

Minutes of the hybrid Corporation meeting held on 9 July 2021 at 2pm

Present physically:	C Higgins, Vice Chair E D'Souza, Chair E Lawrence, HE Student governor	J Wakelam N Savvas, CEO S Clarke
Present virtually:	S Daley, Vice Chair	S Howard
In Attendance:	C Meredith, Executive Dean for Higher Education C Shaw, Principal – Sixth Form Provision L Moody, Vice Principal Employer Engagement R Stevenson, Group Operations Director S Graham, Group HR Director S Gales, Board Secretary S Jones, Vice Principal Finance and Resources A Maltpress, Observer K Points, Observer	
Apologies:	None	
Absent:	D Jugg, FE Student governor J Gazzard P Hickman, Staff governor T Elkin, Clerk	

AMaltpress, CHiggins, ED'Souza, JWakelam, KPoints, NSavvas, SClarke and SDaley declared their roles as Trustees of Suffolk Academies Trust.

No other interests relevant to the agenda were declared by members.

- Apologies for Absence**
Apologies for absence were received from J Gazzard and T Elkin. The Corporation noted the absence of D Jugg and P Hickman.
- Minutes of the meetings held on 25 March 2021**
The minutes from the meeting on 25 March 2021 were **agreed** as an accurate record of the meeting.
- Matters arising from the meetings held on 25 March 2021**
The matters arising from the meeting were summarised in the report and all actions reported had been completed, or where ongoing the update captured elsewhere on the agenda.
- CEO's Briefing**
The Corporation received and reviewed the report outlining the work this term including an update on the sixth form provision as well as the employer engagement, university studies and escalator provision; including the awards won, projects developed and areas of innovative practice as well as a brief events, media and digital update.

NSavvas summarised the feedback from TElkin:

"As my tenure of supporting as a clerk for SAT and WSC now comes to an end [...] I feel privileged to have been a small part of your progress in the last academic year. To see what you have all managed in the climate in which we've lived through, has been extraordinary. [...] The support you've received from Trustees and Governors appears to be never ending and dedicated, I've not witnessed such in the majority of schools that I work with, But, the dedication you have all shown as a cohesive team to continue to provide ever improving education and opportunities in challenging times must be recognised."

Action

NSavvas commended the team for their outstanding leadership during an unprecedented year due to the pandemic, where the College had to rapidly adjust to respond to government guidance, implement Covid-19 mitigation measures, transition to remote working and learning and establish ways to continue to support and engage students, and to continue with assessments in a virtual environment. NSavvas noted that our Group structure, with dedicated teams for each function led by highly-qualified experts, has been of huge value to the College as it created the capacity to deal with the changes without adversely affecting teaching and learning or our ability to support the community we serve. NSavvas noted that despite the year of changes, teams have been sharing best practice across all areas to continue to improve the quality of provision and student experience, and to create new opportunities for our students and staff. NSavvas commended every part of the College for an exceptional year, where we managed to balance the finances, expand our provision, open a new sixth form building, support the welfare of students and staff, create and implement the Teacher Assessed Grading process and start work to tackle big societal issues such as decolonising the curriculum and to address unconscious bias.

Governors commended the Executive and all the staff for their outstanding work and contribution throughout the year to deliver outstanding teaching and learning, improve quality, balance the finances and provide extensive wrap-around support for students, staff and our community in an unprecedented year.

