

MEETING OF THE FULL CORPORATION OF FAREHAM COLLEGE

13 December 2021

MINUTES

Present: Kevin Briscoe (Chair) Emma Champion
Andrew Kaye (Principal) Paul Marchbank
Erin Meakins Tanya Richardson
Karen Shreves Chris Thomas
Chris Thomson Andy Wannell
Karen Woods

In attendance: Christian Allen-Kotze (Deputy Principal Curriculum, Quality, and Innovation)
Richard Bryant (Deputy Principal Finance & Resources)
Georgina Flood (Head of Governance)
Anoushka Ottley (Managing Director, Business and Partnerships)

Observing: Frances Butler Incoming independent governor
Louise Fowler Incoming independent governor
Simon Harris Incoming independent governor

This meeting was preceded by a deep dive session on the College Self-Assessment Review (SAR). Feedback from Governors involved in the Departmental SAR and the final SAR review was incredibly positive. All members endorsed both the Governor and 3rd party involvement in the review and welcomed this SAR approach going forward. Members of the Corporation were reminded that TSCQ have recommended the formal SAR report to them for final approval. The Corporation agreed.

DECISION: The Corporation approved the SAR review for 2020-21.

58/21 Item 1: Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Governors Adam Spires, Tanya Richardson, Mark Hoban, and Ian Harris. Apologies were also received from staff members Sarah Carruthers and Victoria Adams.

59/21 Item 2: Declaration of Interests

Members were reminded of the need to declare any personal or financial interest in any items of business to be considered during the meeting.

KW noted that Blanchard Wells are currently (as previously) a private client of her business.

60/21 Item 3i Minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2021

PM noted this attendance at this meeting had not been included in the minutes. HG noted the error.

Subject to this minor change, the Corporation reviewed and agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on the 1 July 2021 were a true and accurate record.

61/21 Item 4: Report from the Chair of the Corporation

The Chair provided a verbal update noting that much of the projects and items discussed outside of the Boardroom with the Principal will be included in the Principal's report. Of note these include.

- ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) assurance review – and any 'clawback' and the effect or otherwise on the statutory accounts

- Strategically where we 'sit' between Portsmouth and Southampton on a medium/long term basis and the consideration of strategic/merger and other partnerships going forward
- Ongoing financial challenges

The Chair re-iterated that his support of the new SAR approach and noted that his attendance very useful worthwhile and encouraged Governors to similarly get involved where possible.

62/21 Item 5: Link Governor Feedback

The Chair thanked members for their link involvement to date and asked if there were any queries on the report's included. A member queried the allocation of roles for the year ahead. The Chair confirmed that these roles would be confirmed ASAP.

Members responsible for link reports included in the papers provide brief overviews of their experience/any issues they encountered. Of note that were some concerns (experienced during the single central record check) around DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) certification and the availability of hard copy certificates, as well as the process to deal with new starters whilst waiting for checks to come through. It was noted that the Principal had liaised directly with the People & Culture team as a result of this check and there is an action plan in place to review those outstanding records/identified issues. Additionally, the Principal informed members the DBS policy will be reviewed to include a non-statutory (but best practice) 3-year renewal. Members discussed the requirement to be 're-checked' and the fact that DBS only really applies to the day the check was made. A governor noted a practice in her workplace which includes the making of an annual confirmation of DBS status as part of an annual appraisal conversation - whilst this isn't the same as a full check, it can be used as an additional measure to raise awareness. All agreed this was a good suggestion.

ACTION: People & Culture to action DBS issues, review policy to include 3-yearly checks and consider a method of introducing an annual staff declaration.

63/21 Item 06i: Principal's Autumn Term report.

The Principal provided an overview of his report commenting on sector issues, local and national perspective as well as headline College Performance.

Covid

Daily reported cases at 677 in the borough of Fareham (17% increase since report written), we continue to follow guidance of mask wearing in communal areas, signposting for vaccinations and booster for student/staff. If things change significantly in January, we can revert to online teaching, but this may well be at risk due to increased staff sickness. When asked for their views, student governors provided their opinion on the application of mask both in campus and in classrooms. EM and CT both noted they felt there were adequate reminders, signposting and encouragement from staff with most students complying in communal areas and some choosing to wear them additionally in the classroom.

A member queried how quickly we can roll-out IT support e.g., devices and or internet access to students that may require support? Going on to query the possible impact on teaching and learning?

