

PETER SYMONDS COLLEGE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

HELD ON MONDAY 15 MAY 2023 at 3.00 PM

Present:

Amanda Storey (Chair)	
Syamantak Bhattacharya	Sara Russell (Principal)
Onkar Chiroma	Alan Sydney
Rob Sykes	Caroline Rand
Lynne Evans	Tina Thorne
Dave Stickland	Joanna Townsend
Norman Levy	Michael Wesley
Zac Hussain	John White
Barry Neaves	Benjamin Bahamonde Wastavino

In Attendance:

Nick Allen	(Deputy Principal Quality)
Dave Cartwright	(Vice Principal)
Lucy Edevane	(Deputy Principal Welfare & Progression)
Irfan Khan	(Finance Director)
Vicky Owen	(Clerk)
Liz Crouch	(Head of Student Services) - for the presentation at item 2 only
Liz Wilmott	(Head of Student Services) - for the presentation at item 2 only

Item		Action
1.	Apologies – Scott Stemp, David Williams	
2.	Presentation <i>Paper uploaded to Google Drive after the meeting: Student Services Presentation</i>	
2.1	Liz C and Liz W talked through the slides in the presentation, explaining the make up of their team and the three strands of their work: one-off interactions; targeted interactions and wider College life.	
2.2	In addition to the slide contents, they mentioned some additional points of interest:	
2.2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the link with the Family Counselling Trust means that they are able to offer students some sessions with a male Counsellor (all the College Counsellors are female); 	
2.2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the Period Equality Products scheme is not income-related; 	
2.2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● there is much less work around train passes than there used to be, due to better availability of reduced price passes online; 	
2.2.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● they find that the schools are very good at working with College staff to ensure a smooth transition for students in care; 	
2.2.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● ‘Safeguarding concerns’ is a short bullet point under ‘targeted interactions’ but is in reality a great deal of their work, especially for Liz C who is a DSL; 	

<p>2.2.6</p> <p>2.3</p> <p>2.4</p> <p>2.5</p> <p>2.6</p> <p>2.7</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ●the College works with Catch 22 regarding substance misuse. <p>Liz C spoke about the Wellbeing Day, making the point that it consists not only of fun activities e.g. a petting zoo, but also serious matters. This year, for instance, there were staff from NHS Organ Donation who were very positive about how engaged students were with the topic.</p> <p>The College has recently established a ‘pantry’ which is similar to a food bank. Students and staff who are in need can help themselves to food. The department has already received grateful feedback from some users. They are looking for a sponsor and asked Board members to consider if they might know of any organisations which could help.</p> <p>Questions from the Board</p> <p>The Board noted that the number of declared transgender/non-binary students had increased from five in 2019 to about thirty per year group. They asked if there have been other growth areas. Liz C replied that there has been a significant increase in students reporting poor mental health. She also felt that young carers are now more likely to identify themselves as such.</p> <p>The Board noted that the department sells second hand books and new calculators. They asked if the team had considered selling second hand calculators. Liz W explained that they do not do that as they cannot guarantee that they are in working order; this is essential given the fact that calculators are used in exams.</p> <p>The Board thanked Liz C and Liz W for their informative presentation.</p>	
<p>3.</p> <p>3.1</p>	<p>Minutes of the meeting dated 27 February 2023</p> <p>These were accepted as a correct record.</p>	
<p>4.</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p> <p>4.3</p> <p>4.4</p> <p>4.5</p> <p>4.6</p> <p>4.7</p> <p>4.8</p>	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>Point 3.12.1 Re communication with neighbours on the masterplan. Noted for P&R agenda. Completed.</p> <p>Point 6.1 Re the IT Conditions of Use Policy, DC has produced a draft which the Head of IT is looking at and which will go to Committee and Board. It may need to be amended to reflect Governors’ use of the Google Drive.</p> <p>Point 8.6.1 Amendment made to Financial Regulations re laptops. Completed.</p> <p>Point 8.6.3 Amendments made to Financial Regulations for consistency. Completed.</p> <p>Point 10.1.1 IK has spoken to the Catering Manager re communication of price increases and re chicken supplies. Completed.</p> <p>Point 10.2.1 DC said that some students have been using rooms at busy times, plus the dry weather has reduced pressure on indoor social spaces.</p> <p>Point 14.3 The Clerk has noted the question about training for Oxbridge interviewers to bring forward in the autumn. Completed.</p> <p>Points 15.2 Change made to Provider Access Policy. Completed.</p>	<p>DC</p>

