

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

**HELD ON MONDAY 9 DECEMBER 2024 at 3.00 PM**

<b>Present:</b>	Lynne Evans (Chair)	Sara Russell (Principal)
	Joanna Townsend	Alan Sydney
	John White (online)	Michael Wesley
	Onkar Chiroma	Dave Stickland
	Lucy Walsh Waring	Aman Basra
	Hugh Stafford-Smith	Khadijeh Masty
	Norman Levy	Briannah Butler
	Caroline Rand	Christopher Airiemiokhale
	Oscar Holloway	

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

Item		Action
<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies</b> – Syamantak Bhattacharya, Scott Stemp, David Williams.	
<b>1.1</b>	The Chair and Board welcomed new governors to their first meeting: Oscar Holloway, Khadijeh Masty and Aman Basra. They also said goodbye and thank you to Onkar Chiroma who was attending his last Board meeting. It had been hoped that Barry Neaves would be able to join the meeting so that the Board would be able to thank him, but this was unfortunately not possible.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes of the meeting dated 14 October 2024</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 5.7</b> NA has made a note to provide the requested information on results over time when preparing his next Headline Results report. Completed.	
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Point 16.3</b> Information about the Alertus app was sent out although SC commented that there will shortly be an upgrade so more information may follow in the new year. Completed.	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Principal’s matters</b> <i>Paper circulated: Principal’s Matters Updated for Board December 2024; the report of the recent Ofsted Inspection (October 2024) was published at 8 am on the morning of the Board meeting. SR distributed hard copies to Board members in the meeting.</i>  SR summarised the key points of the report which had been updated in the first section since the version which went to P&R.	

<p><b>4.1</b></p> <p><b>4.2</b></p> <p><b>4.3</b></p> <p><b>4.4</b></p> <p><b>4.4.1</b></p> <p><b>4.4.2</b></p> <p><b>4.4.3</b></p> <p><b>4.4.4</b></p>	<p><b>Workforce and pay update</b> – unfortunately there will be four more days of strike action. There has been no movement from the Secretary of State for Education on the lack of a funded pay award and, in answer to a question from the Board, SR explained that the request for a judicial review is pending a judge deciding whether it can proceed.</p> <p><b>ESFA College Financial Health Score</b> – this is based on what the College submits.</p> <p><b>Maths and English Condition of Funding</b> – this represents a change in government policy.</p> <p><b>Ofsted</b> – the report of the October 2024 inspection was published this morning and SR distributed hard copies to the Board. There are no recommendations in the entire report. The findings were that the College is ‘outstanding’ in all areas and it is one of only four sixth form colleges to be considered ‘strong’ in meeting skills needs. Sadly, the report can only say re safeguarding that ‘the arrangements... are effective’ but in person the inspectors said that they were very impressed by the work that LKE and her team are doing.</p> <p>On behalf of the Board, LE congratulated SMT and the whole College community on the outcome. SR had said that, in verbal feedback, one of the inspectors used the word ‘sparkling’ and indeed LE said that this is a ‘sparkling’ report which reflects the very hard work in the run up to the inspection but also throughout the years since the last inspection.</p> <p>JT, as Vice Chair who met with inspectors, confirmed SR’s report of the inspectors’ view of the work on safeguarding.</p> <p>The Board expressed their appreciation to all of the staff team for their very hard work and their congratulations on an exceptional Ofsted report.</p> <p>SR thanked the Board for their words and for the governors’ input during the process. She expressed her sincere appreciation of the work of the whole staff who supported each other throughout.</p>	
<p><b>5.</b></p> <p><b>5.1</b></p>	<p><b>Governors’ Snapshot</b> <i>Paper circulated: Governors’ Snapshot 02-12-24</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> – 16-19 enrolment was extremely close to the target. He commented that entry criteria were applied in a clearer way e.g. applicants had to achieve a minimum of two GCSE passes to join the Level 2 provision. That programme exists to prepare students who are not ready to start a Level 3 course and the application of the requirement has been very effective in ensuring enrolments by those with a reasonable prospect of progressing. There are more Level 2 students than ever and SMT are very pleased with how this is going. AHED HE enrolments have recovered from last year’s dip.</p>	

