

Governing Body

Minutes of the meeting held virtually at 3.30pm on 09 July 2020

Present:

E D'Souza (Chair)	K Points
C Higgins (Vice Chair)	D Wildridge
S Daley (Vice Chair)	E Lawrence
S Clarke	N Savvas Principal/CEO
J Wakelam	J Gazzard
A Maltpress	

In Attendance:

- S Jones, Vice Principal Finance and Resources
- L Moody, Vice Principal Employer Engagement (part)
- C Shaw, Vice Principal Quality and Student Experience (part)
- C Meredith, Executive Dean (part)
- J Raffel, Group Director Finance
- S Graham, Group Director of HR
- S Gales, PA to the Principal/CEO
- T Elkin, Clerk

Apologies: There were apologies from Daniel Jugg

Observer: R Inman

No interests relevant to items on the agenda were declared by members.

1 Apologies for Absence

There were apologies from the Student governor.

2 Proposal to appoint a Clerk

Trustees agreed to a proposal to engage T Elkin for a period of 12 months as the Clerk. This was **agreed**. Proposed by CHiggins and seconded by SDaley.

3 Minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2020

The minutes (minute book pages 1378) were **agreed** as a correct record, SClarke proposed and KPoints seconded.

4 Matters Arising from the meeting held on 27 March 2020

The matters arising from the meeting (minute book page 1379) were summarised in the report and all actions reported had been completed, or where appropriate an update had been provided on progress elsewhere on the agenda.

5 Proposal to establish a Higher Education Curriculum and Quality Committee

Governors received and considered the report. CHiggins provided an overview – he expressed a concern that Higher Education (HE) becomes submerged into the Standards and Excellence committee that deals with Ofsted and supports the model of a separate HE that is regulated by the office for students and QAA. CMeredith has drafted a paper that has CHiggin's support.

CMeredith noted that with greater oversight, HE provision could be extended and strengthened, also need increased specialist support and advice for HE. Will look to revise and reform the committees that would feed into this.

The proposal was **agreed** and proposed by CHiggins and seconded by JWakelam.

Action

6 Committee Chairs' Summary Reports**6.1 Finance Overview**

Governors received and considered the report. SClarke advised that good progress is being made in difficult circumstances. There is excellent financial monitoring and control by SJones and his team, expecting deficit of £48k. It's now projected that there will be a 'zero' situation by the end of the year but warned governors to be prepared for a small deficit – but still a brilliant result. The ESFA have confirmed that they regard our financial status as outstanding, which is an endorsement of the work that is being done.

The College was expecting to be able to pay a 1% pay award to staff, but the projected deficit of the £48k did not include this payment – therefore it will not be awarded. Governors were disappointed but accepted the rationale. SJones confirmed that with finer tuned forecasting, that unless there is a crisis, then there will be a surplus for the year and can afford a non-consolidated bonus to staff. Confident to deliver a five-figure surplus. No other FE (Further Education) College in the region is expecting to make a surplus this year.

SClarke stated, this is brilliant news and even better for staff. NSavvas confirmed that it will be approx. £200 per staff member.

CHiggins endorsed making the payment and staff deserve this and questioned whether governors could authorise it in this meeting. It's in budget and will be a decision of the Executive. SHoward noted that this is a positive message and a strong position going forward. AMaltpress confirmed that he was delighted with the small bonus and more delighted that it is a lump sum as it's the lower paid who are suffering.

SClarke shared a request from RStevenson regarding the on-going use of The Gateway by Abbeygate Sixth Form College. An authorised expenditure of £165K for IT equipment is required to enable Abbeygate to continue to use the Gateway. The Finance committee has reviewed it and recommended it to the Corporation. ED'Souza used his Chair's powers to authorise due to the immediacy.

The DfE have to continue the lease agreement with a rent of £500k and if Abbeygate did not need it for all that time, the College will negotiate a percentage. NSavvas updated, Abbeygate will not have to pay this, it's from an extra budget from the DfE, negotiating with project management for the Eastern region. CShaw will lead the negotiation on behalf of West Suffolk College with other Executive colleagues to determine the best possible amount from the DfE.

CShaw

SClarke advised that the equipment will be used by the college long-term.

ED'Souza noted that this a remarkable achievement in terms of finance and budget control and well done to the team. JWakelam agreed.

