

**Tuesday 18th June 2024 at 5.30pm
Remote Online Meeting**

Minutes

Present:

Michael Belfourd – Chair of the Committee/Foundation Governor
Sarah Medicoff - Foundation Governor
Nader Sheta – Chair of Governors/ Foundation Governor
Graham Thompson – Principal

In attendance:

Clare Baskott - Clerk to Governors
Ciaran Graham – Associate Principal (Observer)
Anna Mason – Support Staff Governor
Margaret Searle - Director of Finance & Resources
David Wright – National Leader of Governance

The meeting was quorate.

The reports had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Item 1 Opening Prayer and welcome

The Principal opened the meeting in prayer at 5:29pm.

The Chair of the committee welcomed David Wright, National Leader of Governance and Anna Mason, Support Staff Governor, to the meeting.

Item 2 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies, all Committee members were present.

Item 3 Declarations of Interests

None.

Item 4 Notification of Any Other Business (notified to the Chair and Clerk prior to the meeting)

See confidential item 1.

Item 5 Minutes of previous meeting, 20th February 2024: for review and agreement for signing (*in papers*)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting and will be signed electronically on GovernorHub by the Chair of the Committee. **Action: Clerk/Chair of the Committee.**

Item 5.1 Matters Arising for this meeting not on the agenda

All covered.

Premises/Estates

Item 6.1 Premises and Accommodation Report – Graham Thompson – Principal

The Principal gave an update and reported that contractors, Prince Build, had been approved by email, by the Committee, prior to the meeting to meet the contract deadline for the Wave 5 Capital T Level Project.

The college had been unsuccessful with two Condition Improvement Fund bids and had appealed both bids. However, the appeals were expected to be unsuccessful as the funding had already been allocated and there were additional bids from schools and colleges with RAAC this year.

A discussion took place about funding and grants. The Committee noted that the college had been successful with many bids in the past.

Governor question: Why has £111k been set aside for the LRC part of the project?

Response: This is because we are moving the Careers Hub into the LRC to accommodate the new T Level course and the LRC will be being reconfigured. We were unable to claim for this out of the T Level funding.

The Committee voiced concern that some parts of the project may go beyond the summer holidays and asked about the possible impact of this. The Principal explained that there was a schedule of work which is due to begin on 1st July 2024 and is due for completion on 6th September 2024, for the start of teaching on 9th September 2024.

Governor question: Will there be many students in the college when the works begin?

Response: The week commencing 1st July 2024 is the current Year 12s final week. We will be also holding the offer holder experience day on 5th July 2024, of that week.

Governor question: Do you have contingency plans if the building works over run?

Response: The film and media suite will be completed first and we are confident that this learning space will be ready for September. The refurb of the LRC will be the final part to be completed and is more of a reorganisation of the space. We have worked with one of the contractors for several years and we do not expect too many delays.

A discussion took place about the projects and the repurposing of the air conditioning to make savings. The Principal reported that the glazed panels did not need to be fire-proofed so savings will also be made here.

Item 6.2 To note the appointment of Princebuild UK Limited as the Principal Contractor for the W5 project (approved by the Committee by email)

It was noted that this had been reviewed and approved by the Committee by email.

Item 6.3 Insurance update – Margaret Searle - Director of Finance & Resources

The Director of Finance & Resources reported that colleges were waiting for

clarification from the ESFA, as there had been no update in relation to insurance in the recently published College Financial Handbook. Colleges had been advised to extend their insurance by a further year, and this had been arranged.

A discussion took place about potential changes to insurance if the college joined a Multi Academy Trust (MAT).

A discussion took place about the insurance costs. The Director of Finance & Resources reported that the premium was high at £64k, but the college will receive a rebate of circa £3.8k next year if no claims are made.

The Committee approved the extension of the insurance contract with Hettle Andrews by a further year.

Item 7 Annual Health and Safety Report: – Graham Thompson – Principal – *for recommendation to the Full Governing Board*

The Principal explained that the new report made it easy to drill down to identify incidents and their seriousness using the new platform which had been introduced by the Health and Safety Officer. The new system also alerted the Estates Team as and when renewals are due.

The Principal reported that the college will be upgrading the college's Tannoy system to align with the critical incident procedure and an external company will be assisting with this. The college had recently reviewed the Critical Incident Procedure.

