



MINUTES OF THE STRATEGY AND POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

Held At Esher College
Wednesday, 28th February 2018, at 6.00 pm.

Present:

David Irving (Chair)
Dan Dean
Hannah McKean
Adrian Mills

Tim Oliver
Clarissa Wilks
Ben Williams

Dan Hards, Assistant Principal - Student Services (Advising Officer)
Rebecca De'Ath (Clerk)

1. BUSINESS INTERESTS IN AGENDA ITEMS

There were no declarations of business interests from Governors.

2. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Principal introduced new Staff Governor Hannah McKean to those present, and the Chair welcomed her to her first meeting. All members of the committee were present.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting of 29th November 2017 required two amendments:

- Dan Hards is an Assistant Principal (not Vice-Principal)
- Item 5 (College Self-Assessment Report) captured, on page 4 of the minutes, the question about social mobility, should read:

Prompted by the Government's recently published State of the Nation Report, the Deputy Principal replied that students receiving a bursary or PPG have their progress tracked and monitored at each progress review meeting at three points during the year. Progress guidance and different pathways are offered to each student. Of the 53 students in this category last year, only two did not attain their planned destination and were seeking employment. The College actively recruits from pockets of social deprivation in the area. A view was expressed that social mobility is not just about disadvantage. The Deputy Principal pointed out that, once students commence at the College, the focus is on ensuring progress for all, in the round.

Subject to the above changes, the minutes were otherwise approved as an accurate record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

All actions had been completed.

S&P1-001: Item 5 - the Deputy Principal had amended the College SAR and the new version was reviewed at the December Corporation meeting.

S&P1-002: Item 7 - the Clerk had amended the Instrument and Articles of Government as agreed.

S&P1- 003: Item 9 – a Safeguarding presentation will be given to the Corporation in July 2018.

5. Academy Conversion Update

An update on the application process for academy conversion had been circulated to Governors with the meeting papers, along with the March 2017 update to provide context. It was for this committee to consider the educational and broader strategic argument for or against conversion. The application was being presented to the Head Teachers' Board (HTB) on 1st March and the Principal expected some challenge from them on aspects of the proposal. The Principal answered the following question from Governors:

Q: Should we address the potential objections now, or wait for the HTB outcome? The ESFA will present our paper and represent the College at that meeting; we are in contact with them, and will await the HTB decision.

The financial implications of conversion had been updated and would be presented to the Finance & Estates committee meeting in early March. Future pay awards, in the context of the lifting of the public sector pay cap, will be a factor to consider.

Q: Is there a significant financial advantage in the reduction in LGPS employer contributions payable should the College become an academy? The risk that the College would present as an academy would decrease, and therefore so would the amount to be paid into the fund. However, this is an actuarial calculation, rather than a hard financial gain.

The meeting discussed whether there would be any long term amalgamation issues that could arise as a result of conversion, or otherwise. The Principal felt that the status of the College made no difference to whether approaches were made to the College to support local colleges or schools, as it would operate as a Single Academy Trust.

Governors concurred that there was no further educational motivation or benefit to convert to an academy at the present time, over and above the situation a year ago. The original argument for the advantage of being able to reclaim VAT was compelling at the time, but the College now faced other challenges in the future. The "last man standing" argument was no longer a risk with so relatively few Colleges opting to become academies. In addition, any decision to pursue the opportunity to work with Norwegian students (covered under item 7) would almost certainly have implications for a planned change of status.

The consensus of the meeting was that there was no educational argument for conversion and therefore nothing new to present to the Corporation. This left the Finance & Estates Committee to consider if there was any financial driver for change at its meeting in March.

6. REVIEW OF EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

This policy was at the three-year review point. Only minor changes had been made, mostly to the use of language. The Chair referred to page 2, explaining that extensive efforts had been made by the Corporation to widen the diversity of its governors via different recruitment strategies and it would continue to do so.

A suggestion was made that Goal 4 (pages 3 & 4) did not adequately reflect the role of the Safeguarding Link Governor in the process, or the collaborative nature of the College and Corporation working in partnership to deliver E&D outcomes.

ACTION: College Designated Safeguarding Lead to amend wording as follows:

- 4.3 – alter wording to the effect that the Corporation would monitor compliance with legal duties *via the Safeguarding Link Governor*;
- 4.4 - to state that the Principal, “*supported* by the Corporation, would give a consistent lead on E&D issues...”
- 4.7 - remove “every January” and replace with “annually”.

The meeting thanked the Assistant Principal (Student Services) for his work on this.

7. ADMISSIONS POLICY 2019

There was one minor change made: page 1, Exceptional Applicant Status: “Applicants with an EHCP...will be offered a place, *pending an assessment of need.*”

This change was accepted, and the committee agreed to recommend to the Corporation that it approve this Policy.

The Principal raised a matter that had a bearing on College admissions – he had just received a request from a Norwegian college for 20 to 30 of its students to attend Esher College for a year, on a rolling basis. Accommodation would be local and sourced by the Norwegian college’s representative, with costs borne elsewhere. However, Esher would have limited financial responsibilities in terms of providing Maths and language tuition for those students. That said, each student would come with a level of funding to more than offset this.

The Principal reported on two other colleges involved in this scheme and understood that their experiences had been very beneficial, leading to a long term relationship. He now sought the committee’s agreement to take the matter forward and explore the request. Governors asked for additional information:

Q: Would the College need a Tier 4 Sponsor Licence to be able to enrol students from outside the UK? The Principal had been informed that this is not required.

