



**MINUTES OF THE ESHER COLLEGE CORPORATION
MEETING**

Held At Esher College
Monday, 25th September 2017, at 6.00 pm.

Present:

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| Terry Price (Chair) | Ian Leigh |
| Darrell Bate | Daniel Loughlin |
| Paul Collyer | Adrian Mills |
| Dan Dean | Tim Oliver |
| David Irving | Emily Thomas |
| Robin John | Ben Williams |
| David Lavarack | |

Helen Odhams, Deputy Principal (Advising Officer)

Dan Hards, Assistant Principal (Advising Officer)

Rebecca De'Ath, Clerk

1. PRESENTATION ON EXAMINATION RESULTS 2016 – 2017

The Deputy Principal reported that the College was very proud of this year's results, particularly in view of the fact that it was the first year of the linear exam format which had followed a period of uncertainty. Referring to her report previously circulated, she informed the meeting of the following outstanding results: the A level pass rate had increased to 99.6%, and that of AS exams had increased to 94.6%; high grades (A*-B) at A level had increased to 62.3%, and that of AS was 49.4%. All BTEC courses received a 100% pass rate. All of these achievements were higher than national benchmarks.

Teachers are currently reviewing scripts received back from exam boards as part of the Self-Assessment Review process in order to determine emerging themes. Examiners had carried out a review of marking of 166 papers and to date 22 students had received an increase in grades – a similar level to last year.

Five courses at either A or AS level or both, had been asked to produce an exams results report which would be scrutinised by Steering. Meetings between Heads of Department, Divisional Directors and a member of Steering will follow in order to establish improvement plans.

Governors congratulated the College on these significant achievements and asked the following questions:

Q: What is the difference between a BTEC Certificate and Diploma? The former equates to an AS level, the latter to two A levels.

Q: Can those who received a U at AS level go on to complete A levels? They do not carry on with those subjects, except in exceptional circumstances, but can stay and take up new subjects providing that they have two E grades.

Q: Results nationally seem to indicate a lower pass rate overall. Is this reflected in the locality? Pass rates nationally have gone down, but across the S7 colleges and local schools, results have been variable across institutions.

Q: Do you have evidence that universities have been “trading down” in terms of their entry requirements?

Yes, as a result of the lifting of the cap on the numbers who can apply for entry. We will have a clearer idea on the impact for our students from our Destinations Database nearer Christmas.

Q: Do we assess the quality of College facilities against exam outcomes – for example, have the Sciences had a better investment in accommodation, which might have had an impact on improved grades? We do not believe that any subject is suffering - we have good facilities: chemistry labs were refurbished five years ago; potential staff recruits are always impressed with College facilities.

The Principal concluded by stating that these results were a record for the College, in particular the fact that over 60% were High Grades. The College needs to sustain this going forward.

The Corporation thanked the Deputy Principal for her presentation and report.

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2. REGISTER OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest in items on tonight’s agenda.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received (and accepted) from Jo Gardner, Karin Rowsell, Fran Stewart, Clarissa Wilks and Damian O’Malley.

4. CONSTITUTION

The Chair welcomed Emily Thomas (Student Governor), and Adrian Mills (Parent Governor-designate) to their first Corporation meeting. He explained that Adrian’s appointment would commence in November, in line with the usual time-frame for terms of office for Parent Governors. He had been elected unopposed, and hence the lack of the usual election process meant that he would observe meetings in the interim until formally appointed at the beginning of November 2017.

The following matters received the Corporation’s consideration:

- **Confirmation of Chair and Vice-Chair** – this was Terry Price’s last meeting as Chair and governor. This time last year the Corporation had voted that Tim Oliver become Chair-designate, and that Robin John become Vice-Chair. Governors were asked if there were any other nominations for Corporation Chair. There were none and it was agreed unanimously that Tim Oliver would chair the Corporation for the next two years.

Proposer: Terry Price Seconder: David Irving

Robin John had been voted to become Vice-chair of the Corporation. As there were no other nominations, he was unanimously elected to the position.

Proposer: Tim Oliver Seconder: Terry Price

- **Extensions to terms of office** – Fran Stewart and Karin Rowsell completed their first 4 year term of office yesterday. The Chair had approached them to determine if they wished to continue on the Corporation for a second term. They did. As the date of this Corporation meeting had been put back a week, and now fell outside their period of office, he asked whether the Corporation wished

to approve an extension to their terms of office of a day, and approve a second term for both. This was approved.

