

Minutes of the Board meeting 23.5 held on Tuesday 16 July 2024

Room A203, Long Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge

Present: Gerry Bolton (Corporation Chair), Yolanda Botham (Principal), Ishan Cader, Chris Cope, Sophie Harrison, Rob Howes, Gemma Long, Hugo Macey, Jenny O’Hare and Gavin Sheffield

In attendance: Steve Dann (Vice Principal), and Charlotte Hemmins (Finance Director)

Clerk: Anne-Marie Diaper

Ref	Actions:
23.5.1	Apologies for absence Apologies were received from Gary Bourton, Alex Curnow, David Evans, Abby Futter, Melissa Mlazi, Alex Pryce, Sebastian Rasinger and Alex Wong.
23.5.2	Declarations of Interest None.
23.5.3	Minutes of last Board meeting The minutes of the 23.Y Board meeting held on Tuesday 25 June 2024 were approved with no amendments as a true and accurate record of the meeting.
23.5.4	Matters arising None.
23.5.5	Report from Finance & Resources committee FRC23.4 held on Wednesday 19 June The FRC Chair reported from the last meeting. The meeting minutes provided a background briefing and there were 4 items for Board approval. Before taking the approval items, the FRC Chair gave an overview from the other parts of the recent meeting. The meeting on 19 June had received a helpful summary of the management accounts, including information on financial surplus. The meeting had taken the usual update on estates and CIF bids and works planned over the coming months, and an updated report on risk. <u>Financial support policy</u> – for approval. The FRC Chair drew the meeting to the detailed discussion at the meeting, detailed in the minutes. She advised that the committee was recommending Board approval of this key policy as presented, but then later there would be a review of the fund, followed by a possible amendment to the limits and thresholds, depending on uptake. There was a brief discussion about barriers, and the approaches taken to increase uptake.

With no further points raised the Corporation approved the Financial Support policy.

Health and Safety policy – for approval. The FRC had considered the policy which contained minor amendments. **The Corporation noted the amendments which were not material, and with no discussion or comments approved the policy.**

Annual budget for 2024/25 including capital budget allocation. The FRC Chair pointed out that the budget presented at the meeting was for Long Road as a SFC. The committee had been assured that the budget setting process was robust, and was owned across the whole of the organisation, was aligned with strategic objectives, and provided assurance on the College's financial position for the Board. The updated paper in the folder, she pointed out, included crude assumptions on savings post 1 September (eg. VAT, rates, joint insurance policy) and further joint procurement savings also to be sought going forward. There would also be some likely savings to be made from joint finance and payroll systems, and further savings expected over a 3-year period.

There were a couple of questions and a short discussion about capital developments on site, how budgets would be prepared for the Colleges in the new MAT, and the level of pay costs shown.

With no further queries, the Corporation approved the annual budget for 2024/25 including the capital budget allocation as presented.

Three-year financial forecast. The FRC Chair advised the meeting that the forecast set out a prudent position without assumed growth, that should provide the Corporation with assurance on the future financial position of the College.

There was a short discussion about the financial reserves (Reserves policy likely to be in place in the MAT), and with this **the Corporation approved the three-year financial forecast.**

23.5.6 Report from Audit committee AC23.3 held on Wednesday 26 June 2024

The AC Chair was unable to be present, so the Vice Chair reported from the most recent meeting. The minutes provided a written briefing and there were two items for Board approval but he firstly touched on other matters discussed at AC23.3 including the 13-month period external audit due in the autumn (due to transition from FE to MAT world), risks and the assurance map, Ofsted particularly for MATs, curriculum preparing young people for life, one political party's keenness on

technical skills, a letter from the Secretary of State about a comprehensive system for post-16, and an Independent Commission for Wales.

GDPR/DP Policy – for approval. On approvals, the Vice Chair referred to Health & Safety and IT/cyber security policies likely to be inherited by the MAT, but now the AC wished to recommend approval of the GDPR/DP policy with minor amendments.

Financial regulations and procedures – for approval. Under the AC ToR, the Board must approve the financial regulations on AC recommendation. The meeting noted that new financial regulations were introduced 12 months ago, and those now for approval included only minor amendments. It was likely that financial regulations would be revised for the new entity.

With no discussion, the Board approved the GDPR/DP policy, and the Financial Regulations as presented.

