



Full Corporation Meeting

12th December 2024

Time: 6.00 pm
Chair: Mr N Horsfall

Present:

Nick Horsfall	Mark Rigby	Glenys Hughes
Andy Lythgoe	Stephen Bamber	Sam Jackson
Carol Davies	Robert Coyle	Zahid Tapas
Bashir Shama	Stuart Merrills	Rida Zafar

In Attendance:

Lesley Hart Deputy Principal	Joanne Smith Vice Principal	Sarah Ball Assistant Principal – Pastoral
Mark Goodwin Assistant Principal – Student Experience	Nicola Sodano Assistant Principal – Teaching and Learning	Tracy Tunstall Clerk

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted by Governors from Susan Wright, Carole Swarbrick and Emily Quinton.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Appointment of Student Governor

The Chair informed Governors that the Student Learner Voice had held an election for the post of Student Governor and that Rida Zafar, who is a first year student, was recommended for appointment as Student Governor for a term of 2 years or until such time as she ceases to be a student at the College.

Governors resolved to formally appoint Rida Zafa for the duration of her programme of study or until such time as she ceases to be a student at the College.

4. Appointment of External Governor

The Chair informed Governors that Councillor Karen Hon and Mrs Anna-Marie Watters had both expressed an interest in becoming a Governor. They had completed application forms and references have been received, although one was still outstanding. The Chair, Clerk and the Principal had recently met with both Councillor Hon and Mrs Watters to discuss their applications. The Governance and Search Committee had also considered the applications and recommended that both Councillor Karen Hon and Mrs Anna-Marie Watters are appointed as External Governors for a period of 4 years ending 12th December 2028. The Principal reported that both applicants had also completed the skills audit form which had been completed recently by all our Governors and a desk top exercise had been carried out. Governors **noted** that both of the applicants have skills which address some of our weaker skills areas on the Board as a whole.

A vote was taken and Governors unanimously resolved that Councillor Hon and Mrs Watters are both appointed as Governors for a four year term of office ending 12th December 2028.

5. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th September 2024 were **agreed** as a true and accurate record.

6. Matters Arising from the Minutes

(a) Minute 7(a) - Resignation of External Governor

The Chair informed Governors that Martyn Cox was unable to attend this meeting and that his resignation as External Governor has now taken effect. He expressed his thanks and gratitude to Mr Cox for his outstanding contribution to the College over his 30+ years as a Governor.

(b) Minute 8(a) - Minutes of the Governance and Search Committee

Governors **noted** that the Vice Chair of Governors had not yet met with each individual Governor as part of an annual review but would be arranging to do so shortly.

The Chair of Governors reported that he had met with the Chair of the Risk and Audit Committee and the Chair of the Curriculum and Quality Committee. He informed Governors that the meetings had gone well and were positive.

(c) Minute 12 – Principal’s Report

The Principal reported that the Government has confirmed earlier today that all BTEC courses will be funded in 2025/26 giving one year’s reprieve however further reviews will take place and some courses may be under threat in 2026/27.

The Principal informed Governors that the SFCA has launched a legal challenge on the Government’s decision that the pay award and associated funding for teachers in schools and academies will not apply to sixth form colleges in the FE sector. There was nothing further to report at the present time.

7. Minutes of Curriculum and Quality Committee

The minutes of the Curriculum and Quality Committee held on 26th September 2024 were **noted**.

The Chair of the Committee highlighted that a lengthy discussion had taken place regarding the examination results. He had expressed concern that in some subject areas there was consistent failing whereas some were much more successful and that he was striving for consistency across all subjects. He informed Governors that the College is aiming for an ALPS score of 5 which is good however there is a need to progress and continue to move forward. The Principal drew attention to the examination results in 2022 and 2023 not being comparable as GCSE grades were still inflated as a result of the Covid pandemic and reported that grade boundaries in 2024 are now more in line with pre-pandemic boundaries. He agreed that there was a need to progress further and that there was a need to make more effective use of the data.

