



Minutes of the Search Committee Meeting held on Monday 19 May 2025 at 3.30pm 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

None

1.4 Minutes of the Search Committee meeting held on 3 March 2025 (*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.

1.6 Committee risk register (*previously circulated*)

The Clerk explained that in response to a recommendation arising out of the External Governance Review, an extract from the strategic risk register was included to provide assurance and oversight of the risks specific to Search Committee. The update provided against the relevant risk(s) was highlighted.

Resolved:

- **That the Committee Risk Register be received and noted.**

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:

Foundation Governor Vacancies

Two Foundation Governor applications had been received and interviews held with applicants in line with the Governing Body Recruitment and Succession Planning Policy. The Chair updated the Committee on the relevant professional skills, experience and personal attributes displayed by both candidates and confirmed that the Panel had recommended their appointment. Following members' consideration of the current committee structure, membership and skills mix, both candidates were recommended for appointment and assignment to committees as follows:

- Darren Melling – Finance & Resources Committee
- Rob Peacock – Quality & Standards Committee and Search Committee

As with all Foundation Governor appointments, the final appointing authority rested with the Archdiocese of Liverpool. In the meantime, the Chair confirmed that both candidates would be invited to the next Governing Body meeting on 1 July 2025 at which Governing Body approval for their appointment and committee assignment would be sought.

Chair roles due to expire during 2024-25

Reference was made to the key governance leadership roles due to come up for election in the Summer Term meeting cycle. Succession planning had been taking place for these roles and – as indicated at the previous committee meeting – no specific issues were anticipated.

Attendance at meetings

Reference was made to the persistent non-attendance of one individual at recent Quality and Standards Committee meetings and it was agreed that the Clerk would follow this up separately before the new academic year.

Resolved:

- **To recommend to the Governing Body the appointment of Darren Melling and Rob Peacock as Foundation Governors, subject to Archdiocese approval and satisfactory completion of usual checks**

ACTION – FGB agenda item

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 nine actions had been closed out (green RAG rated) and five actions were ongoing with work underway and/or on track for completion (amber RAG rated). With the recommended appointment of two Foundation Governors to address the two outstanding board vacancies, it was noted that one key area for development highlighted in the external board review (captured in the QIP) would soon be closed out.

Resolved:

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

3.2 **Governing Body Handbook 2025-26** *(previously circulated)*

The Clerk referred governors to the updated Handbook and explained that it had been presented for approval to ensure that it was finalised in time for the start of the new academic year. Proposed amendments to the document were highlighted. These were designed to reflect planned changes in strategic priorities and remove references to the now defunct ESFA.

In addition, the Handbook's Key Document Appendices – including all key governance documents and policies – were presented for annual review. Of these appendices, proposed amendments were highlighted to the Governing Body Recruitment and Succession Planning Policy. It was further noted that all committees would be conducting an annual review of their respective terms of reference which may result in further proposed amendments.

It was confirmed that Governing Body approval would be required for any amendments to the Handbook itself and the Key Document Appendices.

Resolved:

- **To recommend approval to the Governing Body of the Governing Body Handbook 2025-26 and Key Document Appendices**

ACTION – FGB agenda item

4. GOVERNANCE / REGULATORY UPDATE

4.1 **DfE updates** *(previously circulated)*

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

- Further Education Commissioner (FEC) intervention report on Weston College – this intervention report had been published by the Department for Education (DfE) in April 2025 and provided an opportunity for the College to review its own governance practices. The Clerk presented an overview of the report's recommendations against an assessment of the College's current practice. Discussion ensued on those areas where there was scope to further strengthen practice.
- Novel, contentious or repercussive (NCR) transactions – new good practice guidance had been issued by the DfE in March 2025 intended to help colleges better understand and identify types of NCR transaction and ensure proper factors were considered and approvals sought when required. The guidance document would also be brought to the attention of the Finance & Resources and Audit Committees.
- Effective senior post-holder and Chair performance review – in March 2025, the DfE published this guidance which would be shared with Remuneration Committee with respect to the senior post-holder element. Committee members reviewed the College's current practice with respect to Chair performance review against the recommendations within the guidance and confirmed that no additional action was required.

Resolved:

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

5. COMMITTEE GOVERNANCE

5.1 **Annual review of Search Committee Cycle of Business and Terms of Reference** *(previously circulated)*

The Clerk referred members to the Committee's cycle of business which had been reviewed and updated to move the annual review of the business cycle and terms of reference to the Summer Term meeting.

Discussion ensued on the appropriate timing and reporting mechanism for the annual review of the Link Governor Scheme. It was agreed that this should be reported directly to the full Governing Body at the final meeting of the academic year at which point all Summer Term link governor visits would be completed. Members agreed, therefore, that it should be removed from the Search Committee business cycle, however any issues arising from the Governing Body's annual review of the scheme would be considered by the Committee in the usual course of business.

The updated cycle was confirmed and no further amendments were proposed.

Members were also invited to conduct an annual review of the Search Committee's Terms of Reference. A number of amendments were proposed, the main one being to update the Committee's name to 'Search and Governance' to reflect its full remit.

Resolved:

- **That the Search Committee cycle of business be updated as agreed.**
- **That amendments to the Search Committee Terms of Reference be recommended for approval to the Governing Body.**

ACTION – FGB agenda item

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. The Clerk reported back on the latest SFCA Governance Webinar entitled 'Chairing the Strategic Board', the slides from which had been uploaded to GovernorHub.

6.2 Any Other Urgent Business

None

6.3 Date of next meeting

Monday 20 October 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 4.10pm.

Signed by the Chair



On this day _____ 20 October 2025 _____