

## CORPORATION BOARD

Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 12 October 2023 at 5pm

### **Present**

Gavin Maitland-Smith (Chair)  
Jacqui Canton (Principal)  
Edward Collett  
Victoria Field  
Nick Handy  
Adam Mumford  
Nicolas Pages  
David Walker  
Lucy Butler  
Ben Haxton  
Mackenzie Howe Nordal  
Astrid Schloerscheidt  
Sam Wolfe  
Kathryn Schutterlin  
Jessie Weavers

### **In attendance**

Olivier Cognard, Vice Principal  
Mark Lay, Finance Director  
Jo Milsom, Deputy Principal  
Jack Price, Vice Principal  
Howard Stamp, Clerk & Governance Adviser

Governor questions are represented with bullet points, and management responses are italicized.

The Chair opened the meeting by recognising this meeting was the last meeting for external governor Vicky Field. The Chair thanked Vicky for all the support and dedication during her eight years on the Board and more recently as Vice Chair of the corporation, Chair of CQS and NRG committees and designated governor for safeguarding and health & safety. The wider governing body all shared their thanks to Vicky.

Vicky thanked the Board and the college for her eight years as governor and the privilege to be able to have held the role over these years.

### **1. Apologies and items to be raised under AOB**

Apologies had been received from Scott Gray, Vice Principal.

There were no items to be raised under AOB

### **1.2 Declarations of interest**

There were no new declarations of interest.

### **2. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2023**

One item was noted, on item 9.6 to update the minutes to reflect Nick Handy left the meeting for the discussion and appointment of a new chair to the corporation.

Following this update. the minutes were approved for signature.

### **3. Matters Arising, Written Resolutions & Action Points**

The Chair outlined the actions points, noting that a number of the actions were in progress. The Clerk confirmed action were progressing and would come through relevant committee cycles.

The Board noted the report.

#### 4. Strategy & Vision

Item 4 was agreed to be taken at the end of the agenda to allow for wider discussion.

#### 5. Principal's report

The Principal presented the report and highlighted the key points to note including the increase in 16-19 student enrolments for the start of the academic year. More detail on this followed as a separate agenda item. It was highlighted that the increased recruitment has not impacted room capacity and the college is able to manage timetabling effectively to support the growth.

It was also highlighted from the paper that ongoing works have been taking place to identify any RAAC in the college campuses. There has been one small area of a building at Witney that has been closed while further investigation takes place, however this has not impacted teaching and classes have been able to be easily relocated.

- Is there any update on the Multiply contract from Oxfordshire County Council? *OCC has been given just over £2m for adult numeracy and the college has offered to support delivery of this. There have been ongoing meetings with OCC but nothing confirmed to be delivered at this time.*
- Is there a time limit on this? *Yes March 2025. We have advised the council the later it gets the more challenging it will become to deliver this.*
- I couldn't see any reference to RAAC in the risk assessments, should this be reflected? *We don't believe this to be a significant risk to the operation of the college; it is still to be confirmed and it is only affecting one classroom. Therefore, we don't feel the need to flag as a risk at this stage.*
- Is the one RIDDOR any concern? *It has been investigated and has been concluded to be an isolated incident with no trends or themes involved.*

The Board shared their thanks to the Principal's PA who is due to leave the organisation at the end of the half term.

The Board noted the report.

#### 6. Enrolment Update

The Vice Principal presented live enrolment data during the meeting, highlighting the key areas including the increased 16-19 student recruitment and demonstrating visually this had been evenly distributed across curriculum areas with the main of the growth at Abingdon campus.

- The curriculum areas that have significantly increased, have they done anything different? Such as marketing or promotion? *The majority of the increases are from Abingdon and growth for curriculum areas within that is evenly distributed.*
- How is the availability of this data now being used to help informed decisions? *SMT and managers are using it for much more granular decision making. We are also using it across quality monitoring. We would like to now train more staff to be more confident in how they can use the data. It is giving us more confidence in our data and forecasting as we can now see our forecast information is accurate, which in terms gives us more confidence in the wider data sets and usage.*
- Will this enable you to keep students who are at risk of dropping off or being retained? *The attendance data we can quickly see whose attendance is dropping and take action to support this and engage with the student.*

It was highlighted to the board that the increased number of new students should also be followed through for the next academic year as they progress to the second year of their courses. It was also highlighted to the Board that the data can be used to help inform marketing. An example was provided of lower automotive applications in year. A targeted campaign on this then resulted in increased applications for the curriculum area.

Information was presented on the growth and the detail behind this, outlining 46% of the growth from Abingdon campus of which there have been notable increases in construction and the general demographic population.

- Why has there been increased Abingdon construction enrolments, given the volume of construction in the Witney area? *It is a good question and one that would need further investigation to identify any qualitative feedback from students.*
- What is the competition at Witney? *Typically, students are able to get the bus to Oxford easily which provides more options with local providers.*

The board agreed this is a very positive position and it is helpful to see more of the data. The Chair noted this would be a good item for strategy day.

