



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ESHER SIXTH FORM COLLEGE ACADEMY TRUSTEES

Held by video conference
Wednesday, 9th December 2020, at 6.00 pm.

Present:

Tim Oliver (Chair)
Dan Dean
Paul Collyer
Berzek Sanda
Ian Leigh
Andrew McVeigh
Cindy Dawes

Declan Mason
Mark Nelligan
Tom Webb
Fran Stewart
Evie Bennison
Faith Owiny

Terry Price (Member)
Clarissa Wilks (Member)

David Lavarack (Member)

Helen Odhams, Deputy Principal
(Advising Officer)
Stephanie Wiles (Director of Finance and
Estates (Advising Officer)

Dan Hards, Assistant Principal (Advising
Officer)

Ken Kehoe (Clerk)

1. REGISTER OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of business interests.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Karin Rowsell and Ruth Seabrook.

3. THANKS

The Chair noted that this was probably Ian Leigh's last meeting. He wished to thank Ian for his service to the College and to wish him well in his retirement. The Board concurred.

4. CONSTITUTION

The Chair of Trustees updated the Board on the Members' Annual General Meeting that he had attended prior to the Board meeting. This had been the first AGM of the Trust; it was a legal requirement to hold the AGM but it was also useful that the work of the Board was subject to scrutiny.

The Chair of Members noted that the AGM had agreed to the Board's recommendation that Paul Collyer be re-appointed as a Trustee and to the re-appointment of the auditors for the current financial year.

5. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Board approved the minutes of the Board of Trustee meeting of 23rd September 2020.

6. MATTERS ARISING

The Board reviewed the matters arising:

AT1-001 The Clerk should review the Articles of Association and Standing Orders to determine whether there were any constraints on a co-opted Trustee chairing a sub-committee. **This had been done. There are no constraints.**

AT1-002 Clerk to add a table setting out the committee's role in different circumstances to the Terms of Reference of the Special Committee. **This had been done.**

AT1-003 Clerk to investigate the approach taken by other Academies to opening their Board meetings to the public and make recommendations about how information about meetings should be made available. The Clerk should amend the draft Standing Orders to reflect the discussion of the Board. **The Clerk had investigated the approaches taken by other Trusts. There is a presumption that meetings will be open to the public but only one puts the future dates on its website. The Board agreed that the dates of future Board meetings should be placed on the College's website.**

Action: Clerk to add future Board meeting dates to College website.

AT1-004 Clerk to prepare a Written resolution for Members of the Trust seeking their agreement to the re-appointment of Paul Collyer as Trustee. **Paul Collyer had been re-appointed at the Members' AGM.**

AT1-005 Clerk to circulate a list of Trustees with the dates of their Terms of Office. **This had been done.**

AT1-006 Clerk to investigate the possibility of having a virtual training morning to replace the event postponed from the summer term. **The Board agreed that a Training morning should be scheduled for May.**

Action: Clerk to schedule a Training Morning in May.

7. PRINCIPALS'S REPORT

The Principal began by updating the Board on the impact of COVID. He noted that the sub-committees had reviewed the impact in detail. The Principal made the following points:

- He had written to parents, with the Board's support, setting out the approach that the College was taking to learning during the crisis. The parents were broadly content and there had been no negative feedback following the parents' evening.
- The level of disruption to learning had been minimised because of the steps that had been taken to ensure the quality of delivery through the use of curriculum pilots last term, the training and development of staff on online provision, the focus on support for SEN students and the bringing forward of the class forums to assess the student experience;
- Over the term, there had been 34 cases of COVID among the students, 6 among staff and 1 case among canteen staff. Most cases appear to be from community transmission;
- COVID was continuing to place an additional burden on the SLT, particularly contact tracing. The SLT would have to be on duty until 23 December to allow for contact tracing. For every lesson, teachers either had to provide a seating plan or a photo of the class. As of the day before the Board meeting there were 49 students in self-isolation and 4 members of staff but at the peak numbers were higher;
- The College had introduced a third grouping of students that attended full time, rather than on alternate weeks. This group included those defined by the Department for Education as vulnerable and those students requiring practical work;
- The Department for Education remained unhappy with the blended learning approach, but it was the only practical approach. The issue would be discussed at the S7 meeting the following week as some sixth form colleges had been in discussion with the Department.
- The College would continue with the blended approach in the Spring Term.

Turning to the numbers on roll, the Principal informed the Board that there had been 2010 students at enumeration day. This was nearly 70 more than last year. For 2021, the target will be 1940 students. There had been 3164 applications for 2021; this was another record. There had been 8 appeals; 4 had been successful.