5 Committee Chairs' Summary Reports:

5.1 FE Standards and Excellence Overview

The Corporation received the minutes of the Committee and a summary of the performance:

- Overall student attendance is 89% for 16-18 and 93% for 19+.
- Retention remains strong at 95% for 16-18 and 96% for 19+.
- Apprenticeship performance remains strong with a predicted planned achievement rate of 73% (compared to a NR of 67%).
- Assessment progress is strong in a high majority of areas and progress is either on or ahead of target with students being supported to catch up where appropriate.
- Current classroom-based forecast achievement (exc. English and maths) is 93% for 16-18 (a 2% increase on last year) and is 96% for 19+ (a 10% increase on last year).
- The quality team created a robust quality assurance process to standardise the approach for awarding Teacher Assessed Grades [TAGs], and effectively trained staff to implement the process and have undertaken extensive sampling to validate the TAGs.
- There has been significant progress against the QIP including work to prepare for Ofsted, robust quality assurance and quality improvement activity, development of digital learning resources, bespoke CPL to support Teaching Learning and Assessment, a broad range of activities to highlight and embed Fundamental British Values and equality, diversity, and inclusion within the curriculum inc. embedding Black History throughout the curriculum scheme of work, and analysis of the results of student surveys.

SDaley summarised that throughout the year standards remain very high with excellent results, outstanding innovative practice and very strong parent and student survey results. SDaley noted that maths and English achievement remains a concern which the team are proactively supporting, and the Committee is monitoring. CShaw noted, that Functional Skills maths and English students continued to sit exams which differed to GCSE maths and English students and added extra pressure to these students, and added that whilst our maths Functional Skills results are a concern, our English Functional Skills results are significantly above NR which is a great achievement.

CShaw also shared the feedback from the Ofsted Intelligence Gathering visit which was very positive.

SDaley, on behalf of the Standards and Excellence Committee, thanked CShaw and executive team for their exemplary work for the Committee.

5.2 HE Educational Excellence Overview

The Corporation received the minutes of the Committee and a summary of the performance:

- Applications, though significantly below the 2020/21 target, are higher than last year despite a reduced course offer (circa -40% compared to last year) and include a greater proportion of students progressing from Level 3 courses across the Group (WSC, ASFC and OSFC)
- Accepted offers are higher than last year, with a strong conversion rate
- Average Tariff Entry is strong and is above the 2020/21 target
- Retention is strong and is above the 2020/21 target
- The Committee reviewed and endorsed US's Data, Registry & Compliance committee terms of reference, approved US's Student Communications Policy, discussed US's plans to further support students and to formalise US's student voice and to reform class representatives into a Student Council.
- Discussed an early draft proposal for a strategic framework for higher education
- Agreed to a further discussion on proposals for additional members of the committee

CHiggins noted that this has been a year of great change, with a new senior team, new building and branding, new courses, new data management systems and processes and a new validation partner, as well as additional regulations from the Office for Students and the pandemic resulting in a shift to remote delivery and enrolment.

CMeredith added that the support and engagement of the students, with the support of ELawrence, has been invaluable. ELawrence added that students have feedback to her their appreciation of CMeredith and the team for their open-door policy and their proactive inclusion/prioritisation of student voice.

CHiggins shared that in June the College received written confirmation from the Secretary of State that University Studies is formally able to use the protected term 'University' in its business name.

5.2.1 Enrolment targets in the context of validation agreement targets

The Corporation received and considered a paper outlining the enrolment targets in our validation agreement with UEA and our current and anticipated enrolment figures.

5.3 Safeguarding Overview

The Corporation received the minutes of the executive Board and a summary of the performance in the Autumn and Spring term:

- Welfare Officers saw 1,232 students (compared with 1,214 last year)
- The Counselling team assessed 88 students (compared with 126 last year)
- The Personal Support Tutors saw 922 students (compared with 996 for last year)
- Welfare Officers made 12 multi-agency referrals to Social Care Services
- 1 vulnerable adult referral was made to Suffolk County Council
- No further PREVENT referrals were made in the Spring term
- We have 43 Children in Care from 7 different Local Authorities, 5 children 17yr+ have been placed into care since Easter, which is unusual
- We have 28 self-identified Young Adult Carers. 1 staff LADO referral was made in the Spring term with no further actions required

JWakelam added that SLNeesam is leading the way in regards to the issues raised in Ofsted's 'findings and recommendations on sexual harassment and sexual violence, including online sexual abuse', in order to ensure we have the appropriate support, training and reporting systems in place.