6.1.1 Budget 2020/2021 Financial Forecast 2020/2023

Governors received and considered the report. SClarke advised that the revenue budget, capital budget, capital objective and future years budget have been reviewed.

HE income has been under pressure and given circumstances, will continue to be under pressure. Apprenticeship income is likely to be under pressure next year. These are two key areas of focus. The Executive team has generated prudent assumptions.

Surplus for next year, forecast as £200k, against a turnover of £33million.

SClarke was happy to present the budget, as shared with Governors.

SHoward asked if there was any impact on the latest programme from the Chancellor that will help. LMoody informed governors that the budget is being reviewed and are expecting more detail next week. There have been six calls today from employers who will go ahead

with apprenticeships. There is a new partnership with the Flagship group who have agreed to sponsor a level 2 study programme and guaranteed to run new traineeship programmes. They will write to their tenants to highlight West Suffolk College (WSC) training and courses. LMoody summarised other interest in the community, WSC will maximise all opportunities.

NSavvas added that Gavin Williamson has set out the government vision for Further Education, today, to deliver the skills that the country needs. Governors discussed further.

The proposed income and expenditure budget and forecast were **agreed**. SClarke proposed and CHiggins seconded.

Capital budget - £1.8m, half was in relation to the condition works, as a result of the survey and the other half from operation planning process. The capital budget was **agreed** proposed by SClarke and seconded by SDaley.

SClarke referred governors to the report (page 19): Financial objectives for next year and highlighted change to the second objective where wording has changed. This was **agreed**, SClarke proposed and CHiggins seconded.

6.1.2 SLA's with SAT

SClarke highlighted three SLA's (Service Level Agreements) The CEO and CFO SLA, the Support Services SLA and the Lease Agreement with SAT for part of the Gateway building were **agreed**, JWakelam proposed and KPoints seconded.

6.1.3 Lease Agreement with SAT

Lease agreement SLA: RStevenson outlined the details of the SLA. The DfE have not given notice on the lease for the Gateway. SAT have requested an extension therefore rent is due for the second period of 12 months. The DfE is more confident that they can move Abbeygate into the new building in September. This will be subject to negotiation between CShaw and the DfE but expectation is that part of the rent will be repaid.

SClarke asked if they have to give us 3 months' notice. RStevenson confirmed that this is the case, but has not yet been done and therefore has rolled into the second year, RStevenson outlined the consequences of giving and not giving notice to WSC.

The lease agreement was **agreed**, SClarke proposed and was seconded by AMaltpress.

6.2 Standards and Excellence Overview

Predictions are strong and a huge amount of work has been done by everyone in sending data to awarding bodies. Curriculum areas that have been monitored have improved, some have moved from Grade 4 to Grade 1.

CShaw outlined the areas that have improved. Lots of achievements were made before lockdown, therefore there were no grade inflations. Well done to teams across the college.

6.2.1 2019/20 Quality Improvement Plan Update

SDaley confirmed that the College has delivered under difficult circumstances, the staff team has done more than was expected, therefore well prepared for Ofsted.

6.3 Audit and Risk Management Overview

Governors received and considered the report. JGazzard noted that issues are being addressed by senior management and the committees are content with how these are being acted upon. JGazzard commended the responses around GDPR as very well managed.

The external audit plan was received by the committee.

There are plans for consideration of the internal audit plan given Covid-19. Will be reviewed via the Risk Register at the next meeting of the committee. The Risk Management Procedure was **agreed**, JWakelam proposed and SClarke approved.

The Committee recommended that the internal auditors (Scrutton-Bland) are re-appointed: they are sound and thoughtful. This was **agreed**, proposed by JGazzard and seconded by JWakelam.

The committee are content with the provision of external auditors, RSM. This was **agreed**, JGazzard proposed and JWakelam seconded.

6.4 Property Overview

Governors received and considered the report. DWildridge provided a summary. It has been decided to move HE to the STEM centre and believe that it's possible to do this within the budget. The Sustainability and Environmental policy was noted by RStevenson. Has been amended and approved by the committee.

JWakelam thanked RStevenson and governors for their support. CHiggins recommended that the policy needs to go further. This was **agreed**, proposed by JWakelam and seconded by SDaley.

SClarke noted that the property committee agreed to recommend the Property Strategy to the Corporation Board by email. The paper to be circulated to governors for approval by the end of the summer break. To be circulated by the Clerk.