<p>5.2</p> <p>5.3</p> <p>5.4</p> <p>5.5</p>	<p><b>Table 2 Retention</b> – NA said that retention in the sector is typically c80% whereas this College achieves 90%+. He believes that the increased focus on attendance is a factor as it helps to pick up on issues before a student drops out. As well as being good for the students, this level of retention has a significant financial benefit for the College.</p> <p><b>Table 4 Student Attendance</b> – NA said that Level 2 attendance is ‘transformed’.</p> <p><b>Key Priorities 2024-25</b> – NA said that the detail of this is covered at the Curriculum &amp; Quality Committee.</p> <p>NA also said that he may remove the ‘projected surplus’ summary next time as IK covers this in detail in his Finance update.</p> <p><b>Comment from the Board</b> The Board thanked NA for his report. They find the historic data very helpful but suggested that the graphs would be clearer if lines relating to only the past few years were shown. NA to review.</p>	<p>NA</p>
<p>6.</p> <p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p> <p>6.3</p> <p>6.4</p> <p>6.5</p>	<p><b>Risk Management</b> <i>Papers shared on permanent section of Google Drive (Board/Risk Management): Draft minutes of meeting of 7 November 2024; Strategic Risk Register &amp; Board Assurance Map October review; Prevent Risk Register Oct 24; IT Risk Register Nov 24</i></p> <p>NA said that the Risk Management Group met on 7 November. They had a detailed look at the Prevent Risk Register in the light of national and local intelligence as well as the changes to the KCSIE publication which is updated every September.</p> <p>When looking at the Strategic Risk Register, the RMG noted that the government has not announced the outcome of the ‘pause and review’ process regarding the potential defunding of some qualifications. The College, and other providers, is advertising some courses without certainty as to whether they can be offered to students starting in September.</p> <p>An additional risk was added by separating out an existing one; following a couple of incidents in 2023-24, 2.2 now refers to the risk arising from a ‘Decline in quality of assessment’.</p> <p><b>Questions from the Board</b> The Board noted that, in the Audit Committee papers, there is a reference to the Risk Management Policy being due for review in 2024 but this is yet to come to the Board. NA to follow up.</p> <p>The Board noted that the numbers given to each point in the Strategic Risk Register do not match those in the Operational Plan although the two documents track each other. If this was changed, it might be easier to interpret the material. NA replied that one refers to risks that are currently being addressed whereas the other is about those which could arise. However, he will consider a system to cross-reference the two.</p>	<p>NA</p> <p>NA</p>

<p><b>7.</b></p> <p><b>7.1</b></p> <p><b>7.2</b></p> <p><b>7.3</b></p> <p><b>7.4</b></p> <p><b>7.5</b></p>	<p><b>Report from the Curriculum &amp; Quality Committee</b>  <i>Papers circulated: C&amp;QA Minutes Draft Nov 24; Confidential Minutes C&amp;QA Draft 11 11 24 (as appropriate); AHED HE Report to Governors – November 2024; Annual CP Safeguarding Report Sept 24 (as appropriate); College SAR and Devt Plan 2024 25; Operational Plan 2024 25; Results Analysis 2024 (as appropriate)</i></p> <p>JW summarised the discussion at the Committee.</p> <p><b>AHED</b> – there were few changes to the AHED report compared with last year. The NSS results are much improved, although it is important to note that only one group is part of the NSS; AHED is conducting three separate surveys of all students, with results due to come to future committees. The Board welcomed the fact that these further surveys will be conducted and the results shared.</p> <p><b>SAR and Development Plan</b> - no concerns were identified and the Committee also discussed Artsmark accreditation.</p> <p><b>Results Analysis</b> - Looking at the detailed analysis of results in the light of EDI data, JW said that there is quite a lot of variability and it is hard to see patterns. Where they do exist, the Committee was satisfied that plans are in place to address potential issues. The Committee noted that there are no subjects in the College that are in the bottom 30% nationally which is unusual. There are a few subject areas causing concern and the Committee considered them in detail, hearing about management plans.</p> <p><b>Operational Plan</b> – this was not much changed and the Committee noted that any plans for student growth were very modest and must consider the wider student experience.</p> <p>The Committee received some other reports, including confidential ones, and are able to report that they had no concerns.</p>	
<p><b>8.</b></p> <p><b>8.1</b></p> <p><b>8.2</b></p> <p><b>8.3</b></p>	<p><b>Report from the Audit Committee</b>  <i>Papers circulated: Audit Minutes Draft 181124; Audit Committee Annual Report; External audit findings report 2023; Financial statements Letter of Representation 2024; Regularity Letter of Representation 2024</i>  (HSS chaired the Committee in the absence of DS.)</p> <p><b>External audit</b> - HSS said that the effectiveness of the meeting was constrained by the fact that the RSM auditor had technical difficulties. However, RSM issued an unqualified opinion on the financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2024. They made only three comments which HSS considered ‘amazing’ and he commended IK and his team for their work. There were no issues in the ILR and just small adjustments to the balance sheet.</p> <p><b>Internal audit</b> – the current year’s Plan is on schedule.</p>	