4.9	There was one matter arising from the confidential minutes which was for the Clerk to arrange a tour of buildings which have been identified as requiring work. This took place before this meeting. Completed.	
5.	<p>Principal's matters <i>Paper circulated: Principal's matters 150523; ESFA Financial Health Letter dated 290323; ESFA how to access the online governing body financial dashboard</i></p> <p>5.1 SR highlighted that the report circulated has been updated since that presented to P&R at its meeting on 17 April (draft P&R minutes refer). She drew the attention of the Board to two sections in particular:</p> <p>5.1.1 Section 2 NEU 2nd Industrial Action Ballot – SR reported that the College could be impacted by strike action in June and/or early July. She noted that the mandate for strike action extends into November and said that strike action at that time would be particularly disruptive.</p> <p>5.1.2 Section 6 ESFA Financial Health Score – SR said that the ESFA has reviewed and assessed our financial statements and concluded that the appropriate assessment grade for 2021/22 is Outstanding. The ESFA has also shared a digital financial dashboard.</p> <p>5.2 There were no questions. The Board congratulated the Senior Management Team on the 'outstanding' assessment grade.</p>	
6.	<p>Annual Accountability Agreement <i>Paper circulated: Draft Accountability Agreement 2023-24 040523</i></p> <p>6.1 NA reminded the Board that they saw a draft of this on the Training Day at which time he gave a presentation explaining 'The Accountability Landscape' and the content of the proposed draft. He thanked the Governors who had made suggestions for amendments and said that, if approved, the Agreement will be uploaded to a government portal and put on our College website.</p> <p>Questions from the Board</p> <p>6.2 The Board reminded NA that, arising from the presentation, they had requested further statistics relating to students on applied qualifications – specifically the potential impact on progression for these students to HE. NA replied that this will be provided to C&QA.</p> <p>6.3 Resolved: the Board approved the Accountability Agreement 2023/ 24 as per the copy circulated before the meeting. All in favour.</p>	NA

<p>7.</p> <p>7.1</p> <p>7.2</p> <p>7.3</p> <p>7.4</p>	<p>Governors' Snapshot <i>Paper circulated: Governors Snapshot at 040523</i></p> <p>NA drew the Board's attention to Panel 3 which shows a lower retention figure compared to recent years. SMT have not been surprised by this as the year group has posed some challenges.</p> <p>He also commented that Panel 4 shows a small decline in attendance in some groups. SR said that education as a whole is reporting a decline which seems to be as a result of some families' changed expectations post Covid.</p> <p>Finally, NA drew the Board's attention to item 23 on the Key Priorities RAG Rating re the EDI Action Plan which is the only one that is amber rather than green. This is due to staff absence.</p> <p>Question from the Board</p> <p>The Board asked if SMT expects item 23 to be complete before the end of the academic year. SMT replied that the staff member has returned and is hopeful that he will finish the Plan this term; that may be optimistic but it is definitely now in hand.</p>	
<p>8.</p> <p>8.1</p> <p>8.2</p> <p>8.3</p> <p>8.4</p>	<p>Report from the Curriculum & Quality Committee <i>Papers circulated: Draft C&QA Minutes March 23; Complaints Policy 2023; Complaints Policy Annex 2023; Assessment Policy Amended by Committee 2023; SU constitution amended by Committee 2023</i></p> <p>BN said that at the March meeting, the Committee welcomed CHC as Co-opted Governor and Link Governor for Study Support/LDD. A number of policies and similar documents were reviewed.</p> <p>Questions from the Board</p> <p>Referring to page 2 of the minutes, the Board asked the reason for the change whereby issues 'relating to student support' are no longer referred to the Head of Student Services, but instead to the DoCS. LKE explained that, while the HoSS would receive complaints about areas under her remit (as described in her earlier presentation), most support/pastoral matters lie within the DoCS structure and are better handled there.</p> <p>Referring to point 11.6 of the draft minutes, the Board pointed out an error which should refer to TT not JW. Board also pointed out some inconsistencies of capitalisation in the SU Constitution. Clerk will amend.</p> <p>Resolved: the Board approved the Complaints Policy 2023; Complaints Policy Annex 2023; Assessment Policy Amended by Committee 2023 and SU constitution amended by Committee 2023 as per the copies circulated before the meeting and subject to the amendments discussed. All in favour.</p>	<p>Clerk</p>

