

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

HELD ON MONDAY 16 OCTOBER 2023 at 3.00 PM

Present:	Amanda Storey (Chair)	Sara Russell (Principal)
	Syamantak Bhattacharya	Onkar Chiroma (online)
	Alan Sydney	John White
	Rob Sykes	David Williams
	Lynne Evans	Michael Wesley
	Joanna Townsend	Tina Thorne
	Lucy Walsh Waring	Barry Neaves
	Norman Levy	Zac Hussain
	Dave Stickland	

In Attendance:	Nick Allen	(Vice Principal)
	Lucy Edevane	(Deputy Principal Welfare & Progression)
	Irfan Khan	(Finance Director)
	Vicky Owen	(Clerk)

Item		<i>Action</i>
1.	Apologies – Scott Stemp, Jaanvi Singh, Caroline Rand	
1.1	The Chair opened the meeting by encouraging all members to ask questions and contribute to the meeting. No question is ‘stupid’ and the Board benefits from multiple perspectives and experience.	
2.	Minutes of the meeting dated 11 July 2023 These were accepted as a correct record. A post meeting note on insurance had also been circulated.	
3.	Matters arising	
3.1	Point 6.1 IT Conditions of Use Policy is on the agenda. Completed.	
3.2	Point 9.1.1 Chair’s Diary circulated to potential Chairs/VCs and meetings set up to discuss interest and potential committee roles. Completed.	
4.	Presentation from Nick Allen (VP) on headline results for 2022/23 Due to the nature of this discussion, it is recorded as a separate confidential minute.	
5.	Principal’s matters <i>Paper circulated: Principal’s Matters September 2023 Updated for Board October 23</i>	
5.1	SR explained that there are some small updates since the version that went to P&R and summarised the content of the paper. Referring to the Teachers’	

	<p>Pay negotiations, she said that it should be clear quite quickly whether the union will accept the employers' offer. Since she wrote the paper, the employers' side in the Support Staff negotiation has made an offer of 6.5% which is under consideration.</p>	
5.2	<p>Referring to the PM's recent announcement of an 'Advanced British Standard' to replace the current 16-19 curriculum, she said that it came as a surprise, even to the DfE. The advice in the sector is to continue with existing plans as the timetable is long term and its implementation may be subject to changes in the national political landscape.</p> <p>Questions from the Board</p>	
5.3	<p>Enrolment September 2023: the Board asked how the conversion rate compares to other colleges. SR said that it is remarkably similar. The Board asked why this might be and SR said that it seems that schools are actively encouraging students to make multiple applications. The Board asked why and SR said that it could be to ensure that their advice and guidance is seen to be independent and not favouring a particular college.</p>	
5.3.1	<p>The Board asked if applicants have to rank their applications, selecting a first choice, and SR said that they do not.</p>	
5.4	<p>RAAC: the Board asked if SMT is confident that there is no RAAC in the College. SR said that they are and IK explained that he had met with the architect and considered every building constructed during the appropriate period. All have timber roofs.</p>	
6.	<p>Report from the Policy & Resources Committee <i>Papers circulated: P & R Minutes draft 25 09 23; Financial Report 25th September 2023; HSCP Safeguarding Audit July 2023; Review of 2022 HSCP Safeguarding Action Plan; Capital Project Working Group (CPWG) 2023 draft ToR v2; Governor IT Conditions of Use draft 23</i></p> <p>Finance</p>	
6.1	<p>IK said that the focus of the Report is the year end position 2022/23. The audit was completed last week and he will report to the Audit Committee and the next Board. The auditors complimented management on being the only team among college clients to provide all the necessary documents on schedule.</p>	
6.1.1	<p>The overall position is slightly better than expected. Boarding/Catering combined are good and the cash position is strong.</p>	
6.1.2	<p>IK said that the College awaits notification of any additional funding for in year growth and also the results of the TPS revaluation. The government has confirmed that the latter will continue to be funded.</p>	
	<p>Questions and comments from the Board</p>	

