

Minutes of the virtual Corporation meeting held on 25 March 2021 at 3pm

Present: C Higgins, Vice Chair
E D'Souza, Chair
E Lawrence, HE Student governor
J Gazzard (part)
J Wakelam
N Savvas, CEO
P Hickman, Staff governor
S Clarke
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 Gales, Board Secretary
S Jones, Vice Principal Finance and Resources
T Elkin, Clerk
A Maltpress, Observer
D Wildridge, Observer
K Points, Observer

Apologies: None

Absent: D Jugg, FE Student governor

AMaltpress, CHiggins, DWildridge, ED'Souza, JWakelam, KPoints, NSavvas, SClarke and SDaley declared their roles as Trustees of Suffolk Academies Trust. JWakelam also declared an interest in relation to 6.2.1.

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

1 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence. The Corporation noted the absence of D Jugg.

2 Minutes of the meetings held on:

• 11 December 2020

The minutes from the meeting on 11 December 2020 were **agreed** as an accurate record of the meeting.

• 10 February 2021 (extraordinary meeting)

The minutes from the meeting on 10 February 2021 were **agreed** as an accurate record of the meeting.

3 Matters arising from the meetings held on:

• 11 December 2020

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.

MA4 SGraham is liaising with the ESFA and DfE to discuss possible solutions to formalise the common CEO/CFO employment contract between WSC and SAT. Once a proposal has been finalised, SGraham will bring a paper to Corporation for approval.

• 10 February 2021 (extraordinary meeting)

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.

4 CEO's Briefing

The Corporation received and reviewed the report outlining the work this term and NSavvas summarised the key points of the report.

Action

SGraham

Since the last meeting, the college has undertaken significant additional work as a result of Covid-19 such as responding to the latest government guidance about Covid-19 mitigation (including setting up and staffing lateral flow testing facilities, track and trace, lockdown, home-testing kits, etc.) and, following the cancellation of exams, preparing for teacher assessed grades (including developing a robust methodology for collecting and fairly grading assessment evidence) as well as supporting staff, students and parents throughout the pandemic. In January, the college rapidly transitioned to remote learning and working, and departments worked together to trial innovative practices and share best practice to ensure remote learning was effective and engaging. Departments also continued to support students to work on projects with industry, access virtual talks/Q&As with leading employers in their sector and, showcase student work in competitions and publications. Since re-opening, students have transitioned really well back to physical learning environments and continue to be very compliant with Covid-19 mitigation measures. Due to the pandemic, many of our Adult and Full Cost courses have postponed /delayed their start date but as lockdown lifts more broadly, we expect this business to pick up. Apprenticeships continue to make good progress and to achieve. We have further invested in HE and have created a dedicated HE library at the University Studies centre. The HE team continue to manage the transition from University of Suffolk and, they have been working with students and industry to inform a review of our HE course offer, to ensure we delivers the right courses at the right level to support students to progress into a job with prospects. The HE team are also working very closely with SAT to support progression routes for sixth form college students. As part of the escalator model, the Computing Hub, Tech She Can and EdTech Demonstrator programme have all expanded this term and have supported/reached hundreds of schools and teachers.

Governors queried if there has been an increase in NEETs as a result of the pandemic. LMoody replied that there has been an increase in the region, and to address that we have secured extra funding to continue our Youth Employment Schemes to support NEETs back into education and employment and, have recently won a tender to further extend this work into Ipswich.

Governors commended all staff for their support to the students this term. NSavvas to share this with staff.

NSavvas

5 Committee Chairs' Summary Reports:

Note: 5.8 was discussed first, then 5.1 and there-after sequentially according to the agenda.

5.1 FE Standards and Excellence Overview

The Corporation received the minutes of the Committee and SDaley summarised the discussions from the last Committee meeting, where they reviewed the Curriculum and Quality KPIs, progress against the College's 2020/21 Quality Improvement Plan and plans for teacher-assessed gradings. Student attendance and retention remains strong for both 16-18 students and 19+ students, and Apprenticeship performance remains strong with a predicted planned achievement rate of 73% compared to a NR of 67%. Assessment progress is in a strong position, however due to lockdown practical assessments are behind on the same period last year but action plans are in place to ensure students catch up as soon as possible. Maths and English attendance remains a concern, however measures are in place to proactively address this. Significant progress has been made against the 2020/21 QIP including further improvements in the curriculum intent and implementation to support the blended learning; further development of excellence in TL&A through high quality, targeted CPL and good functional skills achievements at the December English Reading exams at Level 1 and Level 2. The college has also been awarded the Quality in Careers Standard.

