

**Minutes of the Corporation meeting 20.2 held on Tuesday 8 December 2020, by video conference
Long Road Sixth Form College, Cambridge**

Present: Ian Wilson (Chair), Anne Adamson, Paul Andrew, Gerry Bolton, Yolanda Botham (Principal), Charlie Brown, Steven Esdale, Karen Everitt, Maria Ferguson, John Godwood, Colin Greenhalgh, Vickie Grenville, Paula Heaney, Tony Humphrey, Chris Lang, Alison Miles, Rikki Morgan-Tamosunas, Jenny O'Hare, Olivia Palo and Owen Shield

In attendance: Steve Dann (VP), Charlotte Hemmins (Finance Director), Tinashe Chitakasha (Governance Assistant),

Clerk: Anne-Marie Diaper

The College EDI lead gave a training session on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, which was very well received by the Corporation members

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20.2.1	Apologies for absence Apologies were received from the Parent Governor. The Chair welcomed newly elected student Governor, Olivia Palo.
20.2.2	Declarations of Interest Jenny O'Hare declared an interest in agenda item 5, Tony Humphrey, Anne Adamson and Ian Wilson declared an interest in agenda item 9, all 3 staff Governors declared an interest in agenda item 7, and Colin Greenhalgh and Rikki Morgan Tamosunas declared an interest in agenda item 6.
20.2.3	Request for any other business None
20.2.4	Minutes of Corporation meeting 20.1 13 October 2020 With no suggested amendments, the minutes of the meeting held on 13 October 2020 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.
20.2.5	Matters arising The Covid-19 Working Group (C19WG) chair pointed out that the 20.1 Board meeting had included an update, but the C19WG group had not met since. It was agreed the group was being held in abeyance until such time as a further meeting was needed. <u>Safeguarding Governor.</u> The Corporation was informed that the designated Safeguarding Governor (DSG), Alison Miles, had indicated her intention to step down from the role. This coincided with changes at College in DSL occurring at the end of the term. With responsibility for safeguarding assurance part of the Standards committee remit, the

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committee had discussed the matter at the STC20.2 meeting. Jenny O'Hare had subsequently contacted the Standards committee Chair and Clerk expressing an interest in taking on the role. Alison Miles and Jenny O'Hare had discussed the role in some depth.

Jenny O'Hare left the meeting at 5.39pm

The Corporation discussed the role/appointment and with many thanks to Alison Miles for her support, approved the appointment of Jenny O'Hare as safeguarding Governor.

Jenny O'Hare returned to the meeting at 5.42pm

20.2.6 Principal's strategic update

The Principal, presenting her report, wished to highlight key sections and then take questions. She asked the Corporation to consider approving the continuation of the current blended learning operating model until the February 2021 half term. She advised the low numbers of staff and students currently self-isolating due to Covid-19, pointing out that the numbers had not increased in the last few weeks. In addition to new pressure and imminent new guidance, expected to propose an increase in the percentage of onsite learning, the sector had received instructions to cease on-site learning a day early this term, meaning that testing and tracing by the College would continue up to Christmas Eve. The College had received a supportive letter from the LA Director of Education and Director of Public Health on the current model, acknowledging the benefit of minimising numbers on site to controlling transmission of the coronavirus.

The Principal went on to explain the recommendations she had received for suggested new operating model. The College was considering these, but she also highlighted the possible opportunity for confusion set out within them, especially when January 2021 includes a period of mock examinations for which arrangements and plans were already set in place.

Governors discussed the various aspects and benefits of blended learning, under current guidance, and agreed that given the confusion and apparent impracticality of changing to a 2-week mixed rota of part remote, part face-to-face teaching, a cautious approach should be taken. In order to reduce the risk of transmission, and minimise the risk of another spike in cases in the new year (supported by the letter from the LA/DPH), students should not be brought more regularly to the site, following the social festivities of Christmas. Governors were content to continue with the current operating model, and were not supportive of

change to a new model, unless made mandatory, in view of the low numbers of cases locally given that infection rates elsewhere were high, until the February half term. In the light of new guidance being released, should that occur before Christmas, the College would not be in a position to make changes like 'flicking a switch'. Any plans to change the operating model may be supported by a meeting of the C19WG, a roll-out plan, and a communications strategy.

The staff and student Governors also concurred that the current effective model, with a weekend separating year groups, was viewed as best for students and was supported by parents.