6.2	The Board asked whether, should it be agreed nationally, the budget allows for a 6.5% salary increase for all staff. IK replied that it does.	
6.3	The Chair of P&R commented that the Committee noted a downturn in the financial position of AHED and reported that SMT is working on this and will report to the Committee. The Board asked whether the potential adjustments referred to in the P&R Minutes (item 6.1.1) would be significant. IK said that this has yet to be established.	
	Estates	
6.4	Wyke Lodge redevelopment – IK said that a great deal of work has been done to date, including submission of a pre-planning application which has resulted in some small changes to the plans and a meeting with the neighbours. He hopes that the formal planning application can be submitted this week. If it is approved, unlike with the Carville build, there will be a great deal of work to be done around decanting, including accommodation for the Caretaker.	
6.4.1	SRP Freeman – IK said that we have a date of April 2025 for the start of the work but it remains unclear what size of project will be delivered, from repair of the existing roof to a complete rebuild and options in between. This Programme is unusual as we are entirely dependent on the DfE to manage it.	
6.4.2	Summer projects – IK drew the Board’s attention to some of the projects that have been completed over the summer.	
	Questions from the Board	
6.5	The Board asked whether Music staff have been involved in the design of the new building and SMT replied that both HoS have been heavily so.	
6.5.1	The Board asked if IK could provide more information on the costs of decanting. IK said that he does not yet have detail but will provide it as soon as he can. SMT said that it may be that the Caretaker and his wife have to be in rented accommodation near the College rather than on site.	
6.5.2	The Chair of P&R explained that, as with Carville, the Committee recommends the establishment of a CPWG to include DS and SS who have particularly relevant expertise. The Group’s main role is likely to be the appointment of a main construction contractor.	
6.6	Regarding the HSCP Audit and Review, LKE said that the key points are in her presentation (see item 10).	
6.7	The Chair of P&R drew the Board’s attention to the Governors’ Conditions of Use document and the fact that the requirements are quite tight. Members need to be confident that they are able to comply.	

6.8	<p>Resolved: the Board approved 1) the appointment of a CPWG in accordance with the terms of reference, to include delegating to this group the appointment of the main contractors; 2) the proposed membership of the CPWG; 3) the Governor IT Conditions of Use Policy as per the copy circulated. All in favour.</p>	
7.	<p>Confirmation of written resolution <i>Paper circulated: Written Resolution Salix 23 prepared by the Clerk</i></p> <p>The Board approved A 12% contribution i.e. £607,943 from College reserves to secure maximum available grant funding of £4,458,246 through Salix.</p>	
8.	<p>Report from the Audit Committee <i>Papers circulated: Audit minutes draft 02 10 23; Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire draft 2022 23; Data Protection Report 2022-23; ToR Audit draft 2023; Data Protection Policy 2022; Gifts and Hospitality Policy amended by Committee and register; Health & Safety Policy 2023-24</i></p> <p>8.1 MW summarised key points from the Committee: the Questionnaire is much the same as before, with some changes arising from ONS reclassification; two internal audits are ongoing; there are a few outstanding matters on the internal audit tracker but the auditor has confirmed that there is nothing of concern; the DP Report showed no breaches requiring referral to the ICO; there were no fraud and whistleblowing incidents to report; no changes to the DP Policy; minor changes to the Terms of Reference.</p> <p>8.2 Regarding the Health & Safety Policy, MW said that there is a new Health & Safety Co-ordinator in post. The Disaster Management Plan and protocols regarding lockdown etc have been reviewed, with a lockdown rehearsal planned.</p> <p>8.3 Regarding cyber security, MW said that this is an increased focus in KCSIE, including the requirement for a governor to undertake CS training. DS has done this. The Board asked DS what he learned from the training and DS replied that the content was familiar to him from the corporate world. He does not feel that the Board needs to be concerned.</p> <p>8.4 Resolved: the Board approved 1) the Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire as circulated and for SR as Accounting Officer and the Chair of Governors to sign; 2) the amendments to the Health & Safety Policy as per the copy circulated; 3) the Data Protection Policy and the Gifts and Hospitality Policy (and Register) as per the copies circulated; 4) the revised Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee as per the copy circulated. All in favour.</p>	

