



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

Wednesday, 7th December 2022, at 6.10 pm.

Present:

Tim Oliver (Chair)
Dan Hards
Paul Collyer
Fran Stewart
Ruth Seabrook
Natasha Meade
Mark Nelligan

Declan Mason
Jane Duscherer
Kate Parsons
Zara Lyons
Max Nicholson
Stephanie Fudge

Terry Price (Member)

David Lavarack (Member)

Helen Odhams, Deputy Principal
(Advising Officer)

Stephanie Wiles, Director of Finance and
Estates (Advising Officer)

Catherine Davies (Clerk)

1. REGISTER OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of business interests.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Andy McVeigh and Ben Obese-Jecty.

3. CONSTITUTION

The Chair informed the Board that Helen Odhams, Deputy Principal, has resigned and will be leaving next year. The Chair congratulated Helen on her new role as Principal and Chief Executive of Brockenhurst College. The recruitment of the Deputy Principal Role will start immediately with interviews scheduled to take place on the 8 and 9th February 2023.

Stephanie Fudge, the new Parent Trustee, was welcomed to her first Trustee Meeting.

The Chair informed the Trustees that Ruth Seabrook has resigned as a Trustee and thanked her for her contribution to the Board and Leadership of the Quality and Standards Committee.

The Chair briefed the Board that he would like to expand the number of Trustees from the current number of 15 to 17. The Trustee vacancy will be advertised in January 2023 and depending on the response there is the possibility of recruiting up to 4 new Trustees.

Action: The Chair asked the Clerk to speak to the College's external legal team to advise regarding changes needed to be made in order to expand the number of external Trustees of the College.

The Chair asked Terry Price to brief the Board regarding the Members. Terry informed the Board that the Member's AGM is taking place on 13th December and at the meeting a proposal to rotate the Members and recruit additional members will be put forward for discussion.

The Chair turned to the issue of remote and hybrid meetings and briefed the Board that going forward he would like the Board meetings to be in person and the Committee meetings to be remote unless the Chair decides otherwise. The Chairs of the Audit and Finance and Estates Committees agreed with this balance of remote or in person and without the hybrid option. The Principal added that it is important that the Trustees utilise the lesson visits, training days and additional events in the College calendar to ensure they have a clear vision of how the College operates.

4. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Board approved the minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting of 21st September 2022.

5. MATTERS ARISING

The actions from the last meeting had all been completed.

The Board congratulated the College on the Outstanding Ofsted September 2022 Report and rating. The Chair also thanked the College Leadership team and staff for their roles in the process and thanked the Trustees too for their role which was praised in the report.

6. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Principal began by giving an overview of the Chancellor's Autumn statement in which there is no indication of an increase in funding for 16-19 education over the next 2 years. The energy costs relief scheme is also due to come to an end next year although funding towards energy efficiency is being released. Despite the increase in the funding rate in February 2022 costs for the College are increasing, in particular teacher pay. It's likely that the College strategies, such as supervised study time, used to cover the increased GLH will continue next year rather than increased course contact time. The Principal noted that the campaign led by SFCA to protect student choice continues and the College will continue to monitor the DfE's approach to reforming BTEC's and introducing T Levels. The College course at most risk of defunding is Health and Social Care BTEC and the College will continue to fight for its continuation. The Principal has met with a range of politicians including Sir Ed Davey and will continue to press funding issues at the highest level. In terms of industrial action, the Teaching Union's strike on the 30th November impacted College teaching as around 54 teachers took action and were unavailable to teach on that date. The College communicated with students, parents and met with the Union and no complaints were received regarding the operation of the College during this time.

The Principal informed the Board that the interim pay award made to the Teaching Staff is below the % rise requested by the Teaching Union. The Principal is also making a one-off payment to all staff employed

from 1st September in recognition of the Outstanding Ofsted report. Finally, the Principal congratulated Helen Odhams on her new role at Brockenhurst College. The recruitment drive for her replacement starts immediately and the Trustees will be involved in the process, including a full board meeting on the 9th February, to agree the senior appointment.