The Board noted the report.

## **7. Curriculum, Quality and Students**

### **7.1 SAR & QIP Update**

The Vice Principal presented the SAR document on screen to work through each item of the SAR. It was highlighted to the Board that a small group of governors had attended a SAR workshop chaired by the Chair of CQS. to work in detail through the SAR and ask questions and provide advice on behalf of the governors.

[The minutes of the SAR workshop are recorded separately]

The Chair of CQS fed back to the board that the process had been helpful with a good representation of governors. There had been wide discussion across all aspects of the SAR, particularly the data sets provided and how confident governors felt the data had been represented in the SAR context.

The Vice Principal advised there had been some changes made to the SAR document following the workshop and the feedback provided by the governors present.

The document was outlined starting with a broad overview of the SAR, highlighting what we do well and the overall grading of 'Good' with outstanding features. It was highlighted that the college is an inclusive organisation, and this is increasing. Overall achievement was positive across the college.

- How do you measure inclusivity? *A number of ways including information from the students and feedback on a qualitative basis, however also using the data around achievement gaps for different demographic groups and comparing this to other colleges where we can.*
- Will the student survey be presented to the December Board? *Not the student survey but the equalities data will be shared and presented. The survey will not yet have concluded by that time to be shared.*

There were a number of items outlined that the college feels are still areas for improvement. In particular, closing achievement gaps for disadvantaged students, with a view that this may be those that are being impacted by the cost of living challenges. The achievement rates on

level 1 and in particular maths and English which has an impact on the wider level 1 achievement. There continues to be some issues in a small number of faculties such as technology that has been previously reported,.

The college has graded overall as good with behaviours and attitudes at outstanding along with apprenticeships.

- Although we are not grading as outstanding at this stage for the reasons discussed, are there areas that we may be able to self-assess as outstanding next year or the year after? *Yes we had good discussion around this at the workshop, and we discussed the personal development aspect, that is challenging to grade as the outcomes of this follow after college and beyond, this area we feel could be outstanding but we need better information to self-assess as outstanding.*
- What is holding us back from assessing leadership and management as outstanding? *For us it is the inconsistency around study programmes and the drop in achievement rates makes it very difficult to suggest leadership and management is outstanding.*
- Does grading work on the basis of the more outstanding items then the college grades as outstanding or are there weighted items? *No, quality of education is a large focus, this area almost certainly needs to be outstanding for the overall college to achieve outstanding.*
- Do students have a view on our grading? *The student survey outlines they made the right choice to come here, but we don't ask them explicitly on our grading or their view on it.*

An overview of the grading for each element of the SAR was presented to the governors highlighting areas of strength within each category and the areas of improvement needed to move the college towards outstanding.

- How do you make English and maths outstanding when you inherit students from their schools? *It is very difficult, and engagement can be a challenge. We are moving more towards GCSE and away from functional skills as this is more familiar to students. We also work on a whole college approach to support the English and maths provision.*
- Does enrichment include communication skills? *Yes, and in some curriculum areas this will also be part of the taught curriculum and qualification.*
- How often is this updated? *The SAR is annual, but we have moved to a rolling QIP and this will be reviewed throughout the year and reported to governors through the CQS committee.*

The chair of the workshop and members present also provided assurance again they had work through each of these in more details and were confident in the information provided having worked through the data and processes behind reaching these gradings.

[The board took a short break at 18:00 – 18:15]

The Vice Principal then outlined the QIP, outlining this is a rolling action plan for the year that is created from the SAR. Key actions that are focussed to help the college progress key areas that have been discussed were highlighted.

- How will you track the actions in the QIP? *This is reviewed internally through the Heads of Faculty and quality teams. It is then fed back through to governors via the CQS committee.*
- Will you RAG rate the actions? *Yes, we will do. This has not been applied yet until the first conversation on the actions take place during the first review point.*

- What do you feel will be the most difficult element of the QIP? *English and Maths achievement. This continues to be a challenge across college nationally.*

The board approved the SAR and the QIP. It was also agreed for in year monitoring of the QIP to be reported to the CQS committee on behalf of the board.

## 7.2 Student Engagement Update

The Clerk presented the report highlighting key dates that have been agreed to carry out student engagement that had been arranged with the Student Voice Coordinator.

- What would the topics cover? *This may vary depending on the time of year and would be reasonably open for governors to define with support from SMT members.*

The Board agreed for the Clerk to reach out to governors with the 3 dates with a view to seeking 3 governors for each date. Locations would also be agreed and shared when available.

Action	By Whom	Deadline
Clerk to share dates and locations for student engagement with all governors	Clerk	November 2023

The Board noted the report and agreed the dates.

## 8. Finance & General Purposes

### 8.1 F&GP committee update

A verbal update was given by the Chair of the F&GP committee, providing highlights from the recent meeting, including information from the HR report, estates and capital developments, the ongoing planned programme of works and echoed the information that had been shared earlier on RAAC at the college. There had been a report received on the impact of the marketing team linked to strong recruitment.