Q: Might this affect our chances of academy conversion? Academies are not permitted to have international students. The Principal explained that he is waiting for a response from ESFA on this point – it may prevent us converting.

Governors raised the following points:

- The principle issue should be that existing students would not be negatively affected;
- The capacity of the College to take additional students would need to be considered - the number of Open places might have to be slightly reduced;
- This intake might be of help in a volatile recruitment climate;
- The Norwegian students would be enrolled on the courses with the most capacity, as far as possible;
- Any financial benefits should be invested back into College to the advantage of the current student body;
- If an agreement was entered into, it should specify a break clause and notice period.

The committee concluded that this proposal would add value overall to the College and its students and the international aspect gelled with Esher’s existing E&D values in terms of diversity. It was agreed that the Principal should explore this proposal further.

8. REVIEW OF ADMISSIONS APPEALS PROCEDURE

There was only one change to this procedure (the removal of the last sentence in bullet point 1.) The committee agreed this change, and approved the document.

9. REVIEW OF NEWLY-QUALIFIED TEACHER INDUCTION POLICY

The Principal explained that although this was an operational matter, the Appropriate Body for ensuring that NQTs meet statutory teaching requirements (Babcock 4S) insists that Governing Bodies approve the Induction Policy.

To avoid confusion in the future, the Clerk requested that the Table on page 2 of the policy be enhanced to reflect this requirement. The first bullet point might read: Role of the Governing Body is “to approve the NQT Induction Policy *as per the requirements of the Appropriate Body.*”

ACTION: Principal to add this wording to the Policy.

10. CONSTITUTION

- **Staff Governor Election**

As recorded above, Hannah McKean had been elected.

- **Resignation**

The meeting expressed regret that Damian O’Malley had resigned. The Clerk was asked to review governors’ skills to determine what gaps may need to be filled in the future. The meeting was reminded of the previously-agreed approach to membership under the governance review - which was to reduce numbers from 20 to 15 Governors (now achieved) and to retain this model irrespective of whether the College became an academy or not.

- **Vacancy – Safeguarding Link Governor**

This was a matter for the Corporation and would be put on the agenda for the meeting in March. The Chair informed the meeting that changes to training on Prevent were being mooted at a national level; the Assistant Principal (and the College’s Designated Safeguarding Lead) replied that he was aware of these proposals and would know more after a forthcoming meeting with the Surrey Prevent lead the next day.

- **Terms of Office**

Ian Leigh’s term of office would end later this year on 22nd September.

ACTIONS: Clerk to review the summary of Governors’ skills to determine any gaps that might be addressed via future recruitment and to ensure that the vacant Safeguarding Link Role was put on the agenda for the next Corporation meeting.

11. GOVERNOR TRAINING

Several topics were suggested for the Governors’ Training Morning:

- General Data Protection Regulations – update.
- Funding methodology for post-16 students
- The College’s Strategic Plan and how the Corporation could support this.

The Governance Quality Improvement Plan and Student Focus Groups would also be on the agenda as is usual. The meeting felt that these topics would enhance their knowledge and that this would be an appropriate agenda for the morning.

The committee agreed to this proposal and the Principal undertook to inform members should any change be subsequently made to these suggestions.

ACTION: Clerk to ask the Deputy Clerk if she would draft an agenda covering these topics.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

No additional business was raised.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, 6th June 2018.

*The meeting closed at 6.47pm.
Attendance was 100%.*

Signed.....

Date.....

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

S&P2-001	<u>Item 6. Equality & Diversity Policy</u> College Safeguarding Designated Lead to amend wording as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4.3 - alter wording to the effect that the Corporation would monitor the College in terms of its compliance to legal duties <i>via the Safeguarding Link Governor</i>; • 4.4 - to state that the Principal, “<i>supported by the Corporation would give a consistent lead on E&D issues...</i>” • 4.7 - remove “<i>every January</i>” and replace with “<i>annually</i>”.
S&P2-002	<u>Item 9. NQT Induction Policy:</u> Principal to add wording to this document to explain that the Appropriate Body requires the Corporation to review this Policy.
S&P2-003	<u>Item 10. Constitution:</u> Clerk to review the summary of Governors’ skills to determine any gaps that could be addressed via future recruitment and to ensure that the vacant Safeguarding Link Role was put on the agenda for the next Corporation meeting.
S&P2-004	<u>Item 11. Governors’ Training Morning:</u> Clerk to ask the Deputy Clerk if she would draft an agenda covering these topics.

SUMMARY OF GOVERNOR CHALLENGE [C] / SUPPORT [S]

C/S	Minute	Topic
C S	Item 5.	<p><u>Academy Conversion</u> Questions from Governors to determine whether there were any significant advantages or disadvantages to academy conversion.</p> <p>Consensus that there was no educational benefit to students in a conversion to academy status.</p>
S	Item 6.	<p><u>Equality & Diversity Policy</u> Suggestions to amend the Policy to give greater emphasis to the role played by the E&D Link Governor, and show the support provided by the Corporation to the College in this area.</p>
C S	Item 7.	<p><u>Admissions Policy 2019 (Norwegian students)</u> Governors were emphatic that any accepted proposal should not impact negatively on the experience of the core student body.</p> <p>The committee demonstrated support for the Principal in its agreement that the proposal could be of benefit to the College, and should be explored further.</p>
S	Item 11.	<p><u>Governors' Training Morning</u> Careful consideration given by Governors as to the relevance and usefulness of topics to be covered at their annual Training Morning.</p>