CShaw commended the student support team for their extensive work with students, and the foresight of Governors to allocate resources to fund the student support services.

AMaltpress queried if County Lines activity is still a concern in the region. JWakelam confirmed that, through proactive policing, there has been a significant reduction in County Lines activity – down to 3 active lines. JWakelam added that a greater risk is the rise in extremism.

ED'Souza shared news about Colchester Grammar School, where Ofsted found significant evidence of systemic peer-on-peer abuse; and added this is a key area we need to be vigilant

about. CShaw noted that, across the Group, we are reviewing our systems to identify and safeguard against peer-on-peer abuse to ensure this is really robust.

5.4 Equality Overview

The Corporation received the minutes of the executive Board and a summary of the performance in the Autumn and Spring term:

- There has been a general improvement in retention and achievement rates across the Apprenticeship provision for Gender, Age Learning Difficulty/Disability, Ethnicity, High Needs and Bursary
- All withdrawals have been fully investigated and there are no concerning trends
- The EDI team have run multiple activities to embed black history into the curriculum, LGBTQ events and events in support of Mental Health Awareness Week

JWakelam commended the work of the Committee and of Elisha Soames for their outstanding work to proactively tackle issues around EDI.

Governors queried if the proactive EDI work has extended to our 19+ provision. NSavvas answered that it does, and it is the next phase of our Group working.

NSavvas and ED'Souza feedback that the College is being recognised as the national leader for EDI work.

5.5 Health and Safety Overview

The Corporation received the minutes of the executive Committee and a paper summarising the accidents, incidents, RIDDOR, fire and first aid data and the College's Covid-19 response. CHiggins commended the work of the health and safety team in keeping the sites safe throughout the pandemic.

Governors queried the progress on addressing the remedial works identified within the fire audit. RStevenson answered that the team are working through the remedial works in priority order.

Governors queried the instances of behavioural and physical assaults within the report, and whether they have increased. CShaw and RStevenson answered that this includes both physical altercations and self-harm, and that the Health and Safety teams work closely with the Student Support teams to not just log these instances but to also follow up on these instances appropriately.

RStevenson gave an overview on the development of the health and safety team, to create a highly effective Group function, and summarised the work to prepare for September and have prepared a draft outbreak plan (based on the current Covid-19 guidance).

5.6 Property Overview

The Corporation received the minutes of the Committee and a summary update of the discussions at the Committee.

CHiggins and the Governors thanked the estates team for their outstanding work maintaining the estate throughout the pandemic; and for their proactive pursuit of additional funding pots to develop the estate in line with the Property Strategy.

5.6.1 Property Strategy

Governors received and reviewed the updated Property Strategy which had been recommended by the Committee; and **unanimously approved** the Property Strategy.

RStevenson summarised the planned summer works and room moves, including plans to upgrade the wi-fi and to address the sinkhole which has developed outside Suffolk House. RStevenson also summarised the bids which the College has applied for that we are awaiting to hear the outcome of, as well as the progress of bids we have been successful in funding and their work completion.

5.7 Audit Overview

The Corporation received the minutes of the Committee and a paper summarising the items discussed by the Committee.

- The risk register has **1 red**, **4 amber**, **22 yellow** and **13 green** status risks, with two new risks: one relating to ability to grow within resources capacity and one relating to risk of loss of systems due to malicious activity.
- Good progress has been made against the GDPR Compliance Action Plan, with one action remaining which is in progress.
- In 2020/21 there were 14 GDPR breaches, of which one was reportable to the ICO, and where breaches have occurred appropriate training and/or processes has been implemented.
- There have been no Subject Access Requests.
- Most of the internal audit work from 2020/21 has been completed, with a few audits still in progress.
- The Committee approved both the internal and external auditors' 2021/22 audit plans.

