

Minutes of the Corporation meeting 22.4 held on Tuesday 16 May 2023

Room A203, Long Road SFC, Cambridge

Present: Gerry Bolton (Corporation Chair), Paul Andrew, Gary Bourton, Yolanda Botham (Principal), Ishan Cader, Chris Cope, Alex Curnow, Abby Futter, Sophie Harrison, Rob Howes, Gemma Long, Hugo Macey, Lily-Kate McCormack, Carole Moss, Jenny O'Hare, Sebastian Rasinger, Ian Wilson and Alex Wong

In attendance: Steve Dann (Vice Principal), and Charlotte Hemmins (Finance Director)

Clerk: Anne-Marie Diaper

Ref **Actions:**

22.4.1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from David Evans and Alex Pryce.
The Corporation Chair welcomed Gary Bourton to the meeting.

22.4.2 Declarations of Interest

None

22.4.3 Request for any other business

None

22.4.4 Minutes of Board meeting 22.3 held on Tuesday 14 March 2023

With no amendments, the minutes of the last meeting were approved by the Board as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

22.4.5 Matters arising

None

Gary Bourton withdrew from the meeting at 5.20pm

22.4.6 Board appointments

Independent Governor appointment. The GSC Chair advised the meeting of another successful round of recruitment processes and thanked the Clerk for finding suitable candidates. The GSC Chair introduced the candidate to be considered for appointment, explaining that on appointment he would fill the last remaining vacancy on the Corporation.

The Board approved the appointment of Gary Bourton as Independent Governor from 16 May 2023, for an initial term of 4 years (ie. to 15 May 2027).

Gary Bourton rejoined the meeting at 5.23pm

Ref**Actions:**

Appointment of All Staff Governor. The paper prepared by the Clerk set out the processes and timeframe for the All-Staff Governor role and the outcome of the democratic election.

The Board formally ratified the elected appointment of Chris Cope as all Staff Governor for a term of 4 years to 30 March 2027.

22.4.7 Board strategic business

Draft accountability agreement/statement. The Principal gave an introduction to the draft accountability statement commenting that this was a new requirement of the funding body, part of the Skills and Post 16 Education Act for further education Colleges, to demonstrate how Colleges were supporting local, regional and national needs. With a submission deadline of 31 May 2023, she went on to say that the agreement needed Corporation approval, and these would be in the public domain. She drew Board's attention to the summary points.

The Corporation Chair added that the agreement would be a living document, with actions and targets drawn from the College's strategic plan and it demonstrated some of the work already in place. The draft agreement had already received input from the Standards committee Chair.

A Governor commented that the agreement was an impressive document from a dynamic institution.

The Board agreed the document as presented, accepting that minor (not material) changes would be made (such as a glossary added) and that it would be signed off by the Chair on behalf of the Corporation in order that it could be submitted by 31 May 2023.

Discussion and recommendations from the strategic 10 May 2023 workshop. The Principal presented her paper, which set out a proposal for Board consideration, to seek Board approval to formally pursue the creation of an Eastern region post-16 Multi Academy Trust (MAT). This was not a new theme to most Governors, who had attended the recent strategic awaydays when these strategic matters were presented.

She gave an overview of her paper, pointing to page 2 as a summary. The paper articulated the background to the proposal, explaining the vehicles used for the exploration work to date (earlier an AWG, and latterly the SFWG).

Section B of her paper set out the proposal in detail (including some questions that had been raised previously), and Section C set out the

Ref**Actions:**

initial principles/framework, including the benefits. She went onto explain the difference in the current proposal from the intention in 2017.

The College had already had informal conversations with other regional partners, but the Board decision at this point was to enable the College to move forward and have an open dialogue with the Regional Director, College staff, and the other strategic partners, and to signal commitment to the formal processes. She explained that the next steps would include production of a project plan, provide further clarity on what government would require the College to do, further detail on the key stakeholders (including the other parties), and evaluation of options etc.

In response to a question from a Governor it was explained that a post-16 MAT would not be a unique entity, as there were a couple in existence already in other parts of the UK.

A Governor asked what could be the possible consequences of not approving the proposal, which the Principal explained that it would put a stop to public discussions. There were other key strategic risks to not being proactive at this time. A Governor echoed the Principal's sentiments, assured as to the benefits of the proposal.

A Governor commented that whilst she understood the benefits of academisation, she personally needed to consider further the benefits of the current proposal over and above alternative proposals. The Principal reminded the meeting of the messages the speaker gave about the spectrum of MAT models. Another Governor commented that he preferred to follow a course of action where the College could preferably lead the strategic direction now. A third Governor was content with the proposal but that the College should make sure it had considered all options. There was a short discussion about other local strategic plans, and the possible impact of these on LRSFC, and then about matters raised by College staff and the possible decentralised model of a MAT.