The Principal confirmed all earlier COVID arrangements for laptop/internet access remain in place and we are in significantly better position than previously. DPCQI confirmed online teaching online remains an ongoing possibility and plan on this basis, however we do intend to keep this as a last resort wherever possible.

Ofsted

Members were informed of the Ofsted accelerated programme of inspection to visit all providers before August 2025. Previously, Fareham College expected to have received a 'short' inspection (2 days) before August 2026 on the basis of our Outstanding grade from 2017, we will now receive a 'full' inspection (4 days) before to August 2025. Additionally, the college will be inspected as part of a 'thematic review' into T Levels in January. This inspection will form part of a national report into T Levels and the college will not receive specific feedback. There is also a possibility of the college being asked to be part of a pilot inspection in the spring term. Ofsted will update the Education Inspection Framework from September 2022 to take into account colleges' response to local skills improvement. This pilot inspection would support Ofsted's research into the implementation of the new inspection framework. If selected, the college would receive feedback and a report. The curriculum and quality teams will ensure they remain 'Ofsted ready'. The Self-Assessment process presents a good picture of the college, and we are confident we will be in a good position ahead of any inspection

Politics/Funding

Members received an overview of the spending review and potential new/additional money available. It was noted some of these programmes e.g., skills funding/bootcamps don't have traction yet or offer the College much new opportunity. The Principal noted that the main issue remains in a government increase in base rate per student, otherwise we just can't keep up with national minimum wage, inflation, rising fuel costs etc. Members were informed the 3-year plan feels increasingly 'tight' and will need re-review.

City Wide Solution

Members were reminded of the discussions held at the last Strategy Day around the College's position in the Solent and the larger number of Colleges in the Solent region than in comparison to other areas e.g., West Sussex. It was noted the appetite for merger or partner discussion was open but the resulting conclusion of a bid to link with Highbury was unsuccessful.

Members were reminded of the 'City wide solution' CWS review being carried out by ESFA / Deloitte looking at FE and Sixth Form provision in Southampton. City College Southampton has experienced inadequate financial health for a number of years, which is impacted by too much competition and an oversupply of provision. Previous attempts to merge with Eastleigh College have been unsuccessful on two previous occasions and other lead partners in Southampton have not been identified. ESFA have said they would be 'open' to considering a Fareham led merger. A Fareham College / City College proposal option hasn't so far been explored however our 'natural' inclination to merge towards areas of Portsmouth are now largely unavailable.

A member queried the financial position of City College and if any financial support was likely to be available? The Principal confirmed that City are in significant financial difficulty and relying on financial intervention. It is highly likely that any proposal would require a degree of funding or debt write-off to be applied which ESFA have confirmed is possible, as long as figures are realistic. The Chair of the Corporation reminded members of the stance we took with the potential Highbury merger which was clear and firm around the finances – we would be approaching any city solution in an equivalent manner.

A member queried what city would bring from a curriculum point of view? Are we similar?

The Principal confirmed whilst we are similar this would be less about rationalisation as much as widening provision. There are a number of advantages for efficiencies in management, administration and support services and the ability to scale adult, apprenticeship, and higher education provision. We would also be in a position to accelerate the introduction of T Levels and Higher Technicals into the City and could further incorporate City College into the work of the IoT and the SDF.

A member suggested it was important that we are confident any potential merge has mutual benefit. They are not entirely convinced by the rationale the only way to achieve financial security is via merger and we need to

be clear why we are doing this. Do we have any indication of potential timescales?

The Principal suggested that Fareham College has been looking for merger options for several years and feels that the only way of developing and solidifying our financial position is to increase our size in line with the rest of the sector. In terms of timescales the Principal confirmed an initial chat between Principal's and Chairs was scheduled for this week, a direction of travel could be agreed in the spring term, with the entire process taking c. 12 months noting there is no urgency on our part.

The Chair of the Corporation requested for a 'steer' from the Board in respect of having initial discussions with City College. No decisions would be made, and any further progress would be discussed with the Board. Whilst some members expressed concern with the option of merger, all agreed the College can't 'not' have these discussions at this early stage.

DECISION: The Corporation endorsed an initial discussion with City College Southampton around possible merger options.

Other items of update

- Members were informed that a 2nd stage interview for the IOT (Institute of Technology) took place with the place last week with the DoE, all progressed well, and we hope to get final notification before Xmas.
- Members were asked to note we continue to work collaboratively with the ESFA around the assurance review with a meeting schedule for 17 December for (hopefully) final feedback.
- Members were provided with an overview of subcontracting delivery with attention drawn to the ongoing requirements from L&SS to meet quality assurance requirements. It was noted this remains under close review.

