

MINUTES

South Essex Colleges Group Corporation Board
7E.03 Southend College
Tuesday 9 July 2024 at 16:50

Date and timings: 17:30 to 20:45

Location 7E.03 Southend College

Present (Governors):
Rick Olver (Chair)
Gerry Bender (GB)
Denise Brown (DB)
Sue Leonard (SL)
Jo Brooker (JB)
Aaron Thompson (AT)
Seye Awolusi (SA)
Paul Gribbon (PG)
Roland Anderson (RA)
Lee Freeman (LF)

Minutes Carrie Brown- Head of Governance

In attendance
Adam Fahey (AF) Deputy CEO- Curriculum and Quality
Zed Mohammed (ZM) Vice CEO- Finance
Ansar Mahmood (AM) Vice CEO- MIS, IT and Marketing
Jayne Sheehan (JS) Vice CEO- Innovation

Apologies Lana Jackman (LJ) Clerk to Corporation

Item

0. Agenda

06.00 Minutes and matters arising.

06.01 Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2024.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2024 were **APPROVED** as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

06.02 Matters Arising.

There were no outstanding matters arising from the minutes of the meeting 26 March 2024 that were not discussed elsewhere on the agenda.

06.03 Minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2024- External Board Review.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2024 were **APPROVED** as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

SL asks about the Terms of Office extension for RO and GB will be until the first meeting in September. GB details his frustration that his Term of Office has not had a four-year extension like SL, and that this has been noted that this is due to the incoming Chair however, new Governors are being put forward for approval at this meeting before the new Chair is in place. GB details that he would like there to be a discussion regarding his concerns and highlights that he will be abstaining from the votes on the new Independent Governors **ACTION:** DB to speak to LJ regarding this matter.

07.00 Chairs Report- end of year report.

RO gives a verbal report reflecting on the year, noting a number of key aspects including the Ofsted inspection and the challenges with the Chair recruitment. RO details the laser like focus on the student attainment. RO reflects positively on the changes in the Committees these are particularly apparent in Audit and Risk Committee. RO notes the External Board Review report, its positive points but also the need to have more challenging questioning and more strategic overview. RO thanks the Governors, the Group CEO and SLT and also the Governance Team for their tireless work on improving the Governance Structures.

08.00 Group CEO report.

The Corporation Board **REVIEW AND NOTE** the Group CEO report.

DB presents her Group CEO report update reflecting of the Strategic Plan and the progress made on this. DB reflects that the Staff Turnover is at 16% and the target for 2027 is 15%. DB notes that the cash days KPI is too high given the SECG circumstances and this needs to be around 20. The Corporation Board **AGREE** to amendment the cash days KPI from 45 to 20.

DB notes that SECG has 17 strategic projects to deliver and has begun to deliver on 8 of these projects in the first year of the plan. DB details the changes to the review process of assessment and thanks AM and the MIS for their work on the automated system to give an objective view of learner achievement.

DB comments on the need to improve the staff engagement. JB confirms that the staff are in a negative mindset and are not looking at the positives, noting that SECG haven't made redundancies, the negative mindset is historic and needs to be chipped away.

PG asks if this is localised? DB responds that this is localised in teams- staff are happy with their teams but not with the Group and this needs to be worked on.

ZM notes the financial issues that SECG has had in this context for example pay awards have been made and staff engagement will be a long term project for SECG. SL notes that perception is everything.

LF details that the staff turnover has halved in two years and comments that this is an incredible achievement.

GB reflects on the SECG and the local College structure may bring a more positive local perspective on the local Colleges.

08.01 Strategic Project Update.

Covered in Group CEO Report.

09.00 Learner Outcome Outlook.

AF gives a verbal update on the Learner Outcome noting that this is a snap shot that doesn't include the GCSE results. AF notes that for 16-18 learners SECG set a target of 80% and SECG is currently at 86% and this is 4.6% above national average and a 11.7% improvement this year which is extraordinary.

GB thanks AF and his team for all the work on obtaining these results and details that the staff really took ownership in getting these results.

SL also thanks AF and this team, reflects positively on the results noting that these are blinding and awaits next year's results.

DB comments that this is the best set of results that the SECG has had in a very long time- detailing that this is a fantastic result for our learners.

AF details the ambition of SECG and the drive for improvement. JS details the work that has been done with managers to drive the improvement. ZM comments on the collective effort to achieve these results.

10.00 Finance update.

10.01 Approval of Budget 2024-2025- recommendation from Policy and Resources Committee.
The Corporation Board **RESOLVE TO APPROVE** the proposed SECG budget for 2024-2025.

RO reflected positively on the risk analysis in the documentation.