Action: Trustees are to be made aware of a remote full Trustee meeting on 9th February to agree the appointment of a Deputy Principal.

The Board welcomed the Principal's report.

6.1 The Student Trustees briefed the Board on the activities of the Student Union highlighting the Student Union Day with Varndean College and initiatives at the start of term included a cake sale, pizza evening and open mic event. The Student Voice requests centre around a covered outdoor seating area, water fountains and more recycling bins. The Student Union plans to appoint a rep to work closely with ECAT.

A Trustee commented that the students have worked together to provide 50 boxes of donations for Elmbridge food bank and he thanked the Student Union and in particular the Student Union co-ordinator for organising this. The Director for Finance and Estates added that the Student Union request for covered outdoor seating has been progressed and the Assistant Principal for Student Services, Sagar Patel, is currently reviewing the proposal. The Recycling Bins ordered in September are on their way to the College.

The Board thanked the Student Trustees for their report and welcomed their work to engage and support the students to ensure their voices are heard and charity events promoted.

6.2 The Director of Finance and Estates briefed the Board on the management accounts and reports for periods to the end of August and the end of October. Highlights of the Financial Report for the period ended 31 August 2022 include income in excess of £11m for the first time, EBITDA of just under 9% of income and a cash balance of over £3.5m. Regarding the period to October 22 the Director noted the highlights include income of over £2m and a predicted full year income of over £12m. Energy costs continue to be a concern and the Director plans to reforecast the budgets in the Spring. The bank balance continues to show funds of over £3m.

The Board approved the Management Accounts and Reports.

7. REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 AUGUST 2022 AND LETTER OF REPRESENTATION TOGETHER WITH AUDIT FINDINGS REPORT AND AUDIT COMMITTEE INTERNAL SCRUTINY REPORT

The Director of Finance and Estates introduced this item noting that the Audit Committee and the Finance and Estates Committee had seen these documents and recommended them to the Board. The Director thanked the Chair of the Audit Committee for his assessment of the documents. The Director briefed the Board that the external auditors had been uncertain about some of the actuarial valuation data of the Surrey LGPS but following new analysis they were pleased to sign off the accounts.

Report and Financial Statements – The Board approved the Report and Financial Statements.

Audit Findings Report and Letter of Representation – The Board approved the Letter of Representation that had been circulated in Appendix 1 of the Audit Findings Report.

Audit Committee Internal Scrutiny Report – The Board noted the Audit Committee Internal Scrutiny Report.

The Board thanked the Director of Finance and Estates for her work on the reports.

8. COLLEGE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

The Deputy Principal introduced the College Self-Assessment Report, noting that the Report had been considered by the Quality and Standards Committee. The Deputy Principal reflected that the document showed the hard work across all departments at the College in the post pandemic period which led to excellent results and culminated in the outstanding Ofsted judgment. Looking to the future the Deputy Principal has focused on areas for development and improvement, these include:

- Staff development following the return to classroom teaching.
- The ECT framework following the first successful year of completion.
- Progression Guidance Department re-organisation.

The Quality and Standard Committee questioned a response on the student survey concerning advice and guidance for progression after Esher. Following this feedback, the Deputy Principal advised the Board that the Progression Guidance Department is going to be re-organised so that more qualified staff lead the 1:1 appointments with students. This will also help the department achieve Gatsby benchmark 8 which is currently outstanding.

Action: Deputy Principal to include qualified Progression Guidance staff leading 1:1 appointments with students in the SAR.

The Deputy Principal drew attention to the HESA statistics that confirm Esher Sixth Form College prepares our students very well for Higher Education. Regarding Behaviour and Attitudes the Deputy Principal commented that discussions around re-introducing student lanyards have been broached at both SLT level and at the Quality and Standards Committee meeting. Turning to Personal Development the Deputy Principal highlighted the developments made to the Oxbridge programme which has resulted in an increased number of students applying this year. Finally, the Deputy asked the Board to consider the role of Vocational Strategy at the College especially in the ever-changing educational landscape including the development of T levels. The Deputy Principal added that Vocational Strategy has now been referenced in the QIP.