The Corporation Chair summed up that the Board endorsed and supported the College's current system of blended learning remaining in place until the February half term pending any new mandatory guidance from government.

The Principal went on to lead a discussion about curriculum reform and the review of post 16 level 3 qualifications in England and its possible significant impact on Colleges. Through consultation government was proposing two future pathways for young people, A level and T level at level 3, accompanied by the withdrawal of funding from a range of applied qualifications currently offered by Colleges, including LRSFC. These proposed changes are scheduled to take effect in 2023/24. She and the VP advised Governors of the significant likely strategic impact of the changes proposed both on organisations and on their students. Governors discussed a range of matters relevant to the curriculum consultation including the possible impact of this on imminent strategic plans in other local institutions. The SFCA had made a powerful case for continuation of applied subjects, but the consultation was progressing and was now at the second stage. Governors agreed to return to considering this in depth, and the College's position should the consultation proposals come to fruition, at the strategy/training day(s) in February 2021 and later, by which time the consultation will have closed.

Maria Ferguson left the meeting at 6.09pm.

Returning to the matter of Covid-19 testing and tracing, the Principal advised that those staff on a rota who do extra work, in unsocial hours, to contact trace where necessary, will receive a payment.

The Corporation wished to most sincerely thank the senior leaders and all College staff for the extra work and effort and for continuing to cope admirably well under enormous strain.

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20.2.7

Update on national pay negotiations

The Corporation Chair had provided a short paper on which he did not elaborate. He advised there was no development since he wrote the paper. Negotiations were midway and a positive outcome was being sought. There were no questions from Corporation members.

20.2.8

Report from Standards committee

The report from the Standards committee Chair, from the STC20.2 meeting held on 26 November 2020, had been provided with the papers. There were two items for approval.

Safeguarding policy. Safeguarding was a high priority for College and the procedures had been significantly more challenging due to the Covid-19 outbreak. The committee was confident of the rigour and care taken in safeguarding policy and practices at College, and the committee wished to recommend for approval the updated Safeguarding policy which included changes clearly marked taking account of updated Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance.

There would be a change in designated College safeguarding lead and safeguarding Governor, and the committee thanked the outgoing leads for their excellent work supporting students.

With no comments, the Board approved the Safeguarding policy

The Standards Chair informed the Corporation of the work of the committee on the SAR for the previous year's work on quality of teaching and learning, support for students, leadership and management. However due to changes in College operations associated with the Covid-19 outbreak, the committee would be considering the SAR separately. The committee had reviewed the 2019-20 quality improvement plan and the content of the 2020-21 QIP.

Quality Strategy (QS). The committee had considered the QS and quality cycle in some detail at its meeting. The Standards committee Chair highlighted one additional key point around developing and implementing QA measures for remote teaching learning and support in the strategy and some adaptation of the quality cycle for this year that the committee wished to recommend for Board approval.

A Governor, commenting on a well thought through strategy, asked if managers were keeping up with the dates, which the VP confirmed was the case.

The Board unanimously approved the Quality Strategy and quality cycle.

The committee Chair also shared that the committee had reviewed key summary data and outputs from the quality cycle. Outcomes from key assessments were also considered by the committee and the committee noted that the monitoring and support that needed to take place this year would be increasingly individualised, not least due to no exams having taken place in the summer. The committee also discussed blended teaching & learning and engagement with students on camera etc. New practices and new skills were being developed; learning was being shared across College, and College was engaging in sector research.

The Corporation thanked the Standards committee Chair for a comprehensive report. The rota system of learning appeared to be working well both in terms of educational standards and achievement, and in supporting low Covid-19 transmission rates.

20.2.9 Report from Governance & Search committee

The draft minutes of GSC20.1 held on 3 November 2020 provided a written report for the Corporation. The GSC Chair advised that 3 items required Board approval.

The GSC Chair reported that the committee had discussed succession planning at its recent meeting, as a number of Governors were coming to the end of their terms of office. A potential candidate had withdrawn her application and the committee would be having an additional meeting discuss a longer term strategy for recruitment. Governors were encouraged to use networks to support the effort to recruit.

Vice Chair. At the last Board meeting the Corporation Chair had drawn the meeting's attention to the vacancy of Corporation Vice Chair.

Tony Humphrey withdrew from the meeting at 6.41pm

Following a committee discussion and nomination, Tony Humphrey had indicated his willingness to be considered for the role of Corporation Vice Chair (CVC).