5.2 HE Educational Excellence Overview

The Corporation received the minutes of the Committee and CHiggins summarised the discussions from the last Committee meeting, where the terms of reference, KPIs, HE Policy schedule, HE Admissions Policy, Student Protection Plan and Student

Transfer Plan, were approved. A comprehensive curriculum update was also considered along with an internal analysis of our provision's CMA compliance.

Governors received a copy of the CMA compliance and the Corporation confirmed **they are assured** that the College's CMA measures are adequate and proportionate; and agreed as noted in 5.8 to conduct an internal audit in 2021/22 to provide the Corporation with further assurance.

5.2.1 Student Disciplinary Policy

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

JGazzard left the meeting at 3.59pm

5.3 Safeguarding Overview

The Corporation received the minutes of the executive Board and JWakelam summarised the discussions from the last Board meeting. Wrap around support for students has continued throughout the lockdown, with welfare officers, counsellors and personal support tutors supporting a similar number of students compared to the same period last year. This term, 7 multi-agency referrals to Social Care Services and 3 PREVENT* referral were made (*none were taken to Channel Panel). There are 42 Children in Care from 7 different Local Authorities and 23 Young Adult Carers. Significant progress has been made with ensuring staff DBS compliance.

Governors queried whether staff need for further support to safeguard their wellbeing when dealing with students with complex and serious mental health needs. CShaw answered that the college provides informal supervision counselling to support staff working with these students and feedback from these teams is that this is really effective. Governors noted that the teams across WSC and SAT are working ever closer together and this is having real benefits to our students.

5.3.1 SEND Policy

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

5.4 Equality Overview

The Corporation received the minutes of the executive Board and KPoints summarised the discussions from the last Board meeting. The college has appointed an EDI Innovation Coach to support and further the EDI action plan and share best practice across the Group; and is looking to establish an EDI board for students and staff to plan ways to increase inclusivity, celebrate diversity and plan how EDI topics are embedded within curriculum in order to support cultural change nationally. Retention rates across all Classroom based EDIMs for Gender, Age Learning Difficulty/Disability, Ethnicity, High Needs and Bursary have improved compared with January 2020. Further analysis of Apprenticeship Best Case achievement data, showed that a 24% decline for 19-23 BME apprentices was due to 6 withdrawals, all of which for valid reasons and not indicative of any concerns.

5.5 Health and Safety Overview

The Corporation received the minutes of the executive Committee and CHiggins summarised the discussions from the last Committee meeting, including Covid-19 case data and mitigation measures, track and trace and risk assessments, as well as first aid, accidents and incidents, and the action plan resulting from the external fire risk assessment. As a part of ongoing maintenance, 4 buttresses have been installed to support the Barrack Wall and, following a recent survey which identified and RAG rated required intervention, we have fenced off several areas as a precaution while specialist contractors are sought for the repair works. 11 warning signs have been installed around the Copse which are visible at all entrances and pathways to warn of the risks. Staff representatives from each area have become Health and Safety Champions and are meeting regularly to discuss Health and Safety, with an aim of

creating a college culture of proactive Health and Safety awareness and accountability.

Governors queried the costs associated with the action plan resulting from the external fire risk assessment. RStevenson answered that some costs will likely be substantial (i.e. replacing fire doors in some areas) and that he is working closely with the finance team to create a proposal.

DWildridge left the meeting at 4.29pm

5.6 Finance Overview

The Corporation received the Finance and KPI reports of the Finance Committee and SClarke summarised the discussions at the last Committee meeting. The year to date position is a surplus of £182k (vs a profiled budget surplus of £118k) and the year end forecast is a surplus of £20k (vs. a budgeted surplus of £200k). The principal items affecting the year end forecast are reduced HE Income and impact of Covid-19 (extra unbudgeted cost and reduced income); and an anticipated claw-back of AEB funding.

The Committee considered and approved the Treasury Management policy and will be considering a review of banking services at its meeting in May. The Committee also considered the proposed updates to the college's Financial Regulations and discussed how best to modify the regulations to be more agile in order to respond to short lead times for funding opportunities and agreed to consider an updated Financial Regulations document at its May meeting, in readiness for the Corporation to review and approve in July.

