

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

**HELD ON MONDAY 11 DECEMBER 2023 at 3.00 PM**

<b>Present:</b>	Amanda Storey (Chair)	Sara Russell (Principal)
	Syamantak Bhattacharya	Onkar Chiroma
	Alan Sydney	John White
	Rob Sykes	David Williams
	Lynne Evans	Michael Wesley
	Joanna Townsend	Dave Stickland (part)
	Lucy Walsh Waring (part, online)	Barry Neaves
	Norman Levy	Zac Hussain
	Caroline Rand	Jaanvi Singh

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

Item		Action
<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies</b> – Tina Thorne, Scott Stemp	
<b>1.1</b>	The Chair explained that, at the time of the last Board, it was expected that the new Mercers’ nominee (HSS) would have joined in time to attend this meeting. In fact, the formal process at the Mercers is not yet complete, but we hope that he will be in attendance in February.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes of the meeting dated 16 October 2023</b> The open and confidential minutes were accepted as a correct record.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Matters arising</b>	
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Point 10.6</b> The key safeguarding documents are on the Google Drive in a ‘Safeguarding Resources’ subfolder within the Board folder. Completed.	
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Point 11.2</b> The Clerk sent out the Careers Google Form and dates of future events. Completed.	
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Point 13.5</b> IK said that the SU insurance provides public liability cover up to £5m. He also said that the SU accounts were included in the overall audit. Completed.	
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Point 15.6</b> EGR update is on the agenda at item 16. Completed.	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Principal’s matters</b> <i>Paper circulated: Principal’s Matters November 2023</i>	
<b>4.1</b>	SR said that the PM paper is as seen by P&R. She had wanted to update it by including some messages from students, but time did not allow, so instead she read them out. The first is an anonymous survey response:	

<p><b>4.1.1</b></p> <p><b>4.1.2</b></p> <p><b>4.2</b></p>	<p>‘...thank you PSC for being so incredible, all throughout (sic) secondary school I felt unsafe and unhappy, but college is a place where I always feel accepted, protected and looked after and I often have a great time here. You guys are brilliant.’</p> <p>The second was an excerpt from a student’s LAMDA speech, shared with his permission, which included the following: ‘There is a huge emphasis on respect and inclusion here ... I can actually forget that I have disabilities for once in my life because I always feel safe and protected and looked after. It’s so peaceful because everyone is so respectful. PSC should be extremely proud of their incredible EDI, and as for me, I’m very grateful.’</p> <p><b>Questions from the Board</b></p> <p>Referring to item 3 in PM, the Board asked what a Minimum Service Level in a College might look like. SR replied that it could include prioritising certain year groups or having minimum staffing numbers on site. SR commented that, in the opinion of a number of professionals in the sixth form sector, the government’s consultation is unlikely to be productive. They lack confidence in the design of the survey and may not participate.</p>	
<p><b>5.</b></p> <p><b>5.1</b></p> <p><b>5.1.1</b></p> <p><b>5.1.2</b></p> <p><b>5.2</b></p> <p><b>5.3</b></p>	<p><b>Governors’ Snapshot</b> <i>Paper circulated: Governors’ Snapshot 22-11-23</i></p> <p>NA drew the Board’s attention to areas which he feels are of particular interest:</p> <p><b>Table 1 Student Numbers</b> – these are very buoyant, with notable growth at Level 2. However, there is a significant drop in HE numbers at AHED.</p> <p><b>Table 4 Student Attendance</b> – this has been a particular focus in the last year and SMT is delighted to see the improved attendance figures.</p> <p><b>Question and Comment from the Board</b></p> <p>The Board commented that they are very pleased to see the higher SFC attendance figures.</p> <p>The Board asked why HE enrolments have dropped. NA replied that this is a surprise and that the view of the Director of AHED is that it is a result of more local competition. There is a drop in students progressing from Foundation to BA degrees and a drop in enrolments directly onto the latter. The ending of the insurance degree which was based on the relationship with a particular local firm is also a factor. NA said that the overall numbers are relatively small so SMT is currently of the view that the situation can be addressed. Some action has already been taken and work continues on a recovery plan.</p>	
<p><b>6.</b></p>	<p><b>Report from the Curriculum &amp; Quality Committee</b> <i>Papers circulated: Draft C&amp;QA Minutes Nov 23; Draft Confidential C&amp;QA Minutes 131123 (as appropriate); AHED HE Report to Governors – November 2023; Annual CP Safeguarding Report Sept 23 (as appropriate); College SAR and Devt Plan 2023 24; Operational Plan 2023 24; Performance analysis</i></p>	

