

## CORPORATION

### Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 12 July 2023 at 2.00pm

**Present physically:** A Duffety  
C Higgins, Vice Chair  
E D'Souza, Chair  
H Colthorpe, Staff Governor

J Drake  
N Savvas, CEO (part)  
S Daley, Vice Chair

**Present virtually:** C Chua  
J Gazzard (part)

K Chapman  
S Howard (part)

**In Attendance:** A Maltpress, Observer  
A McGarel, CFO (part)  
C Shaw, Principal Sixth Form Provision (part)  
G Grainger, Chief Information Officer (part)  
M Chatt, Deputy CFO  
R Cannon, Committee Member (part)  
R Hetherington, Committee Member  
R Stevenson, Group Operations Director (part)  
S Gales, Governance Professional (part)  
S Graham, Chief People Officer (part)

**Apologies:** J Baker  
J Wakelam  
M Searcey

**Absent:** S Shaddock, FE Student Governor

Note: agenda item 5.6 (and its sub-sections) was discussed after item 8 (and its sub-sections)

#### 1 Declaration of Interests and Apologies for absence

C Higgins, E D'Souza, N Savvas, and S Daley declared their roles as Trustees of Suffolk Academies Trust. A Duffety declared her interest in relation to agenda item 9. No other conflicts of interest in relation to the items of the agenda were declared.

Apologies were received from J Baker, J Wakelam and M Searcey. The absence of S Shaddock was noted.

The Corporation welcomed J Drake as a new Governor.

The Chair noted that, in accordance with our scheme of delegation and terms of reference, the detailed scrutiny of the papers happens within the Committees though welcomed discussion on all items.

#### 2 Minutes of the meetings held on:

- 29 March 2023 (Corporation)
- 5 April 2023 (Corporation)
- 12 May 2023 (Strategic Conference)
- 19 May 2023 (Corporation)

The minutes of the Corporation meetings held on 29 March, 5 April and 19 May 2023 were **agreed** as an accurate record.

The notes of the Strategic Conference on 12 May 2023 were **agreed** as an accurate record

The Corporation **noted** that in May 2023 the Corporation appointed R Cannon as a Committee member of the FE Educational Excellence Committee. Moreover in June 2023, the Corporation appointed J Baker as Governor for a term of 4 years; as member of the FE Educational Excellence Committee and of the Resources Committee, J Drake as Governor

### Action

for a term of 4 years; as member of the FE Educational Excellence Committee and of the Finance Committee, and M Searcey as Governor for a term of 4 years; as member of the Audit and Risk Management Committee and of the HE Educational Excellence Committee.

### **3 Matters Arising from meeting on 29 March**

The matters arising from the meeting were summarised in the report and all actions reported had either been completed or a progress update had been provided.

Governors commended the team's progress leading and embedding a culture of sustainability.

### **4 CEO's Briefing**

#### **4.1 Update on ECG and SENDAT**

Governors received and considered the CEO's Briefing which provided an update on how we are delivering the ECG Strategic Plan 2022-25, including a termly update on student awards, accolades and activities, Group services and collaborations, and an update on SENDAT's activities since March 2023.

N Savvas summarised the key successes of the Group and noted there were success stories in each provision areas, international accolades and national recognition, a huge array of enrichment activities for our students and ASFC being recognised as Ofsted Outstanding.

Governors who attended the Celebration of Achievement event, fed back how heart-warming it was to hear students' life stories and to share in celebrating their accomplishments.

N Savvas summarised the achievements and developments at SENDAT (a multi-academy trust sponsored by the college).

Governors discussed how SEN students' needs are identified and the process by which students are allocated to schools. Governors proposed a Briefing Strategy Seminar to discuss and understand this further.

#### **4.2 Key Performance Indicators dashboard**

Governors received the RAG rated KPIs for sixth form provision, university and professional development provision, financial sustainability, HR, data compliance, and safety/operational efficiency.

N Savvas summarised the key measures and discussed the context for the KPI metrics RAG rated as red.

### **5 Committee Chair's Summary Reports:**

#### **5.1 FE Educational Excellence Committee Overview**

Governors received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions and recommendations of the Educational Excellence Committee meetings in the Summer Term.

The Committee reviewed the Risk Register Extract, and reviewed progress on 2022/23 Quality Improvement Plan. The Committee also considered key performance indicators to monitor student progress and experience so far in 2022/23, received updates in regard to student welfare and support, including information on safeguarding, received an annual report of progress made against our Public Duties objectives and reviewed and recommend the Recruitment and Selection Policy to the Corporation.

