

Tuesday 15th November 2022
Held remotely via ZOOM video conferencing

MINUTES

PRESENT:

Mr M Belfourd, foundation governor, Chair of Committee
Mr N Sheta, foundation governor, Vice Chair of Committee
Mrs E Preece, staff governor (non-teaching)
Mrs S Medicoff, non-governor member
Mr G Thompson, Principal

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs M Searle, Director of Finance & Resources
Mrs C Biscoe, Engagement Partner, Buzzacott LLP for item 1
Mr C Graham, Associate Principal – observing
Mrs E Lewis, Clerk to the Governors

1. THIS ITEM WAS TAKEN AND MINUTED AS A MEETING OF THE GOVERNING BODY IN JOINT (REMOTE) SESSION WITH THE AUDIT COMMITTEE.

The meeting was opened by Mr Belfourd at 6.45pm. It was quorate throughout and all participants could see and / hear one another.

2. **Opening Prayer.** Offered by Mr Thompson.
3. **Apologies:** not applicable, all present. It was noted that Mr D Freeman had stepped down as a foundation governor.
4. **Welcome:** Mrs E Preece, Staff Governor (non-teaching) and Mrs S Medicoff (non-governor member co-opted to committee pending appointment as foundation governor) were welcomed.
5. **Election of Chair of Committee:** With Mrs Lewis temporarily in the chair, Mr Belfourd was re-elected, unanimously, unopposed, as chair of the committee for a further term of two years, which would still be within his term as foundation governor. It was agreed that Mr Sheta would continue as vice chair of the committee for two years from 26th January 2023, subject to his reappointment as foundation governor in May 2024.
6. **Declarations of Interest:** there were none
7. **Minutes: Meeting held on 20th September 2022:** included in the papers for the meeting and previously circulated on 17th October 2022 were agreed to be a true and accurate record to be signed in due course.
8. **Action Points from previous meeting:** there were none outstanding.
9. **Matters Arising:** there were none that would not be covered by the agenda.
10. **Accommodation, Premises project reports and plans:**
 - 10.1. Mr Thompson introduced the “Capital Projects, Accommodation and Premises Report, November 2022” which had been included in the papers for the meeting, providing an update since the previous meeting in September 2022.
Capital Projects and Strategic Issues: Current and recent projects were reviewed, and Mr Thompson reported that the Wave 4 T Level capital fund refurbishment of the

ground floor had commenced during the October half term and was progressing well. It was expected that the ALS team would be able to move into their new area in early January 2023 as the first phase. As part of this initial phase, it was noted that the Chaplaincy Base had moved to a more spacious and centralised position in a room accessed from the foyer.

Mr Thompson confirmed progress with the strategic review of the estate as the final condition survey document had been received that morning in the format requested. He said that the review with the topographical survey and condition survey would support future bids.

Mr Thompson explained the intention, following consultation with Barker's Associates, to submit two bids to the next round (2023 / 24) of CIF¹ funding. He described the nature of the projects one of which would be a resubmission of the water and pipework upgrade and the other to replace flat roofing. Mr Thompson explained how strengthening the flat roofs would make them more robust to support solar panels which was an aspect of the strategic commitment to sustainability. Barker's Associates would cost both projects and, due to the tight turnaround to meet the submission deadline of noon on 7th December 2022, it was agreed that the costings would be shared by email once received. Mr Belfour suggested that allocation of matched college funds to the projects would require the provisional approval of the governing body and governors should be apprised of the estimated costs from Barker's Associates. [The outcome of the bids would be announced in May 2023, at the earliest]. Mr Thompson commented that it was helpful to have third party involvement and noted the success with bids prepared by Barker's.

Health and Safety: Mr Thompson noted that the policy had been reviewed and updated and that an Health and Safety Compliance Officer had been appointed to start on 1st December 2022.

Sustainability: Mr Thompson reported discussions at an investigative level looking at solar energy options which would reduce energy costs and progress the college towards the environment / sustainability strategic priority. He advised an interest in a fully funded Power Purchase Agreement which had been outlined. He advised that the college had, working with central London colleges, been awarded a grant of £43k from the Central London Strategic Development Fund, which would be used to upskill students and staff on green skills and provide some demonstration solar panels for engineering students to work on. Mr Thompson said a carbon literacy short, accredited course was being planned.

Mr Belfour asked whether the purchase agreement would go down a similar route to the SILEX loan in the accounts. Mrs Searle and Mr Thompson said they did not think it would.

