

Minutes of the Part 1 Corporation meeting held in the Coaching Rooms, Welwyn Garden City Campus, at 17:00 on 25 March 2024.

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| **Present** | Peter Thompson  (Chair) | Andrew Slade  (Principal & CEO) | Rob Payne  (Corporation Member) | Simon Caunce  (Corporation Member) |
|  | Neil Myerson  (Corporation Member) | Jean Fawcett  (Corporation Member) | Mairi Watson  (Corporation Member) | Kevin Ibeh  (Corporation Member) |
|  | Luke Parker  (Corporation Member) | Jamie Stevenson  (Corporation Member) | Katy Henderson  (Corporation Member) | Richard Whitehead  (Corporation Member) |
|  | John O’Sullivan  (Corporation Member) | Mia Barrell  (Student Corporation Member) | Sarah Furley  (Staff Corporation Member) |  |
| **In Attendance** | Jackie Page  (Deputy Principal Curriculum, Performance and Student Experience) | Mark Sellis  (Deputy Principal Finance, Resource and College Planning) | Claire Dolan  (Deputy Principal Strategy, Partnerships and Business Development) | Joseph Maggs  (Director of Governance) |
|  | Barbara Jones  (Interim Vice Principal HR and OD) |  |  |  |
| **Apologies** | Jamie Blee  (Student Corporation Member) | Phillip Fulton  (Corporation Member) |  |  |

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| **ITEM NO.** | **ITEM DISCUSSED** |
| **42/23** | **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** |
| 42/23.1 | Apologies for absence were received and noted from:   * Phillip Fulton (Corporation) * Jamie Blee (Corporation – Student Governor) |
| **43/23** | **CONFIRMATION OF ELIGIBILITY AND QUORUM** |
| 43/23.1 | No notice had been received of any member becoming ineligible to hold office and the meeting was quorate. |
| **44/23** | **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** |
| 44/23.1 | There were no new declarations of interest. |
| **45/23** | **GOVERNOR TERMS AND APPOINTMENTS** |
| 45/23.1 | The Corporation Chair welcomed Sarah Furley to the meeting. Sarah had been elected by the College’s support staff to become the Staff Corporation Member (Support Staff). The election for the Staff Corporation Member (Teaching Staff) position had also concluded and the candidate with the most votes was Deborah Caviel. Unfortunately Deborah was not able to attend this meeting. |
| 45/23.2 | It was noted that John O’Sullivan’s term as Corporation member was due to expire before the next meeting of the Corporation. |
|  | *Sarah Furley and John O’Sullivan left the meeting at this point* |
| 45/23.3 | The Corporation ratified the appointment of Sarah Furley and Deborah Caviel as Staff Corporation Members (support staff and teaching staff, respectively). |
| 45/23.4 | On the recommendation of the Search, Governance and Remuneration Committee, the Corporation approved the reappointment of John O’Sullivan for a further two-year term. |
|  | *Sarah Furley and John O’Sullivan returned to the meeting at this point* |
| **46/23** | **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING** |
| 46/23.1 | The minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 December 2023 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting. |
| **47/23** | **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES AND ACTIONS** |
| 47/23.1 | The Corporation noted the updates regarding the actions arising from previous meetings. Two actions remained amber and ongoing as at the time of the meeting. |
| **48/23** | **PRINCIPAL’S REPORT:**   * **GOOD NEWS STORIES AND ACTIVITY** * **STUDENT GOVERNOR PRIORITIES FOR 23/24** |
| 48/23.1 | The Principal and CEO’s report highlighted the latest good news stories and activities related to the College. Items that were highlighted included:   * The College celebrated National Apprenticeship Week by joining forces with the University of Hertfordshire on 7th February for a special event on higher technical qualification and degree apprenticeships. * The Careers team proudly participated in the Generation Welwyn Hatfield Careers Fair, a collaborative effort by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and the Hertfordshire LEP’s HOP. This event was not just a showcase of potential career paths but also a vibrant platform for young people to directly engage with employers. * In February half term the College welcomed the largest ever number of talented sportspeople for the Wolfpack trial day. |
| 48/23.2 | The Deputy Principal Strategy, Partnerships and Business Development reported on the Lambing Weekend (held over 23 and 24 March). The event had been a success with a high number of visitors. The number of visitors had caused some disruption to the local area and the College would consider how to improve this experience in future years. |
