

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

HELD ON MONDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2024 at 3.00 PM

Present:	Amanda Storey (Chair) Syamantak Bhattacharya Onkar Chiroma Rob Sykes Lynne Evans Dave Stickland Norman Levy Zac Hussain David Williams	Barry Neaves Sara Russell (Principal) Alan Sydney Lucy Walsh Waring Tina Thorne Joanna Townsend Michael Wesley John White Hugh Stafford-Smith
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In Attendance:	Nick Allen Lucy Edevane Stephen Cowling Irfan Khan Vicky Owen Rosie Leigh	(Vice Principal) (Deputy Principal Welfare & Progression) (Deputy Principal Stakeholders, Systems & Services) (Finance Director) (Clerk) (Mental Health Adviser) for item 2 only
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Item		Action
1.	<p>Apologies – Scott Stemp, Caroline Rand, Jaanvi Singh.</p> <p>AJS welcomed HSS and SC to their first Board meeting. She also welcomed back NL who has been re-elected as Support Staff Governor. She encouraged all Governors to ask questions and to contribute to the discussion.</p>	
2.	<p>Presentation on The Hub by Rosie Leigh, Mental Health Adviser</p> <p><i>Paper circulated after the meeting: The Hub Presentation to Governors 26.2.24</i></p>	
2.1	<p>RS talked through her presentation as above. She drew particular attention to the fact that males are less likely to use the service and explained that staff are considering whether, if they were to offer a men’s group, it would be used.</p>	
2.2	<p>Questions from the Board</p> <p>The Board asked whether The Hub works independently or whether it shares information with other teams such as Study Support. RS replied that they are moving to more collaborative working so that a single student does not have to connect with multiple services.</p>	
2.3	<p>Noting that some students could not be seen when they first attended, the Board asked whether they came back and, if so, how quickly they were seen. RS said that she does not have information as to the timescale but said that those students are always given priority if there is a queue when they return.</p>	

<p>2.4</p> <p>2.5</p> <p>2.6</p> <p>2.7</p> <p>2.8</p> <p>2.9</p> <p>2.10</p> <p>2.11</p>	<p>The Board asked how the service ties in with the Counselling team. RS said that it is separate although they might see someone who is on the Counselling waiting list. The Hub's focus is how wellbeing impacts on the College experience and how the student is now, rather than working with them on longstanding issues.</p> <p>The Board asked if staff follow up on those who do not attend. RS said that they do, with particular urgency if the student is considered vulnerable. Otherwise, they tend to make one attempt to rearrange and otherwise leave it with the student to initiate.</p> <p>Re support for staff, the Board asked if the funding is ongoing and if there is sufficient. RS said that she thinks it is ongoing and that, although they could always do more with extra resource, they feel they can do enough. There is also an employee assistance scheme.</p> <p>Regarding student support, the Board asked if there is sufficient resource. RS said that they are confident that they see those who really need it although, again, if they had more resource they feel that it would be used.</p> <p>The Board asked about RS's reference to male mental health. RS said that the team is a non-diverse, female one although there are now male Counsellors which is good. They are considering whether a visiting male Adviser could be helpful.</p> <p>Re the dogs, the Board asked if they have to be trained. RS said they have to be assessed and registered with PAT.</p> <p>The Board asked if the team has data on use of The Hub by ethnicity. RS said that they do, while noting that the source is the student's application form rather than how they self-identify.</p> <p>The Board thanked RS for her presentation and SR thanked the Mercers for the funding which enabled The Hub to be set up. (RS left the meeting)</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>Minutes of the meeting dated 11 December 2023 These were accepted as a correct record.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p>Matters arising There were no matters arising.</p>	
<p>5.</p> <p>5.1</p>	<p>Principal's matters <i>Paper circulated: Principal's matters 29 January 2024</i></p> <p>SR said that the report circulated is the one presented to P&R at its meeting on 5 February (draft P&R minutes refer) and gave a brief summary. There were no questions.</p>	