Clerk

6.5 Safeguarding Board Overview

KPoints will re-present the Policy back in the autumn term with updates. There has been a focus on supporting vulnerable students during lockdown and expressed thanks to the teams who have contacted students during lockdown.

K Points

NSavvas advised that an Ofsted inspection is due in September and their first focus will be safeguarding. CShaw and the Clerk will check that governors are up to date with any mandatory safeguarding training. Clerk to chase all governors with CShaw.

Clerk
C Shaw

The Safeguarding policy was **agreed**, KPoints proposed and JWakelam seconded.

6.6 Health and Safety Overview

AMaltpress noted that the team have done immensely well during the Covid-19 crisis and recommended the policy. RStevenson noted that there have been some Health & Safety audits and provided an update.

The policy was **agreed**, AMaltpress proposed and KPoints seconded.

6.7 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Overview

KPoints confirmed that workforce data has been reviewed which has been helpful, there are no concerns to report. It was noted that the meeting took place before Black Lives Matter, but they may be reviewed at a future meeting.

The policy was **agreed**, KPoints proposed and AMaltpress seconded.

7 Strategic Matters

7.1 CEO's Briefing

NSavvas outlined the differentiation between Sixth Form, Adult training and upskilling, Apprenticeships and Higher Education as the four distinct areas of provision. CMeredith outlined the focus on HE and is developing a five-year plan before creating a ten-year plan; student voice will be put at the heart of what we do.

LMoody summarised; things just keep getting better. Adult teams, all have had Grade 1 SARS. There has been positive success on adult learning, the teams have been incredible.

CShaw noted that the Sixth Form have been engaging incredibly well. Wraparound services have worked well, to ensure that students are safe. JWakelam and SDaley heard the passion and enthusiasm at the SAR.

JWakelam added that the student welfare at the college has been amazing during the Covid-19 crisis, staff have been outstanding throughout. SDaley added that it's been planned and delivered with real team work to ensure that wraparound support has helped staff as well as students.

NSavvas explained the escalator model, when support is also extended to other local schools. CHiggins proposed sending a letter to every staff member from the Chair, thanking them for their dedication in the difficult Covid-19 situation. LMoody noted that it will have a very positive effect. Staff have also worked the local communities and charities. ED'Souza agreed to action.

E D'Souza

7.2 Update on Multi Academy Trust (SAT and SENDAT)

NSavvas - SAT is doing well in terms of quality and financially. Abbeygate should be in a new building by the end of August. One has had a change of the senior leaders and staff are working well with the students and collaborating closely with Abbeygate and WSC Sixth Form, all to the benefit of post 16 education in the county.

SENDAT - NSavvas is very proud of the work they are doing. Growing in stature and it has picked up more SEN providers. They are doing exceptional work. AMaltpress agreed and noted that the facilities are fabulous for young people with special needs.

8. Governance

8.1 Training, development and Governor Link and Representative activities

JWakelam updated governors on the SAR meeting; it was really heartening. JWakelam recommended that link governors attend as it helps understand the day to day work.

SDaley attended four SAR meetings including Art and Design, it was fantastic, the enthusiasms of some of the teams was fantastic.

ED'Souza advised that he has had a one to one with the FE Commissioner and is aware of the outcomes of the lockdown. The College is responsible for one third of the 16-18-year olds' education in Suffolk and it's a great story, but its due to everyone's hard work.

The Clerk advised on the following points from the Appointments and Governance Committee: DWildridge will have served ten years at the end of July 2021 and therefore is not eligible for re-appointment; SClarke and AMaltpress will have both served seven years by the end of this year and are eligible to continue to 2022; JGazzard, JBloomfield and NRoberts will each have served three years and HNYdam, six years by the end of this year and the committee agreed that they can be re-appointed; PHickman has been elected as Staff Governor; the term of office and standing process for Student Governors will be reviewed at the next committee meeting and it was agreed that the two existing student governors will continue until the next election, December 2020.

9 Any Other Business

There was no other business declared.

Note: at 5.47pm, LMoody, CShaw and CMeredith left the meeting.

Note: items Agenda 10-12 are confidential and minuted separately.

Date of next meeting:

- Friday 11 December at 3.30pm.

The meeting closed at 6.03pm