The Chair of the Committee reported that he had asked for Assessment 3 data to be available to Governors in December rather than wait until the next scheduled meeting of the Curriculum and Quality Committee in March.

Assessment 3 Update

The Vice Principal presented the report informing Governors that this provides a snapshot of the current working grades that students are performing at a certain point when they returned for Year 2 in September. She reported that grades are expected to increase in the summer after students have had a further six months of study. Assessments 4 and 5 will take place in January and March respectively.

A whole college 'at risk' list has been produced ranking all Year 2 A Level learners identifying the students who are the furthest away from their minimum progress grades. The top 35 students have been allocated a mentor from either the SLT or Teaching and Learning coaching team to work with them to overcome their individual barriers. A Governor asked of the 35 students were there any common themes and **noted** that this is not the case. Attendance is not always the issue and some are linked to pastoral matters which the Progress Coaches support. The Assistant Principal - Pastoral informed Governors that many students are now reported to MHST as their needs are too severe for CAMHS.

A Governor asked if background information on students is forwarded from secondary schools and **noted** that information is shared automatically if a student has an EHCP. At admission interviews prospective students are asked if they have had additional support in school and this is followed up.

The Vice Principal drew attention to the examples of departmental interventions which are taking place and reported that she now meets with Heads of Department on a regular basis.

The Vice Principal informed Governors that a 'deep dive' departmental evaluation had taken place in the Science Department. She highlighted that there is a lack of consistency in the Science department and key areas of focus have been outlined. Feedback has been given to the Director of Science and next steps, along with areas to work on, have been shared. Teaching and Learning in the Department is of a good standard but there is a dis-connect between this and external examination results. There are new members of staff in the department who are keen to work more consistently and share good practice in the best interests of all students. On-going work with SLT and the Director of Science will help with this process.

Governors **noted** that Assessment 4 will take place at the end of January.

8. Minutes of the Student Affairs Committee

The minutes of the Student Affairs Committee held on 13th November 2024 were **noted**.

9. Minutes of the Finance and Personnel Committee

The minutes of the Finance and Personnel Committee held on 13th November 2024 were **noted**.

The Chair of the Committee informed Governors that the Financial Regulations require approval each year and that no amendments had been made. However, since the meeting the Deputy Principal had reflected on the accounting treatment of the purchase of assets other than land and buildings. Currently assets costing £300 or more and grouped items such as a suite of computers with an individual value of less than £300 but a group value of £1,000 or more are capitalised on the Balance Sheet. She highlighted that this is no longer representative of the value of items purchased. She felt that a more realistic value is £1,000 for individual items and £3,000 for groups items is more appropriate.

Governors considered the suggested amendments and resolved to approve that the Financial Regulations be amended to increase the value of individual items from £300 to £1,000 and for grouped items to be increased from £1,000 to £3,000.

Subject to the amendments outlined above Governors resolved to approve the Financial Regulations for 2024/25.

The Chair of the Committee informed Governors that the Health and Safety report was not in a usable format as presented. The lack of a Health and Safety Officer in college is a real concern however a job description and person specification has been drafted and this new position will be advertised over the Christmas holiday.

The Chair of the Committee drew attention to the time required to carry out a full review of all policies. Key policies have been reviewed and updated however many policies have now become more procedural than policy. The Deputy Principal informed Governors that SLT will undertake a full review of all policies in the new year.

10. Minutes of the Risk and Audit Committee

The minutes of the Risk and Audit Committee held on 28th November 2024 were **noted**.

The Chair of the Committee informed Governors that the Auditors had attended part of the meeting and had given a detailed report on the external audit which had been carried out for the year ended 31st July 2024. He highlighted that there had been no recommendations raised in relation to the audit. The Letter of Representation and the Regularity Letter of Representation were recommended by the Committee for approval by the Full Corporation, along with the Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire.

The Chair of the Committee reported that the Risk Register had been discussed in detail and that further work to develop this was required. It had also been agreed that each risk should be allocated to a specific person who is responsible for ensuring that all actions are completed within a specified timeframe. The Principal and SLT would undertake this.