LF thanked Governors for their attendance to the Policy and Resources Committee meeting. LF gives a positive reflection of the progress in the last 4 years as a Governor. LF comments that ZM's presentation was fantastic. LF reflects positively on the budget since ZM's appointment noting that the budget has been honest and realistic (including having negative figures).

DB details the importance of having a hand on the audit process. ZM responds that the controls and balance sheet need systematic improvement. ZM noted the need to work with the auditors.

PG asks about the capital budget including the air handling unit and asks if the £2m budget should continue being that large? ZM notes the need to invest in the estate and IT. DB notes the work that is required on the estate and the costs involved in these repairs detailing the challenge in this area.

10.02 Draft annual report and accounts for July 2024.

ZM gives a verbal update noting the need to review the balance sheet.

10.03 Finance update.

Covered in item 04.00.

11.00 Governor Recruitment.

11.01 Formal approval of Andrew Overs Dowsett- Independent Governor.

The Corporation Board **RESOLVE TO APPROVE** Andrew Overs Dowsett as an Independent Governor until 9th July 2028 with 1 abstention.

AT notes Andrew's CV and asks what he would bring that SECG Board doesn't currently have? DB details that he brings experience of Governance in the education sector which does fill a gap on the Board and he has an inspiration story for the students. DB notes that post this recruitment SECG need to focus on obtaining more female Governors.

AT asks why these appointments were given informal chats and not formal interviews? PG and DB notes that this were semi formal interviews. CB details cost of the Peridot appointment and the Reach volunteer process which has a rapid take up meaning that a quicker process was required.

11.02 Formal approval of Noel Gibb- Independent Governor.

The Corporation Board **RESOLVE TO APPROVE** Noel Gibb as an Independent Governor until 9th July 2028 with 1 abstention.

11.03 Formal approval of Rachel Sanders- Student Governor.

The Corporation Board **RESOLVE TO APPROVE** Rachel Sanders as an Student Governor until 9th July 2025.

11.04 Formal approval of Francesa Phillips- Student Governor.

The Corporation Board **RESOLVE TO APPROVE** Francesa Phillips as an Student Governor until 9th July 2025.

12.00 Governance Matters.

12.01 Register of the Corporation Seal.

The Corporation Board **RESOLVE TO APPROVE** the register of the Corporation Seal.

12.02 Timetable of Corporation meetings.

The Corporation Board **REVIEW AND NOTE** the timetable of Corporation meetings for 2024-2025.

CB proposed that one additional meeting is moved to MS Teams citing the cost of on-site meetings, the need to improve female representation and the childcare challenges on site meetings present (which has already impacted on the SECG Board) and the need to be more flexible for Governors that are in the workplace market.

GB notes that he feels that interaction of having on-site meetings and having a better discussion with on-site meetings.

DB comments that this representation of the Board is important and by being more agile will improve the representation on this Board. RO notes the onboarding process will need to be on-site.

SL comments that she prefers face to face but notes the need to be more agile.

The Corporation Board **AGREE** to move one additional meeting to MS Teams.

12.03 Updated Instrument and Articles.

Deferred.

12.04 Gifts and Hospitality Register.

The Corporation Board **REVIEW AND NOTE** the Gifts and Hospitality Register.

12.05 Updated Standing Orders.

Deferred.

12.06 Committee Evaluation.

The Corporation Board **REVIEW AND NOTE** the Committee Evaluation paper.

12.07 Governor Hub approval.

The Corporation Board **RESOLVE TO APPROVE** to use Governor Hub for the academic year 2024-2025.

12.08 Governor Training and Development Schedule.

The Corporation Board **REVIEW AND NOTE** the Governor Training and Development Schedule.

PG asks if all Governors would be interested in having Audit and Risk training? It was **AGREED** that all Governors should be invited to Audit and Risk training.

AT asks what the aims of the Strategic Workshops are? CB, DB and RO gives some context. **ACTION:** LJ to give more information on the training and development programme.

AM asks the data dashboard is added to the governor onboarding process. **ACTION:** Data dashboard training is added to the Governor onboarding process.

12.09 Written Resolutions.

The Corporation Board **REVIEW AND NOTE** the Written Resolutions paper.

13.00 Policies.

13.01 Recruitment Selection Policy.

The Corporation Board **RESOLVE TO APPROVE** the Recruitment Selection Policy.

AT notes section 16.1.1 of the procedure repeats 17.1.3 and could this just be a reference back? AM agrees. **ACTION:** Recruitment Selection Procedure 17.1.13 to be amended as outlined above.

13.02 Fees Policy.

The Corporation Board **RESOLVE TO APPROVE** the Fees Policy subject to amendments outlined below.

ACTION: SL asks that there is an amendment from the reference to 'The College' to 'The Group'.

AT asks if a course was cancelled would a student be refunded for the whole course if it was a multi-year course? AM confirms it would be a full refund for all years. .

