

Kirklees College Corporation

### **SEARCH & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

## Minutes of a meeting held at 10am on 25 September 2020 by videoconference

Present: Gerard Hetherington Member (Chair)

Cristina George Member

Marie Gilluley Member (Executive)

John Royle Member John Williams Member

Attendance: 5/5 = 80% KPI 80% Quorum: 3

In Attendance: Ms J Green Clerk to the Corporation

PRELIMINARY ITEMS			
1	APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR, WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS		
i	The Clerk confirmed that due notice of the meeting had been given, the requirement for all persons participating to be able to communicate with one another was satisfied, and the meeting was quorate. It was noted that the meeting had been initiated from the home address of the Committee Chair elect Mr J Williams ("JW").		
	RESOLVED:		
	(i) To appoint Committee Member Mr J Williams as Committee Chair.		
	The Chair declared the meeting open.		
2	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST		
i	There were no apologies.		
ii	All confirmed that, except as already disclosed, they had no direct or indirect interest in any way in the business to be transacted at the meeting which they were required to disclose.		
3	MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING		
i	It was noted that the minutes were incorrect and should be amended in that attendance was recorded as 4/5 (it should be 5/5) and item 4 had been numbered 6.		
ii	RESOLVED:		
	(i) Subject to the two amendments agreed, to approve the minutes of 20 March 2020 as an accurate record.		
	Matters arising not on the Agenda		
iii	Nothing was raised.		
	Update on Agreed Actions		
iv	Role Descriptions for Link Governors and Office Holders: Updated role descriptions		

were now in place for all appointed Links and key Office Holders. As Links were introduced or reinstated, further role descriptions would be produced.

Office for Students ("OfS") Reporting: Management had been asked to keep under review whether any of the COVID-19 measures or impacts gave rise to a reportable event, either for the OfS or otherwise. The Committee discussed this with management, noting and concluding as follows:

- The OfS required the reporting of any event or circumstance that, in the judgement of the OfS, materially affected or could materially affect the College's
  - legal form or business model;
  - o willingness or ability to comply with its conditions of registration; or
  - o financial viability or sustainability.

Although the impact of the pandemic had been severe, as yet such an event or circumstance had not occurred or arisen.

- The College's funding agreement with the Education & Skills Funding Agency ("ESFA") required it to comply with charity law and guidance from the Charity Commission, which had published specific guidance on the reporting of 'serious incidents relating to the coronavirus pandemic'. This mandated the reporting of any substantial loss of income, coronavirus outbreak or closure of the premises (whether forced or voluntary) resulting in insolvency within the next 12 months or preventing the delivery of vital services to at-risk beneficiaries and/or the continuance of normal operations. Members agreed that no such incident had yet occurred, as the College was not considered at risk of insolvency, it had continued to admit vulnerable learners during the lockdown and it had successfully moved its delivery online.
- Corporation report: The Committee considered whether any incidents or events arising from, or relating to, the coronavirus pandemic and lockdowns had triggered any mandatory reporting to the College's regulators. In discussion with the Principal, the Committee noted the requirements of the Office for Students and Education & Skills Funding Agency around incident reporting and agreed with the Principal that no trigger events had occurred or were anticipated.

Governor access to online training: This had proved unsuccessful and a decision had been made to provide bespoke training in house, probably via Microsoft Teams.

#### **BUSINESS OF THE MEETING**

#### 4 POST COVID GOVERNANCE REVIEW

Following a presentation by the Clerk, the Committee discussed the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on governance and the effectiveness of the arrangements the Corporation had put in place. It was recalled that Governors had wished to maintain oversight of the urgent operational activity whilst standing back to let management respond swiftly to mitigate the risks. The Principal Ms M Gilluley ("MG") invited views on whether a verbal update at the start of each sub-committee meeting on the impact of the pandemic and the College response would be a welcome addition to agendas and it was agreed that this would be a positive move, creating opportunities for scrutiny and intervention as necessary.

**Corporation report:** As part of a review of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on governance, the Clerk posed a number of questions for discussion. They are reproduced in the meeting minutes, together with the Committee's recommendations and comments.