SJones noted that there are some new elements to the external audit process introduced by the ESFA in relation to Funding Agency income, which applies to all FE Colleges; and for the external auditors to present their findings to the entire Corporation, as opposed to just the Audit and Risk Management Committee. So, we plan to effectively accommodate this requirement by inviting the Corporation to the first part of the November meeting of the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

SGraham noted that DCook is working to further develop staff awareness of GDPR and reporting of breaches.

JWakelam, on behalf of the Audit and Risk Management Committee, thanked SJones for his exemplary work for the Committee.

5.8 Finance Overview

The Corporation received the Finance and KPI reports of the Finance Committee and SClarke summarised the discussions at the last Committee meeting. SClarke noted that the latest forecast position is circa £800k surplus, which is a tremendous accomplishment in such an unprecedented year of financial uncertainty.

5.8.1 Budget 2021/22 and Financial Forecast 2021/24

The Corporation received and reviewed the updated Budget and 3-year Financial Forecast. Governors discussed that the 3-year financial forecast which includes a significant amount of proposed capital expenditure to reinvest in the estates. The Corporation **unanimously approved** the Budget and Financial Forecast.

Financial Regulations

The Corporation considered and **unanimously approved** the College's Financial Regulations, subject to updates to the Governance section to reflect the governance structure for 2021/22 as *discussed in Agenda item 7*.

LIBOR Termination and Transition proposal

The Corporation discussed the proposal and having considered the documentation in this regard, the Corporation **unanimously approved** the Transition proposals outlined in the documentation, replacing LIBOR with other rates as set out in the Transition agreements that were circulated with the papers. The Corporation further **authorised** the following signatories, Elton D'Souza (as Chair of the Corporation) and Steve Clarke (as Chair of the Finance Committee) to sign the necessary certificates and Transition Agreements on behalf of West Suffolk College.

Financial Objectives

The Corporation considered and **unanimously approved** the College's Financial Objectives.

SClarke, on behalf of the Finance Committee, thanked SJones for his exemplary work over the years and on behalf of the Committee.

ED'Souza
SClarke

6 Strategic matters**6.1 Update on Multi Academy Trusts (SAT and SENDAT)**

The Corporation received a paper with an update on both SAT and SENDATs performance this term. The SAT report included the progress of best practice sharing groups and shared services, student awards, enrichment activities for students, promotional events and media presence. The SENDAT report included an update on the new Free School, recent Ofsted inspection, their specialist units and specialist training undertaken.

NSavvas noted that this has been a year of great change with a new senior team, new Group roles and Group processes and a new building (ASFC). Much work has been done to create a culture of collaboration and best practice sharing. Due to under-recruitment of students at ASFC, SAT has strategically expanded Group working with the College to continue to support students and balance the finances, whilst strengthening the expertise of teams in order to support future growth. Like the College, the SAT has had to respond to the changing Covid-19 guidance, shift to remote delivery and working, and put in measures to support students throughout the pandemic.

SClarke also noted that the Finance Committee had reviewed a detailed Value For Money (VFM) analysis report, identifying the financial qualitative and strategic benefits of working with SAT; and were assured that our strategic alignment with SAT continues to be highly beneficial to both WSC and SAT.

SHoward left the meeting at 4.09pm

AMaltpress noted that SENDAT now consists of 4 significant schools and Priory School has maintained its Outstanding rating by Ofsted. SENDAT continues to grow and is successful and 2 of its students have recently received a Duke of Edinburgh Gold Award.

Governors agreed it would be beneficial for the College to work even closer with SENDAT. CShaw noted that he is working closely with SENDAT to achieve this.

6.2 Gender Pay Gap Report

The Corporation received and considered the Gender Pay Gap report based on data analysed on 31 March 2021. SGraham summarised the report and noted that the mean pay gap is 8.85% (compared to 25% in the education sector nationally).

SGraham noted that pay gap data is skewed by there being more females in each band and the roles in which men and women work/the salaries that these roles attract (e.g. Teaching staff earn more than support staff and support staff roles offer more flexible employment terms which are often more desirable to females).

The Corporation discussed the data and how the College could best promote gender neutral progression and ambition, in all pay scales.