- **Confirmation of revised committee structure** - The Corporation approved the merger of the Finance and Estates committees to form a new committee; approved a new Quality and Standards Committee; approved the merger of the Policy and Review & Search committees into a Policy and Strategy Committee. It was noted that the Corporation's Standing Orders and Instrument & Articles would need updating in the light of these changes.
- **Committee terms of reference** – draft TORs had been prepared for the new and merged committees. The Chair suggested that the TORs bed in for the year, and that all are reviewed in the summer term.

Audit Committee – some wording had been changed to reflect the fact that the College now has one Audit firm, not both internal and external ones. TORs were approved.

Finance & Estates Committee – wording of previous committees had been merged. Under paragraph 2, The Director of Finance and Estates had suggested increasing the limit that the Corporation and Finance & Estates Committee Chairs could jointly approve for expenditure on urgent unbudgeted building matters - from £250,000 to £500,000. Although this discretion had not previously been used, it was felt that £500,000 was not a huge sum of money for the College to bear. Additionally, any future requirement would be critical in nature, and a higher limit would mean that quicker action could be taken. The Corporation approved the TORs containing this higher limit.

Quality & Standards Committee – the draft TOR for this new committee was a starting point, and would need to evolve over time. Governors discussed the frequency and timings of the two proposed meetings, and agreed to review this at the end of the year. The TORs were approved (subject to the amendment of the mis-numbered points).

Strategy & Policy Committee – TORs consisted of a merger of those from the Policy and the Review & Search committees. Responsibility for the College SAR process had moved to the new Quality & Standards Committee. The meeting noted the requirement in the College's Articles of Government for a named "Review & Search" committee, and agreed to review the Instrument and Articles shortly. The TORs were approved (subject to the amendment of the mis-numbered points).

- **Committee Chairs** – committee chairs would continue their terms as per approval given in 2016:
Audit – Paul Collyer
Finance & Estates – Robin John (formerly Finance)
Strategy & Policy – David Irving (formerly Review & Search)
Quality & Standards – Clarissa Wilks (formerly Policy)

Governors asked whether, with her new work responsibilities, Clarissa would have the capacity to chair a committee. The Corporation Chair replied that he had spoken to her about this role, and she was content to be considered. He added that as part of her role as Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching & Learning) at Kingston University, she was also proposed as the External (HE) Co-opted governor at Kingston College and had declared this interest. The meeting considered whether this was a conflict of interest, and decided that it was not, and if it did become an issue, it would be dealt with under the Business Interests protocols. The meeting agreed that Clarissa should chair the new Quality & Standards Committee.

- **Committee membership** – this would be reviewed to ensure that the Parent Governors were spread across different committees; to ensure that members of the Finance & Estates Committee could sit

on the Audit committee, and to capture Dan Hards' responsibilities as Advising Officer. The membership structure was agreed, subject to these changes.

- **Committee meeting dates 2017/18** - the Chair of the Audit Committee was unable to attend the Audit meeting on 22nd November and would ask the Deputy Clerk if this date could be changed. Other than this, the schedule of meeting dates was approved.

ACTIONS:

Clerk to ensure that membership of the committees is finalised.

Clerk to ensure that Standing Orders and Instrument & Articles are reviewed via the Strategy and Policy Committee for the December Corporation meeting, in order to take account of governance structure changes.

Deputy Clerk to ensure that the TORs are correctly numbered.

5. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (12th July 2017)

There was a suggestion to change the wording on page 4, paragraph 6, from “morally-indefensible” to “not appropriate”. The minutes were otherwise approved as a true record, subject to the above change.

6. MATTERS ARISING

C4-001 Action completed: the Director of Finance and Estates has carried out a lot of work in relation to fire safety and building cladding. There were no concerns and she would report back to the Finance & Estates Committee.

C4-002 Action completed: Working Group papers had been uploaded to the portal.

C4-003 Actions completed: governance actions had been completed – see item 4, above.

7. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT (verbal)

The Principal reported the following:

- Enrolment 2017 – this had not been straightforward: There was a drop in the take-up rate from some schools, partly linked to a higher rate of non-qualification. Students on the Reserve list had been contacted and the College expects to achieve its planned numbers target of 1870. The College is researching the reasons for this lower take-up and will report back via the Strategy & Policy Committee under the item on Admissions Analysis. Governors discussed the impact that apprenticeships might be making on enrolment figures and whether other colleges had experienced similar instability in applicant numbers (results varied).
- Applications 2018 – Applications are progressing at the usual rate, before the deadline of midday on Friday.
- Academy application update - the final paperwork had been submitted on 4th September; the Head Teacher Board had met on 21st September, and if there was no response soon, it might mean that the application will be discussed at the next meeting.
- Review of College Quality Improvement Plan(QIP) – targets that had been updated were:

- 6: action ongoing; extra PDP sessions had been added; this will be reviewed as part of the SAR process in October;
 - 7: entry requirements had been uploaded onto the College website;
 - 19: A level target pass rate achieved, as discussed under item 1, above;
 - 24: BTEC data in terms of pass rates and high grade rates and their national benchmarks had needed correcting;
 - 28: the target for reviewing and refining the Academic Mentoring programme was achieved.
- The Corporation approved the QIP.

