

**Monday 26th February 2024, 5.30pm
remote online meeting**

Present:

Somayina Ebele – Chair of the Committee/Foundation Governor
Daniel James-Proffitt – Student Governor
Dave Navarro – Foundation Governor

In attendance:

Clare Baskott, Clerk to the Governing Body
Margaret Searle, Director of Finance and Resources
Graham Thompson, Principal

Apologies:

Chukwuweta Uraih – Foundation Governor

Minutes

The meeting was quorate throughout, and all participants could see and hear each other.

Item 1 Opening Prayer

The Principal led the meeting in prayer at 5:31pm.

Item 2 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Chukwuweta Uraih.

Item 3 Declarations of interest

None.

Item 4 Committee time with Auditors (if required)

The Committee confirmed that time with the auditors was not required.

Item 5 Election of Vice Chair of the Committee

It was agreed that this will be carried forward to the next meeting. Clerk to add to the agenda. **Action: Clerk.**

**Item 6 Minutes of previous meeting, 14th November 2023: for review and agreement
– Chair of the Committee**

The committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting, 14th November 2023. Clerk to move to the approved minute file for electronic signature. **Action: Clerk.**

Daniel James-Proffit, Student Governor, joined the meeting at 5:34pm.
The Chair of the Committee welcomed Daniel James-Proffit to the meeting.

Item 7 Matters Arising

All actions had been completed.

Item 8 To review the Committee's Terms of Reference (routine review)
The Committee approved the Audit Committee's Terms of Reference.

Item 9 Internal Audit – Chair of the Committee

Item 9.1 Audit Committee to review and agree plans for internal audit and key priorities for 2023-2024 and 2024-25

The Director of Finance and Resources explained that the Committee needed to agree which areas would be audited in 2024-25. The Director of Finance and Resources suggested two options for the committee to consider; financial planning (to include budget setting) and/or student recruitment and marketing. Individual Learner Numbers were audited annually.

The Director of Finance and Resources explained that an external review of governance had been scheduled for summer 2024, and safeguarding had been covered during the Ofsted inspection in November 2023.

The Principal explained that the number one risk to the college was student recruitment, there was an increasingly competitive post 16 landscape and therefore, student recruitment and marketing would be an ideal area for audit. The last marketing audit had taken place in 2019, however, this audit had focused more on the college's marketing strategy, than on student recruitment.

A discussion took place about the future audit areas.

The Committee agreed that the Director of Finance and Resources will obtain audit scopes for both student recruitment and financial planning and circulate to these committee. **Action: The Director of Finance and Resources.** It was agreed that the committee will discuss the proposed audits at the next meeting. Clerk to add to the agenda for the next meeting. **Action: Clerk.**

Item 9.2 Internal Audit Action Report – The Director of Finance and Resources
The Director of Finance and Resources gave an update and explained that the network configuration had been delayed due to costs. The works had been scheduled for the summer break and will be completed by August 2024.

A discussion took place about delays to complete the action. The Director of Finance and Resources explained that the delays were due to a lack of time and expertise, and it was unusual for there to be any delays on the audit report actions.

The Committee noted the report.

Item 10 FMCE improvement plan: monitoring of progress – Principal

The Principal gave an overview of the FMCE Improvement plan and reported that student numbers for September 2024 were looking positive, with applications slightly ahead of the same time last year. There were currently 704 accepted offers (at this point in 2023 there had been 537) and interviews will continue until the Easter break. An open evening had been scheduled for prospective students to take place on 6th March 2024

The Principal reported that there was increased revenue from lettings, which were now back at pre-Covid levels, and this had been discussed at the recent Finance and Resources Committee meeting.

It was expected that the revised College Financial Planning handbook will be published in March 2024.

Governor question: What will be the key focus areas for the College Financial Planning Handbook?

Response: The handbook is expected to be more of a consolidation of the bite size guides around senior pay and loans, so that we no longer need to refer back to the Managing Public Money document. One area which is still being debated is the possible change of financial year.

The Committee thanked The Principal for the update.

Item 11 Risk Management:

Item 11.1 To receive the updated risk register and policy

Item 11.2 Principal to present verbal report on key active and emerging risks.

The Principal gave an overview of the updated Risk Register and explained that the risks, and their order were unchanged. The Principal invited questions.

Funding and Finance

The Principal reported that the college had received notification from the NJC that they had agreed to raise the hourly rate for support staff on scales 3-8, to ensure they were meeting the national minimum wage legislation. These increases were unlikely to impact on the college, as the college had already agreed to meet the London national living wage, which was paid at a higher rate.

The Principal explained that the college's financial health was expected to be graded as "Requires Improvement" or "Inadequate", due to the under recruitment of students in Autumn 2022, and this was as a result of the lagged funding.

Quality

The Principal explained that the move to digital exams in summer 2026, for a small number of subjects, may impact on the achievement of some students and create digital capacity issues for the College.

Staff Recruitment and Retention

The Principal explained that the college had set up a teaching training hub in partnership with the four London Catholic sixth form colleges, and this will begin in September 2024. It was hoped that the hub will mitigate against the national staff recruitment and retention crisis.

T Levels

The Principal explained that the scaling up of the industrial placements for T Levels was an on-going risk.

MIS/IT Infrastructure

Reputation

The Principal explained that the college currently had an AI Acceptable Use Statement, and an AI Policy will be introduced in the future. There was an ongoing risk of the misuse of AI e.g. in Deep Fakes.

The college was in the process of updating the tannoy system, to improve health and safety procedures, particularly for lockdowns.

The Principal explained that the college was using the positive comments in the recent Ofsted report, in the college's marketing materials.

Catholic Ethos

The Principal explained that the college was awaiting the Catholic Schools Inspection. The Associate Principal was now a trained inspector and had recently undertaken two inspections of schools.

The Principal explained that the senior leadership team had self-assessed the college as outstanding in all areas.

The Principal reported that the number of Catholics enrolling in primary and secondary schools was falling nationally, and the greatest impact was being felt in Lambeth, and this decline was expected to impact on the college in the next five years.

A discussion took place about the potential for future projects to overspend. The Principal explained that although some projects had overspent, the college received additional funding. The proposed summer project was being projected managed and the costs had increased because of the changing scope. All projects are closely monitored, and the programme of works was shared with F&R at every meeting.

Governor question: Do you think the college will see an increase in students with more complex needs, following the positive Ofsted report?

Response: We may become more attractive to students with Education Health Care Plans, and we may also see an increase in students who have not had a diagnosis of their needs. We are very good at diagnosing students' additional needs within the college.

Item 12 Board Assurance Framework

The Committee noted the Board Assurance Framework.

Item 13 Auditors Performance Review

To review the performance of Buzzacott (external auditors) and Scrutton Bland (internal auditors)

The committee completed the review of year end 2023 work collaboratively with the management team present, using the performance indicators questionnaire in the papers. Complete satisfaction was confirmed.

Item 14 Any Other Business

None.

Item 15 Identification of Confidential items

None.

Item 16 Date of next meeting

Tuesday 7th May 2024 at 5:30pm

Item 17 Closing Prayer

The meeting closed at 6:35pm

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Chair of the Committee