There had been 3 policies approved by the committee and the Tuition Fees policy had been recommended for approval at the board highlighting the discussion that the committee had held around these.

There has also been discussion around the increased pay proposal on the agenda for the Board and a review of the budget to reflect the pay award changes. The committee held good discussion on these and recommended to the Board for approval at this meeting.

The Board noted the verbal update including items being recommended for approval.

### 8.2 Annual Committee Report

The Chair of F&GP presented the reported, highlighting there had been one addition to be made around the policy work carried out by the committee.

The Board noted and approved the report.

### 8.3 Management accounts and draft outturn 2022/23

The Finance Director presented the report and summarised the key points to note including a positive budget that has led to a financial health grade of Good. It was highlighted that the

LGPS liability movement would be added before final sign off and this change would increase the level of reserves.

The Board recognised the increase in cash holding over the last 5 years, recognising the work carried out by the college to manage their finances effectively.

- We often look at our payroll as a percentage of turnover, this has come down but still remains high in the sector? *We are high within the sector however we also insource a number of items such as cleaning and catering that many colleges outsource.*

The Board approved the report.

#### **8.4 Update financial forecast and revised pay award**

The Finance Director presented the report and summarised the key points to note. It was highlighted this would not be a usual report brought at this time of the year, however following the information and advice received from the AoC based on the funding received from the ESFA, there has been an update to the college pay award that is an increase from the previously approved pay award at the July meeting.

The recommendation for a 6.5% pay award was presented to the board. It was explained that it is affordable for the college and would be in line with AoC advice. The additional pay rise would have an impact on the college EBITDA falling just below 5% of which could impact the college's financial health grade. Board members were reminded that the increased 16-19 recruitment would have a positive impact on next year's income as well.

- Does this include all vacancies? *Yes, it does.*
- If we didn't give the additional pay award, but other costs still increased would the EBITDA remain above 5%? *Yes, it would but the college would not be in line with guidance received to prioritise the use of the increased funding on pay.*
- Are we confident in the funds due to be received from the council? *Yes, the council processes have improved and the relationship with OCC is good.*

The Board approved the revised budget and the pay award to be awarded at 6.5%.

### **9. Audit committee update**

#### **9.1 High Level Risk Register**

The Finance Director summarised the report and highlighted the key points to note including the key changes being the reduced risk on the 16-19 recruitment numbers.

- The cost increases faster than income inflation, should this be reduced from red? *Yes, this could now be reduced to amber.*

The Board approved the report.

### **10. Nominations, Remunerations & Governance**

#### **10.1 NRG committee update**

A verbal update was given by the Chair of the NRG committee, providing highlights from the recent meeting. Key areas of discussion at the meeting were highlighted including the term of office for student governors in the standing orders to be reviewed. There were two potential candidates interested in the vacant governor posts; these were being followed up by the Clerk. A discussion was held around the re-election of committee chairs as 3 of the roles were due to be renewed in the first academic term. The link governor information had been shared and communication to governors.

The Board noted the verbal update.

**10.2 Annual NRG Report to the Board**

The joint Chairs of NRG presented the report, highlighting the activity carried out by the committee over the previous year.

The Board noted and approved the report.

**11. Policies**

**11.1 Tuition Fee Policy (from F&GP)**

The Clerk presented the policy, highlighting this had been recommended by the F&GP committee as outlined by the committee chair; there had been good discussion over the policy at the committee.

Board approved the policy.

**4. Strategy & Vision**

The Principal presented a recap of the college’s mission, strategic objectives and unique selling point. Information was shared with governors that had been presented to staff reflecting on how the college could reach outstanding or ‘Extraordinary’. Information was shared on what the college had been working on for the last year to contribute towards the strategic plan.

The governors had time for reflection on how the college has begun to make progress against the strategic plan. It was discussed that the college is still at the start of the strategic plan and direction. Both governors and SMT members agreed the college still has the right vision as we continue to work towards the strategic objectives.

The Chair presented the vision for governance, highlighting how good governance is determined by the board. Reflection by the board was given to the topic of what does high performing governance look like. including how can we support governors and ensure we get the best from their skills knowledge and expertise.

Governors reflected that it is important not to stand still and to ensure as a governing body there is challenge that supports the colleges growth and strategic direction.

**12. Future Business**

There were no items raised for future business

**13. Any Other Business**

There were no items raised for AOB

The Chair thanked again Vicky Field for her commitment to the governing body and wished her well for the future.

The next Board meeting was scheduled for Monday 11 December 2023 at 5pm.

The meeting closed at 19:55.

Approved for signature: ..... December 11th 2023

G Maitland-Smith  
15/02/2024 14:29:39

Signature ..... *Gavin Maitland-Smith* .....

15/02/2024

Date .....



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