birmingham & Solihull Institute of Technology (GBSIoT) Board Report

The Deputy Principal and CFO detailed the report which provided an update on the proposed changes to the GBSIoT Board membership; the Corporation were asked to approve the proposed changes. A copy of the GBSIoT Collaboration Agreement was received for information.

Following a governor question, discussions took place regarding whether all partners within the GBSIoT engaged equally. It was noted that following on from the briefing about Charity Trustees the college were seeking legal advice regarding how it approves items which relate to GBSIoT and an update would be provided at the next Corporation meeting in June **ACTION**

The Corporation **APPROVED** the membership change and contribution rates as detailed within the report.

10. Annual Accountability Statement

A draft copy of the Annual Accountability statement was shared for information and governors were given the opportunity to discuss the contents on the report.

The Deputy Principal and CFO explained the statement was a working draft which followed feedback received from governors within the working group to identify the different sections of the statement. An explanation was given regarding the areas of the report which were missing, and it was confirmed that a final version will be shared at the next meeting in June **ACTION**.

The Chair noted the working group meeting was helpful and enabled governors to meet the timings requirement and review the changes to the accountability statement. An updated copy will be uploaded to the DfE website by the end of June.

11. Careers and Guidance Report

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services provided an outline of the College's careers strategy and the work of the Careers team. A copy of the careers report, Gatsby benchmark assessment, careers calendar 23/24 and Solihull careers report were all shared for information and promoted positive discussions.

The report was **NOTED for information, understanding and decision making by governors**.

12. Sub-contracting Update (verbal update)

The Deputy Principal and CFO gave a verbal update in relation to the tender process for RMF and noted there may be a Chair's action required due to the rise of the increase value. The contract variation for RMF will be for up to £200K. Governors **approved in principle** that a contract variation could be issued to up to £200K and that final confirmation of the figure will be confirmed once the Chairs action is signed. **ACTION**

The update was **NOTED for information, understanding and decision making by governors**.

13. Safeguarding Termly Update

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services provided a termly update for Governors on safeguarding and Prevent. The safeguarding report – term 2 and a report from an external audit of safeguarding records were shared for information.

Governors were made aware of the Prevent training being delivered in the summer term, in addition to the online mandatory training, which they may wish to attend. **ACTION**

Governors were thanked for their support during the recent Ofsted visit particularly when discussing safeguarding.

The report was **NOTED for information, understanding and decision making by governors**.

14. Annual IT Report including Digital Strategy

The Director of IT presented the new Digital Strategy for 2023 – 2026, a position statement on AI, and an annual report on IT and digital related issues. He gave a detailed explanation of the key points of the report and provided an update on improvements which have taken place over the last year.

A governor asked about the reliability of the network on the top floor of Blossomfield where there is poor network. The Director of IT confirmed that the digital survey detailed the concerns and the team have engaged the services of an external technician. He noted there were some configuration changes required to improve the Wi-Fi and those concerns have been addressed.

An explanation was given regarding the reference to “A cloud smart approach to storage”, discussions took place regarding bandwidth and cyber essentials and the link between the IT contractors and sustainability.

Following a question from a governor regarding the monitoring and evaluation of objectives which have been set within the Digital Strategy, it was agreed that an update on the objectives would be given 6 months as opposed to annually. **ACTION**

Discussions took place regarding the draft position on AI, the Director of IT confirmed he was benchmarking the risks of AI.

With there being no further discussions, the Corporation **APPROVED** the Digital Strategy and **noted** the position statement on AI and the Annual Report

15. Governance Items

15.1 Approval of External Auditors Tender

The Director of Governance, Risk & Compliance confirmed that following a recent tender process and interviews, the Audit & Risk committee have recommended the appointment of Bishop Fleming to provide External Audit Services to include provision for 2023/24, 2024/25 and 2025/26.

The Corporation **APPROVED** the recommendation to appoint Bishop Fleming with effect from 27th May 2024.

15.2 Membership Report Update

Discussed under item 4.

15.3 Feedback from Search & Governance Committee

The Director of Corporate Governance, Risk & Compliance informed governors that the Search & Governance committee met recently and reviewed the skills audit outcome and gave some helpful feedback on how we use the data, how we incorporate the terms of office dates in the succession planning.

15.4 Meeting Dates for 2024/25

Governors **APPROVED** the meeting dates for 2024/25 and were asked to provide feedback outside of the meeting regarding the changes to the Corporation start times. **ACTION**

Discussions took place regarding the Saturday Governor Development Day (GDD). Governors **agreed** to proposal 1 as detailed within the report. The Senior Governance Officer noted that it will be an opportunity to review the new Code of Good Governance so that it can be adopted for the new academic year. **ACTION**

16. Confidential

There were no items to be discussed.

17. Policies

The following policies were shared and **APPROVED**:

- Freedom of Information Publication Scheme Policy
- Incident Management and Business Continuity Plan
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Framework and Procedure for the Terminating Contracts of Employment by Agreement

The Director of Corporate Governance, Risk & Compliance advised that the Incident Management and Business Continuity Plan was a recommendation from the Audit & Risk committee.

18. Items for Information

The following items were shared for information:

- 18.1 Bids and Projects
- 18.2 Tender update
- 18.3 Gifts and Hospitality Report
- 18.4 PMR

The reports were **NOTED for information, understanding and decision making by governors.**

19. Any Other Business

19.1 Focus Groups

The Chair referred to the recent focus groups which took place and provided feedback for information. There were 5 focus group areas and feedback has been provided to the Principal and CEO and Vice Principal of Quality and Curriculum. Governors were asked to ensure their feedback reports were shared with the Governance Administrator. Feedback on subsequent actions from the College would be discussed at a later Corporation meeting **ACTION**

19.2 H&S Report for information

The Deputy Principal and CFO noted for information that the H&S report was not shared at the last corporation, however it was reviewed by A&R committee on 5th March and uploaded to BoardEffect for governors to access.

19.3 Governors Training

The Chair reminded governors of the importance of completing their mandatory training and noted that a reminder for those who were still to complete it would be sent separately. Governors were asked to complete their training within one week of receipt of the reminder. **ACTION**

20. Future Dates

- Financial Oversight Group (FoG) – Additional FoG Wednesday 05.06.2024 5pm (Teams) and Tuesday 24/6/2023 4pm – Teams.
- Corporation and annual dinner - 26/06/2023 4pm (4 hours)

The Chair thanked everyone for their time and the meeting ended at 8.30pm

Barbara Hughes

Signed:

Dated:

08.10.2024