8.4	<p>There was a report of a fraud relating to a staff member’s salary payment. It was openly declared and dealt with very quickly, with measures put in place to prevent a recurrence.</p> <p><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 2023/24 to be submitted to the ESFA; 2) for the Principal and Chair of Governors to sign the Letters of Representation 3) the Privacy Notices for Applicants, Governors, Students, Staff and Volunteers/Contractors 2024 as per the drafts circulated.</b></p>	
9.	<p><b>Report from the Policy &amp; Resources Committee</b>  <i>Papers circulated: P &amp; R Mins Draft 251124; Finance Report Nov 24; Annual Report 2023 24 v13 Board; Governor Acceptable Use Agreement Draft after Committee 2024</i></p> <p><b>9.1</b> JT said that the Committee considered the Finance Report and Annual Report. (Approval of the latter was considered under item 8 above.) She invited IK to provide a brief report on Finance and Estates.</p> <p><b>9.2</b> <b>Finance</b>  IK drew the Board’s attention to the year-end position for 2023/24 saying that he expects the final overall financial health score to move to ‘outstanding’ but this is to be confirmed.</p> <p><b>9.2.1</b> Looking at the current year, regarding the AHED Recovery Plan, IK said that the numbers are looking ‘very good’ and he expects to bring more information to the next Board. At that time, he also hopes to have more information on the government’s funding for the increase in employer National Insurance contributions.</p> <p><b>9.2.2</b> IK also said that the P&amp;R Committee had supported his recommendation for a new fix of the Barclays short term deposit of for another year. In accordance with the Financial Regulations he requested Board approval.</p> <p><b>9.3</b> <b>Estates</b>  <b>Wyke Lodge/music block</b> - IK said that some governors visited the site before the meeting. 60% of the funding has already been claimed and the forecast continues to be within the budget. He expressed gratitude to the Mercers for their generous contribution towards new pianos.</p> <p><b>9.3.1</b> <b>CIF Bid</b> - IK referred to the section ‘CIF Bid 2025/26 – Fire Doors and Electrical Works’. He had written a separate paper on this which was not ready to go out with the Board papers but was circulated to the Board seeking electronic approval by Wednesday 11 December 2025 in time for a bid to be submitted. The Clerk said that many members had already emailed to indicate their approval, but it would be helpful to confirm the resolution in the meeting.</p> <p><b>9.3.2</b> IK gave a brief update on some smaller Estates projects and on sustainability where the current buildings focus is a plan for a number of energy centres.</p>	

