

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

HELD ON MONDAY 8 JULY 2024 at 3.00 PM

Present:

Amanda Storey (Chair)	Sara Russell
Syamantak Bhattacharya (online)	Onkar Chiroma (online, part)
Alan Sydney (online)	Hugh Stafford-Smith
Lynne Evans	Michael Wesley
Joanna Townsend	Dave Stickland
Lucy Walsh Waring (online)	Barry Neaves
Norman Levy	Briannah Butler
Christopher Airiemiokhale	

In Attendance:

Nick Allen	(Vice Principal)
Stephen Cowling	(Deputy Principal SS&S)
Lucy Edevane	(Deputy Principal W&P)
Irfan Khan	(Finance Director)
Vicky Owen	(Clerk)
Charlotte Hamilton-Clark	(Co-opted Governor, part)

Item		Action
1.	Apologies – David Williams, John White, Scott Stemp, Caroline Rand	
2.	Appointments	
2.1	The Chair welcomed Briannah Butler and Christopher Aireimiokhale and advised that they have been elected President and Vice President respectively of the SU and accordingly are put forward as Student Governors.	
2.2	The Board duly approved: the appointment of Briannah Butler and Christopher Aireimiokhale as Student Governors for a term of one year commencing 8 July 2024. All in favour.	
3.	Minutes of the meeting dated 13 May 2024 The open minutes were accepted as a correct record.	
4.	Matters arising	
4.1	Point 5.3 The idea of governor visits to curriculum areas is now on the agenda of the C&QA Committee. Completed.	
4.2	Point 9.3.4 IK confirmed that it is not possible to take out insurance against the possibility of the project not being completed on schedule. The CPWG has approved the bond which compensates should the contractor go bust and this has been purchased. Completed.	

<p>5.</p> <p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p> <p>5.3</p> <p>5.4</p> <p>5.5</p>	<p>Principal's matters <i>Paper circulated: Principal's matters 24 June 2024</i></p> <p>This is the version seen by P&R. Since then, there has been a general election and a change of government, so matters referred to could well change. SR reported that she has written to the new MP for this constituency (Danny Chambers) and also contacted Caroline Nokes who was re-elected MP for Romsey and Southampton North. SR feels that it is important to build and maintain strong relationships with local MPs.</p> <p>Job Evaluation (JE) – SR said that the Personnel Director is reviewing the JE toolkit and will come up with a recommendation. Governors commented that this could be a very large job and one that has the potential to be divisive. SR agreed with both points and said that it may be that it will necessitate the use of a consultant. In any event, it is likely to take some time to action.</p> <p>Skills Council – the second meeting will be early in the new academic year.</p> <p>Ofsted – the College expects an inspection early in the next academic year, with SR commenting that it may be that the new government will make some changes to the inspection regime.</p> <p>Members of the Board noted that the national ‘mood music’ in FE regarding the new Secretary of State for Education seems to be positive.</p>	
<p>6.</p> <p>6.1</p>	<p>Governors' Snapshot <i>Paper circulated: Governors Snapshot 2023-24 June</i></p> <p>NA said that this is virtually unchanged from the previous version. Since the last Board he has checked this College's attendance trends against the national data for 2022-24 and reported that ours has improved while the national picture is worsening. The Board congratulated SMT for their work on this and particularly LKE for her focus on tutorial attendance.</p>	
<p>7.</p> <p>7.1</p> <p>7.2</p>	<p>External governance Review <i>Papers circulated: EGR Report – final Jun 24; Summary of EGR report for publication Draft July 24</i></p> <p>The Chair explained the context for the benefit of the Student Governors and thanked members who attended the meeting with the Reviewer before the June Audit Committee. The Clerk said that the Reviewer had now said that it is not compulsory for a college to publish the report or summary, although the Clerk was of the opinion that it would be good practice. The wording has been approved by the Reviewer.</p> <p>The Board approved the wording of the summary report subject to a change from ‘staff’ to read ‘senior staff’ and that it be published on the College website.</p>	<p>Clerk</p>