Mrs Medicoff asked whether, under the sustainability agenda, lower grade options such as smart lighting and heating had been adopted. Mr Thompson confirmed that an LED lighting project had been implemented across the college and that BREEAM compliance was a condition of funding of the new Business Hub building. He emphasised that there was more that could be done. Conserving energy was a target. The recently installed new boilers would be more energy efficient and zoned heating was being driven by sensors.

Annual Plan of Works 22/23: The costed and colour coded plan was noted. Mr Thompson advised that the biggest outstanding item was the water supply.

- 10.2. **Annual Review of Health & Safety Policy:** Mr Thompson introduced the updated Health and Safety Policy for 2022 – 2023 which had been included in the

¹ Condition Improvement Fund

papers for the meeting. He explained how it had been streamlined and compiled, drawing on appropriate model templates, to focus more on the responsibilities of individuals and teams across the college and the arrangements for delivery of the policy.

Mr Belfourd agreed that the approach made sense.

The Health and Safety Statement and Policy was agreed and would be proposed to the full governing body at its meeting on 8th December 2022 for immediate adoption and signing.

11. Financial update:

- 11.1. **Monthly Commentary; Accounts and Cashflow:** The monthly accounts with commentary and cashflow reports for September 2022 had been sent to all governors on 17th October 2022 and included in the papers for this meeting. Mr Belfourd commented that they had been prepared before a revised report had been received from the actuaries. Mrs Searle confirmed that a revision would be reflected in the October accounts to be distributed shortly, reducing the pension liability from £6m to £1m. The college was a category B. **ACTION: Mrs Searle to share the revised actuaries report with Mr Belfourd.**

The ESFA Governing Body Finance Dashboard would be shared once the pdfs were available to download. **ACTION: Mrs Lewis.**

- 11.2. **Funding - Financial Projections: review and update of financial plan.** Mrs Searle introduced that paper, included in the papers for the meeting, updated since the previous version presented in September 2022 and adopting the new accounting methodology. Mr Belfourd confirmed that the statutory accounts had matched with the management accounts to July 2022. Mrs Searle advised that the financial plan would have to be reforecast as a result of the shortfall in the confirmed number of enrolled students (a key assumption) which was 105 below target at 1220. Reworking the plan to manage the factors creating financial impact including reduced lagged funding, increases in salary and utility costs, LPFA triannual valuation and the increase in TPA to 10.3% from April 2023 were expected to make quite a difference and would be challenging. Mrs Searle advised that financial health grading was “outstanding” from last year; would be “good” this year but, she cautioned, why it would be hard to remain “good” next year. It was noted that the operating surplus feeds into financial health for the ESFA.

Mrs Searle confirmed to Mr Belfourd that the next return to the ESFA would be at the end of December when the audited and signed financial statements would be filed along with the Financial Record and annual report of the Audit Committee.

- 11.3. **Treasury:** Mrs Searle introduced the autumn treasury report which had been included in the papers for the meeting. It was agreed it was appropriate to continue the £1m deposited in an instant access Scottish Widows account. Mrs Searle commented that the cash balance was healthy but with another potential capital project on the horizon (ref item 10.1) a careful eye was needed. She confirmed that the [college treasury management policy](#) referenced in the college financial regulations, both approved annually, set out the credit ratings for approved investments.

Mrs Medicoff asked whether splitting accounts across multiple banks to reduce the risks had been considered. Mrs Searle replied that this was kept under review but the norm for the college was two banks and explained that a lot of reserves had been used up constructing the Business Hub.

- 11.4. **Student Council (“Student’s Union”) Financial Report– presentation of accounts for 2021 – 2022:** Mrs Searle introduced the report which had been included

in the papers for the meeting. The committee noted that events had started to run again and accepted the account summary.

11.5. ESFA confirmation of CFFR 2022 to 2024 & Financial Dashboard October 2022: Mr Belfourd introduced the letter dated 25 October 2022 from Adrian Brook, Deputy Director, Finance & Provider Market Oversight, ESFA, which had been included in the papers for information. He explained that the letter set out the financial health grade assessed in response to the CFFR for 2021/22 to 2023/24. Based on that financial plan the grade would be “Good” for 2021/22 (latest outturn forecast year) and “Good” for 2022/23 (the current budget year). Mr Belfourd highlighted mention of the financial dashboard information previously discussed in item 11.1. He reiterated that financial health is closely linked to student numbers.

11.6. ESFA Annual Strategic Conversation: It was announced that 14th June 2023 had been arranged for the next annual strategic conversation. The previous conversation had taken place in June 2021 at the start of the scheme and since then the college had been released from early intervention.