<p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p> <p>6.3</p> <p>6.4</p>	<p><i>131023 (as appropriate); GDPR Protocols (Exams) 2022-23; Reviews of Marking 2023</i></p> <p>BN summarised the discussion at the Committee, which had much in common with the content of NA’s Snapshot in item 5 above. The Committee also discussed curriculum areas of concern, as well as flagging Artificial Intelligence as a potential future matter of both opportunity and concern.</p> <p><b>Questions from the Board</b></p> <p>Regarding the AHED NSS Survey result and the discussion at the Committee about the limited nature of the data, the Board nonetheless expressed concern that even a very small group of students should provide feedback which was not as good as hoped. The College’s mantra is ‘counting in ones’ and every student’s experience is important. NA agreed that this is the case. Further information is included in a confidential minute.</p> <p>The Board noted that, at the time of the Committee meeting, the Principal’s Academic Board Review (AHED) had not taken place (see item 4.8 of Committee minutes of 13 November) and asked if this has now happened. SMT said that it has.</p> <p><b>Resolved: the Board approved the GDPR Protocols (Exams) and Reviews of Marking Policies as per the copies circulated. All in favour.</b> (LWW left the meeting.)</p>	
<p>7.</p> <p>7.1</p> <p>7.2</p> <p>7.2.1</p> <p>7.2.2</p> <p>7.2.3</p>	<p><b>Report from the Policy &amp; Resources Committee</b> <i>Papers circulated: Draft P &amp; R Mins 271123; Draft Confidential P &amp; R Mins Nov 23 (as appropriate); Finance Report Final; Annual Report 2022 23 v8 (Board); Boarding fees 2025-2026</i></p> <p>LE said that the Committee considered the Finance Report and Annual Report. Approval of the latter will be considered under item 9 below. She invited IK to provide a brief report on Finance and Estates.</p> <p><b>Finance</b></p> <p>IK drew the Board’s attention to the year end position for 2022/23 and the adjusted forecast for 2023/24. He mentioned that the College can expect some additional funding for in year growth but this is yet to be confirmed.</p> <p>IK also said that the P&amp;R Committee had supported his recommendation for a new fix of the Barclays short term deposit of c£1.6m for another year. In accordance with the Financial Regulations he requested Board approval.</p> <p><b>Boarding fees</b> - Regarding the proposed increase in boarding fees for 2025/26, IK said that there was a more substantial increase in the fees for 2024/25, but the proposed rise is lower this time, at 3.65% in light of the wider reduction in the rate of inflation.</p> <p><b>Question from the Board</b></p>	

	<p>The Board noted that the paper on fees refers to refurbishment of boarding houses and asked if there is a plan for this. IK replied that there is a rolling programme of improvements, depending on the availability of funding.</p> <p><b>Estates</b></p> <p><b>7.3 Wyke Lodge</b> - IK said that the planning application for the Wyke Lodge redevelopment has been submitted and, while the Council initially indicated that the outcome might come in early January, they have put back that estimate to early February due to the Christmas break. There have been no objections to date, with the deadline being next week.</p> <p><b>7.3.1</b> IK said that SMT are working on the appointment of the main contractor, who will be selected by the Working Group, as well as considering decanting plans. He drew the Board's attention to the claim made to date as outlined in Table 4 of the Finance Report.</p> <p><b>7.3.2</b> SR commented that some colleges have found that costs have gone up significantly compared with the amount estimated in their original bid. IK said that he is confident that sufficient contingency has been allowed for and that this should not be an issue. He also said that the Carville building project was underspent, which should provide reassurance; the Carville project has been used as a case study by the FE Commissioner's Office.</p> <p><b>7.3.3</b> The Board asked if SMT had views on why there have been no objections to date. They replied that there are few near neighbours and that the one who is very close is supportive and keen to see the Music provision have suitable accommodation. SMT also feel that their early engagement with the Council planning department, Conservation Officer and neighbours resulted in small changes to the design and strong communication which have been positive. There is a neighbours' meeting on Wednesday this week, so more questions may arise.</p> <p><b>7.3.4</b> The Board asked how the notice of the neighbours' meeting was communicated and SMT said that it was through the neighbours' liaison group as well as hard copies delivered to those closest to the building.</p> <p><b>7.4</b> <b>Resolved: the Board approved 1) the financial information for the audited 2022/23 year and for submission of Finance Record 2) the Boarding fees for 2025/26 3) the extension of the Barclays short term deposit for one year 4) the recommendations of the Remuneration Committee (to be considered under agenda item 18).</b></p>	
<p><b>8.</b></p> <p><b>8.1</b></p>	<p><b>Approval for CIF Fire Safety Bid Contribution</b> <i>Paper circulated: Approval for CIF Bid 2024 25 for Fire Safety</i></p> <p>IK reminded the Board that the College submitted such a bid last year which was unsuccessful. There is a new bid process opening shortly and SMT recommends increasing the contribution from College reserves to increase the chance of success from 15% to 30% i.e. c£182k.</p>	