<p>9.</p> <p>9.1</p> <p>9.2</p> <p>9.3</p> <p>9.4</p>	<p>Report from the Search & Governance Committee <i>Papers circulated: Search mins draft Oct 23; AoC Code of Good Governance 2023</i></p> <p>Governor Self-Assessment and actions arising: JT said that the return rate was very high and thanked members for their responses and comments. The Committee considered them all carefully. As the Chair said at the start of the meeting, the Committee is concerned if even one person feels inhibited in asking questions in Board meetings.</p> <p>AoC Code: this is simplified compared with the previous version and the Committee recommends its adoption. The Clerk said that, while the AoC has advised adoption from next academic year, she advises that the best date for adoption would be 1 August 2024 to avoid the need to report against two codes in one financial year.</p> <p>Succession planning: the Committee spent some time discussing this, including Chair and VC succession. The Mercers have put forward a potential second nominee (HSS) who visited the site and met with members of the Board and staff who gained a favourable impression. The Committee’s recommendation is subject to formal Mercer nomination which is expected this week.</p> <p>Resolved: the Board approved 1) the adoption of the new AoC Code of Good Governance from 1 August 2024; 2) the appointment of Hugh Stafford-Smith as governor subject to formal nomination by the Mercers effective from a date to be agreed; 3) the appointment of LE as governor for a second exceptional term from 10 February 2024; 4) the appointment of LWW to the Search Committee.</p>	
<p>10.</p> <p>10.1</p> <p>10.2</p> <p>10.3</p>	<p>Annual Safeguarding Update <i>Paper circulated after the meeting: Governors’ Annual Safeguarding Update 2023. See also HSCP papers under item 6.</i></p> <p>LKE updated the Board on the membership of the DSL team and on changes arising from the update of the government’s Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) publication which have also been shared with staff.</p> <p>LKE said that there is an increased emphasis on allegations against staff and on reporting low level concerns which, recorded and put together, can build an important picture.</p> <p>Referring to slide 5 ‘The Range of CP Issues’, LKE said that those in red have been updated this year.</p>	

<p>10.4</p> <p>10.5</p> <p>10.6</p> <p>10.7</p> <p>10.8</p> <p>10.9</p> <p>10.10</p> <p>10.11</p>	<p>LKE said that colleges are now obliged to follow their internal procedures if there is an allegation regarding an outside body which uses our premises.</p> <p>Management and staff will be doing a lot of work to audit filtering and monitoring systems. This will be coming to governors in due course.</p> <p>On page 10 ‘You Must Read...’, LKE listed key documents. The Clerk will ensure that the most up to date versions are saved in the Board area of the Governors’ Google Drive. Should any members have difficulty accessing this or have questions, they should contact the Clerk.</p> <p>LKE reminded governors that they are required to undertake mandatory safeguarding training every three years. Many will be due an update in the spring/summer and will receive an email reminder.</p> <p>Questions from the Board</p> <p>The Board asked how the College can monitor student online activity when they are using their own devices. LKE said that activity on the College Wi-Fi can be monitored, but not if they are using their own data. The guidance accepts this.</p> <p>The Board asked whether students accessing something they should not, tend to do it in such a way that the College cannot detect it. LKE replied that this is unfortunately the case with some students.</p> <p>Referring to the guidance re allegations about hirers, the Board asked if this is applicable. LKE said that there are very few hirers, so this is not a big concern, although there are some.</p> <p>The Board asked if there were any particular areas in the HSCP Audit and Plan to which LKE wished to draw their attention and LKE said they are covered in this presentation.</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>11.</p> <p>11.1</p>	<p>Careers Link Governor Annual Report <i>Paper circulated: Link Careers Governor Report Oct 23</i></p> <p>JT drew the Board’s attention to two highlights. The first is the ‘astonishing’ number of one to one appointments (2,998) delivered by a small team. The other is the introduction of Unifrog which is an online platform accessible to students, staff and parents. JT described the range of benefits, including the fact that it collects data to inform staff as to the topics of most interest and that it records students’ progress in their applications.</p>	

<p>11.2</p> <p>11.3</p> <p>11.4</p> <p>11.5</p> <p>11.6</p>	<p>JT referenced the section ‘How can Governors support the careers provision of PSC?’. The Clerk will send out the Google Form and will include the dates of the Progression Fair and Careers Day. JT and the Chair also encouraged members to volunteer to do Oxbridge practice interviews which are extremely useful to candidates and very rewarding for interviewers.</p> <p>The Board thanked JT for her very useful report.</p> <p>Questions from the Board</p> <p>The Board asked what ‘Gatsby’ is. It is the criteria by which careers provision is assessed.</p> <p>The Board commented that there seems to be a great deal of support available to students, asking if there is a case for providing mentoring for those who are stuck and to ensure that all students access what is there. JT and SMT replied that the initial delivery is through the tutorial programme and that the Careers team are then available to provide one to one meetings - multiple ones if required. Sometimes a tutor will take the student to Careers if they are nervous.</p> <p>The Board asked if the Careers department can cope with increased student numbers. SR said that SMT looks at this alongside other support provision and the faculty structure which has recently been strengthened. She said that the PSC Careers Department is exceptionally well resourced; some colleges buy in County advisers for a short time each week. The Student Governor confirmed that he feels that the Careers team is very effective.</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>12.</p> <p>12.1</p> <p>12.2</p>	<p>Risk Management <i>Papers circulated: RMG Meeting 200923 Draft Minutes</i></p> <p>NA said that P&R has recently considered Risk and reported that the RMG made no changes to overall risk ratings at its recent meeting. It proposed the merging of two documents to produce a Strategic Risk Register & Board Assurance Map which the Audit Committee approved.</p> <p>Question from the Board</p> <p>Since the Committee meetings took place, there has been a significant escalation of hostilities in Israel and Gaza, with the impact felt across communities in the UK. The Board asked if there are implications for our students. SMT replied that they have been discussing this. LKE has been in touch with the staff member with links to the Jewish Society, although management is unable to identify if there are students with Palestinian</p>	