7.3	The Board agreed that the Search Committee review the recommendations and bring a proposal to the Board. They noted that this review can be undertaken over a couple of years.	S&G
8.	<p>Policies (direct to Board) Safeguarding and Abuse Disclosures <i>Papers circulated: Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy Draft; Child Protection and Abuse Disclosure Guidelines Draft</i></p> <p>8.1 Safeguarding...Policy: LKE explained that KCSIE is updated every year and is published in September to be immediately effective. Hence this update has come directly to Board and cannot wait for a committee. It is written on the basis of trailed changes and, if there are any more necessary when the new KCSIE is published, electronic approval will be sought.</p> <p>8.1.1 The changes to the Policy are minor, mainly reflecting the latest terminology used in KCSIE. There are, however, some significant changes to appendices, particularly the addition of a new Appendix 6 relating to filtering and monitoring. LKE summarised its contents.</p> <p>8.1.2 LKE said that Appendix 7 ‘Supporting Transgender and Non-Binary Students’ is not a requirement but SMT feel that it is good practice. She reminded the Board that there was recently a national consultation on this but the outcome is pending. Meanwhile this appendix outlines the College approach on matters including boarding and trips. She commented that the nature of the questions in the consultation made SMT feel that the College’s approach is likely to be in line with the national practice.</p> <p>8.1.3 Questions from the Board The Board asked whether the College seeks feedback from boarders to find out whether they are happy with the approach in boarding. LKE said that there was wide consultation when the policy was introduced but there has been none since. She said that SMT will consider that, while cautioning that some students are not comfortable with their status being revealed which would limit that work.</p> <p>8.1.4 The Board asked how many trans/non-binary students there are at any one time. LKE said that until recently there were 10 – 20 per year group but it is increasing and we expect between 60 and 70 to join in September.</p> <p>8.2 Child protection... Guidelines: LKE said that the changes are minor. Referring to the requirement for staff to report a suspected case of FGM to the police, a governor queried whether this should go through a manager. LKE replied that this is the one occasion when the regulations say that the person to whom the disclosure is made must go directly to the police. The Guidelines also set out how it should be reported internally. (OC joined the meeting.)</p> <p>8.2.1 A Board member queried whether staff also go directly to the emergency services if there is a perceived threat to life and SMT said that this is the case. For instance, ambulances are quite frequently called to site and SMT are informed when that has already been done.</p>	

8.3	<p>Resolved: the Board approved the 1) Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy Draft; 2) Child Protection and Abuse Disclosure Guidelines. All in favour.</p>	
<p>9. 9.1</p> <p>9.2</p>	<p>Student Update</p> <p>BB and CA have just taken up their roles as P and VP of the SU. They put on a ‘Meet the SU’ event which unfortunately suffered due to the very bad weather; there were still a number of attendees and they managed to have some fun activities. Students are currently working to coursework deadlines, EPQs and UCAS applications. BB and CA went to SMT to meet the team.</p> <p>The Board noted that the previous officers had been looking at whether to disaffiliate from the NUS. BB and CA were unaware of this but will look into it. LKE said that she thinks that a decision had been taken by the previous officers to retain membership.</p>	
<p>10.</p> <p>10.1</p> <p>10.2</p> <p>10.2.1</p> <p>10.3</p>	<p>Report from the Personnel Sub-Committee of Remuneration (with Personnel) Committee</p> <p><i>Papers circulated: Personnel (in Remuneration & Personnel) minutes draft May 24; Capability Procedure; Family Friendly Policy 2023 small change; Pay Policy 2024; Payroll & Expenses Procedures; Probationary Period Policy & Procedures 2024; Work Experience Policy 2024</i></p> <p>LE said that the Committee considered the Gender Pay Gap Report and that CG had said that, as there is a majority of female staff in the workforce, there is inevitably a pay gap. The College is taking what steps it can to address this. The Committee also received the Trade Union Facility Time Report which is consistent over the years.</p> <p>LE said that the Committee heard that someone at a Staff Forum had suggested that there be a system for public reward of individual staff. SR said that she frequently contacts staff to congratulate them on particular achievements and often gives verbal acknowledgement at Staff Briefing. However, she is of the view that all staff work hard and it could be divisive to have individual rewards; she provides whole-staff rewards such as Christmas treats and is keen not to jeopardise the ‘team Symonds’ collegiate ethos.</p> <p>Board members gave their experience from other workplaces, some of which provide individual public reward e.g. ‘employee of the month’ and some of which do not. Suggestions included asking students to nominate teachers and making rewards very clearly linked to specific targets. There were differing views in the room as to whether such a scheme would be beneficial or could be seen as favouritism. SMT will continue to think about this.</p> <p>LKE said that the Committee had considered a number of policies.</p> <p>Questions from the Board</p>	