8.2	<b>Resolved: the Board approved a College contribution of 30% (£181,886) towards the estimated costs to support the CIF Bid 2024/25 application.</b>	
9.	<p><b>Report from the Audit Committee</b>  <i>Papers circulated: Draft Audit Minutes 201123; Audit Committee Annual Report 2023; External audit findings report final; Financial statements Letter of Representation; Regularity Letter of Representation</i></p> <p><b>9.1 External audit</b> - MW said that RSM issued an unqualified opinion on the financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2023. As a result of ONS reclassification, they looked at the new area of ‘novel, contentious or repercussive transactions’, making one suggestion but finding nothing of concern. They also made a minor control recommendation regarding the fixed assets register. There were no implications for the result for the year.</p> <p><b>9.1.1</b> MW said that the letters of representation are standard but for the usual reference to the fact that the College does not own its land and buildings plus an explanation of the treatment of a pension asset.</p> <p><b>9.1.2</b> The Audit Committee, together with P&amp;R, recommends the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 July 2023 to the Board.</p> <p><b>9.2 Internal audit</b> - the Committee received the last two internal audit reports for 2022/23 which were Key Financial Controls (substantial assurance) and Cyber Security (reasonable assurance) as well as TIAA’s overall findings for the year.</p> <p><b>9.2.1</b> The internal audit plan for 2023/24 was initially considered by the Committee in June 2023, since when there has been further discussion about a potential internal audit of learner numbers which would be different from that conducted by the external auditors, focusing as it does on system and process as opposed to outcome. This discussion and the recommendation of the Committee on the areas for internal audit in the current year are in the post meeting note in item 7 of Draft Audit Minutes 201123.</p> <p><b>9.2.2</b> IK commented that communication from the internal auditors has not been up to normal standards in recent months, hence the delay in the completion of the final two audit reports. However, the firm has assured the College that this year’s reports will be completed during the current academic year.</p> <p><b>9.3</b> <b>Resolved: the Board approved 1) in conjunction with the P&amp;R Committee, for the Principal and the Chair of Governors to sign the Annual Report and Financial Accounts for 2022/23 to be submitted to the ESFA; 2) for the Principal and Chair of Governors to sign the Letters of Representation 3) the Internal Audit Plan 2023/24</b></p>	