The annual report of the Risk and Audit Committee summarises the work of the committee during the year and was recommended by the Committee that this is submitted as part of the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended July 2024.

11. Approval of the Annual Report and Accounts to 31st July 2024

The Deputy Principal informed Governors that the Annual Report and Accounts represents the published financial position of the College for the year ended 31st July 2024. She highlighted the unrestricted reserves balance and reported that this figure relates to the value of the College. She outlined the following documents which required approval:

(a) Letter of Representation

The draft letter to confirm that the Corporation has fulfilled its responsibilities and that the accounts give a true and fair view of the college's financial position had been considered and was recommended for approval by the Risk and Audit Committee.

Governors resolved to approve the Letter of Representation and authorised the Chair and Principal to sign the letter on behalf of the Corporation.

(b) Regularity Letter of Representation

The draft Regularity Letter of Representation to confirm that the Corporation has proper internal processes in place and is used to test the effectiveness of internal controls was recommended by the Risk and Audit Committee for approval by the Corporation.

Governors resolved to approve the Regularity Letter of Representation and authorised the Chair and Principal to sign the letter on behalf of the Corporation.

(c) 2023/24 Annual Report from the Chair of Risk and Audit Committee

The annual report to the Corporation from the Chair of the Audit Committee was considered and was recommended to the Corporation for approval.

Governors resolved that the report is submitted as part of the Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended July 2024.

(d) Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire

The Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire is a standard format which is completed by the Deputy Principal and confirms that the Corporation has proper internal processes in place and is used to test the effectiveness of those internal controls and was recommended for approval by the Risk and Audit Committee.

The questionnaire was considered and Governors resolved to formally approve the Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire.

Governors resolved to formally approve the Annual Report and Accounts for the Year Ended 31 July 2024.

12. Management Accounts to 31st October 2024

The Deputy Principal presented the management accounts based on actual income and expenditure up to 31st October 2024 and projected to 31st July 2025. She highlighted the impact of the increase to the National Insurance rate and the deceased National Insurance threshold and reported that no assumption had been made about additional funding for this. The Deputy Principal reported that the original projection had assumed a pay award of 4% across all staff, however the teaching staff unions are requesting that the offer made to the school sector of 5.5% is matched and funded. The support staff union, Unison, is requesting 5% with no request for additional funding. The pay awards remain unsettled at the present time however the requested Pay Awards of 5.5% and 5% along with the increased National Minimum Wage, have been reflected in the accounts therefore showing a decrease in surplus.

The Deputy Principal informed Governors that the cash position remains healthy and the ESFA Financial Indicators result in an 'outstanding' rating. The bank loan covenants are not breached.

The projected budget outturn position is £348,539 against a budget surplus of £479,117.

Governors resolved to approve the management accounts to 31st October 2024.

13. Strategic Plan Update

The Principal presented the Strategic Governor Dashboard as at December 2024 and reported that this addresses the main targets. He asked Governors if anything else should be included. There was a general discussion and Governors **agreed** that the following should be included:

- Staff turnover across the year
- ALPS score and Six Dimensions Report
- Quality of Teaching and Learning – one word statement as to where we are at present time

14. College Annual Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan

The Principal presented the College Annual Self-Assessment Report for 2023-24 and the Quality Improvement Plan 2024-25 and highlighted the summary judgements. He informed Governors that the reports are produced for staff to use and for Governors and Ofsted to monitor. He outlined the defining features and characteristics of the College and drew attention to the key strengths.

The Principal informed Governors that improvement in a minority of courses at A Level and BTEC remains a key priority and highlighted, in particular, that the focus on improvements in some science subjects along with an additional whole College focus on high attaining students, also remains a priority. He drew attention to the A Level courses which will be focussed on during this academic year. He also drew attention to developing teacher skills to effectively embed the wider skills of English, Maths and employability skills into their teaching and to ensure that learners are aware of when these skills development work has taken place.