<p>6.</p> <p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p>	<p>Governors' snapshot as at February 2024 <i>Paper circulated: Governors Snapshot Feb 24</i></p> <p>NA drew the Board's attention to section 4 (Attendance) and the very positive results from recent steps taken. He said that most increased attendance has come from those with a poor record, rather than the occasional absentees. It is notable that the U6 figures are very good i.e. entrenched habits have been changed. The Board welcomed this data as tutorial attendance has been a focus of discussion over recent years.</p> <p>NA also said that retention appears to be up, although it is too early in the year to draw firm conclusions.</p>	
<p>7.</p> <p>7.1</p> <p>7.2</p> <p>7.3</p> <p>7.3.1</p> <p>7.3.2</p> <p>7.4</p>	<p>Report from the Search & Governance Committee <i>Papers circulated: draft minutes of the meeting held 22 January 2024; Draft JDs AHED & Safeguarding Link Governors; Draft Instrument and Articles</i></p> <p>JT reported on the meeting of 22 January. She said that, when seeking new Board members, the Committee considers existing skills gaps, the expertise of those who will be leaving and diversity.</p> <p>The Committee also looked at committee membership and made recommendations to the Board.</p> <p>The Committee identified that there is some divergence in whether Link Governor reports go to committees or direct to Board. The Committee was clear that LG roles are important and so reports should be seen by Board, but the question was whether they go to committee first and where the primary discussion occurs. The Board noted that some LG roles are a statutory requirement and that their primary purpose is to give assurance to the Board re key areas. They are not an audit. The Board questioned whether LGs are an independent resource or part of a committee and concluded that they are primarily the first. An issue was whether Board has time to enable proper debate or whether that needs to happen in the most appropriate committee.</p> <p>The Board agreed that it is important that there is no over-reliance on individuals and that governors need to debate the issues.</p> <p>The decision was that the reports will come direct to Board, taken as read with time for debate. They are presented annually, although LGs can raise matters in the interim.</p> <p>The Committee reviewed a new draft role description for the post of Link Governor for AHED and revisions to that for Safeguarding. There were no questions or comments from the Board on these other than a preference to call them 'role' rather than 'job' descriptions and the need for amendment in accordance with the decision on reporting (see above).</p>	

7.5	They also looked at a revised draft Instrument and Articles. There were no questions.	
7.6	The Committee considered whether there should be a survey of all governors as part of the EGR and decided against as the Reviewer can refer to information obtained in the last governor self-assessment and also because, as this is the first EGR, the Committee had no views on what might be useful questions. However, should any governors wish to speak to the Reviewer, they are most welcome and should notify the Clerk.	
7.7	Finally, the Committee discussed the annual Training Day on 22 April 2024, proposing two main topics of curriculum review and the inspection framework. NA said that it is necessary to look at the curriculum at this stage although it is a difficult point in the national political cycle so there is uncertainty about future government plans. Regarding inspection, he reminded the Board that, unlike the last inspection, the next will be an enhanced skills inspection and there will be an update on this.	
Questions from the Board		
7.8	Referring to the draft Search minutes of the meeting of 22 January 2024, item 5, the Board asked about the members with low attendance. The Committee Chair replied that the Committee is not concerned, but it is something they must review and note.	
7.9	The Board noted that there is no role description for the Boarding LG. The Clerk said that is so, but a draft is currently under discussion.	
Resolved: the Board		
7.10	-approved the job description for the AHED Link Governor;	
7.11	-approved the amendments to the job description for the Safeguarding Link Governor;	
7.12	-decided that the Board will receive Link Governors' written reports, with time for discussion, and that those reports should come directly to the Board and not normally via the committees;	
7.13	-approved the revised Instrument & Articles as per the version circulated;	
7.14	-approved the appointment of Norman Levy as Support Staff Governor for a second term commencing 26 February 2024;	
7.15	-approved the appointment of Bishop David Williams as Governor for a third term commencing 7 March 2024;	
7.16	--approved the appointment of Hugh Stafford-Smith to the Audit Committee;	
7.17	-approved the appointment of Lucy Walsh Waring to the Personnel Committee;	
7.18	-approved the appointment of Joanna Townsend to the Policy & Resources Committee.	
7.19	Chair and VC Succession	
7.19.1	The Clerk reminded the Board that AJS will leave at the end of the academic year as her final term ends and that the Board seeks a new Chair and Vice Chair from 1 September 2024. She explained the procedure for the	