Report Item 2

Report

Item 1

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iii	1. Online meetings to continue?  A blended approach was felt to be desirable. While online meetings had many benefits: they were convenient, in some ways more focused, and were less time-consuming than face-to-face meetings, and so removed some of the common barriers to participation and attendance, for some conversations they were no substitute for real human contact, as much of the nuance and meaning was lost and challenging conversations were made more so.  Members agreed that a wholly-online approach was also an obstacle to building and maintaining relationships. There was support for recommencing Governor visits to campus, subject to local restrictions.	
iv	Corporation report: The Committee recommends that the Corporation adopt a blended approach going forwards: a combination of remote and in-person meetings. Governors are advised that they may now recommence visits to the campus, subject to local restrictions and COVID-19 precautions. Contact the Principal, your SLT Link (for Link Governors) or the Clerk to arrange.	Report Item 3
V	2. Should we live stream/record meetings?  It was noted that many public authorities, including Kirklees Council, streamed their members' meetings or made appropriately redacted recordings publicly available. While there was no appetite to adopt public live streaming in College, there was support for recording Microsoft Teams meetings so that Members/Governors who were unable to attend could catch up later. The Clerk commented on the risks of recording meetings. She reminded Members that, whereas certain categories of information were exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the legal exemptions were drawn tightly and would not cover anything that was merely embarrassing and/or offensive. She said, to minimise the risk, Governors, if minded to record their meetings, should consider adopting a policy of retaining the recordings for no longer than Members might reasonably require to catch up on the content of a missed meeting – and should formally record the retention period in the College's document disposal schedule.	
vi	Action: Corporation to receive for consideration a draft policy on the recording of meetings and retention of the footage, together with a note on associated risks.	College DPO, JG
vii	3. Are we being innovative enough?  There was agreement that the ability to annotate documents, comment on them and receive responses from management before meetings would be beneficial. The Clerk said on Teams this was possible with documents saved as Word or PowerPoint files but not with PDF documents. A Member recommended a piece of governance software called 'Decision Time'.	
viii	Action: Clerk to research ways/the cost to introduce document annotation.	JG
ix	4. Is the format of reporting still fit for purpose?	
X	<b>Corporation report:</b> wish to annotate and comment on documents as part of their meeting preparation. The Clerk has been asked to research ways/the cost to introduce document annotation.	Report Item 4
xi	<ol> <li>What skills do we need on the Corporation in 2020/21?</li> <li>To be discussed later in the meeting.</li> </ol>	
xii	6. Do Governors still need to be local?  Recalling their comments on the need for a blended approach, Members agreed that, in future, Governors would not need to be locally-based but	

	would need to attend face-to-face meetings and visits at least occasionally.	
xiii	7. How have members found using Microsoft Teams?  Feedback was largely positive, although it was noted that some Governors had difficulties receiving calendar invites and accessing meetings. The software worked best with Microsoft Outlook and not all Governors used this. There was a need for co-opted Committee members to have access to the online documents.	
xiv	Action: Clerk to follow-up with IT and HR re co-optees' access to Teams site.	JG
xv	8. Do we need more/better tech support for governance?  Tech support for Governors had been adequate. There were still a number of issues for the IT team to look at but it was acknowledged that some of them were Microsoft issues, rather than issues that could be resolved in house.	
xvi	Action: Clerk to seek a response from the IT team on Governors' common issues.	JG
xvii	9. Is there now a role for an oversight committee dedicated to reviewing COVID-19 governance and leadership and horizon-scanning?	
xviii	<b>Corporation report:</b> The Committee discussed the effectiveness of the arrangements for COVID-19 governance and leadership and agreed that the combination of electronic reporting and Teams briefings was working well.	Report Item 5
xix	10. Any ideas for outreach/stakeholder engagement?  It was agreed that the possibility of introducing 'Ask the Governors' vlogs as a substitute for 'Meet the Governors' sessions should be explored. As noted above, Governor visits to the College campuses could now recommence.	
xx	Action: To look into the possibility of introducing 'Ask the Governors' vlogs.	MG, JG
xxi	11. Any ideas for remote networking/team building? Recognising this as a challenge, Members agreed that, going forwards, face-to-face meetings should be offered wherever possible, subject to lockdown rules.	
xxii	<b>Corporation report:</b> The Committee suggests that the Corporation approve a return to face-to-face meetings wherever practicable, particularly for interviews and strategic planning, with a remote access option for those who cannot, or prefer not to, attend in person.	Report Item 6
xxiii	Action: To explore how an in-person meeting with online participants would work.	MG, JG
5	There was no item 5.	
6	CORPORATION COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE REPORT	
İ	Corporation report: All Committees reviewed their 2019/20 performance using an online survey based on a HM Treasury template for committee self-assessment. The Committee reviewed a summary report prepared by the Clerk and, having reviewed all the data, concluded that the Corporation's committees were properly constituted, well organised and effective, and in 2019/20 discharged their remits appropriately. A potential concern exists around the membership of the Quality, Performance & Standards ("QPS") Committee, which is 57% Independent Governors and 43% Executive and Staff Governors, so just one absentee Independent can produce a 50-50 weighting at a quorate meeting. The Corporation may be comfortable with this, or may wish to adjust the weighting.	Report Item 7