The College has highlighted five areas as fundamental themes to be embedded across all College improvement strategies at all levels. The Principal reported that Priority CP5 – Consistency still needs work.

The Quality Improvement Plan is a rolling document and is monitored and updated regularly. Some subjects last year did not do as well as expected and there are areas for improvement. The aim is for ALPs 5 across the College and a Governor asked if 5's are achieved in Biology, Chemistry and Physics would that bring the College to a 5 overall. He **noted** that this could be achieved if all other subjects perform as they should.

Governors **noted** the report.

15. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report

The Assistant Principal – Pastoral presented the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) report. She highlighted the three main findings. She reported that Black and Pakistani students, particularly boys, consistently underperform in comparison to White British students, reflecting a complex interplay of socio-economic and cultural factors. Ways to increase parental engagement are being considered. Students from lower-income backgrounds perform below national averages but slightly better than those from higher-income backgrounds at this college. However, bursary recipients and lower-income students still face significant barriers to achieving high grades and for those on the bursary fund, the college is providing access to laptops. Students with High Needs achieve less top grades compared to national benchmarks and additional support is being provided by the Learning Services Manager.

The Link Governor for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion was not able to attend this meeting to present a report but had sent in some notes of her meeting on 12th November with the EDI Officer. She highlighted that the EDI Officer's report was very thorough although she did feel that the same issues face the same groups of students that were concerns when she was a member of staff in college. The Link Governor is also hoping to complete the TES Equality and Diversity online course.

16. Safeguarding and SEND Annual Report

The Assistant Principal – Pastoral presented the report. She reported that the number of students with an EHCP is on the rise which, along with those students with medical and other needs, is having a huge impact on the Learning Services Team. Additional Learning Support Assistants were appointed at the start of the academic year however there are times in the week that the department cannot cover every class that needs support.

The Cocoon is the safe space for any student to use as and when they need to and students benefit from using it in many different ways, however there are times during the week when there are too many students for the size of the space which is now becoming a cause for concern.

Governors **noted** the exam results and destinations of the High Needs Learners at the end of 2023/24 and thanked the staff for their work in supporting these students.

17. Principal's Report

The Principal spoke to his report. He informed Governors that the NEU disaggregated ballot of its members for strike action in the sixth form colleges not covered by the government's additional pay funding has been successful in 32 colleges/workplaces. Strike action has already taken place and will continue on 13th December and 7th, 8th and 9th January 2025. He reported that there is nothing in the Press about the strike action and the DfE have not made any announcements. The SFCA is continuing to take legal action against the Government.

The Principal informed Governors that the NASUWT union is currently in the process of balloting its members to join this strike action and reported that it is highly likely that this will be the case. This would increase the number of staff involved to around 80% of the teaching staff.

A Governor asked if the same students are being affected by the strike action and **noted** that this is the case.

The Principal reported that there are 1853 funded students on roll.

The Principal informed Governors that there has been a slight decline in attendance at Open Events for 2025 entry as unfortunately there was a last minute change of date due to the strike action, however current applications for a place in September are significantly up compared to the same time last year.

18. Review of Risk Register 2024/25

As discussed previously in the meeting, further work was needed to develop the Risk Register. The Principal would bring the new version to the next meeting.

19. Link Governor Update

The Link Governor for Careers gave a comprehensive report of events which have taken place for our students which included 496 careers guidance appointments being held, 4 Apprenticeship Academy Workshops and a trip to the apprenticeship fair in Liverpool for over 50 of our Year 13 students.

20. Any Other Business

The Clerk drew attention to the amount of photocopying undertaken for Governors to have a full set of agenda papers at each meeting and highlighted that this is not in line with the College's Sustainability Policy. All papers are circulated electronically seven days before a meeting and a small number of Governors currently bring their own devices to meetings to enable them to access the papers. She asked that all governors who have their own device to bring this to future meetings, alternative arrangements will be made for those governors who are not in a position to do this.

21. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 2nd April 2025 at 6.00 pm.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.00 pm.