23.5.7 Report from Standards committee STC23.5 held on Thursday 4 July 2024

The STC Chair reported from the recent meeting. The minutes provided a written briefing; there were no approval items. She reported that the committee had approved the Fitness to Study policy, noting that cases can be difficult both at College level and in the wider sector. The meeting had taken the standard termly update on Safeguarding; since both counsellors had left, College was looking at other provision. Exams series had gone smoothly, with a huge organisational effort from College staff, supporting access arrangements, with few challenges and quite good student attendance. The committee had reviewed internal KAs 3 and 4 and were pleased with the results seen, with a steady improvement in performance including value added. Subject by subject performance had been discussed and the committee had received no surprises. The Vice Principal added that there had been a big push on attendance as was most beneficial to outcomes. Steps had been taken to reduce the number of poor attenders.

23.5.8 Report from Governance & Search committee held on Tuesday 10 July 2024

The GSC Chair reported from the very recent meeting. There had been only two matters discussed at the GSC meeting; the external review of governance carried out at the start of the academic year, and the arrangements for the Long Road LGB after 1 September.

On the external review, the Board noted that there had been a good resulting report with some minor recommendations. The GSC also considered a summary of wider observations of other reviews carried out by Stone King. The committee felt there were some useful points for governance structures going forward. Hugo had attended the GSC meeting this time to discuss membership of the different bodies; discussion mainly centred upon LGB membership, and skills was key. Decisions on recruitment to the Long Road LGB will be for the LGB to take (if and when vacancies arise). The committee had noted that KPIs for LGBs would be a matter for further consideration going forward.

23.5.9 College development plan and KPIs

The Principal spoke to her written papers on this item. She pointed out that the 'Actual' column would be closed down for the College's self-assessment report in the autumn. These matters would be part of the strategic and operational plan for the College going forward. She wanted to draw out a few key points for discussion.

VR project. From the local skill improvement fund College had shared those immersive films with every school and College in Cambs and Peterborough. Demystify roles, these were produced in partnership with Addenbrookes, benefitting the community.

Attendance. She drew out that only 13.9% of year 1 A-levels students had a below 85% attendance rate, the year before this was 28.9%, showing evidence of staff efforts.

MIS had staff helped improve access to data, with new reports, and better shared dashboard/landing page (live) being developed.

Open Evenings. 6000 people had visited. Welcome days would be very important, two days allowed College to accommodate more students.

She pointed out that nothing showing in the performance in the KPIs should cause any alarm, but she paused there.

A Governor asked a question about year 2, level 2 attendance, and it was agreed that this would be an LGB matter for 2024/25. Staff turnover figures were very good. The College's current operating plan would be closed in the autumn, as the Trust would need a strategic plan that will provide a framework for each College's decision making. Each College will have their own operational plan and own budget. September LGB meetings will be encouraged to think about their own KPIs, with some shared across the new institution.

23.5.10 Strategic report verbal

The Vice Chair reported that final touches were being made to all the legal documents and arrangements pertaining to the new Trust. The establishment date of 1 September 2024 was on track. There were Transfer Deeds, land transfers, other MAT approvals to be completed before 1 August.

He reported that the company was now established with Companies House, and the Trust Board will meet on 7 August.

On Policies, some statutory policies (safeguarding, employment etc) will be set at Trust Board level and some local, and there would be new a policy review process. The LGBs would have a greater focus on elements of learning, student experience, some strategic objectives, finance, and risk, with streamlined reporting.

The Vice Chair was very keen to note the contribution of those Governors who were either not present at this meeting, or who were either not continuing on or who would be in new roles. Otherwise, most people present would continue on in new roles in the new structure:

The Corporation extended many thanks to Independent Governor, Alex Wong, AC and Board member, who would become one of 5 new Members of The Sixth Form Colleges Trust. Parent Governor, David Evans, and student Governor, Lily-Kate McCormack were nearing the ends of their terms of office. Sophie Harrison was stepping down from her role as Independent Governor and Chair of FRC, but she wished to note the FD's excellent leadership and financial management, who also thanked Sophie for her support and feedback. Corporation Chair Gerry Bolton had stepped into the role in difficult circumstances in summer 2022. The whole Corporation appreciated Gerry's personal touch, caring about people as well as brilliant with the numbers. Two Governors gave huge personal "thank yous" for everything Gerry did for Long Road, leading the Corporation through a strategically important and challenging period. The Corporation thanked Yolanda Botham, who was not only CEO and Principal, but she had led the MAT project which would not have been so successful without her input, driving all aspects of the project.

23.5.11 Any other business

The meeting noted that this was likely to be the last ever meeting of the Corporation due to the successful establishment of The Sixth Form Colleges Trust. It was the case that most Corporation members would be likely to continue on in the new entity from 1 September 2024.

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Actions:

23.5.12 Date of next meeting (2024/25)

None. The schedule of dates for the LGB meetings and the Trust Board (draft v7) for 2024/25 was available on the portal.