The Corporation **unanimously approved** the Gender Pay Gap report for submission.

7 Governance**Review of Governance Arrangements for 2020/21****7.1 Summary of training undertaken**

The Corporation received a paper outlining the training undertaken by Governors in 2020/21, in addition to their mandatory training modules.

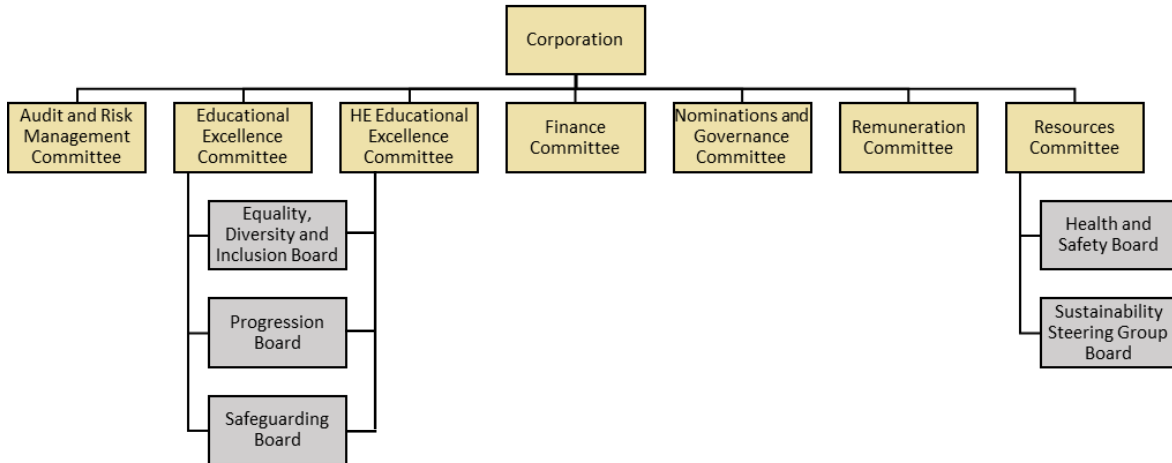
7.2 Results of the meeting preference and feedback survey

The Corporation received the anonymised meeting preference survey results from Governors and noted the preference to keep a virtual attendance option and **agreed** to run hybrid Corporation and Committee meetings for 2021/22 (with options for both physical and virtual attendance); except for the Strategic Conference which will be physical attendance only.

Review of Governance Arrangements for 2021/22**7.3 Governance and Committee Structure inc. Terms of Reference and Committee Skillsets**

The Corporation received and considered a paper outlining the changes proposed to the current Governance and Committee structure including draft terms of reference for the proposed committees. The Corporation **unanimously agreed** to:

- wind down the Appointments and Governance Committee and establish a Nominations and Governance Committee
- wind down the Standards and Excellence Committee and establish an Educational Excellence Committee
- wind down the Property Committee and establish a Resources Committee
- establish Executive Boards, with Governors leads, which report into the Committees to create the following Governance structure (Yellow = governance committee reporting to the Corporation, Grey = executive board reporting to the governance committee).



7.4 Membership inc. appointment of Chairs and Vice Chairs

The Corporation received and considered a paper outlining the proposed membership of the 2021/22 Committee structure. The Corporation **unanimously agreed** with the proposed membership and, for 2021/22, appointed:

ED’Souza, CHiggins and SDaley left the meeting while the Corporation discussed the appointment of Chair and Vice Chair and re-joined the meeting once the Corporation had reached verdict.

