

CORPORATION

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 14 December 2022 at 2.00pm

Present physically:	E D'Souza, Chair K Chapman	N Savvas, CEO
Present virtually:	A Duffety C Chua C Higgins, Vice Chair H Colthorpe, Staff Governor (part)	J Wakelam S Daley, Vice Chair S Howard
In Attendance:	A Maltpress, Observer A McGarel, CFO designate C Shaw, Principal Sixth Form Provision (part) E Lees, Executive Dean of University Studies Provision (part) G Chittock Nash, Group Vice Principal Students (part) G Grainger, Chief Information Officer (part) J Raffel, CFO L Chapman, Committee Member (part) M Chatt, Deputy CFO R Hetherington, Committee Member R Stevenson, Group Operations Director S Gales, Governance Professional S Graham, Chief People Officer	
Apologies:	D Harvey J Gazzard S Shaddock, FE Student Governor	

1 Declaration of Interests and Apologies for absence

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

Apologies were received from D Harvey, J Gazzard, L Moody and S Shaddock

2 Minutes of the meetings held on 13 July and 5 October 2022

The minutes of the meetings held on 13 July and 5 October 2022 were **agreed** as an accurate record.

The Corporation **noted** that in August 2022 the Chair authorised the installation of photovoltaic cells on the rooves of College buildings. The Corporation **noted** that in October 2022 the Chair approved the CEO to undertake Private Consultancies and Other Paid Work (in line with section 2.10 of our Financial Regulations).

3 Matters Arising from meeting on 13 July and 5 October 2022

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

L Chapman joined the meeting at 2.08pm

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 activities, Group services and collaborations, and an update on SENDAT's activities since July 2022.

Action

The CEO noted that despite challenging national circumstances (rising inflation, strikes, a nation-wide mental health crisis, etc.), the team have been delivering outstanding outcomes for our students and wider community.

C Shaw noted that two of our students reached the world skills final and were 'highly commended' and fed back the overwhelmingly positive feedback of the ESFA immersion visit.

E Lees summarised the student engagement activity at University Studies.

C Shaw left the meeting at 2.21pm

G Chittock-Nash summarised the activities of the student support team including the new projects and initiatives in development.

The CEO noted that, despite a national downturn in apprenticeship uptake, we are delivering more apprenticeships than ever before; and success rates are returning to pre-pandemic levels. The CEO also noted that we have opened NCTC and the Extended Reality lab, and continue to invest in our University and Professional Development provision.

S Graham summarised the activities to support and develop our staff. The CEO noted that we have gifted all staff an extra day of annual leave over the Christmas period.

The CEO noted that we continue to support our community through various networks and via our escalator model.

R Stevenson and G Grainger outlined the recent investment in our physical and virtual infrastructure and noted the progress made to strengthen systems, make processes more efficient and effective, and to upgrade our infrastructure to ensure the College has robust infrastructure for now and in the future.

J Raffel summarised the work underway to make operations as efficient as possible, to ensure that College remains financially sustainable despite significant rising costs.

Governors commended the progress this term and the work to develop staff.

Governors noted that retention of apprentices is a national issue, and so to buck that trend is a real achievement.

Governors queried how the pandemic continues to impact on student pass rates. C Shaw noted that the impact has reduced significantly but the legacy impact of gaps in learning and reduced exam confidence will persist for a number of years.

Governors noted that the College's staff retention is very high, which evidences the effectiveness of management in supporting and developing staff. Governors queried if there are hard-to-fill roles and the impact of this on operations. The CEO noted there are some areas which are hard-to-fill, and S Graham summarised how the recruitment team is working to overcome this.

Governors queried how the cost-of-living crisis is impacting our staff, particularly the lower paid and how we are addressing this. S Graham confirmed that we paid a pay award to staff this term to address the immediate need, and we are re-modelling our pay scales to specifically benefit our lower paid staff in the short to medium term. S Graham also outlined the wellbeing and welfare support we have in place.

Governors discussed the impact of the autumn statement on the College. The CEO outlined the impact and the CFO informed of the additional funding awarded to the College.

The CEO outlined the performance of SENDAT over this term.