| 48/23.3 | Mia Barrell (MB) provided an update on the priorities she had been focussing on in her role as Student Union President, including EDI and accessibility. A tracker had been developed which could be shared with the Corporation in future showing progress with the priorities. It was also suggested that the possibility of separating the student Corporation member and SU president roles be explored for next year, based on feedback from MB (ACTION). |
| 48/23.4 | The Corporation noted the updates. |
| **49/23.4** | **STRATEGIC GOALS** |
| 49/23.5 | The Corporation reviewed the summary of progress against the College’s strategic goals and proposed evolution of the goals, given the changes that had taken place and progress made since the original strategic plan. The goals had been discussed at a committee level over the term and it was the intention for a more thorough review at the strategy day. |
| 49/23.2 | The Corporation discussed the goals relating to finance measures in the context of the College’s budget. It was acknowledged that there remained some areas of the College that had historically been under-invested in which now required investment. The investment in upgrading systems was a key factor in the planned budget deficit for 23/24. It was also noted that the EBITDA showed that the College was cash generative. |
| 49/23.3 | The Corporation also discussed the staff to income ratio. The College continued to review structures to support a rebalancing of the ratio to closer to the FE Commissioner benchmark, though it was noted that this was a rough guide and college type and location would affect what ratio was achievable in reality. |
| **50/23** | **NATIONAL POLICIES UPDATE** |
| 50/23.1 | The Corporation received the National Policies Update which highlighted the points discussed at the committees. One of the key updates highlighted was the confirmation of the 16-19 funding for the academic year 2024-25 and the introduction of minimum teaching hours for English and maths as a condition of funding, of at least three hours for English and four hours for maths. Governors asked if the main risk was related to the additional staffing requirements. This was part of the challenge but there were other factors to consider, such as timetabling and attendance. The College would be trialling some different approaches in relation to the requirement for additional teaching hours. |
| **51/23** | **RISK REGISTER** |
| 51/23.1 | The DP FRCP presented the latest risk report. He highlighted the following emerging risks that were discussed at the Audit Committee:   * The challenging financial environment expected in 24/25. Achieving the 2023/24 budget would also be challenging but actions had been put in place that should mean the College achieved the budgeted position. Additionally, in order to ensure the College was in the best position moving into 24/25, cuts in pay and non-pay and increased income would need to be made in 23/24. * The likely prospect of an ESFA/GLA funding audit this year probably in the summer (the Audit Committee had agreed this risk rating should be increased). * A new risk for learner behaviour was also being considered. * The implementation of new systems. The new finance system was a key system that needed to be ready before next year. |
| 51/23.2 | The relevant risks had now been re-assigned to the Estates and Infrastructure Committee, including H&S. |
| 51/23.3 | The risk relating to rights of way was now largely resolved following recent developments. |
| 51/23.4 | The Corporation discussed the risk relating to increased behaviour issues. This was reportedly a national issue and a legacy of the Covid pandemic’s impact on the current student population. A task and finish group had been set up to work on this issue in the College. Governors asked if there was a KPI measure for behaviour. It was agreed to consider if an appropriate KPI was available (ACTION). MB, who attended the task and finish group, commented that more positive reinforcement would be welcomed based on student feedback. |
| 51/23.5 | Governors also noted it was important the College was equipped to deal with an increase in behaviour issues as well as aiming to reduce them. |
| 51/23.6 | The Committee noted the report. |
| **52/23** | **KPI DASHBOARD** |
| 52/23.1 | The Corporation reviewed the latest edition of the KPI dashboard and noted the key points as highlighted by the SLT and explored in more detail in other agenda items. |
| 52/23.2 | Governors asked about 19+ attendance as this was currently lower than 16-18 attendance which was not historically the norm. The College was investigating why this might be the case. Anecdotally, it was also a trend that was being seen at other colleges. |
| **53/23** | **ANNUAL OPERATING PLAN** |
| 53/23.1 | A short presentation highlighted key areas of progress over the term and priorities for next term from the objectives associated with each aim of the Strategic Plan. |