64/21 Item 06ii: Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

The Principal provided an overview for this KPI report asking members to note performance as of December 2021. Members briefly discussed the staff turnover results. The Principal informed members that a new survey provider 'be' used the best 100 companies etc. Has been commissioned for the latest staff survey. This has helped to provide some interesting/wider feedback that we hope to be able to analyse and develop responses from in the New Year.

Members reviewed and noted the KPI's and targets for December 2021.

65/21 Item 06iii: Strategic Priorities and Quality Improvement Plan 2021-22

The Principal introduced this item (circulated in advance) noting that the majority of QIP (Quality Improvement Plan) targets have been reviewed at Committee level this term. An update of those actions that relate to the Corporation included.

- Reputation – There are obviously some concerns that the combination of whistleblowing and the assurance audit will have a detrimental effect on the College reputation. A result is yet to be announced, but we don't feel this will have a significant impact.
- Position in local landscape – we continue to try to lead and drive the local agenda, we have made substantial progress with leading the strategic development fund (SDF) projects, we continue to progress with T levels and relevant capital expenditure – as discussed under Item 06i we aim to remain 'on the front foot' in respect of any merger/city solution.

The Corporation noted the report.

66/21 Item 7i: Chair of Teaching, Students, Curriculum & Quality (TSCQ) Committee report

The Chair of TSCQ provided an overview of the Committee meeting held on 18 November 2021. Members noted the update.

The Corporation noted the report.

67/21 Item 7ii: Curriculum Quality & Innovation update - Autumn Term 2021

The DPQCI introduced this report noting it was a shortened headline report of that shared with the TSCQ Committee on 18 November (and available in the information pack at Item 13).

A member provided comment that she felt the most recent meeting to have been the best she's attended in some time. Another member endorsed this feedback noting that the revised agenda/reporting seemed to enable the Committee to spend the time focusing where they needed to.

A member queried if we feel Teacher Assessed Grades (TAG) (which affected uptake this year) are likely to continue to affect us moving forward? Is there any feedback or wider sector awareness of those that chose alternatively e.g. A levels and how this has developed?

DPCQI confirmed that missed learning (as discussed at deep dive in TSCQ) is a big issue for this year with many year 9 students coming to College requiring real support. The Principal endorsed this point noting he felt it likely this will affect applications for at least the next two years, students are 'hedging their bets' applying for both T levels and A levels. DPCQI noted that we are slightly behind the curve for applications for 2022-23 but there seem no clear trends locally/nationally yet in respect of alternative courses e.g. A levels taking a lead.

A member queried the level of marketing and promotion of T levels to potential students and school? DPCQI confirmed there is an ongoing exercise to educate parents and schools about T levels – COVID has naturally prevented much of the link work we would normally complete at schools and careers fairs etc. Added to this some HE (Higher Education) institutions are still not acknowledging T levels for access to HE, which is causing reticence.

A member queried the progression/retention of students on basic and entry level courses – notably at CEMAST/CETC. A recent visit and conversation with a member of staff suggested that some students will attend for a short period 'try it out' and then give up - which is of course no reflection on us, but the student approach?

The Principal agreed yes, this can be an issue and is notably something we are looking at specifically at CEMAST/CETC. There is an intention to re-structure the curriculum model and some of the apprenticeship offers - there are concerns we are potentially paying at a higher rate too early, which combined some experience proves enough motivation to secure a job in industry without completing the course. Members noted the shortage in site and construction staff which the Principal agreed has exacerbated the problem. DCQI noted that apprenticeship employers are aware of the situation and appreciate that losing students in this way is no reflection on the College but indicative of a rather 'cutthroat' time in the sector.

The Corporation noted the report.

68/21 Item 8i: Chair of Finance & Resources (F&R) Committee report

The Chair of F&R provided an overview of the Committee meeting held on 24 November 2021.

Members of the Board noted the report

69/21 Item 8ii: Financial Overview to include capital projects and business plus

The DPF&R introduced this report noting this was a suite of shortened, high level reports from those received by the F&R Committee at its meeting on 24 November 2021. Items of note included:

- In respect of a potential deficit result for another year F&R were asked for their 'steer' on current approach - options included radical re-structure or reducing low margin provision or to continuing to try to navigate. F&R agreed at this stage to continue to keep provision/staffing as it is to try to weather the storm and 'react' to opportunities with another review in March 2022
- Cash remains positive for 12-18 months, 3-year budget is less robust, we will need to re-evaluate
- Lots of opportunities still available in respect of procured contracts, traineeships, and sector-based work academies

The Corporation noted the report.