<p>10.3.1</p> <p>10.3.2</p> <p>10.4</p>	<p>A Board member commented that many of the policies seem generous to staff and asked if there is union input. SR said that many are based on sector practice and that, within the College, all policies relating to staff matters are discussed at the JNCC.</p> <p>A Board member queried the reference to the payment of support staff who work as Tutors and who are qualified teachers. NA said that all Tutors are paid at the Tutor rate.</p> <p>Resolved: the Board approved the Capability, Family Friendly, Pay, Payroll & Expenses, Probationary and Work Experience policies and procedures as circulated. All in favour.</p>	
<p>11.</p> <p>11.1</p> <p>11.2</p> <p>11.3</p>	<p>Report from the Search Committee <i>Papers circulated: Search Minutes draft June 24; Board and Committee dates 24-25 draft July 24; Boarding Link Governor draft after Committee 2024; Committee membership September 24; Standing Orders draft 24</i></p> <p>JT said that the Committee spent a lot of time talking about succession planning, hence the number of recommendations. Recruitment for new governors is under way, the Clerk having set up a micro-site with information for potential recruits. A panel hopes to interview four candidates during the summer and to bring recommendations to the next Board. Although there are good applicants, she encouraged members to continue to seek other applicants.</p> <p>The Committee also conducted their annual review of link and co-opted governors. They reviewed governors' attendance and propose some changes to the Standing Orders which include making clear the expectation of high levels of attendance so that the Board can benefit from the different perspectives which governors bring.</p> <p>Resolved: the Board approved:</p> <p>1) the appointment of Briannah Butler and Christopher Airiemiokhale as Student Governors to be effective from 8 July 2024 for one year (item 2 above);</p> <p>2) the appointment of Joanna Townsend as Chair of the Policy & Resources and of the Remuneration (with Personnel) Committee with effect from 1 September 2024 (ex officio as Vice Chair of Governors);</p> <p>3) the appointment of John White as Chair of the Curriculum & Quality Committee with effect from 1 September 2024;</p> <p>4) the appointment of Dave Stickland as Chair of the Audit Committee with effect from 1 October 2024;</p> <p>5) the appointment of Lucy Walsh Waring as Chair of the Search & Governance Committee with effect from 1 September 2024;</p> <p>6) the appointment of Hugh Stafford-Smith to the P&R Committee with effect from 1 September 2024;</p> <p>7) the proposed committee membership with effect from 1 September 2024;</p>	

	<p>8) the proposed meeting dates and times for 2024-25;</p> <p>9) the Standing Orders;</p> <p>10) the Boarding Link Governor role description.</p> <p>All as per the drafts circulated where appropriate. All in favour.</p>	
12.	<p>Report from the Curriculum & QA Committee</p> <p><i>Papers circulated: C & QA Minutes draft June 24; Confidential Minute C&QA 10 06 24; Curriculum Review 2024 Final; Note from Clerk on student policy changes; the following policies marked 'draft': Access to Boarding Houses; Admissions; Attendance; Bereavement; Complaints (and Annex); Course and Progression IAG; Disciplinary & Procedures – students; Fitness to Study; Freedom of Speech; Prevention of Bullying and Harassment; SEND. Coursework Charter Draft; Guidance on Searching Student Possessions and Searching Rooms in Boarding Houses Draft; Guidance on the Use of Reasonable Force and Restraint Draft; Moving and Handling of People Protocol Draft.</i></p>	
12.1	<p>The Clerk said that BN had not been at the Committee which was chaired by JW who was not at Board. CR had been due to report to Board but was unable to attend at short notice, hence the Clerk summarised the content of the meeting. The Board thanked NA for his excellent Curriculum Review paper.</p>	
12.2	<p>Resolved: the Board approved the 1) policies as listed in the Note from the Clerk and shared in the sub folder as per the copies circulated before the meeting; 2) the Curriculum Review paper. All in favour.</p>	
13.	<p>Report from the Audit Committee</p> <p><i>Papers circulated: Audit minutes draft 17 06 24; Note form Clerk re tendering for auditors</i></p>	
13.1	<p>MW said that both internal and external auditors attended the Committee. The former gave a summary of recent internal audits. All of the internal audits achieved the highest 'substantial assurance' rating and the auditors said that it is very rare for that to occur. The Committee approved the plan for the year ahead: Financial Sustainability; Cyber security; Climate Change; Talent Management. They also discussed the following year.</p>	
13.2	<p>MW said that the external auditor's work is very similar to previous years. Their emerging issues paper did not indicate any concerns of relevance to the College.</p>	
13.3	<p>MW explained that each of the auditors' initial three-year terms of appointment are up this year but the Committee recommends extending them - one to four years and the other to five years which is the maximum allowed before external audit work has to go out to tender.</p>	
13.3.1	<p>The Committee noted that it is hard to find firms to tender for this work. The Board asked whether this is a general situation i.e. not particular to this College and both MW and IK replied that it is the former.</p>	