The Committee agreed to recommend the Health and Safety Report for adoption by the Full Governing Board.

A discussion took place about the major incident included in the report. The principal reported that a student had been taken to hospital for treatment for a minor ailment. The Principal explained that a definition of a major incident in the report, is anything that requires hospital treatment, although the incident itself may be minor.

Financial – Margaret Searle - Director of Finance & Resources/Michael Belfour – Chair of the Committee

Item 8.1 Monthly Commentary and Accounts – monthly accounts up to 30th April 2024 have been uploaded to GovenorHub

The Chair of the Committee reported that he had raised some points with the Principal, the Director of Finance and Resources and the Committee prior to the meeting, regarding the college's cash flow and the predicted decrease of £720k in cash between 2025-26.

The Director of Finance & Resources explained that the CFFR was a draft copy which will be updated and finalised for the FGB meeting on 2nd July 2024. The revised CFFR will be circulated, and the key changes will be highlighted. It was agreed that in future a summary will be included to give an overview of the CFFR, the history of the deficits and the key changes. **Action: Director of Finance & Resources**

A discussion took place about the increasing costs of capital projects.

The Director of Finance & Resources reported that increased costs, a fall in student numbers in the past, and increased partially funded capital works had impacted on the cash reserves. The college had also recruited additional teachers because of increased student numbers. However, the funding was not in line with salary increases. The Director of Finance & Resources explained that there will be £1M in reserves.

A discussion took place about the tuition funding. The Principal explained that the college had benefited with the tuition funding for students who had not passed GCSE English and Maths at school, the funding had enabled the college to appoint additional staff to support students. The Principal explained that these support staff were still required, even though the funding was no longer available, and staffing will be reviewed in September 2024.

A discussion took place about the AI platform, Teachamatic, which the college had recently invested in and the ways this could support SEN students and students with English as an Additional Language.

Item 8.2 Recommendations from the Remuneration Committee (to note that account has been taken in the budget for any recommendations arising) – covered under 8.3

The Chair of the Committee reported that the Chair of the Remuneration Committee had emailed him on 11th June with proposals for the two senior post holders and this had been taken into account in the budget.

Item 8.3 College Financial Forecasting Return including College Budget for 2024/25 – Three-year template and supporting commentary for filing with the ESFAA by 31st July 2024 for recommendation to the Full Governing Board

The Director of Finance & Resources gave an overview of the CFFR and explained that last year the college's financial health grade was 'Outstanding' but this had changed to "Requires Improvement" for this year and the next two years.

The Director of Finance & Resources explained that costs were increasing including exam fees, utilities, contracts, IT costs and the college had very little to play with to bring costs down. The ESFA focused on staff percentage costs which had always been high at the college.

The Principal reported that the college was collaborating with other Catholic Sixth Form colleges to launch the Romero training hub and will be employing and training Teachers which will help to reduce costs and aid recruitment.

Governor question: Who is hosting the training hub?

Response: Teach SouthEast is the validating body who work with the Xavier Trust. We will receive the funding which is similar to the apprenticeship levy.

A discussion took place about the benefits of the colleges training their own teachers and the golden handshakes available for certain STEM subjects.

The Committee agreed to recommend the CFFR return to the FGB, following review by the Committee by email, subject to the proposed changes and the additional commentary.

The Director of Finance & Resources explained that a detailed commentary will be included with the CFFR to the ESFA by the deadline of 31st July 2024.

Item 8.4 Staffing update

The Principal reported that the unions had submitted a request for an above RPI pay increase of more than 3.6%. There was also a request for the London weighting allowance baseline to be raised. The Principal explained that as an inner London college, they paid the highest London Weighting baseline. Negotiations around workload and time continued with the unions. The budget had been set at 4% for pay increases for next year.

A discussion took place about comparisons between school and salary increases. The Principal explained that the college had not yet heard from Unison about support staff pay increases and a meeting was likely to take place after the SFCA conference.

Item 8.5 Funding updates

No updates.

Item 8.6 Treasury Management

Item 8.6 Treasury Management: Monitoring Report – Margaret Searle - Director of Finance & Resources

The Chair of the Committee noted the Treasury Management report.