The Deputy Principal then turned to the QIP. She drew attention to Targets 9 and 10 concerning the pass rate and high grade rate for A levels in the summer of 2023, these rates have been agreed by the Quality and Standards Committee. The appropriate benchmarks for BTECS will be updated when national data is released in February 2023.

The Board approved the College Self-Assessment Report, subject to the minor amendment. The Board thanked the Deputy Principal for her work on the Report.

9. STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2025

The Principal introduced the Strategic Plan for 2023-25:

- Curriculum and Study Programmes – The College continues to focus on the changing DfE support for BTECS and T Levels including the BTEC Health and Social Care Diploma that is at risk of being defunded. The College has worked hard to ensure the 580+ GLH is delivered for all students.
- Quality Assurance – The College continues to achieve good student retention levels. Staff retention and staff development continue to be a priority especially in this current difficult climate for recruitment of both teaching and support staff.

- Student Experience and Digital Strategy - The Principal is in the final stages of drafting the Digital Strategy. The consultation to produce the strategy has been as inclusive as possible and staff have given their feedback in the past week. The new improved College website is due to be released in 2023. The optimum number of enrolled students continues to be discussed and the current number seems sustainable.
- External relations – The College continues to work with external partners including S7.
- Resources and the Estate - The Property Strategy is being developed in the coming months and will identify both the maintenance and future estate needs. The right preparations need to be in place by 2026 when the temporary classrooms may be removed. Sustainability is a key priority with the aim of making the College carbon neutral.

A Trustee asked the Principal about the admissions policy to ensure the College attracts students from all sections of the local population. The Principal replied that he has regular contact with local state secondary schools and the admissions policy ensures a fair admissions process. The Deputy Principal added that the modest entry requirements encourage the broadest range of students to apply for a place.

The Board approved the Strategic Plan 2023-25

10. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Audit Committee

Mark Nelligan updated the Board on the Committee's work. A Member asked about the risk of cyber attacks and a Trustee replied that an external company has reviewed the IT at the College, the Board then discussed the constant need to be vigilant in regard to IT Security.

A Trustee asked about inflation and The Director of Finance and Estates replied that the reforecast will include inflationary calculations and the recent CIF bids have taken inflation into account.

Finance and Estates

Paul Collyer briefed the Board that the teaching staff pay increase and one-off payment to all staff had been approved by the Committee and now by the Board. The Director of Finance and Estates confirmed that the CIF bids have been submitted.

Quality and Standards

The Minutes from the Meeting are due to follow shortly.

Strategy and Policy

The Strategic plan was recommended by the Strategy and Policy Committee.

11. LINK TRUSTEE REPORTS

Ruth Seabrook as EDI Link Trustee praised the "Supporting Gender Inclusivity" internal document for all students at the College. She also commented on the Ofsted report's mention of the respectful and inclusive culture that staff create. The Principal noted that going forward the Safeguarding Link Trustee should consider taking on the EDI role too.

Paul Collyer as Careers Link Trustee commented that the reorganisation of the Progression Guidance team will help to ensure that Gatsby benchmark 8 is met.

12. TRUSTEE TRAINING MORNING – THURSDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2023

The Chair updated the Board that there are currently 3 items on the agenda for the 23rd February:

- Digital Strategy
- Ofsted feedback
- Student Focus Group

A tour of the estate in small groups was also suggested.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A Trustee requested electronic calendar invites for upcoming committee meetings.

The Chair thanked Ruth Seabrook on her final Board meeting.

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was scheduled for 6pm on Wednesday 29th March 2023

*The meeting closed at 8.00 pm
Attendance was 87 %.*

Signed.....

Date.....

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

AT02-3	The Chair asked the Clerk to speak to the College's external legal team to advise regarding changes needed to expand the number of external Trustees of the College.
AT02-5	Trustees are to be made aware of a remote full Trustee meeting on 9 th February to agree the appointment of a Deputy Principal.
AT02-8	Deputy Principal to include qualified Progression Guidance staff leading 1:1 appointments with students in the SAR.

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

C/S	Minute	Topic
S	5	The committee congratulated the College on the Outstanding Ofsted September 2022 Report and rating.