<p><b>9.4</b></p> <p><b>9.4.1</b></p> <p><b>9.5</b></p> <p><b>9.6</b></p> <p><b>9.7</b></p>	<p><b>Questions from the Board on Estates</b></p> <p>The Board noted that eleven claims have been submitted on the music block, commenting that this is a lot of claims and asking how many there are likely to be in total. IK said that claims have to be submitted monthly, so it will continue monthly until the end.</p> <p>The Board asked if the project is on schedule. IK said that the foundations took a little longer than expected but the job has ‘caught up’ and completion should be on time.</p> <p>JT said that, in addition to the building plans, the Committee heard about other initiatives around sustainability. SC summarised the content of the Sustainability Action Plan.</p> <p>JT also referred to the Governor Acceptable Use Agreement and urged all members to examine their practice to ensure that they comply.</p> <p><b>Resolved: the Board approved 1) the financial information for the audited 2023/24 year and for submission of Finance Record 2) the extension of the Barclays short term deposit for one year 3) the Governor Acceptable Use Agreement as per the draft circulated.</b></p>	
<p><b>10.</b></p> <p><b>10.1</b></p> <p><b>10.2</b></p> <p><b>10.3</b></p>	<p><b>Report from the Personnel Sub-Committee</b>  <i>Papers circulated: Personnel (in Remuneration &amp; Personnel) minutes Draft Dec 24; 2024 25 Staff Development Plan; 2023 24 Staff Development Report; Sickness Absence Report 2023 24; Equal Opportunities Monitoring Report (Staff) 2023 24; Staff Loans Report Nov 24</i>          (LE chaired the Personnel Sub-Committee as the date was changed due to the Ofsted inspection and JT was not available.)</p> <p>LE said that the Committee received a number of reports and mentioned some areas of interest:</p> <p><b>Staff Development Report and Plan</b> – a great deal of training has taken place and there are plans for a focus on teaching and learning in the coming year. Training is aligned to the Key Priorities of the College.</p> <p><b>Staff Absence Report</b> – 53% of staff had no sickness absence at all. A few had prolonged absence due to serious issues such as cancer and major operations. There are some staff with a pattern of short-term absence; the Personnel team will be working with departments on that. The Committee identified no areas of particular concern.</p> <p><b>EO Monitoring Report</b> – the workforce is predominantly female and older than the general working population. The percentage from ethnic minorities is improving. Overall, the profile seems quite typical of similar colleges. Quite a few staff have not recorded data, so the Personnel team will be focussing on increasing the response rate.</p>	
<p><b>11.</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendations from the Search Committee</b>  <i>Paper circulated: Recommendations to the Board from Search</i></p>	

<p><b>11.1</b></p> <p><b>11.2</b></p> <p><b>11.3</b></p>	<p>LWW said that the Committee has not met since the last Board but has discussed some issues electronically and makes a number of recommendations to the Board.</p> <p>LWW drew the attention of the Board to the fact that OC will step down as Safeguarding Link Governor as soon as possible and invited members to come forward if they might be interested in the role.</p> <p><b>Resolved: the Board approved 1) the appointment of Derek Wiles to the Board commencing 1 January 2025; 2) the appointment of Onkar Chiroma as a Co-opted Governor on the Curriculum &amp; Quality Committee (including Safeguarding Link Governor) commencing 17 December 2024; 3) the appointment of Lynne Evans for a third exceptional one-year term on the Board commencing 9 February 2025</b></p>	
<p><b>12.</b></p> <p><b>12.1</b></p> <p><b>12.2</b></p> <p><b>12.3</b></p>	<p><b>Careers Link Governor Annual Report</b> <i>Paper circulated: Careers Link Governor Report Sept 24</i></p> <p>JT gave her final report as Careers Link Governor. She highlighted the very large number of students seen by the Careers team. She also drew the Board's attention to the success of the SUN Scheme, saying that sadly it is now receiving less government support.</p> <p>JT encouraged governors to attend Careers events such as the Careers Day (on line) and Progression Fair (on site). She described some very interesting activities which she has observed and also explained that there is a new event this year which has a SEND focus.</p> <p>JT thanked governors who provided practice Oxbridge interviews and also encouraged them to think about whether they can offer work experience opportunities, even if they are very short.</p>	
<p><b>13.</b></p> <p><b>13.1</b></p> <p><b>13.2</b></p>	<p><b>Safeguarding Link Governor Annual Report</b> <i>Paper circulated: Safeguarding Link Governor Safeguarding &amp; Prevent Report Oct 24</i></p> <p>OC said that many points relating to Safeguarding have been covered in earlier agenda items. He said that SMT should be proud of the amount of work that has gone into this area e.g. regarding filtering and monitoring. It is OC's view that the College could already achieve cyber accreditation in this regard should they apply for it. He praised LKE for her work and echoed the view expressed in item 4.4 above that it is a shame that the Ofsted Report does not cover this area in more detail.</p> <p>In response to a question from the Board, OC explained that a MDM allows an organisation to keep track of devices used off site and reported that the College now has one in place.</p>	
<p><b>14.</b></p>	<p><b>Equality Analysis &amp; EDI Report</b> <i>Paper circulated: Equality Analysis &amp; EDI Report 2025</i></p>	