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.

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 Autumn Term.

The Committee reviewed the terms of reference and skillset required by the Committee and the Risk Register Extract, reviewed and recommend 2021/22 Self-Assessment Reports and 2021/22 Quality Improvement Plan, 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, and reviewed and recommend the SEN Policy to the Corporation.

S Daley, as Committee Chair, noted that the sixth form provision is strong, adult provision is growing massively, apprenticeship results are strong, and our Self-Assessment Report grading reflects our commitment to excellence and continuous improvement.

S Daley also noted that two additional meetings of the Committee will be scheduled to receive the reports of the Executive Boards.

5.1.1 **Self-Assessment Report 2021/22**

Governors received, considered and **approved** the self-assessment report which had been scrutinised by the FE Educational Excellence Committee.

5.1.2 **Termly and Annual Safeguarding Report**

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

The CEO noted the support provided to students over the Christmas period, to provide food and other items to those in need.

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 Autumn Term.

The Committee reviewed the terms of reference and skillset required by the Committee and the Risk Register Extract, reviewed and recommend 2021/22 Self-Evaluation Document, 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, the Access and Participation Plan and Investment Monitoring plan, student numbers for 2022/23, the summary of the Curriculum Development Board and the NSS results. The Committee also received a presentation on the University and Professional Development Centre's strategy.

C Higgins, as Committee Chair, noted that significant work has been done to refine the strategy of the university provision and to establish a Curriculum Development Board to ensure our curriculum offer meets the needs of our students and community; and noted the improvement of our NSS results.

E Lees outlined the strategy of University Studies, noting the demographic and motivation for studying of our students.

Governors commended the University Studies team.

5.2.1 2021/22 Self Evaluation Document

Governors received, considered and **approved** the self-evaluation document which had been scrutinised by the HE Educational Excellence Committee.

E Lees, H Colthorpe and L Chapman left the meeting at 3.26pm

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 Autumn Term.

The Committee reviewed the terms of reference and skillset required by the Committee and the Risk Register Extract, received the Summer terms 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, considered and recommend the Health and Safety Policy.

C Higgins, as Committee Chair, noted that significant progress has been made to improve systems and processes across the Group and to upgrade facilities across the College.

Governors discussed cyber security and R Stevenson gave an update including noting we have achieved Cyber Essentials accreditation which shows the College has reached a recognised level of cyber security. J Wakelam, as Vice Chair of Audit and Risk Management Committee, fed back that the Committee are live to the risk and are assured by the progress made to strengthen our security.

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.

5.4 **Finance Committee Overview**

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

The Committee reviewed the terms of reference and skillset required by the Committee, Risk Register Extract, 2021/22 Year End Outturn, Bid Register Update, and Going Concern Report. The Committee also reviewed and recommend the Budget Change Proposal, Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2021/22, and Annual Report of value for money of Group services (inc. cost of services to and from SAT). The Committee also considered 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, ESFA Financial Forecasting Return and an update on Bank Loans.

C Higgins, as Committee Chair, noted that, despite it being the busiest time of year and a handover period between the current and designate CFO, the finance team have achieved a great deal and outlined the rationale for the baseline budget and the effectiveness plan. Governors **agreed** with this approach.

Governors discussed there might be wide-reaching ramifications of the effectiveness plan and noted that the Risk Register will continue to be updated to reflect the impact of the effectiveness plan.

A Duffety, as Vice Chair who is independent of Suffolk Academies Trust, outlined the annual value for money report for services to and from SAT.

5.4.1 Annual Value for Money report
Governors received, considered and **approved** the annual value for money report of services to and from SAT which had been reviewed and recommended by the Finance Committee.

5.4.2 Baseline Budget
Governors received, considered and **approved** the revised baseline budget which had been reviewed and recommended by the Finance Committee.

5.4.3 Annual Report and Financial Statements
Governors received, considered and **approved** the 2021/22 Annual Report and Financial Statements which had been reviewed and recommended by the Finance Committee. Governors **delegated authority to the Chair and CEO** to sign and submit these.

5.4.4 Governing Body Finance Dashboard
Governors **noted** the ESFA's Governing Body Finance Dashboard which had been reviewed by the Finance Committee.

