

**MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION MEETING
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 27 MARCH 2024 IN THE
GALLERY RESTAURANT, BRIGHTON MET**



Chichester
College
Group

Present:

Chris Bennett, Dr Roy Bowden, Steve Cooper (Vice Chair), Gayathri Ganesan, Andrew Green (CEO), David Jones, Helen Kilpatrick CB (Chair), Paul Lansdowne (Staff Governor), Richard Moore, Dr James Sarmecanic, Tom Simmonds, Steven Skinner, Paul Wrightm

In Attendance:

Steve Coulthard (CFO), Vicki Illingworth (Executive Principal), Helen Loftus (Principal, Chichester College), Dan Power (CCO), Paul Riley (Principal, Brighton MET and Haywards Heath College), Jon Rollings (COO), Helena Thomas (Principal, Worthing College and Northbrook College), Catherine Vinall (Clerk to the Corporation), Sarah Box (Governance Officer)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

73. The Chair welcomed members to Corporation meeting, especially new members who were attending their first meeting.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

74. Apologies for absence were received from Tosin Adebisi, Kam Bains, Steve Bassam, Elly Claridge (Student Governor), Lauri House (Student Governor), Ryan Sallows, Nick Sutherland and Donna Turner-Irwin (Staff Governor).

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

75. The Chair drew the attention of Governors and those in attendance at the meeting to the requirement to declare any interests they might have in any of the items on the agenda, as detailed on the agenda sheet. Andrew Green declared that he was a trustee of PACSO and would therefore withdraw from the meeting for the PACSO item.

MINUTES

76. The Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporation on Wednesday 13 December 2023 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S TERMLY REPORT

77. Andrew Green gave a presentation to provide an update on FE sector developments and key issues for Chichester College Group.
78. In terms of political activity, Andrew confirmed that he had attended a celebration of skills event with the Chartered Institute of Further Education at 10 Downing Street. In addition, Gillian Keegan MP had also paid a visit to Chichester College. The Chancellor's budget had not focused on FE and there had not been any comment on future investment in the sector. The funding rate had increased by 1.9%. The 'Managing Public Money' Handbook was still awaited and there was continued uncertainty as to whether there would be a change to the financial year as a result of reclassification. It was explained that The Collab Group (a national body representing FE colleges) had been dissolved and the AoC Chair had visited Brighton MET.
79. Turning to the Group's financial performance, Andrew noted that 16-19 applications were currently up in comparison to the previous year. Adult applications were in line with the previous year and apprenticeship applications/new starts were healthy. Areas of risk were HE and Commercial and the Q2 results for Anglia were behind schedule. However, the Q2 results for International and First Steps were on track. An overview was given of changes to Ofsted and the outcome of the former GB MET monitoring visit, which was assessed as having 'significant progress' on all four themes.
80. Andrew explained that while issues such as staff recruitment, pay harmonisation, issues with vaping in campuses, Ofsted and the STEM building still posed some challenges, they were not quite as acute as they had been earlier in the year. The focus on GCSE mathematics and GCSE English attendance continued. The government had also announced a new policy which, when introduced, would require an increase in teaching hours of 4 hours for maths and 2 hours for English, no additional funding had been allocated for this. The completion of apprenticeships was still an issue; however this was countered by a strong achievement rate of 63.4%. Cyber security was an ongoing threat across the sector. Mental Health issues and wellbeing were a continuing issue for students. The issues relating to the decline in HE recruitment were set out in a separate paper and would be discussed later in the agenda. There was also some anxiety from staff regarding the reduced car parking at Crawley, and concern with Anglia income. The ongoing maintenance of College buildings continued to be an issue and related to this was how the new build and upgraded space was viewed by staff working in areas that had not been refurbished.
81. Governors were advised of the emerging opportunities for the Group, which included use of AI platforms such as Teachermatics and Century to streamline planning and teaching practice. Overall, First Steps was doing well and the government childcare entitlement had increased which would positively

impact 83 families with children at the nurseries. The Curriculum Vision for 2030, reputational growth and an increase in 16-18 applications were also noted as areas for opportunity.

Strategic Plan 2023-26 - Spring Term Monitoring Success Measures

82. Strategic objectives had been mapped, and the success measures had been RAG rated to show progress and highlight areas where further work was required. Andrew noted that it was only the first year of the three year strategic plan.