13.03 Whistleblowing Policy.

The Corporation Board **RESOLVE TO APPROVE** the Whistleblowing Policy subject to amendments outlined in the Policy and Resources Committee minutes.

SL notes the need to triangulate the whistleblowing policy as there hasn't been any whistleblowing issues. DB notes that last year SECG had two whistleblowing complaints and therefore staff do understand the policy.

AT asks if knowledge of the whistleblowing policy is a question in the staff survey? DB notes that it is.

ACTION: GB notes the implementation date needs to be amended to July 2024.

13.04 Anti-Bribery Policy.

The Corporation Board **RESOLVE TO APPROVE** the Anti-Bribery Policy.

13.05 Anti-Money Laundering Policy.

The Corporation Board **RESOLVE TO APPROVE** the Anti-Money Laundering Policy.

ITEMS TO RECEIVE- COMMITTEES REPORT

14.00 Curriculum, Quality and Learner Experience.

RO gave a brief update from the CQC meeting including the E&M is a priority for next year and reflected on the impact of AI and the impact of this. JB reflected on the improvements AI have made to staff workload.

14.01 Minutes of the meeting 14 May 2024.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2024 were **APPROVED** as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

14.02 QIP update.

The Corporation Board **REVIEW AND NOTE** the QIP update.

15.00 Policy and Resources Committee.

LF gives headlines noting that these meetings covered budgets and the financial position. LF notes the focus on HR and focus on pay adding that sickness absence is still a concern and alongside Performance Review compliance.

15.01 Minutes of the meeting 23 April 2024.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2024 were **APPROVED** as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

15.02 Minutes of the meeting 25 June 2024.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2024 were **APPROVED** as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

15.03 Minutes of the meeting 2 July 2024.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2024 were **APPROVED** as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

15.04 HR Report.

The Corporation Board **REVIEW AND NOTE** the HR Report.

15.05 Performance Review Compliance.

The Corporation Board **REVIEW AND NOTE** the Performance Review Compliance Report.

15.06 Student Numbers Recruitment.

The Corporation Board **REVIEW AND NOTE** the Student Numbers report.

16.00 Audit and Risk Committee.

PG gives an overview of the Committee highlights including external audit and the final report for this, the new external auditors presentation and the internal audit plan for 24-25 which was too extensive. DB notes that Executive Board have reviewed the plan and it will come to the next Audit and Risk Committee. PG details that the Audit and Risk Universe has been developed.

16.01 Minutes of the meeting 18 June 2024.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2024 were **APPROVED** as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

16.02 Year End accounts audit update 2022-23.

The Corporation Board **REVIEW AND NOTE** the Year End accounts audit update 2022-23.

17.00 Governance and Remuneration Committee.

SL gives an overview of the meeting noting the External Board Review result, the Link Governor system and how fit for purpose this is for SECG.

17.01 Minutes of the meeting 7 May 2024.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2024 were **APPROVED** as an accurate reflection of the meeting.

18.00 Any other business.

RO thanks RA and LF for their work as Governors for SECG and presented them with a small gift. DB adds her thanks to RA and LF their support to her and SECG noting their intelligence and patience.

19.00 Dates of future meetings.

Tuesday 3rd September 2024- Curriculum Plan Corporation Board- via MS Teams

Tuesday 8th October 2024- Corporation Board

Tuesday 15th October 2024- Strategic Leadership Workshop

Tuesday 10th December 2024- Corporation Board- via MS Teams

Tuesday 14th January 2025- Board Development Day

Tuesday 11th February 2025- Corporation Board- via MS Teams

Tuesday 18th March 2025- Strategic Leadership Workshop

Tuesday 22nd April 2025- Corporation Board

Tuesday 3rd June 2025- Corporation Board- via MS Teams

Tuesday 24th June 2025- Board Development Day

Tuesday 15th July 2025- Corporation Board

20.00 Board Evaluation.

Governors are encouraged to provide feedback on the meeting and background documentation.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 20:45 hrs

Signed.....Dated.....

Item	Actions	Deadline	Lead	Status
Actions from 9 July 2024				
06.03	DB to speak to LJ regarding the Governor terms for RO and GB	ASAP	DB	Completed

08.00	Amendment the cash days KPI from 45 to 20.		DB	Completed
12.08	LJ to meet with AT to give more information on the training and development programme.		LJ	Completed
12.08	Data Dashboard training to be added into the Governor induction programme.		LJ	CB working with AM to get this completed
13.01	Recruitment Selection Procedure 17.1.13 to be amended so that it refers back to 16.1.1 instead of repeating the information.		CB/RB	Completed
13.02	Fees Policy to be amended to change references to 'The College' to 'The Group'		CB/ZM	Completed
13.03	Whistleblowing Policy implementation date needs to be amended to July 2024.		CB/RB	Completed