<p>9.</p> <p>Report from the Search & Governance Committee <i>Papers circulated: Draft Search Minutes March 23; Policy on Recruitment, Selection & Training of Governors; Draft JD Careers Link Governor Amended by Committee</i></p> <p>JT highlighted two particular items from the minutes:</p> <p>9.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● External Governance Review – this has to occur by the end of next academic year and the Committee recommends waiting until others have completed theirs so that there is feedback to inform the Board’s decision as to which provider to use and the focus of the review. It is for the Board to set the focus. JT explained that the review should result in an action plan which needs to be useful and achievable. <p>9.2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Governor Self-Assessment – this is an annual process which will happen in the next few months. JT said that the Board is diverse and it is very useful to hear everyone’s responses. <p>9.3</p> <p>BN said that a policy and role description were reviewed by the Committee.</p> <p>There were no questions from the Board.</p> <p>9.4</p> <p>Resolved: the Board approved the Policy on Recruitment, Selection & Training of Governors; JD Careers Link Governor Amended by Committee as per the copies circulated before the meeting. All in favour.</p>		
<p>10.</p> <p>Report from the Audit Committee <i>Papers circulated: Draft Audit minutes March 23; Clerk’s note on External Audit fee review; Draft Privacy Notices (Applicants, Governors, Students, Staff, Volunteers etc); Draft Freedom of Information Policy 2022</i></p> <p>10.1</p> <p>MW said that the Committee welcomed DS to their membership.</p> <p>10.2</p> <p>They received a declaration of interest from IK whose daughter has started employment at RSM. They received reassurance as to her separation from any College business.</p> <p>10.3</p> <p>MW said that the external auditors have proposed a fee increase and drew the Board’s attention to the note from the Clerk which summarises discussion to date. The Committee advises that the Board continues to use RSM for the current year, with the potential to go out to tender for future years. This will be discussed again at the next Audit Committee, with a formal recommendation to come to Board if necessary.</p> <p>Question from the Board</p>		

<p>10.4</p> <p>10.5</p>	<p>The Board asked the reason for the proposed audit fee increase. MW explained that this is because of inflation and also due to changes in regulations which require additional work from the auditors.</p> <p>Resolved: the Board approved the Privacy Notices (Applicants, Governors, Students, Staff, Volunteers etc) and Freedom of Information Policy 2022 as per the copies circulated before the meeting. All in favour.</p>	
<p>11.</p> <p>11.1</p> <p>11.1.1</p> <p>11.1.2</p> <p>11.1.2</p> <p>11.2</p> <p>11.2.1</p> <p>11.2.2</p> <p>11.3</p>	<p>Report from the P&R Committee <i>Papers circulated: Draft P&R minutes Apr 23; Finance Report P&R 17 April 2023; IT Summer Spend 2023; Approval for Cleaning Contract Extension; Child Protection and Abuse Disclosure Guidelines March 23; Guidance on Searching Student Possessions and search forms 2023; Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy March 23; Social Media Policy 2023 update; Paul Woodhouse – CAF Fund</i></p> <p>LE invited IK to present the Finance Report.</p> <p>Finance</p> <p>2022/23 Forecast Outturn Position – IK said that the figures reflect seven months’ actual and five months’ forecast. There are no proposed changes to the forecast overall or to those for Boarding and Catering. The cash flow position is strong. IK also reported that the ONS capital grant has been received.</p> <p>IK said that SMT will be recommending changes to the Financial Regulations to comply with changes arising from ONS reclassification.</p> <p>Budget for 2023/24 – IK said that this will go to the next P&R Committee and that SMT will be ensuring a balanced budget despite the challenges. At the next Board he will provide a three-year budget paper.</p> <p>There were no questions on Finance matters.</p> <p>Estates</p> <p>IK said that the College is waiting to hear from the DfE re the timing and nature of work on the Freeman building which will be managed by them. The final funding claim for Carville has been submitted and the College is withholding a final payment to the contractors in case of snagging.</p> <p>IK thanked the Trust for their contribution to the construction of a memorial garden.</p> <p>Questions from the Board on Estates</p> <p>The Board asked if there have been any snagging issues in Carville to date. IK replied that the only difficulties have been related to staff getting familiar with how to use the heating system.</p>	