<p><b>10.</b></p> <p><b>10.1</b></p> <p><b>10.2</b></p>	<p><b>Report from the Personnel Sub-Committee</b>  <i>Papers circulated: Draft Personnel (in Remuneration &amp; Personnel) minutes Nov 23; Personnel ToR 2023 draft v1; Staff Development Plan; Staff Development Report; Absence Update; EDI Report (Staff) 2022 23; Staff Loans Oct 2023; Summary of Policies Note and 2023 policies etc as follows: Absence due to ill health; Equal Pay; Family Friendly; Flexible Working; Ill-Health Retirement; Leave; Professional Association Subscriptions; Retirement; Volunteers Protocol</i></p> <p><b>Policies</b> - LE drew the Board’s attention to the Summary Note, provided because there are a large number of policies to consider. The Board requested two amendments: in the Volunteers Protocol item 3.3 an addition to make it clear who is responsible for making contractors aware of the requirements and giving them the leaflet; in the Family Friendly Policy item 2h, to read ‘on or before’.</p> <p><b>Resolved: the Board approves 1) the following policies and protocol as circulated subject to the amendments referred to above: Professional Association Subscriptions; Absence due to ill health; Equal Pay; Family Friendly; Flexible Working; Ill-health Retirement; Leave; Loans to Staff; Retirement; Volunteers. 2) the revised Terms of Reference for the Personnel Sub-Committee as circulated 3) for staff on the Teaching Staff Scale: an increase of between 6.5% and 8.44% on all main scale pay points; a 6.5% across the board increase for all other teachers including those on the leadership scale; a 6.5% increase on all relevant allowances; for Teachers on pay point 1, a 8.44% increase to move their salary to £30,500 pa and for staff on the Support Staff Scale: an increase of 6.5% on the NJC pay spine; the incorporation of the Support Staff Standards Payment (SSSP) into the NJC pay spine to provide an additional £390 to basic pay for all staff. This as per the written resolution referred to in item 19 below.</b></p>	
<p><b>11.</b></p> <p><b>11.1</b></p>	<p><b>Safeguarding Link Governor Annual Report</b>  <i>Paper circulated: Safeguarding Link Governor Report 2023</i></p> <p>In the absence of TT, LKE and the Board thanked her for her Report and for her work in the role over several years. LKE explained that TT is stepping down as SLG and that OC has kindly agreed to take it on.</p> <p>There were no comments or questions from the Committee on the Report.</p>	
<p><b>12.</b></p>	<p><b>Equality Analysis &amp; EDI Report</b>  <i>Paper circulated: Equality Analysis &amp; EDI Report 2024</i></p> <p>LKE reminded the Board that this is an annual requirement, saying that it has grown over the last couple of years due to the increase in activity in this area. She highlighted a few points:</p>	

<p><b>12.1</b></p> <p><b>12.2</b></p> <p><b>12.3</b></p> <p><b>12.4</b></p> <p><b>12.5</b></p>	<p><b>EDI Events 2022/23</b> - LKE drew the Board’s attention to the large number of events; the EDI (staff) team is active and students very engaged.</p> <p><b>Staff and Student Forums</b> - were extremely well attended, with 65 students at one event. Every tutor group is encouraged to have an EDI representative.</p> <p><b>Student Survey outcomes</b> - revealed a high level of satisfaction, with 99% of new L6 students agreeing with the statement that ‘The College promotes a culture of acceptance and equality.’</p> <p><b>Departmental SAR reports</b> - show many encouraging instances of progress within curriculum areas.</p> <p>The Board commented that it is great to see real changes in what is happening, thanking LKE and the team for her work through the year and for the Report.</p>	
<p><b>13.</b></p> <p><b>13.1</b></p> <p><b>13.2</b></p> <p><b>13.3</b></p>	<p><b>Risk Management</b>  <i>Papers shared on permanent section of Google Drive (Board/Risk Management): Draft minutes of meeting of 2 November 2023; Strategic Risk Register &amp; Board Assurance Map; Prevent Risk Register; IT Risk Register</i></p> <p>The Clerk explained to the Board that there is now a folder called ‘Risk Management’ in the Board folder of the Google Drive. In that folder they can find the most recent versions of the three Risk Registers (the Strategic RR &amp; Board Assurance Map, the Prevent RR and the IT RR) as well as the most recent draft minutes of the Risk Management Group. The papers will be continually updated and are available for reference at any time.</p> <p>NA said that the RMG looked at all three Registers, agreeing to implement the recommendation of the internal auditors that the IT RR be reviewed twice rather than once a year.</p> <p>NA reported that SMT had recently reviewed the Operational RR and will be recommending to the RMG the addition of some items from that document onto the Strategic RR &amp; BAM: AHED not meeting income targets; failure to protect data; cyber attack or catastrophic IT failure.</p> <p>There were no questions from the Board.</p>	
<p><b>14.</b></p> <p><b>14.1</b></p>	<p><b>Update on lunch with students</b></p> <p>AJS, NL and the Clerk attended a lunch with student representatives immediately before the meeting. AJS said that there were two particular strands to the conversation:</p> <p><b>EDI</b> - one of the attendees is the EDI Rep and explained some of what is going on, which mirrors LKE’s report in item 12 above. Governors gained the impression that there is lots happening and that students feel very well supported.</p>	