5.5 **Audit and Risk Management 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 Autumn Term.

The Committee reviewed the terms of reference and skillset required by the Committee and Risk Register Extract, and considered the college's Risk Register to ensure that the college had identified pertinent risks and put in place appropriate and effective mitigations in place 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 the annual report of Internal Auditor's Annual Report. The Committee also considered and recommend the Audit Committee's Annual Report and the Audited Accounts for 2021/22. The Committee 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 Vice Chair also considered the updated Whistleblowing Policy and recommends it to the Corporation.

J Wakelam, as Vice Chair of the Committee, noted that the team have worked hard to update the Risk Register and that the number of red rated risks are decreasing.

5.5.1 Annual Report of the Internal Auditors
Governors received and **noted** the Internal Auditor's Annual Report.

5.5.2 Annual Report of the Audit Committee
Governors reviewed the Committees' Annual Report as recommended by the Audit and Risk Management Committee. Governors **approved** the Annual Report.

5.5.3 External Auditor's Findings Report
Governors received and **noted** the External Auditor's Findings Report.

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

G Grainger and R Stevenson left the meeting at 3.57pm

6 **Policies**

6.1 Whistleblowing Policy
Governors considered the policy which had been reviewed and recommended by the Vice Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee. Governors **approved** the policy.

6.2 Health and Safety Policy
Governors considered the policy which had been reviewed and recommended by Resources Committee. Governors **approved** the policy.

6.3 SEN Policy

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

6.4 Public Duties Statement 2022/23

Governors considered the statement and objectives which had been reviewed and recommended by Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Board. Governors **approved** the statement and objectives.

7 Governance

7.2 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 Autumn Term.

The Committee reviewed the terms of reference and skillset required by the Committee and Risk Register Extract, Constitution including Committee membership for 2022/23, the Board's final 2021/22 data for attendance, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and Skillset. The Committee considered and approved the Board's Training and Development plan for 2022/23, allocated the risks from the Risk Register to the Committees, and reviewed and recommend the updated governance documentation, the change to the Executive Boards and the preferred supplier for the External Governance Review.

S Gales noted that L Blackaby resigned as HE Student Governor on 13 December 2022 due to personal circumstances.

Governors **agreed** the change to the Executive Boards and endorsed the use of AoC for the External Governance Review.

R Hetherington left the meeting at 4.11pm

7.1.1 Membership

Governors **agreed** the appointment of Lawrence Chapman for a further 1-year term to serve on the FE Educational Excellence Committee, and of Roger Hetherington for a further 1-year term to serve on the HE Educational Excellence Committee and Resources Committee

R Hetherington re-joined the meeting at 4.12pm

7.1.2 Updated Governance Documentation

Governors received, considered and **approved** the Governance Handbook (including the updated Committee terms of reference and skillsets) which has been reviewed and recommended by the Nominations and Governance Committee.

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

Governors received, considered and **approved** the Role Descriptions for:

- Chair of the Corporation
- Vice Chair(s) of the Corporation
- Governor
- Staff Governor
- FE Student Governor
- HE Student Governor

which has been reviewed and recommended by the Nominations and Governance Committee.

A Duffety left the meeting at 4.15pm

7.1.3 Update on ONS reclassification

Governors received and considered the paper provided which summarised the implications of reclassification for the Corporation. Governors asked to receive further updates/briefings as more information becomes available.

CFO

C Shaw re-joined the meeting at 4.21pm

8 Any Other Business

- **Review of the meeting**

Governors feedback that the meeting went well and that the technology for hybrid meetings is working well.

- **Engagement in training and engagement events**

The Chair fed back on his experience at First Hand week events and commended Governors to participate in training and events to gain invaluable first-hand experience.

A Duffety re-joined the meeting at 4.32pm

- **Thanks, and farewell to John Raffel**

Governors thanked J Raffel for his service and contribution, and wished him well in the future.

A McGarel, G Chittock-Nash, J Raffel, N Savvas and M Chatt left the meeting at 4.33pm

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

9 **Remuneration Committee Overview**

The meeting closed at 4.46pm