The Principal noted that the results of the Spending Review had been better than expected with more money for the Further Education sector. It looks like the £130k for high value, high-cost courses and £200k for programme weighting that the College had received last year will be sustained. It also appeared that the pension grant would be sustained. Overall, the SLT were anticipating record income levels for 2021/22. He noted that the pay freeze that had been announced in the Spending Review did not apply to this year's negotiations. There was an offer of 2% for teaching staff from September and a further 1% in March. If this is accepted, he thought that UNISON may re-open the Support Staff deal.

Following a question from a Trustee, the Director of Finance and Estates confirmed that the TPS grant was included in this year's budget but was shown below the line for next year. However even if the College did not get the TPS grant next year, she was still expecting an EBITDA of 3%. On the other items, the Director of Finance and Estates would confirm to the Chair of the Finance and Estates committee whether the funding for high value courses and programme weight had been included.

Action: The Director of Finance and Estates to confirm to the Chair of the Finance and Estates Committee whether the budget included the additional funding for high value courses.

The Deputy Principal updated the Board on curriculum and quality. She noted that the traditional approach to quality had had to be amended to shift the focus to how the College was delivering the blended approach. The Joint Review process and the departmental SARs had taken place but they wanted staff to focus on:

- Departmental provision for 6.2 students and how they are supporting the students towards their exams and progression;
- Departmental provision for supporting 6.1 students to bridge the gap between their interrupted time at school and what was required at the College;

- The quality of blended learning and assessment.

The College are planning for exams for both years at the beginning of January. This would be particularly important for 6.2 students who would normally have taken formal exams in May of their first year. The results would be fed into the Progress Review 2 meetings.

Turning to the arrangements for public examinations for 2021, the Principal informed the committee that: for BTEC courses there would be reduced options; for A level courses the marking will be more generous than usual and in line with 2020 outcomes. Advanced notice of the subjects to be covered in the exams will be given, where possible by the end of Jan, study aids will be permitted and there will be a second round of examinations in July, consisting of a single paper only, to allow for COVID related absences. There is also the possibility of Teacher Assessment but it is not clear how that would work.

The Principal noted that the proposed exam regime raised several issues, including:

- The need to ensure that students retained high ambitions and did not become complacent because of the more generous marking;
- Whether there would be a level playing field across the UK as each of the 3 Devolved Administrations and England were taking different approaches to the awarding of results in summer 2021; and
- How would the different levels of disruption experienced across the country be taken into account?

The Chair thanked the Principal for his Report.

The Student Trustees updated the Board on the work of the Student Union and how they had adapted to the restrictions imposed by COVID. This had included the Student Voice sessions with 6.1; a key point from those was the desire for students to get to know the other half of their cohort. The Student Union were looking at how this might be achieved.

The Chair thanked the Student Trustees for their report and for their work in difficult circumstances.

The Director of Finance and Estates introduced the Finance Reports for August and October. She noted that the August report fed into the Financial Statements considered under the next item. They showed a healthy financial position. There was nothing concerning for the current year in the October report.

The Board agreed that training would be made available to Trustees to help them understand the new format of accounts for the Trust.

Action: Clerk to investigate possible dates for virtual training session on the Academy accounts and Trustees to inform the Clerk if they would like to attend.

The Board approved the August and October accounts.

8. REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 AUGUST 2020 AND LETTER OF REPRESENTATION TOGETHER WITH AUDIT FINDINGS REPORT AND AUDIT COMMITTEE INTERNAL SCRUTINY REPORT

The Director of Finance and Estates introduced the Report and Financial Statements, noting that these were Academy accounts and therefore different to the Sixth Form College accounts that Trustees would have seen before. The Report and Statements had been given a clean audit opinion by the external

auditors. She drew the Board's attention to the Letter of Representation that the Board had to agree, confirming that the accounts were true and fair. The Report, Financial Statements and Audit Committee Internal Scrutiny Report would form a package that would go to the ESFA.

The Chair of Audit drew the Board's attention to the fact that the clean audit opinion was a tremendous achievement for the Director of Finance and Estates and her team, particularly as this was the first set of accounts. The Chair of Finance and Estates agreed that the Director was to be commended for her work on the Report and Financial Statements. He further noted that the Report and Statements showed the Trust had a strong financial position with significant reserves.

The Board approved the Report and Financial Statements, and the Letter of Representation. It noted the Audit Committee Internal Scrutiny Report.

Action: The Chair of Trustees to sign the Report and Letter of Representation.

9. COLLEGE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

The Deputy Principal introduced the College Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan. She noted that these were slimmed down, focussing on key successes, as well as areas for development and improvement, within the key OFSTED areas.