	<p>appointments as outlined in the Standing Orders which is a formal nomination and seconding ahead of a decision at the July Board. If there is more than one candidate for either role, there will be an election at that meeting. She suggested that the Board might elect to bring the process forward to the May Board to enable more time for a handover.</p> <p>7.19.2 The Clerk explained that the Search Committee has done a lot of work to identify those who might be eligible by virtue of length of service etc, to explain to them what is involved and to explore their potential interest.</p> <p>7.19.3 The Chair of Board said that anyone stepping forward with a view to be VC and then Chair is potentially taking on a six-year commitment and that is challenging as governors are volunteers with busy lives. Search has had many conversations and, as a result, has identified that LE would be happy to progress to be Chair for a three-year term. JT would be happy to be VC for those three years and then potentially Chair for two years thereafter. This two-year term would not be the new normal, but for this time only.</p> <p>7.19.4 The Chair emphasised that it is open to anyone to propose and second alternative candidates – although the Principal, Staff and Student Governors are not eligible to stand. Search has simply tried to do a good deal of the groundwork.</p> <p>7.19.5 Regarding the timing of the decision (i.e. May v July), the Board asked whether the Standing Orders could be changed to address this for the future. The Clerk said that they could. They are due for review this summer, so the Board can consider that then.</p> <p>7.19.6 The Board noted the work done by the Search Committee and that the Clerk will circulate nomination paperwork ahead of the May or July meeting as appropriate.</p> <p>7.20 Resolved: the Board decided to bring forward the selection of the Chair and Vice Chair for the period from 1 September 2024 to the Board meeting on Monday 13 May 2024</p>	
<p>8.</p> <p>8.1</p>	<p>Report from the P&R Committee <i>Papers circulated: Draft Minutes 050224; Finance paper 5 Feb 2024 with income and expenditure for 6 months from August 2023 to December 2023, Balance sheet to 31 December 2023 and monthly cashflow; Draft ToR P&R Draft; Draft Educational Trips & Visits Policy New; Confidential P&R mins Feb 24 (shared as appropriate)</i></p> <p>LE referred to the draft minutes. The Committee considered the Principal’s Matters which SR had reported to the Board under agenda item 5. LE then invited IK to present his finance report to the Board followed by an update on the estate.</p> <p>Finance</p>	

<p>8.2</p>	<p>2023/24 Forecast Outturn Position – IK said that P&R discussed the Report in some detail. There are no proposed changes to the forecast since December. The AHED recovery plan is in hand and, while there may be some initial indications of the direction of travel in September 2024, the changes will not significantly impact finances until the following financial year. The cash position is strong and agreed investment changes have been actioned.</p>	
<p>8.2.1</p>	<p>IK said that the sector awaits a new Financial Handbook and, once that has been published, the Board will be asked to approve updated Financial Regulations for the College.</p>	
	<p>Questions from the Board</p>	
<p>8.2.2</p>	<p>Noting that the AHED recovery plan hinges on recruitment, the Board asked if the projections are at the conservative or ambitious end of the spectrum and, if they are achieved, whether they will increase costs. SR said that they are conservative and are based on increasing numbers in existing groups so will not add significant costs. She said that the Director has been going in to existing classes to promote progression opportunities and is already seeing a positive response. There is a ‘keep warm’ campaign from Marketing and, in response to a question from the Board, she confirmed that their work is also within the existing staffing budget. A Board member commented that national HE recruitment for September 2024 is expected to be lower than 2023, although SR said that the AHED intake is atypical in comprising mainly working older adults so may not be adversely impacted by that trend.</p> <p>Estates</p>	
<p>8.3</p>	<p>IK reminded the Board that planning permission has been obtained for the Wyke Lodge redevelopment and said that work is under way to meet the pre-commencement conditions.</p>	
<p>8.3.1</p>	<p>The CPWG met last week and appointed the main contractor – Ascia, who built the Carville building. Four firms tendered, of whom three were interviewed. Every tender had its merits, but Ascia’s price was the best and the experience with Carville was very positive – it came in under budget.</p>	
	<p>Questions from the Board</p>	
<p>8.3.2</p>	<p>The Board asked how the successful tender bid compared to the original anticipated costs. IK said that it was about the same as the revised price provided by the consultant in October 2023. That amount had been increased for inflation since the initial estimate was prepared for the bid a year before. SMT were very pleased with the bids as some colleges have found that tenders have come in at double the original estimate.</p>	
<p>8.3.3</p>	<p>The Board asked whether the procurement process followed established frameworks and IK confirmed that the College follows DfE and other regulations.</p>	