S Daley, as Committee Chair, noted that student progress has been very strong and there was focus on English and maths and the Curriculum offer linked to our Accountability Agreement. Moreover, the Committee has amended its agendas to look in more detail at students by level, and compared to the other colleges in the Group, and how our more vulnerable students progress compared to the median. S Daley also noted that forecast student achievement is strong for sixth form, apprenticeships and adult provision.

CEO  
Gov. Prof.

Governors noted the recent news in regard to grade boundaries and distributions and queried the likely impact for our students. C Shaw answered this.

#### 5.1.1 Termly and Annual Safeguarding Report

Governors received and **noted** the termly report which had been scrutinised by both the Safeguarding Board and the FE Educational Excellence Committee.

Governors discussed the emerging safeguarding trends.

#### 5.1.2 Annual report against Public Duties objectives

Governors received and **noted** the annual report which had been scrutinised by both the EDI Board and the joint meeting of the Educational Excellence Committees.

### 5.2 **HE Educational Excellence Committee Overview**

Governors received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions at and recommendations of the HE Educational Excellence Committee meetings in the Summer Term.

The Committee reviewed the Risk Register Extract, reviewed our compliance with Office for Students requirements, considered key performance indicators to monitor student progress and experience so far in 2022/23, and received updates in regard to student voice.

C Higgins, as Committee Chair, noted that significant progress has been made by the team to strengthen systems and reporting to support future forecasting, and commended the work of the Curriculum Development Board to review the curriculum offer to ensure it is appropriate for our local community. C Higgins noted the work to further develop student support and commended the teams use of student feedback to inform and shape the strategy of University Studies and to tailor the offer to our students.

Governors discussed the recent news regarding UEA and the impact of this on our validation partnership relationship.

### 5.3 **Resources Committee Overview**

Governors received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions and recommendations of the Resources Committee meeting in the Summer Term.

The Committee reviewed the Risk Register Extract, received the termly Health and Safety Report (as scrutinised by the Health and Safety Board) and received updates linked to the ECG Strategic Plan: People (including key performance indicators for HR), Physical Infrastructure (including developments of the college's physical estate), Virtual Infrastructure (including developments of the college's virtual estate), and for Data, Systems and Processes update (including developments to improve efficiency via utilisation of technology). The Committee also reviewed the Property Strategy.

C Higgins, as Committee Chair, commended the reports provided and the thoroughness of strategic planning by the Executive.

[S Howard joined the meeting at 3.18pm](#)

#### 5.3.1 Health and Safety Termly Report

Governors received and **noted** the termly report which had been scrutinised by the Health and Safety Board and the Resources Committee.

#### 5.3.2 Property Strategy

Governors received and **approved** the Property Strategy report which had been scrutinised by the Senior Executive Team and the Resources Committee.

### 5.4 **Finance Committee Overview**

Governors received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions at and recommendations of the Finance Committee meetings in the Spring Term.

The Committee reviewed the Risk Register Extract, the management accounts and key performance indicators to monitor financial performance so far in 2022/23, student enrolments (by provision type) for 2022/23 compared to budgetary assumptions and reviewed student applications for 2023/24 against planned targets, College's Effectiveness Plan to deliver the Challenge Budget and the Bid Register update. The Committee reviewed and recommends to the Corporation the Budget for 2023/24 and the three-year financial forecast, the Subcontractor provision and subcontracting partners for 2023/24, the Supply Chain Policy, the Reserves policy and the Recommendation from the Remuneration Committee.

A Duffety, as Committee Vice Chair (and Chair designate), commended the success of the team in achieving the significant efficiencies to balance the budget and achieve a surplus in the context of inflation and significant rising costs and staff pay expectations.

Governors queried the national context for colleges in terms of the financial year-end outturns. The CEO and CFO noted many established colleges have been unable to balance the budget and are in sizeable deficit positions, and noted the legacy issues this has on their estates and staffing – and therefore this is detrimental to student experience and outcomes. Governors commended the team's achievement.

Governors noted that staff pay negotiations are ongoing and remain a key financial uncertainty for the 2023/24 budget and beyond.

Governors noted the 'challenge' assumption within the budget and queried how this will be achieved. The CFO explained how this will be accumulated via efficiencies to lessen costs and growth to achieve greater income.