<p><b>14.2</b></p> <p><b>14.3</b></p> <p><b>14.4</b></p>	<p><b>The academic character of the College</b> - there was a conversation about whether the College has a reputation of being only for more academic students. The students said that there is a great deal of support for all students regardless of their level – it is a place for everyone. They reported that they feel that they really matter to their tutors and teachers. Communication about this at Open Days and in the Principal’s presentation influenced them when making their decision to select this College. A Board member commented that, when in a student area awaiting the start of the lunch, she was really struck by the diversity of the students she observed. (DS left the meeting.)</p> <p>ZH reported that the Student Parliament has agreed on three charities to support. Planning has begun for a Prom on 22 June 2024 at the Guildhall.</p> <p><b>NUS affiliation</b> - ZH said that discussions continue as to whether to maintain this. Pros and cons will be weighed up and communicated, followed by a student vote. A member of the Board encouraged the SU to consider the wider benefits of membership, giving as it does a voice to students on matters such as national education policy. ZH said that a rep from the NUS has talked to them and can also be invited to address the Student Parliament.</p>	
<p><b>15.</b></p>	<p><b>Health &amp; Safety (standing item)</b></p> <p>IK said that there have been no RIDDOR reportable or other significant incidents to report.</p>	
<p><b>16.</b></p> <p><b>16.1</b></p> <p><b>16.2</b></p> <p><b>16.3</b></p>	<p><b>External Governance Review (standing item)</b> <i>Paper circulated: Note for Board on EGR Plan Dec 2023</i></p> <p>The Clerk said that she has spoken to the Reviewer and shared the Board’s proposed EGR focus. The Reviewer said that it is unusual, probably by being quite broad, but she was very enthusiastic about it. The Clerk requested the Board’s agreement to the Plan.</p> <p>The Board discussed what an EGR will feel like. The Clerk said that the Reviewer seems very approachable and well organised. The Clerk anticipates that she will make a number of recommendations for the Clerk to action in terms of process and paperwork, some of which she already has in mind. She welcomes it as an opportunity to have the input of a very experienced governance professional.</p> <p>The Board agreed the Plan and the Clerk will confirm to the Reviewer.</p>	
<p><b>17.</b></p>	<p><b>Any other business</b></p>	



<p><b>17.1</b></p> <p><b>17.2</b></p> <p><b>17.3</b></p>	<p>The Board thanked staff for their organisation of the recent Carol Service and commented that the pre-Service governors' drinks went well. It was lovely that Bishop David officiated at the Service.</p> <p>The Clerk thanked the Board for their attendance at that and other events this term, including those who conducted practice Oxbridge interviews.</p> <p>The Clerk reported that there has been a very small change to the new AoC Code of Governance which the Board has voted to adopt from 1 August 2024. Under Principle 3, the second behaviour used to read 'Externally appointed governors keep their independence' and now reads 'Governors must remain impartial and act with objectivity.' The Board welcomed the change which does not impact their decision to adopt the Code. (Student and Staff Governors and SMT left the meeting.)</p>	
<p><b>18.</b></p>	<p><b>Report from the Remuneration Committee</b>  <i>Papers circulated: Remuneration Committee Annual Report 2023 Draft; Remuneration ToR 2023 draft</i></p> <p>This is recorded as a separate confidential minute.</p>	
<p><b>19.</b></p> <p><b>19.1</b></p> <p><b>19.2</b></p>	<p><b>Confirmation of Written Resolution by the Board to approve pay awards with effect from 1 September 2023</b>  <i>Paper circulated: Written Resolution Pay Awards 23</i></p> <p>The Clerk referred to the paper confirming the written resolution approved by the Board electronically since the Board meeting on 16 October 2023 in relation to pay awards for Teaching and Support Staff.</p> <p><b>The Board approved the following with effect from 1 September 2023:</b>  <b>For staff on the Teaching Staff Scale: an increase of between 6.5% and 8.44% on all main scale pay points; a 6.5% across the board increase for all other teachers including those on the leadership scale; a 6.5% increase on all relevant allowances; for Teachers on pay point 1, a 8.44% increase to move their salary to £30,500 pa.</b>  <b>For staff on the Support Staff Scale: an increase of 6.5% on the NJC pay spine; the incorporation of the Support Staff Standards Payment (SSSP) into the NJC pay spine to provide an additional £390 to basic pay for all staff.</b></p>	
<p><b>20.</b></p>	<p><b>Private business</b></p> <p>There was no private business.</p>	
<p><b>19.</b></p>	<p><b>Date of next meeting – Monday 26 February 2024 at 3 pm</b>  There being no other business the meeting ended at 5.15 pm</p>	