ii	A survey respondent from the Committee had queried whether Members adequately understood the Committee's role and whet met often enough to adequately discharge all its business. Members concluded that additional meetings should not be scheduled but should be called if necessary and agreed that the Committee should continuously reflect on and explore its role and remit.	
7	MEMBERSHIP REPORT, INCLUDING PROPOSED RE-APPOINTMENTS	
i	It was noted that Dr A Conn ("AC") and Mrs C George ("CG") were approaching the end of their terms of office. Both wished to be considered for reappointment.	
ii	The Clerk reminded the meeting that the Corporation had three potential vacancies (based on a target membership of 19). The process had been put on hold until the Coronavirus restrictions were relaxed but it was now clear that this would not happen in the foreseeable future. It was agreed that discussions about external appointments should wait until after the skills matrix and person specification were considered.	
iii	<b>Corporation report:</b> The Committee discussed whether it was appropriate for the Corporation to reappoint Independent Governors Dr A Conn and Mrs C George, each for a further four year term. Both were noted to be experienced and much valued members of the board, each having contributed significantly to the College's success. The Committee recommends their reappointment.	Report Item 8
iv	It was noted that JW's term of office as Corporation Vice Chair would end on 30 July 2021, at which point a vacancy would arise. There was discussion about succession planning for the role.	
V	<b>Corporation report:</b> In July 2021 a vacancy is expected to arise in the role of Vice Chair of Corporation. Any Governor who would like to express an interest in or find out more about the role - perhaps shadowing the current Vice Chair, attending some training or arranging an informal discussion, should contact the Clerk or Chair.	Report Item 9
8	SKILLS AUDIT	
i	All Governors had completed a self-assessment skills audit questionnaire and their responses were summarised in a skills matrix. The Clerk had identified some potential vulnerabilities (but no gaps) in terms of including digital/IT and finance/audit. In addition to these, Members agreed that marketing and public relations should be high priority areas of focus for Independent Governor recruitment.	
ii	A Member observed that a few of the descriptors provided had led to perverse outcomes, as they unnecessarily linked expertise to specific professional qualifications. This had capped some Governors' scores (most notably MG's), including for financial expertise and human resources.	
iii	<b>Action:</b> To review the descriptors used in the survey to ensure that no unfair cap is placed on anyone's score in future.	JG
9	GOVERNOR ATTENDANCE REPORT	
i	<b>Corporation report:</b> Governor attendance in the 2019/20 academic year was excellent: 92% at Corporation meetings and 91.4% average attendance across all meetings, in each case against a target of 80%.	Report Item 10
10A	CODE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE REVIEW	
i	Attention was drawn to the requirement to include within the Statement of Corporate Governance and Internal Control a declaration of compliance with the	