70/21 Item 09: Risk Management - Annual review of risk management for 2020-21

The DPF&R provided an overview to this report (circulated in advance) informing members that this looks to provide a review of the risk management in place for the year 2020-21. Additionally, the report suggests a revised strategic risk register for 2021-22. The Audit Committee have reviewed and recommended for approval both the risk management for the year completed (2020-21) and the strategic risk register for the year ahead (2021-22).

The Board approved the annual review of risk management for 2020-21 and endorsed the suggested strategic risk register for 2021-22.

71/21 Item 10i: Annual report of the Audit Committee to the Corporation for 2020-21

In the absence of the Chair of Audit Committee the DPF&R introduced this report, reminding members that this was an annual report from the Audit Committee providing its opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Corporation's assurance arrangements, its framework of governance, risk management and control.

The Board approved the annual report of the Audit Committee to the Corporation for 2020-21

72/21 Item 10ii: Internal Audit (TIAA) Annual report for 2020-21

In the absence of the Chair of Audit Committee the DPF&R introduced this report on behalf of Internal Auditors (IA) TIAA. Members were informed that this report provided an overview of the work completed during the year by the IA as well as a summary of recommendations and any identified 'control weaknesses.' Member's attention was drawn to the statement from the Head of Internal Audit on page 1 of the report that it is "satisfied for the year the College has reasonable and effective risk management, control and governance processes in place"

The Board approved the Internal Audit annual report for 2020-21

73/21 Item 10iii: External Audit (RSM) Financial Statements for 2020-21

The DPF&R informed members that because of the EFSA Assurance Review conducted by KPMG during November we are unable to provide a final version of accounts for sign off. Members were reassured that the outcome of the assurance audit will be the only effect to the accounts as included in these papers. Members were asked to review the accounts at their current time with a scheduled extraordinary meeting of the Corporation scheduled for 25 January 2022 to facilitate formal 'sign-off'.

The Board noted the Financial Statements for 2020-21 and the intention for final sign off on 25 January 2021.
74/21 Item 11: Corporation Member Appointment

The HG introduced this report informing members that the Peridot recruitment campaign has been concluded and there is a recommendation from the SEARCH Committee for the appointment of 3 new independent Governors and an additional Associate Governor co-opted to the Corporation. Members approved all four appointments.

DECISION: The Board approved the appointment of Frances Butler, Collins Ntim, and Simon Harris as Independent Governors for 3 years from 1st January 2022 – 31st December 2025

DECISION: The Board approved the appointment of Louise Fowler as an Associate Governor for one year from 1st January 2022 to 31st December 2022

Members were informed that a number of student governor roles had been filled by a total of 5 students for the academic year ahead. As is usual, only the Presidents of each campus will take elected roles on the Corporation.

DECISION: Governors approved the appointment of Erin Meakins (BRC President) and Chris Thomson (CEMAST President) as Student Governors from 1st November – 31st July 2022

Members were reminded that confirmation of Committee Chair and Vice Chair's takes place at the first meeting of the academic year. Search, TSCQ and F&R remain static with their nomination of Chair and Vice Chair for 2021-22. Audit and Risk Committee are proposing that Ian Harris will take the Chair with effect from 1st January 2021, and that the role of Vice Chair is filled by Chris Thomas.

DECISION: Governors endorsed the Committee Chair and Vice Chair roles for 2021-22 as per section 3.0 of the report

The HG reminded members that the positions of Corporation Chair and Vice Chair are both elected based on a three-year term, with annual confirmation. Both Kevin and Mark have confirmed their intention to remain for their third year in these respective roles and as such require nomination and approval.

Kevin Briscoe was nominated to the role of Chair of the Corporation by EC; this was seconded by KW.

Decision: KB was nominated as Chair of the Corporation for a third and final year ending at the first formal meeting of the 2022-23 academic year.

Mark Hoban was nominated to the role of Vice Chair of the Corporation by CT, this was seconded by EC.

Decision: MH was nominated as Vice Chair of the Corporation for a third and final year ending at the first formal meeting of the 2022-23 academic year.

75/21 Item 12: Information Pack

The Board noted and approved the contents of the information pack.

76/21 AOB

Before the commencement of the Strictly Private and Confidential section of the meeting, members were asked if they had any additional items of business. There were none.

There were no further items of business the main section of the Corporation meeting ended at 18.01