5.6.2 Gender Pay Gap Report

SGraham noted that the Government have delayed the submission date until 31 October 2021, so the college will complete the Gender Pay Gap report in time for consideration at the July 2021 meeting so that the final report can be submitted ready for the October deadline.

5.7 Property Overview

The Corporation received an update of the discussions at the Committee and CHiggins summarised the discussions at the last Committee meeting. Works continue to utilise the FE Capital Fund and tenders are being sought to replace Australia House roof, and further work has been undertaken at University Studies campus to improve the appearance and resources available for students.

5.7.1 T-Level and FE Transformation Grant Funding

Governors received and reviewed a paper summarising the 4 T-Level and 2 FE Transformation Grants funding is being pursued and noted that, following discussions at the Property Committee and with the Chair of the Finance Committee, in order to meet the tight deadlines of the grant application; Elton D'Souza (as Chair of the Corporation) approved via Chair's action the T Level Grant Application. CHiggins made the Corporation aware that of the 4 T Levels the college applied for: 2 are with 25% match funding and 2 are with 50% match funding.

Governors queried whether there has been market testing to ensure that Pick Everard are the most competitive supplier? RStevenson answered that given Pick Everard's extensive historical knowledge of the College's property they are well placed to quickly respond to the short deadlines associated with these bids; however in normal tendering circumstances we will return to the full competitive tender process.

5.7.2 Updated Property Strategy

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

5.8 Audit Overview

The Corporation received the minutes of the Committee and JGazzard summarised the discussions from the last Committee meeting. The register now has 2 red, 4 amber, 21 yellow and 11 green status risks. Two new risks have been added to the risk register relating to Covid-19: one relating to grading assessments and student outcomes and one relating to financial impact of Covid-19 on the budget. In order to mitigate these risks, the college is developing a robust methodology for teacher-assessed grades to ensure the process is without unconscious bias, fair and consistent, and is working closely with SAT and our lawyers to ensure the process incorporates best practice where it exists. We are also closely monitoring student progress and engagement, and the data suggests that outcomes for this year will be strong. We are also closely monitoring the budget and, where needed, are making adjustments to minimise the adverse impact of Covid-19 on our finances. The college has made good progress against the GDPR Compliance Action Plan to date, leaving the single action in relation to Glasswells' storage facility to progress. There have been 24 breaches since December, 1 of which was reportable to the ICO as the breach involved notes of a welfare meeting which were incorrectly shared with an employee; and where breaches have occurred appropriate response has been implemented by the Executive. There have been no Subject Access Requests.

CHiggins requested that in 2021/22, the Audit Committee undertake an internal audit of University Studies to give the Corporation assurance of its CMA compliance. Governors **agreed** to action this request.

SJones

5.8.1 Appointment extension of external auditors

Governors **unanimously approved** the proposal to appoint RSM as the College's external auditors for 2021/22, and to undertake the external audit of the 2020/21 financial statements.

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. NSavvas summarised that the focus for SAT has been to share best practice between SAT & WSC (sharing vocational best practice between WSC & OSFC and academic best practice between ASFC & OSFC), creating efficient shared services through 'Group' functions and to standardise our approach to sixth form education and use the Escalator Model to support students pre-16 and University Studies and Employer Engagement to support post-18 students.

AMaltpress summarised that SENDAT continues to grow; acquiring Stone Lodge in Ipswich, Chalk Hall in Stowmarket and establishing Duke of Lancaster School (Free School) in Fakenham. AMaltpress noted that, because of the Free School application, SENDAT's Articles of Association will be updated however they have successfully negotiated with the DfE for WSC to retain the original rights as sponsor.

KPoints left the meeting at 5.18pm

7 Governance

7.1 Governance Report

The Corporation received a paper outlining the current membership of the Corporation, noting that both student governors term of office ends in summer so elections will be held early in the autumn term to fill these roles and, acknowledging the resignations of Alan Maltpress, Debbie Wildridge and Karen Points on 1 March 2021. The Corporation agreed for Alan Maltpress and Karen Points to be observers of Standards and Excellence Committee; and Debbie Wildridge to be an observer of the Property Committee, until summer as part of the transition period.

ELawrance asked to stand down from FE Standards and Excellence Committee. Governors agreed to this request.

8 Any Other Business

8.1 Date of Next Meeting

The Corporation agreed to reschedule the date of next meeting.

SGales

Date of next meeting:

- TBC

The meeting closed at 5.33pm