	College's adopted governance code, with explanations of any departures. Members were pleased to note in this regard that, by December, with the exception of Item 4.4 ("The board should be alert to college issues and use various methods to meet with students, staff, parents and employers, such as learning walks and having link governors"), the Corporation could expect to be able to report full compliance for 2019/20. Item 4.4 had been impacted by the pandemic lockdown as well as the recent reconfiguration of the Governor Links and it was in any case a 'should', rather than a 'must' item. The pandemic had delayed some other Items, such as the review of the HR Strategy but those would be addressed by December.			
ii	There was discussion about Item 3.2 ("The board must endorse a set of appropriate policies that describe how the strategy is being implemented"). The Committee agreed that 'endorsed' should be understood to mean supported and backed by, rather than having had express approval in every case. It was noted that the adoption of a scheme of delegation would help the Corporation to evidence its compliance with this item.			
iii	Corporation report: The Committee carried out a review of compliance with the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges (the "Code") and reports that, while there are still some outstanding items that must be addressed before the financial statements are signed off, the Corporation can expect to be fully compliant with all mandatory aspects of the Code and fully compliant with all but one advisory aspect of the Code. Item 4.4, which is concerned with Governors' stakeholder liaison activities and the effectiveness of link roles, is rag rated 'Amber' and is expected to remain so at year-end.			
10B	SCHEME OF DELEGATION			
i	The Clerk explained the rationale for introducing a central record of where authority resided within the College for particular types of decisions. She explained that the draft scheme she had produced did not recommend any new delegations or propose changes; it merely recorded delegations that already existed, flagging areas for consideration where there was no clear delegated authority. Some alternative templates had been provided for the Committee to consider but Member preferred the simplicity of the Clerk's version.			
ii	Action: To review the draft scheme of delegation with the Senior Leadership Team.			
11	ATTENDANCE TARGETS			
i	<b>Corporation report:</b> The Committee discussed the Governor attendance targets for 2020/21 and recommends as follows:			
	Performance Measure	Recommended Target		
	Average attendance across all Corporation and relevant Committee meetings (Individual Governors)	80%		
	Overall attendance Corporation meetings (all Governors)	80%		
	Overall attendance at all Corporation and relevant Committee meetings (all Governors)	80%		
	It should be emphasised that the targets are a guide to expectations generally and adjustments will be made in individual circumstances in recognition of the different barriers to attendance Governors face.			
MONITO	DRING			
12	GOVERNOR ROLE DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPEC	IFICATION		
i	There was agreement that the Independent Governor role description and person			

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	specification should be amended: the requirement to attend at least two Governor events each year should be removed. There was discussion about the need to include a statement on Governor expenses in terms of what was covered and whether IT equipment should be provided, either on request or to everyone.	
ii	<b>Action:</b> The Committee to receive a proposal on Governor expenses and the provision of IT equipment.	MG
iii	<b>Action:</b> A shorter summary of the responsibilities of the role to be produced to sit alongside the full role description.	JG
13	SUCCESSION PLAN AND APPOINTMENTS PROCEDURE	
i	<b>Corporation report:</b> The Committee recommends for approval the Succession Plan and Appointments Procedures. These describe how the Corporation's commitment to succession planning is put into practice and kept under review.	Report Item 13
7 (cont)	MEMBERSHIP REPORT, INCLUDING PROPOSED RE-APPOINTMENTS	
vi	Having discussed the skills audit outcomes and the proposed person specification, the Committee returned to Item 7 to discuss Governor recruitment. It was noted that advertisements had been placed in various places. There had been some initial requests for information and a couple of warm leads were being explored.	
vii	The Committee discussed a CV received months previously from an applicant who had been on hold during the initial lockdown. It was agreed that the applicant, who was still interested in the role, seemed to satisfy all the essential criteria and therefore should be invited to interview.	
viii	<b>Action:</b> To arrange a (face-to-face if possible) interview for the applicant discussed at the Committee's 25 September meeting.	JG
14	LINK GOVERNORS MATHS AND ENGLISH AND HE AND SKILLS	
i	It was agreed that, in the circumstances, the Link roles should not be reinstated for the time being.	
ii	<b>Action:</b> The Clerk to check before the Corporation meeting any specific requirements around Governor involvement as regards Higher Education provision.	JG
15	CORPORATION SELF-ASSESSMENT	
i	There was agreement that Governors should complete the Corporation self-assessment survey as presented.	
ii	Action: The Clerk to circulate the link for the Corporation self-assessment survey.	JG
16	REPORTING OF EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION	
i	An action in the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion ("EDI") Action Plan required the Committee to review the formal reporting of EDI matters to Corporation. As frameworks for reporting were part of the system of internal control and governance, the Clerk had obtained a report from the Audit Committee, which advised that, subject to some agreed actions being taken to strengthen the framework, the systems and controls in place for EDI reporting were adequate and would operate effectively.	
ii	The Committee noted that EDI policy and principles underpinned the entirety of the	