Governors queried why the financial objective for 2023/24 relating to borrowing costs as a percentage of income is much lower than in 2022/23 and whether this gives us less flexibility. The CEO explained the rationale for this.

5.4.1 2023/24 Budget and 3-Year Financial Forecast (including the financial objectives for 2023/24)

Governors received, considered and **approved** the 2023/24 Budget and 3-Year Financial Forecast (including the financial objectives for 2023/24) which had been reviewed and recommended by the Finance Committee.

5.4.2 Subcontracting business case strategy 2023/24

Governors received, considered and **approved** the Subcontracting business case strategy 2023/24 which had been reviewed and recommended by the Finance Committee.

5.4.3 Subcontracting procurement policy 2023/24

Governors received, considered and **approved** the Subcontracting procurement policy 2023/24 which had been reviewed and recommended by the Finance Committee.

5.4.4 Subcontracting and supply chain fees policy for 2023/24

Governors received, considered and **approved** the Subcontracting and supply chain fees policy for 2023/24 which had been reviewed and recommended by the Finance Committee.

5.4.5 Subcontracting partners for 2023/24

Governors received, considered and **approved** the Subcontracting partners for 2023/24 which had been reviewed and recommended by the Finance Committee.

5.4.6 Reserves policy

Governors received, considered and **approved** the 2023/24 Reserves Policy which had been reviewed and recommended by the Finance Committee.

5.5 **Audit and Risk Management Committee Overview**

Governors received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions at and recommendations of the Audit and Risk Management Committee meetings in the Summer Term.

The Committee reviewed the college's Risk Register to ensure that the college had identified pertinent risks and put in place appropriate and effective mitigations to minimise risk. The Committee also reviewed the progress made with previous internal and external audit recommendations, the findings reports of the internal and external auditors and also received updates in regard to GDPR, subject access requests, freedom of information and data breaches, to ensure proper process was followed and effective measures put in place to lessen the risk to the organisation. The Committee also considered and approved the Internal Auditor's Proposed plan of works for 2023/24 and the External Auditor's Proposed plan of works for 2023/24, and the Whistleblowing policy. It also received a report on the compliance of data returns.

J Gazzard, as Committee Chair, thanked the Committee and the Internal and External Auditors for their contributions to make meetings highly effective. J Gazzard noted that internal audit findings report show the college has rigorous processes and systems.

Governors noted the distribution of risks (via the Risk Register Extract) to the Committees continues to add value and effectively facilitates triangulation and risk management.

Governors thanked J Gazzard for his service as Committee Chair.

#### 5.5.1 Risk Register

Governors received and **noted** the Risk Register.

#### 5.5.2 Internal Auditor's plan of works for 2023/24

Governors received, considered and **approved** the Internal Auditor's plan of works for 2023/24 which had been reviewed and recommended by the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

#### 5.5.3 External Auditor's plan of works for 2023/24

Governors received, considered and **approved** the External Auditor's plan of works for 2023/24 which had been reviewed and recommended by the Audit and Risk Management Committee.

### 6 Policies

#### 6.1 Whistleblowing Policy

Governors considered the policy which had been reviewed and recommended by the Audit and Risk Management Committee. Governors **approved** the policy.

#### 6.2 Recruitment and Admissions Policy

Governors considered the policy which had been reviewed and recommended by the FE Educational Excellence Committee. Governors **approved** the policy.

### 7 Governance

#### Nominations and Governance Committee overview

Governors received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions at and recommendations of the Nominations and Governance Committee meetings in the Summer Term.

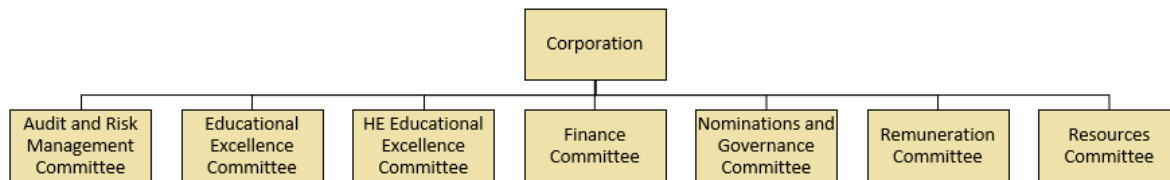
The Committee reviewed the summary of the External Governance Review, reviewed and recommend the updated governance documentation and discussed governor recruitment.