8.3.4	The Board asked if the invitation to bid went to identified contractors or was open. IK said that the consultant advised on suitable firms according to their previous experience, turnover etc. Five were invited to bid, but one did not. Of those who bid, the price difference between them was c£108k.	
8.3.5	IK said that a planning application has been submitted for the temporary buildings required for decanting during the construction phase. Also, that there will be a separate paper for Board re additional costs which could not be included in the original bid.	
8.3.6	The question of accommodation of the Caretaker (currently within Wyke Lodge) was discussed in private business and is recorded in a separate confidential minute.	
8.4	<p>Sustainability and CIF bids IK said that the outcome of these bids is still pending.</p>	
8.4	<p>Educational Trips & Visits Policy LKE said that there has always been detailed guidance but some recent changes e.g. around the need to address accessibility requirements, mean that SMT felt there was a need for a new Policy. There was a small change to the Draft at P&R which was missed from the version circulated to Board i.e. the removal of the word ‘and implementation’ in section 2.1.</p>	
8.4.1	<p>Questions from the Board The Board asked whether there is provision for those unable to travel to receive a virtual experience. LKE said there is no specific provision, but staff will discuss a trip afterwards to reflect on and share learning outcomes. SMT explained that, with the exception of a Geography trip, no trips are essential to the learning aim. Where possible, day trips are provided instead of residential to make them more accessible and there is some funding to help those in financial difficulty. SMT explained that every trip is considered by a group of SMT and Directors before it is approved.</p>	
8.5	<p>Terms of Reference – there were no questions.</p>	
8.6	<p>Resolved: the Board approved</p>	
8.7	<p>1) the Educational Trips & Visits Policy as per the copy circulated; 2) the revised Terms of Reference for the P&R Committee as per the copy circulated</p>	
9.	<p>Confirmation of Written Resolution by the Board to approve costs of Wyke decanting <i>Paper circulated: Written Resolution Wyke decanting Feb 24</i></p>	
9.1	The Clerk referred to the paper confirming the written resolution approved by the Board electronically since the Board meeting on 11 December 2023 in relation to the Wyke decanting.	

9.2	<p>Resolved: the Board approved the appointment of MRC to deliver and install four temporary classrooms and two portacabins for the costs of £315,278.29 (excl VAT) to be funded from College reserves; the contingency of 5% (£15,763.91) of total costs for any unforeseen costs. This contingency will be held by SMT and will only be released in exceptional circumstances</p>	
<p>10.</p> <p>10.1</p> <p>10.2</p> <p>10.3</p> <p>10.4</p> <p>10.5</p>	<p>Equality Objectives 2024-28 <i>Paper circulated: Draft EO Objectives 2024-28</i></p> <p>LKE explained that the set of objectives published for the four years to 2024 are coming to an end and SMT propose three main objectives each for the sixth form and AHED, plus one for staff. She explained that there is a great deal of work going on to identify and provide support to vulnerable students e.g. carers. The new objectives have been drawn up with the help of the EDI team and groups of both students and staff.</p> <p>Questions from the Board</p> <p>Referring to section B1, the Board noted that there was a reference to research 'due to be repeated in January 2024'. LKE confirmed that this has happened and will update the document.</p> <p>The Board asked how achievement of previous objectives is monitored. LKE said that individual staff are required to update the plan and it is monitored by SMT, being recorded in a very large document. The Board, while not wishing to create significant additional work for SMT, requested an executive summary of progress on the last set of objectives. SMT will consider how this can be done and report to the next Board. A Board member suggested a potential tabular approach.</p> <p>Commenting on the objective to be an anti-racist college, the Board asked if SMT feels that there is a long way to go on this. SR replied that it is an ongoing process given the two-year turnover of students and the fact that the wider society is not anti-racist. SMT believe that it is necessary to be active on this front all the time.</p> <p>Noting references to black students, the Board asked if there is the opportunity for consultation with people of colour generally. LKE explained that the Black Leadership Group uses the term 'black' to refer to all people of colour, so that is what is meant in that context. However, she will check whether the term is being used appropriately throughout the document.</p>	<p>SMT</p> <p>LKE</p>
<p>11.</p> <p>11.1</p>	<p>Oxbridge Report <i>Paper circulated: Oxbridge Report 2024</i></p> <p>LKE summarised the highlights i.e. that the % success rate has gone up overall. She said that it is hard to draw any conclusions from the breakdown</p>	