On the SAR, she noted that exams data was included but that this was not comparable to previous years due to differences in the methods of assessment. The exams data included the data on Maths, English and Biology GCSE that had been requested the Quality and Standards committee. The Deputy Principal also noted that the SAR reflected the change to online learning and then blended learning later in the year. The Learning to Learn programme had also taken on greater significance in helping 6.1 students make the move to Level 3 after a prolonged absence from formal education. She also highlighted the work of the Learning Support Team since March, as it continued to give help those students that needed extra support. The Deputy Principal, at the request of Quality and Standards, had added in more data on destinations (some 84% of students had gone on to Higher Education or Arts Foundation courses) and Higher Education Statistics Agency data that showed that Esher students did well in Higher Education.

Turning to areas of development for the coming year, the Deputy Principal noted the focus on supporting 6.1 and 6.2 students, improvements in the quality cycle, and tracking the sustained destinations of students as well as their intended destinations.

The Deputy Principal, under Behaviour and Attitudes, highlighted the work of the Progression Guidance Team who had continued to organise external speakers for students and the Work Experience Co-ordinator who had managed to convert many planned placements into virtual placements. An area for improvement was to maximise attendance across both streams of the blended learning approach.

The Deputy Principal noted that, under Leadership and Management, there was a significant section on the College's work on Safeguarding and on the development of staff.

In response to Trustee questions:

- the Deputy Principal noted that "drop in" observations of lessons would be starting in January and that this would be focussed on the online provision. Its aim would be on helping to develop best practice;
- Dan Hards noted that the university application process was a bit slower but there was some additional staff resource that the College had been able to allocate to assisting students. The

number of students applying remained high. The Deputy Principal also noted that BMAT and Oxbridge support was also continuing.

Turning to the QIP, the Deputy Principal noted that Targets 11,12 and 13 of the 2019/20 QIP had been carried over. For the 2020/21 QIP, much of the focus was on targets to help us get through the COVID pandemic.

The Board approved the College SAR and the 2020/21 QIP.

10. REPORT BACK FROM COMMITTEES

Audit - The Chair of Audit noted that there had been three main items for the committee – the Report and Financial Statements and Audit Report, the Cyber Security Audit and the Strategic Risk Register. The Chair noted that Cyber Security Audit report had been re-assuring and that the SLT had now incorporated the COVID Risk Register into the Strategic Risk Register.

Finance and Estates - The Chair of Finance and Estates pulled out two points. The provision of onsite catering was costing the College some £4k to £6k per month. This had been agreed by the Committee. The committee had also agreed a CIF bid for a new Student Services building of £853k, with 20% coming from College reserves.

Quality and Standards - The Deputy Principal, on behalf of the Acting Chair, updated the Board, noting that the Quality and Standards committee's requests regarding the SAR and QIP had been addressed. The committee had also considered staff development and she was due to report back to the next committee meeting on progress.

Strategy and Policy – The Chair noted that this had largely been covered by the Principal's Report but he asked Trustees to reflect on whether they could volunteer for the role of Link Trustee for Careers Guidance.

11. LINK GOVERNOR REPORTS

Nothing to report.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Board agreed that papers for the Board would be circulated electronically but that if any Trustee wanted to continue to receive hard copies of the papers, they should inform the Clerk.

Action: Trustees to inform the Clerk if they wished to continue receiving hard copies of Board papers.

A Trustee asked if there were any concerns regarding the impact of no deal with the EU at the end of the Transition Period. The Director of Finance and Estates informed the Board that neither the Catering Contractor nor Cleaning Contractor were concerned about their ability to continue providing service in the event of no deal. There were no issues regarding staff and they had secured an EORI number for the IT Department so that they could continue to source IT equipment from the EU.

The Chair thanked the Principal and his team for getting the College through a difficult year and asked that the thanks of Trustees and Members be given to all staff.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for 6pm on 24 March 2021.

*The meeting closed at 7.15pm
Attendance was 86.6%.*

Signed.....

Date.....

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

AT2-001	Clerk to add future Board meeting dates to College website.
AT2-002	Clerk to schedule a Training Morning in May
AT2-003	the Director of Finance and Estates to confirm to the Chair of the Finance and Estates Committee whether the budget included the additional funding for high value courses.
AT2-004	Clerk to investigate possible dates for virtual training session on the Academy accounts and Trustees to inform the Clerk if they would like to attend.
AT2-005	The Chair of Trustees to sign the Report and Letter of Representation
AT2-006	Trustees to inform the Clerk if they wished to continue receiving hard copies of Board papers.

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

C/S	Minute	Topic
S	8	The Chair of Audit drew the Board's attention to the fact that the clean audit opinion was a tremendous achievement for the Director of Finance and Estates and her team, particularly as this was the first set of accounts. The Chair of Finance and Estates agree that the Director was to be commended for her work on the Report and Financial Statements.
C	12	A Trustee asked the SLT if there were any concerns regarding the impact of no deal with the EU at the end of the Transition Period.
S	12	The Chair thanked the Principal and his team for getting the College through a difficult year and asked that the thanks of Trustees and Members be given to all staff.