11.4	Referring to the 'memorial garden', the Board asked to whom it is a memorial and where it will be located. SR replied that it will be a place to remember all students and staff who have died, but also a quiet space for reflection. The Board commented that it might better be called a 'reflection garden'. It will be in the space outside Varley where there is already some planting.	
11.5	Regarding the CAF Fund, the Board asked if it will go into an interest-bearing account. IK said that it would, although it is a relatively small amount.	
11.6	Regarding the Cleaning contract, the Board asked if SMT plan that cleaning be staffed 50/50 internally/by a contractor. IK replied that this is the case for the current year, although the College will continue to try to recruit Cleaners directly. There will be a review in another year.	
11.7	Referring to the IT spend paper, the Board noted that there was a large spend in 2021 and asked if this means there will be another significant bulge in five or six years when those machines have to be replaced. IK replied that this may indeed be the case, but said that SMT propose buying additional machines this year to get ahead while there is money in the budget.	
11.8	<p>Resolved: the Board approved</p> <p>1) that the Committee and Board will no longer receive an annual report of proposed IT spend within the agreed budget;</p> <p>2) the sale of the CAF investment and the transfer of money to the College account, pending a review of the Paul Woodhouse Fund by the Governors in 2025;</p> <p>3) the amendments to the Child Protection and Abuse Disclosure Guidelines March 23; Guidance on Searching Student Possessions and search forms March 23; Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy March 23; Social Media Policy 2023 (minor changes to all);</p> <p>4) the extension of the contract with Two Counties as the College cleaning contractor for 14 cleaners for one year at a cost of £213,220 (excl VAT). Also, to use Two Counties for any temporary cover in case of vacancies pending direct recruitment. To review the arrangement in another year. All in favour.</p>	
12.	<p>Report from the Remuneration Committee</p> <p>This is recorded in a separate confidential minute.</p>	
13.	<p>Confirmation of the written resolution by the Board re the Teaching Staff and Senior Staff pay award</p> <p><i>Paper circulated: Written Resolution Mar 23, prepared by the Clerk</i></p>	
13.1	The Clerk referred to the paper confirming the written resolution approved by the Board electronically since the last Board meeting on 27 February 2023 in relation to a pay award for Teachers and Senior Post Holders.	

13.2	<p>The Board approved with regard to a pay award for Teachers and Senior Post Holders the following:</p> <p>1) the payment of a cost of living award to teaching staff as per the national recommendation of between 5% and 8.9% with effect from 1 September 2022 and as described above. Approval being on the basis that this payment incorporates the interim 5% pay award already made with effect from 1 November 2022 and is not in addition to that award;</p> <p>2) the payment of a cost of living award to Senior Post Holders and the Clerk of 5% as per the national recommendation with effect from 1 September 2022. Approval being on the basis that this payment incorporates the interim 5% pay award already made with effect from 1 November 2022 and is not in addition to that award.</p>	
<p>14.</p> <p>14.1</p> <p>14.2</p> <p>14.3</p> <p>14.4</p>	<p>Risk Management</p> <p>DC reported on the Risk Management meeting on 4 May 2023. The RMG conducted the annual review of the AHED Academic Risk Register, to which there were no significant changes although the RMG asked DT to redraft this document in line with the changes to the Strategic Risk Register.</p> <p>The RMG considered the Prevent Risk Register. There were no significant changes. DC reported that SMT are working on revisions of both the Lockdown Procedure and the Disaster Management Plan. There are also likely to be updates to the alert system which currently sends messages to College PCs but could be enhanced to enable alerts to mobiles etc.</p> <p>DC reported that the RMG proposes no changes to the Strategic Risk Register.</p> <p>Questions from the Board</p> <p>The Board asked if risk management changes go to the Audit Committee. SMT replied that the RMG handles this, with SMT in attendance, and that they ensure that changes come to Board when required.</p>	
<p>15.</p> <p>15.1</p> <p>15.2</p> <p>15.3</p>	<p>Training Day follow up/identifying actions: Policy & Developments; Safeguarding – the role of the governors; the Anti-Racist College</p> <p>The Clerk reminded the Board of the key topics covered at the Training Day on 24 April and invited them to consider any follow up actions.</p> <p>Safeguarding: The Clerk has created a sub folder in the Board folder on Google Drive with LKE’s presentation on safeguarding and related key documents. The aim is to have a single point of reference for Governors so that they understand their responsibilities in respect of safeguarding.</p> <p>Anti-Racist College: The Clerk reminded Governors that the presenters on the topic of the Anti-Racist College had suggested that Board consider the appointment of a Link Governor on anti-racist matters. The Board invited any Governors who might be interested in this role to contact the Clerk.</p>	