Remuneration Committee membership. The CVC role description stated that a Vice Chair should normally chair a committee. In this context the Corporation was asked to consider appointing the CVC as Chair of the newly formed standalone Remuneration committee (RC). The GSC had also discussed the membership of the RC, proposing membership in line with guidance with additional 2 members being Independent Governor,

Anne Adamson, and Corporation Chair Ian Wilson, making up a committee of 3 members.

The Board approved the appointment of Tony Humphrey as Corporation Vice Chair and Chair of the Remuneration committee. The Corporation was content to also approve the membership of the RC as proposed.

Tony Humphrey rejoined the meeting at 6.43pm and the Corporation congratulated him on his appointment as Vice Chair.

Governor visits policy/protocol. The GSC had also discussed the updated policy/protocol, suggesting further changes to provide for greater flexibility in visits to include new virtual approaches. The Chair wanted to stress that changes to the protocol would support Governors visits to resume this year and the amended policy/protocol set out some new ways of conducting them.

With no comments, the Board approved the amended Governor visits policy/protocol.

The GSC Chair reminded the Corporation that elections for both student and Parent Governor were carried out in October.

On reading the GSC20.2 minutes, a Governor noted a GSC discussion about conflicts of interest where the committee had discussed asking LRSFC Board members with a role on Boards of other educational institutions to take action to minimise their conflicts. That signified a new policy message that he felt warranted further discussion. He drew the Corporation's attention to the government's 'governance handbook' that offered guidance on the matter for schools. The Principal referred to an earlier discussion about strategy. This was not about integrity, but about the reality of a difference between the schools sector and the financially competitive market that College is operating in that could lead to possible difficulties in having an open discussion on strategy and recruitment. The GSC would no doubt discuss this in greater detail at its next meeting.

At this point in the meeting the Corporation Chair advised the meeting that Independent Governor, Corporation Vice Chair (CVC), and FRC Chair, Chris Lang, had indicated his intention to resign with effect from the February 2021 half term. The Chair thanked the CVC on behalf of the Corporation, adding that his departure would be a significant loss for the Corporation. Part of the purpose of the GSC having an additional meeting shortly would be to discuss options for finding a successor.

Maria Ferguson rejoined the meeting at 6.56pm

20.2.10 **Report from Audit committee**

The draft minutes of AC20.1 held on 6 November 2020 provided a written report for the Corporation. The AC Chair reported that two items required Board approval.

Annual report of the Audit committee. She presented the annual report of the committee giving further information on its work on oversight/compliance during the year 2019-20.

With no questions the Board approved the Audit committee annual report for 2019-20

Draft financial statements 2019-20. The Audit committee had also considered the 2019-20 statutory financial statements and this was reported in the minutes. The committee wished to offer its support for approving the narrative in the financial statements.

20.2.11 **Report from Finance & Resources committee**

The draft minutes of FRC20.1 held on 18 November 2020 provided a written report for the Corporation. The FRC Chair reported.

Draft financial statements 2019-20. As with the AC, the FRC had considered the financial statements for 2019-20. Before any pension adjustment the financial statements showed a good year for College financially, with a strong performance and £1.5m net current assets. The FRC had scrutinised the figures and wished to support Board approval of the figures in the statements.

On Audit committee and Finance & Resources committee recommendation, the Board approved the financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2020.

The FRC Chair also reported that the committee had covered a few other matters at its meeting on 18 November, including an update on a specific project at the start of the meeting, other matters that could and would possibly impact on the financial position in the College next year and the year after, including property, spend on Covid related issues, sustaining/retaining and increasing numbers, with funding rates as an unknown factor through the spending review, the pressure of staff pay awards, and national developments with curriculum review. A Governor flagged up the value of pensions assets driven by values in stock market and others in which assets invested and the possible negative impact of

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Brexit. Governors were grateful that the FD was being prudent and bringing future financial matters to the committee and the Corporation at this time.

20.2.12 **Governance self-assessment of effectiveness for 2019-20 and governance improvement plan 2020-21**

The Corporation Chair had presented earlier drafts of the governance SAR and GIP during the last month. The updated version presented included deletions or amendments/additions put forward by members/the Clerk.

With no further amendments, the Board approved both the governance SAR and the GIP.

20.2.13 **Any other business**

None. With a reminder about confidentiality, the Corporation Chair thanked the Governors for their input and their excellent attendance this term.

20.2.14 **Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 16 March 2021. The Chair wished all Corporation members a very happy Christmas, and he closed the on-line meeting at 7.22pm.