- Corporation: Elton D’Souza as Chair, and Chris Higgins and Sue Daley as co Vice Chairs
- Audit and Risk Management Committee: Jim Gazzard as Chair, and Julia Wakelam as Vice-Chair.
- Educational Excellence Committee: Sue Daley as Chair, and Julia Wakelam as Vice-Chair.
- Finance Committee: Steve Clarke as Chair, and Chris Higgins as Vice-Chair.
- HE Educational Excellence Committee: Chris Higgins as Chair, and Jim Gazzard as Vice-Chair
- Nominations and Governance Committee: Elton D’Souza as Chair, and Chris Higgins as Vice-Chair.
- Remuneration Committee: Sarah Howard as Chair, and Sue Daley as Vice-Chair.
- Resources Committee: Chris Higgins as Chair, and Steve Clarke as Vice-Chair.

It was noted that the term of office of Steve Clarke is due to expire on 13 December 2021. It was noted that Steve Clarke had an excellent attendance record over the years, and had contributed greatly to the work of the College by bringing a number of valuable skills to his role. It was further noted that while college Governors should not normally serve for more than three terms except where subsequently undertaking a new and more senior role, for example as Chair, it was noted that Steve Clarke skills and performance, and a lack of suitable replacement governor (for his skillset), meant that it was in the best interest of the Corporation to **re-appoint** Steve Clarke for the time limited term of office of 2 years.

The Corporation **approved the reappointment** of Co-opted membership of Nick Roberts and Henry Nydam to the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

7.5 Scheme of Delegation, Standing Orders and Code of Conduct

The Corporation **agreed** with the proposal to instruct the College's lawyers to prepare the updated scheme of delegation, standing orders and code of conduct for 2021/22; and for the Clerk to circulate these documents to the Corporation to review and approve electronically. It was **agreed** that it was in the College's best interest to also review the College's Instrument and Articles of Government ahead of a governance review planned for the academic year 2021/22.

Clerk

7.6 Annual Calendar of Meetings 2021/22

The Corporation received and considered a paper outlining the proposed meeting dates for the 2021/22 Committee structure. The Corporation **unanimously agreed** with the proposed meeting dates for 2021/22 and, as a result of the preference survey, to run hybrid meetings (i.e. with a physical and virtual joining option) but with physical attendance only strategic conference in January 2022.

7.7 Appointment of Clerk

SGales left the meeting while the Corporation discussed this item and re-joined the meeting once the Corporation had reached verdict.

The Corporation received and considered a paper outlining the proposed clerking arrangement for 2021/22. The Corporation **unanimously agreed** to appoint Suzannah Gales as Clerk to the Corporation, with support from the College's lawyers, as required, to provide independent FE Governance advice.

8 Any Other Business

• CFO recruitment

SClarke informed all that, following SJones resignation, members of the Finance Committee, CEO and Group HR Director met to discuss the recruitment plan. SClarke noted that members of the Finance Committee, CEO and Group HR Director intend to interview an internal candidate on Wednesday 21 July 2021. SClarke invited all Governors to join the second part of the interview, on Thursday 22 July 2021, to receive a virtual presentation from the internal candidate.

• Keeping Children Safe in Education

SGales noted that this has been updated and will come into effect from September 2021. SGales agreed to circulate to Governors to read, and to arrange training for Governors to support understanding of the changes.

Clerk

• Hospitality for Governance meetings

To align to the Corporation's sustainability ambitions, the Corporation agreed to bring their own water bottles for future meetings in order to cut down use of plastics.

Clerk

• Link Governors

SGales to circulate information about Link Governors.

SGales

• Staff pay

NSavvas noted that in recognition of the outstanding contribution of staff this academic year, to award a one-off £300 bonus to all staff and, in 2021/22, to award staff with a 1% pay rise.

• Thanks, and farewell to our Student and Staff governors

ED'Souza thanked DJugg, ELawrence and PHickman for their service and invaluable contributions to the College; and wished them every success in their next steps.

• Reflections on the year

ED'Souza commended the Corporation and the Executive for their outstanding work throughout the pandemic to achieve such success both in terms of quality and finances.

Date of next meeting:

- 15 December 2021 at 2pm

CMeredith, LMoody and RStevenson left the meeting at 5.11pm

Confidential items under paragraph 18(2) of the Instrument and Articles of Government

The meeting closed at 5.50pm