The Director of Finance & Resources gave an overview of the balances in the accounts. It was noted a balance of £577k remained in the Scottish Widows instant access account should a contingency be required for the forthcoming capital works.

Item 8.7 Treasury Management Policy (annual review) for recommendation to the Full Governing Board

The Director of Finance & Resources gave an overview of the Treasury Management Policy.

The Committee approved the Treasury Management Policy for recommendation to the Full Governing Body.

Item 8.8 ESFA updates as applicable (letter and annual strategic conversation – tbc) and April Dashboard report

The Chair of the Committee reported that had met Martin Sims and Anthony Haines from the ESFA on 4th June 2024, to focus on T Levels funding, placements and grants. The ESFA meeting had been re-framed from the Strategic Conversation to a “stock take” due to the impending general election and the focus of the meeting had been

risk and cash. The future changes of BTEC courses had not been discussed. The ESFA were supportive of the college and understood the issues with T Levels.

The Chair of the committee and the Principal agreed that it had been a useful meeting and that it was important to take the support offered by the ESFA.

Item 8.9 College Financial Regulations and Associated Policies: update and revision for 2024 – 2025 (in papers) for recommendation to the Full Governing Board

The Director of Finance & Resources gave an overview of the key changes, which had been recommended following the Key Financial Controls audits.

The Committee agreed to recommend the College Financial Regulations and the Travel and Subsistence Policy for approval to the FGB. Clerk to add to the agenda.
Action: Clerk.

Item 8.10 Rateable value – verbal update

No updates.

Item 8.11 FMCE Improvement Plan: to note progress report reviewed by Audit Committee, 26th February 2024

The Principal gave an update and explained that the FMCE Improvement Plan had been circulated to the Audit Committee and it been updated with the current progress on student recruitment for September 2024. The numbers for September had increased on this time last year. An interview day had been scheduled to take place on 25th June 2024, as well as the annual summer open afternoon on 26th June 2024.

Governors were invited to attend the annual summer open afternoon.

Governor question: If the numbers of students increase from September 2024 and we receive lag funding the following year, what impact will this have on the college's deficit?

Response: We have factored in an additional 15 students, but it all depends on how many students we recruit, and which courses they chooses to take. We will be able to make more of an estimate in September or October, however, funding can change year-on-year. If we do get a significant number of additional students, we can apply for increased in-year funding.

Item 9 Accountability agreement update – Graham Thompson

The Principal gave an update and explained that the Accountability Agreement had to be filed with the ESFA by 30th June 2024. The Principal gave an overview and explained that the agreement was linked to the skills agenda and next year's targets had been included. It was agreed that the Clerk will circulate the agreement to all Governors by email to meet the deadline of 30th June 2024. **Action: Clerk.**

The Committee approved the Accountability Agreement for recommendation to the FGB.

Item 10 SFX Corporate Services Ltd – Margaret Searle

SFX Corporate board meetings:

The Director of Finance & Resources gave an overview of the accounts for SFX Corporate. The Director of Finance & Resources gave an overview of the marketing campaign to increase lettings. The pricing strategy had been reviewed to ensure that the college remained competitive.

The Director of Finance & Resources explained that the SFX Corporate surplus is always gift aided back to the college.

The Director of Finance & Resources reported that the Nursery continued to struggle because of families moving out of London.

Standing closing items

Item 11 Committee review of effectiveness, membership, and skills

It was agreed that the clerk will circulate the online questionnaire for completion after the meeting **Action: Clerk.**

Item 11.1 Has the Committee identified any new or heightened risks to be advised to the Audit Committee for the risk register?

None.

Item 12 Any Other Business

None.

Item 13 Review and agree meeting dates and business for 2024/25

It was agreed that the Clerk will set up a Doodlepoll to rearrange the meetings for September 2024 and February 2025 meetings. **Action: Clerk.**

The following meeting dates were agreed:

- 12th November 2024 at 6:30pm
- 17th June 2025 at 5:30pm

Item 14 Identification of Confidential Items

See confidential item 1.

Item 15 Dates of meetings

- 12th November 2024 at 6:30pm
- 17th June 2025 at 5:30pm

Item 16 Close of business

The meeting closed at 7:24pm.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____
Chair of the Committee