12. Student Roll and Recruitment: Mr Thompson: An enrolment data report “SFX Annual Enrolment Statistics (21st October 2020 – 2022 Comparison” had been included in the papers for the meeting. Mr Thompson reviewed the successful and well attended Open Day event held on Saturday 12th November which launched recruitment for September 2023. Mrs Medicoff and Mr Belfourd had also attended.

Mr Thompson reported that enrolment for 2022 – 2023 had been confirmed as 1220 students for funding in 2023 – 2024 and confirmed that this was 105 below target and below the roll for last year (1279). There would be analysis of which courses hadn’t recruited and an assessment of what the impact would be going forward. He analysed the statistics which showed that the recruitment of **new** students was around 70 below target - highlighting a bigger than usual drop in the number of returning students. His focus would be on identifying and addressing the patterns and reasons for this.

Mrs Medicoff asked whether any were leaving to go to other schools and Mr Thompson explained the difficulty determining that he thought there would be some. He acknowledged that the journeys for some students were often difficult which could be a critical factor in their decision not to return. He emphasised that some students leave with a cashed-qualification and go elsewhere to top it up. That also benefitted retention as they had completed a course. He confirmed that achievement was high for the year.

Mr Thompson went on to say that the situation was not that new students were not attracted to the college and year 11s remained keen to come. He reflected on the cause and effect of not offering places early enough for 2022 entry. He expressed confidence in the ability and impact of the new Marketing and Recruitment manager who had been in post for the current campaign Mr Thompson highlighted an increased presence on social media which was raising the profile of the college.

Mr Thompson highlighted that the conversion rate was higher than last year and noted a pleasing increase in the number of new students recruited from St John Bosco. He noted that the overall Catholic population was up from 24% to 28%. There was also more of a balance between the number of male and female students.

Mr Thompson explained why there were fewer students on level 3 courses than last year and the previous year because CAGs and TAGs had awarded more generous grades enabling access to level 3 courses.

Mrs Medicoff commented that she had grown up in the neighbourhood but had never heard much about the college and asked whether that was to be a focus for the new

marketing manager. Mr Thompson agreed that more could be done to raise awareness in the local neighbourhood and that there was a need to understand why there had not been a single application from La Retraite School this year. He confirmed that the number of Wandsworth students had always been 7 – 8% - the majority came from Lambeth and Southwark. He recalled how the former partner schools used to guarantee a flow of students but all, except Notre Dame, now had their own sixth forms.

Mr Thompson advised the committee that Mr Graham was line manager to the marketing manager and that a widening of promotional activity was underway. The committee heard how some schools obstructed the recruitment process by refusing to provide references on behalf of pupils who wanted to move on.

13. SFX Corporate Services Ltd:

13.1. **Report / Business Plans** – an update had been included in the papers for the meeting as discussed by the Board of Directors of the trading subsidiary. It was noted to highlight that the primary source of income generation was from lettings. A profit of £50k generated in 2021 – 2022 would be gift aided to the college.

13.2. **End of year (to 31st July 2022) report and accounts signed 3rd November 2022:** had been provided in the papers and were received by the committee.

14. Staff Cost of Living Rises: Mr Thompson: Mr Thompson reported that the support staff side had accepted the pay award negotiated via UNISON with the NJC (SFCA). The increase agreed was between 5% and 7.7% along with an uplift in London weighting allowance and an extra £20 pro rata for the performance standards payment.

He reported that the teaching staff unions, NEU and MASWT, had rejected the offer of pay increases of between 5% and 8.9% and industrial action was underway. NEU had not negotiated, and members would strike against the Secretary of State on 30th November 2022. The NASWT would be balloting its members in January. The demand was for an increase of 11.7% fully funded by the government.

Mr Belfourd asked how much the government would fund? Mr Thompson confirmed that no money would be provided by the government – it was expected to be paid from the increased funding allocation. He commented that some SFCA members would be financially crippled by even a 5% award.

Mr Sheta sits on the NJC and the SFCA council and was being kept informed. He confirmed he had no further information to pass on.

15. Professor Keohane Memorial Fund / Prize £300 award:

15.1. **Endorsement of nominee(s) for recommendation to full Board:** The nomination received from the Head of Science recommending that the £300 prize should be awarded to Ms Khayla Paguio was accepted and would be **proposed to the full governing body for approval on 8th December 2022.**

16. Risk Management: Governors had received the autumn 2022 version and confirmed that no new risks or modifications were necessary arising from the discussions today.

17. Any other business: there was none.

18. Date of next meeting: Tuesday 21st February 2023

The meeting ended at 8.05pm

SIGNED: _____

DATE: _____