| 53/23.2 | Areas of progress included:   * Additional targets set as part of the ‘Journey to Outstanding’ (signposted with an ‘O’) * Student Crew established and involved in the Lambing Weekend * Confirmation that the College was now back on the apprenticeship APAR (planning for what this would look like was now commencing) * New brand ready for rollout in the summer term * Increased focus on digital transformation from the new IT Director, including engaging with key employer partners * Delivery of a CMT training programme to all managers * First Oaklands Community News launched and distributed to 15,000 homes (future editions likely to be virtual) * Online provision continued to exceed planned starts * Good progress on funding secured through bids |
| 53/23.3 | Areas of focus for Q3 included:   * Student behaviour * Sponsorship of new buildings * Health and safety compliance * Launching of a staff annual survey * Improving progression and retention for September 2024 * Ongoing audit compliance |
| 53/23.4 | The Corporation noted the updates. |
| **54/23** | **BRANDING HIERARCHY UPDATE** |
| 54/23.1 | The Corporation received a presentation regarding the College rebranding exercise that was underway. The brand had been further refined following feedback from governors at the session held in February. The new Oaklands Wolves logo was presented and well received. It was the intention to begin to launch the new brand at the open events taking place in April. |
| 54/23.2 | The presentation would be circulated after the meeting (ACTION). |
| 54/23.3 | The Corporation welcomed the update and looked forward to an update on the rollout at the Corporation Strategy Day. |
| **55/23** | **PEOPLE STRATEGY** |
| 55/23.1 | ​The People Strategy had been developed based on 3 key priorities:   * ​Culture and Change * ​Attract, Develop & Retain * ​Progressive, Collaborative and Healthy Working Environment   ​These pillars aligned with the College’s Strategic Aims & Objectives, Vision, Values & Cross-Cutting Themes. An action plan would be developed to support the delivery of the People Strategy and would be informed by feedback from staff. |
| 55/23.2 | The measuring of the success and impact of the strategy would happen via staff surveys (the first of which was due to commence before Easter), KPIs regarding staff satisfaction, turnover and exit interviews as well as continued use of the staff voice and wellbeing committee to receive feedback and inform priorities. Delivery of the action plan would be reported through the People Committee. |
| 55/23.3 | The staff survey the College would be adopting was provided by York College, which would some benchmarking against other colleges. |
| 55/23.4 | Governors asked whether it would be possible to compare trends from the previous staff survey results. This would be possible in some areas but the questions were not like for like with the previous survey. |
| 55/23.5 | There was some discussion regarding the ideal frequency for staff surveys. The possibility of introducing ‘pulse’ surveys as opposed to full surveys was suggested. |
| 55/23.6 | The Corporation endorsed the draft strategy and direction of travel. |
|  | **REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES** |
|  | **AUDIT COMMITTEE** |
| **56/23** | **MINUTES** |
| 56/23.1 | The Audit Committee Chair informed the Corporation of key matters discussed at the previous meeting. Key points highlighted included:   * An action tracker had been developed and would now become a standing item at Audit Committee meetings to enable oversight of the completion of actions arising from audits. * The findings of the recent H&S audit were discussed. The audit had received a negative audit opinion. * The GDPR audit was also discussed. This was an advisory audit but a number of audit recommendations were captured. * The Committee had reviewed and endorsed for approval by the Corporation the Conflicts of Interest and Gifts and Hospitality Policies, as well as the Whistleblowing Policy. |
| 56/23.2 | The Corporation discussed the findings of the Health and Safety audit. The Deputy Principal FRCP explained the steps the College had taken in response and progress made against the actions to date. Key areas of focus included risk assessment completion, mandatory training and reviewing policies. |
| 56/23.3 | Governors asked whether roles and responsibilities regarding H&S were clearly documented. This had been reviewed as part of the review of the H&S policy. The H&S Committee would be a key forum for monitoring compliance. |
| 56/23.4 | Rob Payne noted he would be providing support as the link governor for H&S. |
| 56/23.5 | The EIC was now the committee with responsibility for H&S and an update on the actions would become a standing item at each meeting for the remainder of the year. |
| **57/23** | **CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND GIFTS AND HOSPITALITY POLICIES** |
| 57/23.1 | The Corporation reviewed and approved the two policies that had been recommended for approval by the Audit Committee. |