13.4	<p>Resolved: the Board approved the appointment of 1) the internal auditors TIAA for one year, that is they will conduct the audit for 2024/25 and a retender will be necessary in spring 2025 for the audits from 2025/26 onwards; 2) the external auditors RSM for two years, that is they will conduct the audits for 2024/25 and 2025/26 and a retender will be necessary in spring or autumn 2026 for the audits from 2026/27 onwards. All in favour.</p>	
14.	<p>Report from the Policy & Resources Committee <i>Papers circulated: P&R minutes draft 24 06 24; Confidential P&R mins Jun 24; Financial Report; Three Year CFFR; Charging Policy & Procedures 25-26; AHED Fee Principles 2025-26; IT Policy draft 24; IT Security Policy draft new 24; Approval for Cleaning Contract Extension 2024-5</i></p> <p>LE invited IK to present the Finance Report.</p> <p>14.1 2023/24 Forecast Outturn Position – IK said the healthy financial position has enabled additional expenditure on IT.</p> <p>14.1.1 IK reminded the Board that he is responsible for ensuring that contracts for the provision of energy to the College are achieving best value for money. He consults with an independent expert (currently The Energy Consortium) to ensure that the best price is received. The supply contracts with EDF (Electricity) and Corona (Gas) had recently been tendered by TEC. Both came with lowest prices and will be awarded these contracts. This is not something that has to be approved by the Board, but he was sharing for information.</p> <p>14.2 CFFR – this is required by the ESFA. IK said that the cash and liquidity position is expected to stay strong and that Boarding and Catering are expected to achieve a surplus. In his opinion, the key areas of risk are the continuation of a TPS grant and the level of the pay award. He reminded the Board that SMT are keeping the AHED recovery plan under close scrutiny.</p> <p>14.3 Estates - The Wyke Lodge project is the major focus. The existing building has been demolished and foundation work has started. Grant claims have been submitted and all is progressing as expected. Fire alarms are being replaced over the summer, along with lots of small jobs.</p> <p>14.4 Cleaning contract - This has been working well and the Committee proposes a renewal for a further year. The contractor was asked to provide a quote for a three-year contract but that would be extremely expensive. This is because of unknowns such as the level of the NMW.</p> <p>14.5 Resolved: the Board on the CFFR 1) approves the 2023/24 forecast outturn and 2024/25 – 2025/26 budget forecasts with the assumptions outlined in this paper and as summarised in table 1 on page 3 for inclusion in CFFR model;</p>	

	<p>2) notes that the CFFR will be prepared on the basis of numbers outlined in this paper and it will be submitted to the ESFA before the deadline of 31 July 2024;</p> <p>3) notes the risks identified throughout this paper and as summarised in section 6;</p> <p>4) notes that the budget assumptions used in this paper will be stress tested later in the year subject to any unexpected changes between now and later in the year.</p> <p>On the Cleaning contract approves</p> <p>5) the extension of the appointment of Two Counties as our cleaning contractor for 17 cleaners for one year for cost of £277,380 (excl. VAT);</p> <p>6) the use of Two Counties for any temporary Cleaners for cover pending recruitment in house cleaners in the event of leavers among College staff;</p> <p>7) the review of this arrangement in one year.</p> <p>On Policies approves</p> <p>8) the principles governing the setting of fees for adult courses 2025/26 as per the paper circulated;</p> <p>9) the Charging Policy & Procedures as per the copy circulated;</p> <p>10) the IT Policy and IT Security Policy as per the drafts circulated.</p> <p>All in favour.</p>	
15.	<p>Risk Management</p> <p><i>Paper circulated: Annual Risk Management Report to Govs June 2024; Papers shared: Strategic Risk Register 2023-24 June review; Prevent Risk Register June 24; IT Risk Register March 2024; Minutes of the RMG May and June 2024</i></p>	
15.1	<p>NA reported on the last meeting of the RMG in June at which they looked at the PRR and SRR. There were no changes to ratings. They also considered the Annual RM Report which shows that it has been quite a 'quiet year'.</p>	
15.2	<p>The Board asked what the Alertus app is. NA explained that the College already has a system called Alertus by which certain individuals can post messages on all screens on the network in case of an emergency. IT are looking at an associated app which would enable messages also to go to those who are away from screens e.g. PE staff. It would also have the benefit of enabling communication with those who are off site, to stop them arriving into an emergency situation.</p>	
15.3	<p>The Board asked if this need had been identified during the recent drill. NA said that they had already been thinking about it. The Board asked if the app links directly to the police. It does not, but the protocol for contacting the police is in the Disaster Management Plan.</p>	
16.	<p>Report of Link Governor – Study Support</p> <p><i>Paper circulated: Report of Link Governor Study Support Jul 24</i></p>	

