



Minutes of the Search Committee Meeting held on Monday 3 March 2025 at 3pm via Teams

Present: Janet Gater (*Principal*)
Mick Martin (*Foundation Governor*)
Helen Stevenson (*Foundation Governor*) – Chair

In attendance: Ruth Potter (*Clerk*)

The Chair opened the meeting in prayer.

1. ROUTINE AND STANDING ITEMS

1.1 Declarations of interest

Attendees were invited to declare whether they had any direct or indirect personal, prejudicial or pecuniary interest or conflict of interest in any matter which formed part of the agenda for this meeting or was likely to be discussed at this meeting. No interests other than those already declared and recorded on the Register of Interests were noted.

1.2 Apologies for absence

All members were present. The meeting was declared quorate.

1.3 Items to be included under urgent business

Quality and Standards Committee quorum provision was accepted as an item of urgent business.

1.4 Minutes of the Search Committee meeting held on 23 October 2024 (*previously circulated*)

The minutes were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair in accordance with Article 12 (3) of the Articles of Government. The publication of the minutes was authorised in accordance with Article 13.

1.5 Matters arising from the minutes (*previously circulated*)

Committee members noted the items on the action log prepared by the Clerk.

2. GOVERNING BODY REVIEW

2.1 Membership and Succession Planning Update (*previously circulated*)

The Chair referred members to the Clerk's report from which the following points were highlighted:

Staff Governor Appointment

Chair's Action had been applied in January to appoint Kevin Crooks as the Staff Governor following an open nomination process. This would be reported back to the full Governing Body at its next meeting in March in line with the protocol set out in the Standing Orders. In the meantime, the Staff Governor would sit on the Quality and Standards Committee in line with the terms of reference for that committee.

Discussion ensued on the need for appropriate management of conflicts of interest during meetings given that the Staff Governor's spouse was also a member of

college staff. The Clerk confirmed the legal and governance advice she had taken in order to ensure all compliance and regulatory considerations had been accounted for.

Foundation Governor Vacancies

Two vacancies remained and the Clerk updated members on the recent expressions of interest received for these posts following a refreshed advertisement campaign. It was agreed that formal applications would be invited from all individuals who had expressed their interest. The process set out in the Governing Body Recruitment and Succession Planning Policy would then be followed; applications would be assessed against skills and diversity gaps and interviews held with applicants as required. If the timeline allowed, recommendations for appointment arising out of these interviews would be referred to the Governing Body at its next meeting. As with all Foundation Governor appointments, the final appointing authority rested with the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

Governors with terms of office due to expire in 2024-25

Three governors had terms of office due to expire. Of these, two had expressed an interest in re-appointment as follows:

- Andrew Jones, Co-opted Governor – second term of office due to end on 31 March 2025
- Helen Stevenson, Foundation Governor – first term of office due to end on 28 June 2025

The re-appointment of Andrew Jones was given special consideration given that this would go beyond the usual two terms of office anticipated by the College's recruitment policy and governance code. Factors considered included: skills, attendance, commitment, contribution outside meetings, succession planning for leadership of Audit Committee and difficulties experienced in attracting applicants for the Co-opted Governor vacancy advertised in 2024. Members were of the view that re-appointment for a third term was in the best interests of the College and recommended this to the Governing Body.

The re-appointment of Helen Stevenson would be referred to the Governing Body for consideration and approval.

It was noted that the Parent Governor's term of office was due to end on 30 June and members agreed that a new Parent Governor election process would commence at the beginning of the new academic year, once a new cohort of students (and parents) had joined the College.

Resolved:

- **To consider Foundation Governor applications in line with the Governing Body Recruitment and Selection Policy**
- **To recommend the re-appointment of Andrew Jones to the Governing Body for approval**
- **To refer the re-appointment of Helen Stevenson to the Governing Body for consideration and approval**

ACTION – FGB agenda item

Chair roles due to expire during 2024-25

Discussion ensued on the committee and board leadership roles due to come up for election in the remainder of the academic year. Succession planning for these roles was discussed alongside the intentions of the existing incumbents. No specific issues were anticipated.

3. GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Governance Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) – progress report *(previously circulated)*

The Clerk presented this report and referred members to the QIP progress update and RAG rated action log. It was noted that six actions had been closed out and seven actions were ongoing with work underway (amber RAG rated). Of these, the most challenging to complete successfully by the end of the year was that in relation to recruitment of Foundation Governors and succession planning. In addition, there was one sub-action highlighted as having made no progress so far (red RAG rated), which related to the introduction of set dates during the year when governors could be invited into College for a specific themed visit opportunity.

Discussion ensued and it was agreed that with regard to the outstanding action, a plan should be prepared ready for implementation in the new academic year.

Resolved:

- **That the QIP progress report be noted**

ACTION – Sub-action 5(c): prepare plan for implementation in new academic year

3.2 Executive reports to governors *(previously circulated)*

The Clerk referred members to the feedback received during the External Governance Review and Ofsted inspection on the length of board and committee packs provided to governors. This was a common challenge across the sector and, as a result, had been the focus of a specific session at the recent Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA) Governance Professionals conference. It would also be the theme for the upcoming SFCA governance webinar on 11 March. The governance risks associated with very lengthy board papers were highlighted and options considered for streamlining executive reports.

Discussion ensued on the balance needed between reducing papers so as to make them more accessible and able to promote strategic decision-making without compromising on the quality of information provided. As a starting point, it was agreed that following the SFCA webinar, the Chair of Quality and Standards Committee would review the latest committee papers and meet with the Vice Principal (Quality, Curriculum & Pastoral) to discuss opportunities for rationalisation. Findings and recommendations would be brought back to the next meeting for further discussion.

Resolved:

- **That further investigation be conducted into options for reducing length of committee and board papers**

ACTION – Chair of Quality & Standards Committee to review latest papers with Vice Principal and report back on findings.

4. GOVERNANCE / REGULATORY UPDATE

4..1 Governance and regulatory update *(previously circulated)*

The Clerk referred members to her report which highlighted the following points:

- FE and sixth form college corporation governance guide – this key guidance document had been updated by the DfE and was stored on GovernorHub and used as part of the governor induction process.
- Accountability Agreement and Local Needs Duty 2025-26 – new guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE) in January 2025. Submission deadline for the Accountability Statement was 30 June 2025 and reporting would be through Quality and Standards Committee into the Governing Body.
- Preparing for workforce change – duty to prevent sexual harassment and employment rights bill. New Anti-Sexual Harassment Policy would be presented to governors for consideration and approval in the coming cycle of meetings.

Resolved:

- **That the governance and regulatory update report be noted**

5. GOVERNOR TRAINING

5.1 Governor and Clerk training log – mid-year review *(previously circulated)*

The Chair referred members to the log which captured all training and development activity undertaken so far during this academic year. Reference was also made to the Governing Body's training and development plan for the year and the Clerk highlighted that the Health and Safety board training planned for December 2024 had not taken place due to the Ofsted inspection.

Resolved:

- **That the Governing Body mid-year training report be received and noted.**
- **That the Health and Safety board refresher session be re-scheduled for the March board meeting and the EDI training be moved to Autumn Term 2025.**

6. OTHER MATTERS

6.1 Governor Training

Members were invited to update the Clerk on any training activities they had completed since the last meeting. No activities were reported.

6.2 Any Other Urgent Business

Quality and Standards Committee Quorum Provision

The Chair of Quality and Standards Committee and the Clerk had raised this as an item of urgent business due to the recent difficulty encountered in securing a quorum for the Autumn Term meeting and also the upcoming Spring Term meeting. It was suggested that the existing quorum of four governors be amended to state 'four members, three of whom shall be governors'.

Resolved:

- **That a change in quorum for Quality and Standards Committee be recommended for approval to the full Governing Body**

ACTION – FGB agenda item

6.3 Date of next meeting

Monday 19 May 2025 at 3pm

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution at the meeting. There being no further business to address, the Chair closed the meeting at 3.40pm.

Signed by the Chair 

On this day 19 May 2025