The meeting discussed briefly the risks of not following the original proposed course of action through to conclusion. Board members agreed that it was better to cease pursuing a strategic direction that could ultimately be detrimental to the College, but that carefully following a path where formal due diligence would support the process would enable the Board to clearly understand what it was entering into.

The Chair and the Principal advised that making the decision to pursue this strategic plan now allowed further detailed information and criteria to be brought to the July Board meeting. The Governors overall agreed that the Principal's clear paper set out the case for change.

Ref**Actions:**

The meeting pondered when would be the right time to communicate with wider stakeholders (students etc), what impact a possible change of government might have. Governors were reminded that there would be formal consultation process as part of the academisation application, but the Principal agreed that the right publicity strategy was key. She would take this away to consider further.

Principal

Academisation Working Group (AWG) ToR. The new AWG proposed would have new membership, new ideas and independent thinking, and it would enable a conduit for formal reporting to the Board. Criteria for evaluation, helpful as a starting point, had been set out in the SFWG papers.

The Chair reminded the meeting that the Board would be formally fully briefed with a regular report from the AWG. Some committee input would also be likely (eg. AC for risks and FRC for finance models). It was proposed that someone other than the Corporation Chair would Chair the AWG. The Vice Chair then spoke about the next steps, steered by the AWG, supporting the senior team to pursue academisation at this time. The Regional Director would allocate someone from his team to support the College through the academisation process, should the application be approved. A small sum of money (circa £25K) would be forthcoming to cover some costs, but it is possible that the College would appoint an external project manager once workstreams were clearer.

The Corporation approved the proposal as set out in the papers to formally pursue academisation, to include the establishment of the AWG including the group's Terms of Reference, with a Vice Chair as AWG Chair, and looked forward to the next update in July 2023. The Vice Chair asked that Governor expressions of interest to participate in the AWG should go to him, copied to the Clerk.

Governors**22.4.8 Report from Audit committee***AC22.2 Wednesday 22 March 2023*

The AC Chair reported from the recent meeting (minutes had been included in the papers). There were no approval items. The committee had received a report on Data Protection and cyber security which remained a big issue in the sector, the business continuity plan, Freedom of Information, Risk, assurance mapping, and approved the Whistleblowing policy. The AC would meet in person in November 2023.

22.4.9 Report from Governance & Search committee*GSC22.3 Tuesday 25 April 2023*

Ref**Actions:**

The GSC Chair reported from the recent meeting (minutes had been included in the papers). There were no approval items. The committee had discussed appointments and committee roles for two new Governors. These new appointments had filled all remaining Board vacancies, but there remained two further prospective applications that were being considered. Other matters touched on briefly at the recent meeting were Governor training and development (visits, webinars, induction, Governor reviews that were occurring), and the usual consideration of risks.

The GSC reminded the Board that an external review of governance was imminent. A date was pencilled in the diary (early 2023/24). The Clerk advised that the GSC would be asked to consider a proposal and a high-level project plan at its June meeting, and the Board should consider approving the appointment of an external reviewer in July.

Board**22.4.10 Report from Finance & Resources committee**

FRC22.3 Wednesday 26 April 2023

The FRC Chair reported from the recent meeting (minutes had been included in the papers). There were no approval items. She drew the meeting to 3 key points in the minutes/her report. The FRC had approved the College's updated redundancy policy. The recent meeting had received an update on the new build, including factors that had led to the finances associated with the project. The College looked forward to an end of May handover of the new building. The committee had considered an early draft budget for 2023/24 and financial forecast. The FRC would consider this again in June for Board approval in July 2023.

A Governor referred to the fencing of the site, favouring a single point of entry, but, looking at other developments, he wondered how the College would finance them. The Finance Director commented that College budgets would be a challenge next year. Additional capital grants had raised an extra £300K and some of this would be used for the perimeter fencing, but otherwise, and without any other successful capital bids, College was looking at many smaller improvements.

22.4.11 Report from Standards committee

STC22.4 Thursday 4 May 2023

The STC Chair reported from the recent meeting (minutes had been included in the papers). There were no approval items. She noted that the committee was already looking forward to this year's summer examination results. Review teams were doing well. The committee had discussed a couple of other teams, and retention and attendance had been touched upon. The Board talked about the highest ever number of students (7) who went onto medical school/veterinary school. These

Ref**Actions:**

applications had been very much student driven, and then supported by the College. The Board agreed this matter was worthy of a note of celebration.

22.4.12 Governance improvement plan (GIP)

The Clerk presented an update on the GIP reminding the meeting that the governance development work is driven by committees who consider the GIP's deliverables at each meeting. There was a short discussion about papers being made available a week before each meeting. The Clerk reminded Governors about statutory requirements and best practice.

22.4.13 Any other business

None. Governors were thanked for attending the 10 May strategic awayday that had enabled a great deal of thinking around the matters presented in agenda item 7.

22.4.14 Date of next meetings

22.5 Board Tuesday 11 July May 2023. The main meeting closed at 6.45pm.