83. The Corporation noted the update and the following points were raised in discussion:

- A query was raised on the recent performance of Anglia Examinations and Dan Power explained that previously there had been a significant market in Argentina. However, there was currently a freeze on all foreign exchange transactions which had resulted in the build up of debt sitting with the franchisee in Argentina. It was also reported that there had been some incidences of malpractice in Italy and some centres had been forced to close as a result
- In response to the success measure reporting, Governors noted the decline in some of the staff survey indicators. Pre merger, 96% of respondents had stated they were proud to be a member of CCG staff, but the latest survey revealed that 66% of respondents were proud. This had been a source of disappointment for the senior team, however it was explained that the response rate was low at 36% and that the survey had taken place following an extensive period of realignment, work to harmonise terms and conditions and a lack of funding for pay awards. Andrew confirmed that a great deal of work was underway to drive the figure back up and increase participation in the future surveys.

CHICHESTER COLLEGE GROUP PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023/24 Update From The Curriculum & Quality Committee Meetings

84. The summary reports from the termly Curriculum and Quality meetings were received. It was confirmed that a meeting had been arranged with the CQC Chairs to discuss the governance and structure of the Committee for the 2024/25 academic year.

Update on the Performance of Teaching and Learning in 2023/24

85. Vicki Illingworth presented the spring term Group performance report. Overall attendance stood at 85% and overall retention at 96.5%. It was noted that attendance at Brighton Met which was 81% and retention at Haywards Heath which was 93.2% and it was recognised that these were below target. In response an attendance strategy had been introduced at Brighton and

Northbrook to provide support for students who were not attending college. It was explained that the bulk of these students were in Maths and English GCSE and this was skewing the data. Paul Riley explained that there was evidence that attendance at Brighton MET had been impacted by the building work and associated noise. There had also been a significant number of fire evacuations due to vaping in the toilets and this had also disrupted learning. It was also explained that the retention figure at Haywards Heath represented data on from the 2 year A'level courses. Numbers were still relatively small at the college and therefore there was a greater impact if students left during the year.

Action:

Incorporate previous year attendance and retention figures in the performance report (Executive Principal)

COMMITTEE UPDATES AND ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Management Accounts to 29 February 2024.

86. Steve Coulthard confirmed that the figures were showing some challenges and presented a summary showing that was a c£900k YTD variance in EBITDA. Governors were reminded that there had been a £1m shortage in the Apprenticeships budget prior to the year starting, so despite additional 16-18 funding, there had been challenges to income at the outset.

87. In Central Services the overheads were over budget and this was linked to the condition of the estate and premises costs. It likely that the refectories would end the year behind budget, this was partly due to the separate contracts with the catering provider, these were in the process of being harmonised. It was noted that the variance for First Steps was normal at this time of year.

Mid Year Forecast 2023/24

88. The forecast showed the position following the mid year reforecasting process. The full year forecast EBITDA was showing £2.2m against the £3m budget. The operations summary detailed a similar outlook and the cash flow summary illustrated the current challenging position with cash days.

89. A confidential minute was taken at this point.

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Financial Procedures and Delegated Authorities

91. Steve Coulthard explained that the paper had been brought to Corporation to seek approval for changes to signing thresholds to reflect the larger size and scale of the organisation. This update incorporated a change to the current delegated authorities beyond which the Corporation was currently required to approve. In order to balance the risk of increasing the threshold from £1m to £5m for Corporation sign off, the recommendation was to bring a pipeline of contracts for sign off (within a value range of £500,001 to £5,000,000) to each termly F&GP and Corporation meeting. This would enable the Corporation to have sight and opportunity to seek further information or assurance on large contracts in advance of the contract formation process (as opposed to the current system which is at the end).
92. The recommendation was discussed, and it was noted that the feedback from Internal and External Auditors was that the threshold was higher than in most colleges, albeit the competitors were not of similar size. Governors considered that the revised process was robust, that it would ensure more transparency and that it was a pragmatic approach given the size and scale of the organisation. It would also give Governors the opportunity to raise queries in advance by way of the additional reporting. The importance of ensuring scrutiny on the tender stage of the process was raised. Steve confirmed that there was a proposal to include a report within the procurement section. It was

Resolved

- a) That the updated Scheme of Delegation to the Corporation be approved;
- b) That the process to ensure that the Board was regularly updated on contracts due for approval be endorsed.

AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

Risk Management Report

93. The Corporation received the latest Risk Management Report and Chichester College Group's Risk Registers.
94. Steve Coulthard confirmed that the risk environment remained very high, and the report showed seven very high risks. The competitive advantage risk had been elevated since the last report and this was driven by the HE recruitment situation. It was explained that this could present a challenge for the Group and its place in the HE market. There were signs of the overall risk environment being reduced. It was hoped that by the summer term, some risk scores would be downgraded in areas such as staff recruitment and retention, where the number of vacancies had now been halved.
95. The Finance and MIS risk remained very high due to the continued uncertainty around the ONS reclassification. Governance and Reputational Risk had been

maintained at high as a result of not achieving year one of the three year merger financial plan.