15.3.1	SR reminded Governors about the Pledge Event (16 May) and encouraged them to attend.	
15.4	The Board noted that there was also a session on the Training Day re the new 'Governors' section of the Google Drive and agreed that papers now be shared on that Drive rather than emailed out. The Clerk will continue to support individual Governors who are having difficulty using the Drive. Some (staff) users who receive Google Drive documents from multiple internal sources are experiencing barriers to accessing the Board papers. A member of Board suggested that a Google Site might be the solution for this. The Clerk will investigate.	Clerk
15.5	The Board requested access to College policies. The Clerk will aim to provide a link from the Drive to the part of the intranet where all College policies are stored.	Clerk
16.	<p>Report from the Governor/Student lunch</p> <p>16.1 TT reported positive feedback from the lunch which took place shortly before this Board meeting and which was well attended by both students and Governors.</p> <p>16.2 Students updated Governors on events such as Culture Day and Wellbeing Day. They also spoke about difficulties in recruiting to SU posts e.g. for EDI, Communications and Events Officers.</p> <p>16.3 Tutorials: TT said that the main issue discussed concerned attendance at tutorial sessions. Students felt that many peers were missing opportunities to hear messages about key issues such as sexual harassment. Also, the Head of Student Services had said that attendance is important in terms of building a relationship between students and their Tutor, without which they will find it harder to seek support should they need it.</p> <p>16.3.1 The group discussed whether there might be better ways to share important messages. They also considered whether it was possible to change the timing of Tutor sessions, as students said that the current lunchtime slot means that many students do not attend as they do not wish to give up social opportunities and time to eat between lessons. DC said that, if tutorials were timetabled out of the lunch break, it would require either an earlier start or later finish to the College day which would be unpopular.</p> <p>16.3.2 The students said that some Tutors do not seem to take the tutorial programme seriously and their lack of enthusiasm means that students do not value it either. One student present said that she had been advised that she did not need to attend, although this was only recently with exams approaching.</p>	

16.4	<p>TT said that the session felt very worthwhile and that, while the Board had previously been aware of tutorial attendance as a concern, it was very useful to hear the student perspective.</p> <p>Questions from the Board</p>	
16.5	<p>The Board asked SMT whether they feel that good tutorial attendance is important. SMT replied that it is vital; really important messages are delivered and also the College has a duty to provide it. SMT said that they are doing a lot of work to promote good attendance, as well as supporting and empowering staff to deliver it. Tutorial resources are created centrally and given to Tutors.</p>	
16.6	<p>The Board asked if students are told in advance what the week's topic will be and, if not, whether that would be helpful. SMT said that they are not and, on consideration, that they did not think it would be beneficial.</p>	
16.7	<p>SMT said that unfortunately, some students do not consider tutorial to be a core part of their programme. SR said that there is possibly a post-Covid context; education attendance has not recovered across all age groups.</p>	
16.8	<p>The Board asked whether it is essential for each tutorial session to take up the full 40-minute lunch break. SMT replied that, in fact, it is often only 20 minutes.</p>	
16.9	<p>The Board asked if there is a difference in attendance rates between upper and lower sixth. SMT said that upper sixth attendance is generally lower, particularly as exams approach.</p>	
16.10	<p>The Board asked whether it would be better to end the tutorial programme earlier in the year rather than have what appears to be an informal acceptance of non-attendance in the run up to exams. SMT replied that the key statutory information is shared earlier in the year so students will not lose critical content if they miss some summer classes. The scheduled classes count towards the minimum hours of full-time provision for funding purposes, so the College would have to be cautious about cutting them.</p>	
16.11	<p>The Board asked if SMT can view attendance figures by individual tutor group. SMT said that DoCS monitor this.</p>	
16.12	<p>The Board suggested that SMT consider student focus groups to try to identify barriers to attendance and bring about improvement. LKE to progress.</p>	LKE
17.	<p>Health & Safety (standing item)</p>	
17.1	<p>IK said that there have been no RIDDOR reportable incidents and nothing else to report.</p>	

<p>18.</p> <p>18.1</p>	<p>Any other business <i>Paper circulated: Request for volunteers for SAR panels</i></p> <p>The Chair said that this is Benjamin’s final meeting as Student Governor, thanking him for his contribution. She drew the Board’s attention to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EDI Pledge Event (see item 15 above) ● Update on progress to date in the appointment of VP (see separate confidential minutes) ● Volunteers for SAR panels ● Nominations for Chair and Vice Chair for 2023-24 to the Clerk by Monday 12 June 2023 	
<p>19.</p>	<p>Private business Held in the absence of Student and Staff Governors and of SMT. This is recorded in a separate confidential minute.</p>	
<p>20.</p>	<p>Date of next meeting – Monday 10 July 2023 at 3 pm There being no other business the meeting ended at 5.30 pm</p> <p>..... Date.....</p> <p>Amanda Storey Chair of Governors</p>	