	heritage. SMT is aware of some unpleasant comments on fake PSC accounts, but nothing significant. SMT will continue to monitor.	
13.	Student Update to include statement of transactions <i>Paper circulated: Student Union Statement of Transactions 22-23</i>	
13.1	ZH said that the SU Constitution requires the presentation of the statement. He summarised the nature of the entries and added that the Prom made a profit although the accounts have yet to be audited.	
13.2	ZH reported recent SU activity: a cake sale for Papyrus; talks and videos to the L6 about the SU; elections in tutor groups for the student parliament; celebration of Black History Month and a visit by SU representatives from the Isle of Wight College. There was very positive feedback from the visitors about the 'energy' and 'enthusiasm' of SU postholders.	
13.3	ZH also said that, with the weather deteriorating, there is a lack of inside social space and SMT said that they are looking at enabling access to classrooms.	
13.4	ZH also said that the SU is discussing whether or not to continue with NUS affiliation. The annual fee is £250 and the changes around loyalty cards mean that the SU receives less in return. The SU is examining the pros and cons, and there may be a referendum.	
13.5	The Board noted the cost of SU insurance and asked what it covers. It also asked who audits the Prom accounts and when that will be done. ZH could not answer these questions and IK will do so at the next meeting.	IK
14.	Health & Safety (standing item)	
14.1	IK said that there have been no RIDDOR reportable incidents and nothing else to report.	
15.	External Governance Review (standing item) to include proposal from Search Committee	
15.1	JT reminded the Board that they need to agree a focus for the review. The Committee had discussed looking at other colleges' experience to inform the decision, but very little has been published. JT said that the Committee had considered whether the Governors' SAR responses suggested a focus, but decided that they do not. The Committee's recommendation is to focus on the first three (of six) principles in the new AoC Code of Practice. If this is agreed, the Clerk will have an initial conversation with the reviewer early in November which may inform the final decision of the Board in December.	

<p>15.2</p> <p>15.3</p> <p>15.4</p> <p>15.5</p> <p>15.6</p>	<p>SR said that she had spoken to a senior manager of a college which has recently had its EGR and they had also used elements of the Code. That college reported that it had been a positive experience.</p> <p>LWW offered her assistance in informing the decision and in support of the EGR.</p> <p>Questions from the Board.</p> <p>The Board questioned whether the choice of principles 1 – 3 is wise and if they are ‘heavier’ than the others. The Committee did not consider this to be the case but are open to advice from the reviewer.</p> <p>The Board asked if the EGR is used as a tool by which colleges are compared with each other. SR replied that is not the case and there is no score or grade, although a report must be published.</p> <p>The Board agreed that the proposal be taken forward in conversation of the Clerk with the reviewer and to be brought back to the December Board.</p>	<p>Clerk</p>
<p>16.</p> <p>16.1</p> <p>16.2</p> <p>16.3</p>	<p>Any other business</p> <p>The Chair drew the Board’s attention to the invitation to all Board members to attend for the first item of the Audit Committee meeting at 3 pm on Monday 20 November 2023 and to the various events listed on the agenda. Please contact the Clerk if you are able to attend the events.</p> <p>A member of the Board commented that an ex-student has been selected as a parliamentary candidate for a local seat.</p> <p>Student and Staff Governors and SMT left the meeting.</p>	
<p>17.</p>	<p>Confidential minutes of the Board meetings on 10 July and 27 September 2023, mainly relating to the appointment of the DP</p> <p>This is recorded as a separate confidential minute.</p>	
<p>18.</p>	<p>Private business</p> <p>There was no private business.</p>	
<p>19.</p>	<p>Date of next meeting – Monday 11 December 2023 at 3 pm There being no other business the meeting ended at 6.05 pm</p>	