96. The four highest areas of risk in Corporate Services were recruitment & retention, cyber security, capital investment levels and major capital projects risk. It was noted that it would be unlikely that the cyber risk would be reduced as it was a high risk area for every organisation.

97. Governors commented that it was important to not allow the red ratings to become normalised and it was confirmed that several areas were expected to reduce but the next Corporation meeting. In addition, it was suggested that it would be helpful to see an indication of targeted risk appetite within the report.

Action:

Incorporate indication of targeted risk appetite in Risk Report. (CFO)

CCG Risk Management Policy

98. It was confirmed that the standard Risk Management Policy had been updated and now specifically referenced the Group's risk appetite. Steve Coulthard noted there was an additional piece of work to ensure that the appetite was mapped across to the risk register. The Corporation noted that the recent mergers had been high risk and it would be important to see a more segmented approach to risk appetite. It was suggested that it would be helpful to see the appetite on the summary report for governors.

Action:

Map risk appetite across to the risk register (CFO)

GOVERNANCE & SEARCH COMMITTEE

Update from the Governance & Search Committee meeting

99. Catherine Vinall confirmed that the External Board Review Action Plan had been endorsed by the Committee, and progress against the plan would be reviewed at future Governance and Search Committees. A meeting with CQC Chairs had been scheduled to take place after Easter to discuss the governance arrangements for CQCs going forward. It was also advised that investment in a board portal was being considered following the recommendation from the External Board review, and several system demonstrations were to take place.

Corporation Membership and Recruitment

100. In an update on Corporation membership, Catherine confirmed that Danielle Dunfield-Prayero, who had been appointed as a Governor in November 2023 had decided to step down from the Governing Body as her personal commitments had changed considerably in recent months.

101. As a result, there were now three vacancies and the Governance and Search Committee had recommended the proposal to start a recruitment process. The Committee had suggested that in this round of recruitment, large local employers should be approached to strengthen links. The use of LinkedIn and the CCG website to raise awareness of the vacancies was discussed. Potential candidates could be invited to observe a Corporation meeting and it was also considered that Co-opted members might also wish to attend a Corporation meeting to further their knowledge.
102. The Corporation noted the approval of the written resolution to appoint Richard Barnes as a Co-opted Member of the Audit & Risk Committee and it was:

Resolved

- i) That the recommendation from the Governance & Search Committee to recruit three new board members be approved.
- ii) That the recommendation to use a recruitment agency to support the selection process and delegation selection of the agency to the Chief Executive and Clerk be approved.

Governor Role Description

103. Catherine Vinall confirmed that Governance & Search Committee had reviewed the updated role description and recommended it for approval. The role referenced the Charity Commission's trustee guidance and the Department for Education's Governance Guide for FE Corporations. It set out expectations and commitment to training and development. There was also a greater emphasis on the commitment required to fulfil the role and an estimation of the time required to fulfil the role. It was

Resolved

That the Governor Role Description be approved

RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Update from the Resources Committee meeting

104. The Resources Committee spring term update was received. Steve Cooper confirmed that the extensive capital projects programme would continue into the summer. The HR workload remained significant due to consultations, harmonisation and the introduction of a new HR system.

STUDENT COMMITTEE

Update from the Student Committee meeting

105. The Student Committee spring term update was received. Student presidents from each campus had updated on the work of the Student Unions across the Group. In response to a query, it was confirmed that the changes

made to the Student President role had been received positively and aligned with support from the student experience team. The Corporation was given an overview of the trips funded by the Turing Scheme. These had given students the opportunity to travel to Mumbai and Tenerife and take part in a life changing programme of education and voluntary work.

ITEM TO NOTE

a) Audit & Risk Committee

Internal Audit Report, Learner Journey

106. Roy Bowden confirmed that the RSM had audited the process from application, to admission and induction. It was concluded that the process was robust and a judgement of reasonable assurance had been made. The recommendations made had been completed, including the updating of the admissions policy.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

107. It was noted that the next Corporation Development/Strategy Event would take place on Tuesday, 14 May 2024 from 10.00 - 4.00 pm at Chichester College. The next Corporation Meeting would take place on Wednesday, 10 July 2024, at 4.00 pm, Brinsbury College.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

108. There were no items of Any Other Business.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

It was

Resolved

That in view of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the minutes for the remainder of the meeting be recorded on a confidential basis.