	corporate strategy. Members reflected that it may not receive adequate scrutiny and attention if the EDI Strategy Group reported directly into the Corporation, rather than via the Quality, Performance & Standards Committee, whose members had EDI expertise and experience.	
iii	Corporation report: The Committee considered advice from the Audit Committee regarding the adequacy of the systems and controls for EDI reporting. It understands that, subject to some agreed actions being taken to strengthen the framework, the current arrangements provide a good level of assurance. The Committee then discussed whether the arrangements should be further strengthened, or whether the reporting processes could be leaned out and made more efficient. Its conclusion (based on an understanding that the effective reporting of EDI matters is a key priority for the Corporation) is that the current arrangements serve the Corporation well and should be maintained.	Report Item 14
17	There was no item 17.	
18	COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE	
i	There was agreement that no changes should be made.	
MATTER	S TO NOTE AND ADMINISTRATION	
19	DATE OF NEXT MEETING	
i	25 June 2021	
20	PUBLICATION OF AGENDA PAPERS	
i	RESOLVED:	
	(i) All papers shall be made available for publication, except for any sections of the Membership Report that include personal data and the appendix to that report (prospective Governor CV) as it also includes personal data; also the draft Scheme of Delegation, Governor Role Description and Person Specification, and Succession Plan and Appointments Procedure, on the basis that they are drafts.	

Action/ Report Item

# **Items of Report for Corporation**

#	Details	Min
1.	The Committee considered whether any incidents or events arising from, or relating to, the coronavirus pandemic and lockdowns had triggered any mandatory reporting to the College's regulators. In discussion with the Principal, the Committee noted the requirements of the Office for Students and Education & Skills Funding Agency around incident reporting and agreed with the Principal that no trigger events had occurred or were anticipated.	
2.	As part of a review of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on governance, the Clerk posed a number of questions for discussion. They are reproduced in the meeting minutes, together with the Committee's recommendations and comments.	
3.	The Committee recommends that the Corporation adopt a blended approach going forwards, i.e. a combination of remote and in-person meetings. Governors are advised that they may now recommence visits to the campus, subject to local restrictions and COVID-19 precautions. Contact the Principal, your SLT Link (for Link Governors) or the Clerk to arrange.	
4.	Members wish to annotate and comment on documents as part of their meeting preparation. The Clerk has been asked to research ways/the cost to introduce document annotation.	4x
5.	The Committee discussed the effectiveness of the arrangements for COVID-19 governance and leadership and agreed that the combination of electronic reporting and Teams briefings was working well.	4xviii
6.	The Committee suggests that the Corporation approve a return to face-to-face meetings wherever practicable, particularly for interviews and strategic planning, with a remote access option for those who cannot, or prefer not to, attend in person.	4xxii
7.	All Committees reviewed their 2019/20 performance using an online survey based on a HM Treasury template for committee self-assessment. The Committee reviewed a summary report prepared by the Clerk and, having reviewed all the data, concluded that the Corporation's committees were properly constituted, well organised and effective, and in 2019/20 discharged their remits appropriately.	
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10.	Governor attendance in academic year 2019/20 was excellent: 92% at Corporation meetings and 91.4% average attendance across all meetings, in each case against a target of 80%.	9i
11.	The Committee carried out a review of compliance with the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges (the "Code") and reports that, while there are still some outstanding items that must be addressed before the financial statements are signed off, the Corporation can expect to be fully compliant with all mandatory aspects of the Code and fully compliant with all but one advisory aspect of the Code. Item 4.4, which is concerned with Governors' stakeholder liaison activities and the effectiveness of link roles, is rag rated 'Amber' and is expected to remain so at year-end.	10Aiii

12.	Governor attendance targets for 2020/21 – the Committee recommends as follows:			
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13.	The Committee recommends for approval the Succession Plan and Appointments Procedures. These describe how the Corporation's commitment to succession planning is put into practice and kept under review.		13i	
14.	The Committee considered advice from the Audit Committee regarding the adequacy of the systems and controls for EDI reporting. It understands that, subject to some agreed actions being taken to strengthen the framework, the current arrangements provide a good level of assurance. The Committee then discussed whether the arrangements should be further strengthened, or whether the reporting processes could be leaned out and made more efficient. Its conclusion (based on an understanding that the effective reporting of EDI matters is a key priority for the Corporation) is that the current arrangements serve the Corporation well and should be maintained.			