#### 7.1.1 External Governance Review action plan

Governors received, considered and **approved** the External Governance Review action plan which has been reviewed and recommended by the Nominations and Governance Committee.

### 7.1.2 Governance Structure for 2023/24

Governors **agreed** the Committee Structure for 2023/24 (as below) and the Committee membership as proposed.



Governors **agreed** the Appointment of Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs for 2023/24 (as below):

- Karen Chapman as Chair and Julia Wakelam as Vice Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee
- Sue Daley as Chair and Julia Wakelam as Vice Chair of the FE Educational Excellence Committee
- Chris Higgins as Chair and Conrad Chua as Vice Chair of the HE Educational Excellence Committee
- Alexandra Duffety as Chair and Martin Chatt as Vice Chair of the Finance Committee
- Elton D'Souza as Chair and Chris Higgins as Vice Chair of the Nominations and Governance Committee
- Sarah Howard as Chair and Sue Daley as Vice Chair of the Remuneration Committee
- Chris Higgins as Chair and Alexandra Duffety as Vice Chair of the Resources Committee

Governors **agreed** the Appointment of Governor Leads for 2023/24 (as below):

- Careers Education and Guidance - Sue Daley
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - Julia Wakelam
- Health and Safety - Chris Higgins
- People - Karen Chapman
- Safeguarding - Julia Wakelam
- Sustainability - Julia Wakelam
- Whistleblowing - Elton D'Souza

Governors **appointed** Martin Chatt as a Governor for a 4-year term of office commencing on 1 September 2023.

### 7.1.3 Updated Governance Documentation

Governors received, considered and **approved** the 2023/24 Governance Calendar which has been reviewed and recommended by the Nominations and Governance Committee.

Governors received, considered and **approved** the 2023/24 Standing Orders which has been reviewed and recommended by the Nominations and Governance Committee.

Governors received, considered and **approved** the 2023/24 KPI Dashboard which has been reviewed and recommended by the Nominations and Governance Committee.

Governors received, considered and **approved** the 2023/24 Code of Conduct which has been reviewed and recommended by the Nominations and Governance Committee.

### 7.1.4 Change of name to 'Eastern Education Group'

Governors **approved** the discussions of the Research and Strategy Advisory Group meeting on 14 June 2023 and the change from Eastern Colleges Group to Eastern Education Group.

### 7.1.5 First Hand engagement and social events calendar

Governors received, considered and **agreed** to at least half a day per annum to undertake First Hand activities and to feedback the impact of the first-hand visit at the next Corporation meeting using the proposed form.

## 8 **Any Other Business**

- **Haverhill Update**

Governors received and considered the report provided which informed that the landlord of the property we lease in Haverhill has served us notice and summarised the proposed next steps with regard to sourcing a suitable replacement venue.

R Stevenson summarised the methodology used to evaluate options and to negotiate terms to ensure affordability.

Governors supported the central location of the proposed venue and voiced support for a continued presence in the town to support the local community. Governors noted the importance of ensuring the financial viability of the lease term.

In accordance with section 3.11.1 of our Financial Regulations, the Corporation **agreed to delegate authority to the Chair of the Corporation and the Chair of the Finance Committee** to review and agree/or not the detailed Business Case and Heads of Terms.

- **Thank you to Martin Chatt**

The Chair and Corporation thanked M Chatt for his service to the College in his role as Deputy CFO.

- **Review of the meeting**

The Chair welcomed feedback from Governors on the efficacy of the meeting and Governors fed back that the changes to the CEO's briefing has removed duplication between the Committee Chairs Summary Reports.

A McGarel, C Shaw, G Grainger, L Moody, M Chatt, N Savvas, R Cannon and R Stevenson left the meeting at 4.31pm

### **Confidential items**

#### 5.6 **Remuneration Committee Overview**

S Howard left the meeting and N Savvas re-joined the meeting at 4.37pm

#### 9. **Inorganic Growth Opportunities**

J Gazzard left the meeting at 4.58pm

S Graham left the meeting at 5.02pm

S Gales left the meeting at 5.06pm

#### 10. **Governance Professional's appraisal**

Upon the Chair's invite, S Gales rejoined the meeting at 5.11pm and the Chair summarised the Corporation's discussion for the minutes

The meeting closed at 5.18pm