<p>11.2</p> <p>11.3</p>	<p>by subject as it depends on the individual students from one year to the next. She thanked governors who helped with practice interviews.</p> <p>LKE said that there were major issues with Oxford’s online entrance tests. They affected candidates nationally and it is hard to say what impact it had on our individual students. SMT noted that the number of PSC students receiving offers was exceeded only by two selective providers.</p> <p>Question from the Board</p> <p>The Board questioned why the success rate for Oxford is lower. NA suggested that this may be because that university uses contextual data relating to deprivation levels in the area where a student lives. Our applicants tend to live in quite homogeneous, relatively wealthy, areas which do not give them the benefit of weighting in this respect that a more mixed area might provide. He said that, nonetheless, more PSC students apply there rather than to Cambridge, probably as it is closer.</p>	
<p>12.</p> <p>12.1</p> <p>12.2</p> <p>12.3</p> <p>12.4</p>	<p>Student Governor Report</p> <p>ZH said that not much has happened in the SU since the last Board. There have been two fundraising efforts and GSA fundraising for Pride 2024 was particularly successful.</p> <p>The SU raised a query about automatic doors not working, causing problems for students with accessibility needs.</p> <p>There will be a Special Officer election under section 10/8 of the Constitution because two roles were unfilled earlier in the year.</p> <p>Question from the Board</p> <p>The Board asked for an update on the question of potential disaffiliation from the NUS. ZH replied that, with the end of the current officers’ terms fast approaching, this will be passed to the new post holders.</p> <p>The Board thanked ZH for his work and update.</p>	
<p>13.</p> <p>13.1</p>	<p>Risk Management</p> <p><i>Papers circulated: draft minutes of meeting of 25 January 2024 together with the changes to the Strategic Risk Register & Board Assurance Map and Prevent Risk Register are continually updated and available at https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1h2BpXAxwE1q3QiAroushm3bfskA2V4vh</i></p> <p>NA reported on the Risk Management meeting on 25 January 2024. There was a minor change to the Prevent Register. The main business was SMT’s annual review of whether items on the Operational Risk Register should move to the SRR & BM. They decided to move the following: curriculum change; AHED failure to meet income targets; loss of personal data; cyber-attack. There were no questions.</p>	

<p>14.</p> <p>14.1</p> <p>14.2</p>	<p>Health & Safety (standing item)</p> <p>IK said that there are no RIDDOR reportable incidents to report. There has been an increase in other reported accidents, but it is unclear whether this is due to additional events or better reporting. SMT will keep this under review.</p> <p>Question from the Board</p> <p>The Board asked if the planned Lockdown Drill had taken place. LKE said that it had and had been very useful, prompting extremely valuable conversations and providing a blueprint for future practices. Management will shortly meet to go through the feedback and identify any actions arising.</p>	
<p>15.</p> <p>15.1</p>	<p>External Governance Review (standing item)</p> <p>The Clerk said that she has provided the papers requested by the Reviewer and is in the course of setting up meetings with committee chairs etc. The Reviewer (Rachel Robson) will be attending all or part of some forthcoming committees and will come to the May Board meeting in person.</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 dates of various events coming up, to which they are invited. SR particularly encouraged members to consider coming to the Simon Clarkson Memorial Concert where a student who is the leader of the National Youth Orchestra will perform part of a new piece. A member said that there is also a lunchtime concert on 27 February at Romsey Abbey.</p> <p>A Governor told the Board about a recent music event he had attended, stressing the high quality of the student and staff performance and organisation. In the light of the anti-racist college work, he also told the Board about a forthcoming talk on Windrush that he is giving to students.</p> <p>A Governor said that a member of staff had greeted him and suggested that governors might occasionally be available in the Staff Room so that staff could talk to them. The Board agreed that there would need to be protocols for such conversations but it was something SMT will consider. SR said that governor attendance at events is very valuable and that perhaps more could be made of that.</p> <p>(The Student and Staff Governor left.)</p>	<p>SMT</p>
<p>17.</p>	<p>Private business</p> <p>This is recorded in a separate confidential minute as it concerns an individual.</p>	

18.	Date of next meeting: Monday 13 May 2024 at 3pm when the External Reviewer will be in attendance. There being no other business the meeting ended at 6.20 pm	
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