| **58/23** | **WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY** |
| 58/23.1 | The Corporation reviewed the Whistleblowing Policy, as considered by the Audit Committee at its recent meeting. It was suggested that the language relating to examinations and assessments be reviewed and clarified (ACTION). |
| 58/23.2 | Subject to the point above, the Corporation approved the Whistleblowing Policy. |
|  | **CURRICULUM AND QUALITY COMMITTEE** |
| **59/23** | **MINUTES** |
| 59/23.1 | The C&Q Committee Chair provided a summary of the two meetings held in February and March:   * It was noted that reporting to C&Q Committee had improved and enabled more effective meetings. * English and maths remained an important area of focus but was becoming more stable and enabling more strategic discussions regarding the provision. * The Committee continued to monitor implementation of T-Levels and held some concerns regarding the displacement of students for who are not able to undertake T-Levels. * The Committee had reviewed the ‘Journey to Outstanding’ action plan which was woven into the College AOP. * The Committee had received an update on the Curriculum Strategy, with detail from the individual curriculum areas. * The Higher Education Report and plans for the development of an HE Strategy were discussed. * The Committee had received an encouraging update on planning for enrolment for the next academic but highlighted progressors as an area to improve from last year. * The Committee had received an informative update on the digital transformation from a curriculum perspective and encouraged the College to start thinking about how to critically evaluate the impact of the initiatives. * The Committee had also received the Quality Report and the detail of the provisional Quality Calendar for 24/25 |
| **60/23** | **QUALITY REPORT** |
| 60/23.1 | The Corporation received the Quality Report which had previously been considered by the C&Q Committee. The paper provided an update on Teaching Learning and Assessment within the College including an update on the lesson observation profile. Targeted learning walks were taking place responsive to College need and timely support / interventions put in place to ensure best practice was consistent. Five curriculum areas and four courses were in intensive support as at the time the report was produced and good progress was being made in most areas, albeit it was still too early to report on the impact of the intensive support. The report also highlighted external sources of quality assurance. The Corporation noted the report. |
|  | **PEOPLE COMMITTEE** |
| **61/23** | **MINUTES** |
| 61/23.1 | The People Committee Chair provided a summary of the last meeting of the Committee. He noted that a number of items discussed at the meeting had been covered elsewhere on the Corporation agenda, such as the People Strategy and branding. He also highlighted from the meeting:   * The outcome of the government consultation on Harpur Trust vs Brazel and associated reduction in risk for the College. * The feedback that the recent pay award had been well received. * Discussion regarding the the Investors in People and Investors in Diversity accreditation and next steps. * The update from the Partnerships and BD Group. On the whole there had been good progress in this area. One big opportunity that was yet to be fully explored was regarding sponsorship. |
| **62/23** | **SAFEGUARDING REPORT (23/24 IN YEAR)** |
| 62/23.1 | The Corporation received the termly update regarding safeguarding, which provided an update on key actions and priorities. The report highlighted that updated Prevent Duty Guidance came into effect on 31 December 2023. The updated guidance did not place any new legal requirements or responsibilities on education settings but there were changes that it was recommended the education sector should be aware of, which were highlighted in the report. The Corporation noted the report. |
| **63/23** | **EDI REPORT (23/24 IN YEAR)** |
| 63/23.1 | The Corporation noted the update regarding EDI and the points discussed at the People Committee meeting, as per the minutes of the meeting. |
| **64/23** | **GENDER PAY GAP** |
| 64/23.1 | The Corporation received the Gender Pay Gap Report 2024 (covering the period 22/23). In accordance with the Equality Act 2010 (Gender Pay Gap Information) Regulations 2017, all UK organisations employing 250 people, or more, are required to report on their gender pay gap. |
| 64/23.2 | The paper included analysis of the pay gap which at mean gender pay gap had reduced to 9.9% from 11.1%, and at the median gender pay gap had reduced to 9.3% from 12.5%. This direction of travel was encouraging and indicated strategies adopted to narrow the pay gap were working but there was more work to do to reduce the gap further. |