<p>16.1</p> <p>16.2</p> <p>16.3</p> <p>16.4</p> <p>16.5</p> <p>16.6</p>	<p>CHC said that a third of students access study support. Her report covers four key areas:</p> <p>Meetings attended – CHC said that there is a new Head who has integrated well.</p> <p>Contribution to PSC strategic priorities – CHC referred to some main aims in the College’s Annual Report to which the team contributes. She commented on the significant increase in the number of students with EHCPs in recent years, the additional resource provided to meet that need and noted the crossover with the work of other services in the College.</p> <p>Contribution to student wellbeing, retention and attainment – CHC said that this is a legal and moral imperative. She noted that, in the recent student survey, the percentage of students who said that they know where to access help had gone up.</p> <p>National updates – CHC noted that these could change with a new government.</p> <p>The main challenges are the increased numbers of students with EHCPs and managing individual exam arrangements.</p> <p>The Board thanked CHC for her comprehensive report and for her clear explanation. (CHC left the meeting.)</p>	
<p>17.</p> <p>17.1</p> <p>17.2</p> <p>17.3</p> <p>17.4</p>	<p>Report of Link Governor – AHED <i>Paper circulated: Report of AHED Link Governor July 24</i></p> <p>SB said that a key message (since he wrote his report) is the change of government which is likely to mean a lot of change in the world of HE.</p> <p>SB expressed confidence that the AHED Recovery Plan appears to be working well. The Board should also be looking for improved NSS results next time.</p> <p>The Board asked whether, at the recent AHED open event, some courses were more popular than others. SR said that in fact the event generally has low attendance and so it is not possible to extrapolate anything from that night.</p> <p>The Board thanked SB for his report.</p>	
<p>18.</p> <p>18.1</p>	<p>Health & Safety (standing item)</p> <p>IK said that there have been no RIDDOR reportable incidents and nothing else to report.</p>	
<p>19.</p> <p>19.1</p>	<p>Review of confidential minutes over past year</p> <p>The Clerk summarised the content of confidential minutes over the past year which are dated 11 July 2023, 16 October 2023, 11 December 2023, 26 February 2024 and 13 May 2024 and recommended that they remain confidential as they relate to matters of business sensitivity or an individual person. The Board agreed.</p>	

<p>20.</p> <p>20.1</p> <p>20.2</p> <p>20.3</p>	<p>Any other business</p> <p>The Awards Evening will take place on 12 September 2024. and all are invited.</p> <p>The Board thanked the Chair for her very significant contribution over many years as she leaves the Board.</p> <p>Student and Staff Governors and SMT left the meeting.</p>	
<p>21.</p> <p>21.1</p> <p>21.2</p> <p>21.3</p>	<p>Report from the Remuneration section of the Remuneration (with Personnel) Committee</p> <p><i>Papers circulated: Remuneration (in Remuneration & Personnel) minutes May 24; Capability Procedure Senior Post Holders 2024 new draft; Disciplinary Procedure Senior Post Holders 2024 draft; Grievance Procedure Senior Post Holders 2024 draft; Remuneration Policy 2024 draft</i></p> <p>LE explained that this Committee normally meets twice a year. In November it sets targets for the Principal and SMT; in May it reviews performance against targets. LE said that all targets had been met with the exception of one that had become overtaken by events due to the general election. SC was not within this process as he was new in post and was subject to a separate probationary review. LE offered any governors not on the Remuneration Committee more information on the targets.</p> <p>The Clerk explained that the Capability Procedure is new; it is based on the AoC model policy. The others have had minor changes.</p> <p>Resolved: the Board approved the Capability Procedure Senior Post Holders; Disciplinary Procedure Senior Post Holders; Grievance Procedure Senior Post Holders; Remuneration Policy 2024 as circulated. All in favour</p>	
<p>22.</p>	<p>Confidential minutes of the Board meeting on 13 May 2024 and verbal property update</p> <p>This is recorded in a separate confidential minute.</p>	
<p>23.</p>	<p>Private business</p> <p>This is recorded in a separate confidential minute.</p>	
<p>24.</p>	<p>Date of next meeting – Monday 14 October 2024 at 3 pm</p> <p>There being no other business the meeting ended at 5.40 pm</p> <p>..... Date.....</p> <p>Amanda Storey Chair of Governors</p>	