<p><b>14.1</b></p> <p><b>14.2</b></p> <p><b>14.3</b></p> <p><b>14.4</b></p> <p><b>14.5</b></p> <p><b>14.6</b></p>	<p>LKE reminded the Board that this report must be published in January each year, saying that the Board has seen much of the content in other reports. She drew their attention to key sections.</p> <p>The Board asked how the College works to ensure that staff feel included when they take up employment. SMT referred to the induction programme and to the ongoing programme of staff forums. They said that there is no survey of staff soon after joining that looks specifically at inclusivity although there has been an EDI survey which provided useful information. SMT also engages the BLG to conduct interviews with black staff on their experience.</p> <p>Across the College, physical access and disability issues appear to have been a bit of a gap and this will be a focus ongoing. There is also going to be work on optics and messaging which SMT hope will positively impact how both staff and students feel about being at the College.</p> <p>SR said that the Mercers are now talking to the BLG following SR sharing information about work in the College.</p> <p>A governor said that they had attended one of the BLG workshops: ‘The Anti-Racist Governor’ and she highly recommends them. The Clerk has previously shared information about those workshops and can do so again on request.</p> <p>LKE said that the College is hosting an ‘equity exchange’ in collaboration with the AoC, involving visitors from other colleges.</p>	
<p><b>15.</b></p> <p><b>15.1</b></p> <p><b>15.2</b></p> <p><b>15.3</b></p>	<p><b>Update on lunch with students and general student update</b></p> <p>HSS, NL and the Clerk attended a lunch with student representatives immediately before the meeting. HSS said that the students had raised the question of facilities, particularly social spaces. They said that there aren’t enough places to go, especially when it is raining, although they reported that they had recently realised that they are allowed to go into classrooms between lessons.</p> <p>The students also reported that there have been very positive developments in communication between students, including strong leadership in the Student Parliament.</p> <p>BB agreed that social and study space is a topic which students raise. She updated the Board on some other initiatives the SU is working on: sourcing vape bins to enable recycling; murals using carbon capture algae paint; plans for the Prom which will be at the University of Winchester.</p>	
<p><b>16.</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>17.</b></p> <p><b>17.1</b></p> <p><b>17.2</b></p>	<p><b>Confirmation of Written Resolutions by the Board to approve Prevent Policy &amp; Procedures with effect from 18 October 2024</b>  <i>Papers circulated: Written resolution Prevent Procedures etc Oct 24; Prevent Policy and Procedures incl Quiet Room Guidance</i></p> <p>The Clerk referred to the paper confirming the written resolution approved by the Board electronically since the last Board meeting on 14 October 2024 in relation to Prevent.</p> <p><b>The Board approved: the Prevent Policy and Procedures with effect from 18 October 2024 as per the copy circulated.</b></p>	
<p><b>18.</b></p> <p><b>18.1</b></p> <p><b>18.2</b></p> <p><b>18.3</b></p>	<p><b>Any other business</b></p> <p>The Clerk thanked the Board for their attendance at events this term, including those who conducted practice Oxbridge interviews.</p> <p>The Principal informed the Board of the death of Mike Vokes who was a Trustee and previously a governor. He was a great supporter of Peter Symonds College and will be greatly missed.</p> <p>(Staff and Student Governors left the meeting.)</p> <p>There was a further item which is recorded in a separate, confidential, minute.</p>	
<p><b>19.</b></p>	<p><b>Report from the Remuneration Committee</b>  <i>Papers circulated as appropriate: Remuneration (in Remuneration &amp; Personnel) minutes draft Dec 24; Remuneration Committee Annual Report 2023 24 Draft v2</i></p> <p>This is recorded as a separate confidential minute.</p>	
<p><b>20.</b></p>	<p><b>Private business</b>  This is recorded in a separate confidential minute.</p>	
<p><b>21.</b></p>	<p><b>Date of next meeting – Monday 24 February 2024 at 3 pm</b>  There being no other business the meeting ended at 5.50 pm</p>	