| 64/23.3 | The Executive Director for People and Culture said it remained the intention to develop the capability to analyse the data by category of staff and other characteristics and would be explored further with the EDI Committee. |
| 64/23.4 | MB highlighted some accessibility issues she had experience recently and the impact this had on her studies. The DP FRCP apologised for the issues and would ensure the estates team looked into the problem. |
| 64/23.5 | The Corporation noted the Gender Pay Gap Report. |
|  | **FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE** |
| **65/23** | **MINUTES** |
| 65/23.1 | In the absence of the FRC Chair, the vice chair provided a summary of the meeting. Key points discussed included the FRC related strategic objectives, KPIs and risks, the work taking place to implement various new systems within the College, an update on the management accounts and cashflows and initial thoughts on the development of the 24/25 budget. |
| **66/23** | **MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS AND CASH FLOWS** |
| 66/23.1 | The Corporation received the management accounts and cashflows as presented to the FRC at its previous meeting. The Deputy Principal FRCP reminded the Corporation that currently the report is produced on a cash as opposed to accruals basis which can result in some misleading in-year positions. This was the situation when the report was produced due to delayed receipt of a major source of income. The report highlighted some challenges with the in-year budget but summarised that the position was still considered achievable. The implementation of a new finance system would help move to more informative monthly reporting. |
| 66/23.2 | The Deputy Principal FRCP also reiterated the points made regarding the challenging conditions that were expected for next year’s budget, with some significant income lines reducing (e.g. income from overage). |
| 66/23.3 | The Corporation noted the report. |
|  | **ESTATES AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE** |
| **67/23** | **TERMS OF REFERENCE** |
| 67/23.1 | The Corporation was informed that the first meeting of the Estates and Infrastructure Committee had taken place in January. The minutes for that meeting were available in the Part 2 Corporation meeting pack. At the first meeting, the Committee had reviewed its Terms of Reference and proposed two minor amendments for consideration by the Corporation in relation to membership and remit. |
| 67/23.2 | The Corporation approved the updated terms of reference for the EIC as presented. |
|  | **SGR REPORTS** |
| **68/23** | **GOVERNOR RECRUITMENT** |
| 68/22.1 | It was reported that the College had been successful in applying for the DfE’s governor recruitment service in relation to the two existing vacancies and would thus be supported by Peridot Partners with the recruitment process going forward. |
| **69/23** | **SCHEME OF DELEGATION** |
| 69/22.1 | The Corporation approved the latest version of the Scheme of Delegation, which had been updated to reflect the creation of the Estates and Infrastructure Committee. |
| **70/23** | **VICE CHAIR POSITIONS** |
| 70/23.1 | It was reported that nominations were currently being sought for the EIC vice chair. |
| 70/23.2 | It was also reported that following discussion at the SGR Committee meeting, it was agreed that it would be appropriate and beneficial at this time for the chairs of FRC, People Committee and C&Q Committee to also hold the position of vice chair of the Corporation. This was in response to the recommendation from the College’s external board review to appoint more than one vice chair. The SGR Committee was therefore recommending the appointment of Jean Fawcett as an additional Corporation Vice Chair (Philip Fulton and John O’Sullivan having been appointed previously). It was also the intention to explore the development of a KPI around board diversity and diversity in senior Corporation positions. |
| 70/23.3 | The Corporation approved the appointment of Jean Fawcett as vice chair of the Corporation. |
| **71/23** | **CORPORATION BUSINESS CYCLE 23/24** |
| 71/23.1 | The Corporation Business Cycle had been updated to reflect the creation of the Estates and Infrastructure Committee. The Corporation noted the updated business cycle. |
| **72/23** | **CORPORATION STRATEGY DAY – DRAFT AGENDA** |
| 72/23.2 | The draft agenda for the next Corporation Strategy Day (13 May) was noted. |
| **73/23** | **FOR INFORMATION:**  **POLICIES – COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS**  **APPROVALS OVER £100K** |
| 73/23.1 | The Committee noted:   * The Compliments and Complaints Policy * A recent FRC Chair’s approval (taken by the Corporation Chair and FRC Vice Chair in the FRC Chair’s absence) relating to the purchases required for the development of an immersion lab (funded by the LSIF). |

**The part one meeting closed at 19:44**

**The Corporation then considered the Part 2 agenda.**