- New staff – the meeting noted the list of new staff appointments that had been circulated earlier.
- 2017 Results Day – it was reported that 4 students had received their results online a day early. This was due to an IT error, which was rectified after 14 minutes. An investigation had been carried out by the College, and each Exam Board was notified (Pearson and OCR had already responded to state that they would take no further action). The Corporation Chair stated that he felt that the College had handled the matter very well, and the meeting agreed with him.

8. GOVERNORS' SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2017

Following the amount of detail in the previous two years' Self-Assessment Reports, this draft was intentionally shorter and concentrated on the focus for governance work undertaken in 2016/17.

The Clerk had recently received the Equality and Diversity statistics for governors and students, to enable a comparison to be made. (At the start of that academic year, 20.2 % of students had declared BAME; Corporation members were almost exclusively White British. 59% of students were female, which was a recent increase on past years; 35% of governors at the start of the year were female). The Chair repeated the attempts made over the last few years to diversify membership and it was suggested that a comparison between a large student cohort and a much smaller governor group was statistically unreliable. Nevertheless, the Corporation would continue its endeavours in this area.

Governors asked whether there was an external review of the contents of the SAR, to validate the findings. The meeting felt that this was a “self-assessment” and external checks were not required – the SAR was lodged on the website where it could be read and challenged if necessary. The Clerk was, however, asked to research if other colleges carry out any external review process.

It was suggested that Appendix 1 was an internal document, and should not be uploaded to the College website. The meeting agreed to this and the Governors' SAR was approved.

ACTION: Clerk to determine whether other S7 colleges carry out any external review of their governance SAR.

Deputy Clerk to upload the Governors' SAR to the website.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

This was the final appearance of Terry Price and David Lavarack, whose terms of office had ended. The Vice Chair proposed a record of thanks from the Corporation for the enormous amount of work that they had both carried out over the past 12 years.

Proposer: Robin John Seconder: Paul Collyer

Terry replied by thanking David, current governors, and those who had supported him over the years as Chair: all Chairs, Dan Dean and the previous Principal, 3 Vice-Principals, 3 Clerks, 2 Deputy Clerks, all previous governors. He had been proud to see the College grow to its present position – it had just

received its best exam results, had an Outstanding OFSTED rating, had a sound financial footing, a well-provisioned estate and was over-subscribed. A major strength was that the SLT had always looked forward and had never stood still.

David added his thanks, stating that it had been a delight to work with everyone over the past 12 years and that his job had been made all the easier by the support received from all.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Wednesday 13th December 2017

*The meeting closed at 7.30 pm.
Attendance was 76% (13 out of 17 members)*

Signed.....

Date.....

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

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| C1-001 | Item 4: <u>Constitution</u> Clerk to ensure that membership of the committees is finalised. Clerk to ensure that Standing Orders and Instrument & Articles are reviewed via the Strategy and Policy Committee for the December Corporation meeting, to take account of governance structure changes. Deputy Clerk to ensure that the TORs are correctly numbered. |
| C1-002 | Item 8. <u>Governors' SAR</u> Clerk to determine whether any S7 colleges carry out any external review of their governance SARs. Deputy Clerk to upload the Governors' SAR to the website. |

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

| C/S | Item | Topic |
|--------|------|--|
| S C | 1 | <u>Examination Presentation:</u> Governors were very supportive over the excellent exam results and praised the efforts of the SLT, staff and students. Governors sought clarification about next steps for students who gained a U grade and for the few Departments whose results were less good than expected. |
| S | 4 | <u>Constitution:</u> The Corporation's succession plan for a new Chair and Vice- chair came to a successful conclusion. Care was taken to ensure that membership of committees was based on experience and complied with Standing Orders. A new committee structure ensured that the Corporation could receive and explore more data in relation to the quality of teaching and provision, and committee Terms of Reference were reviewed and would be evaluated again at the end of the academic year. |

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| C S | 7 | <u>Principal's Report :</u> Governors asked questions to ascertain why enrolment figures differed this year. The Corporation was supportive of the actions taken by the College after the inadvertent early release of exam data. |
| C | 8 | <u>Governors' Self-Assessment :</u> Governors' challenged whether the SAR should receive an external review to ensure that it was robust. |