

MINUTES

South Essex College Group Meeting of the Full Corporation Board Tuesday 31 October 2023

Date and timings:	18.00 to 20.27
Location	South Essex College, Southend Campus, Luker Road, Southend
Present (Governors):	Rick Oliver (RO) (Chair) Roland Anderson (RA) Gerry Bender (GB) Denise Brown (DB) (CEO and Principal) Lee Freeman (LF) Sue Leonard (SL) Paul Gribbon (PGr) Aaron Thompson (AT) Seye Awolusi (SA) Steve Collins (SC) Jodie Curtis (JC) (HE Student Governor) Jo Brooker (JB) (Staff Governor- Academic)
Clerk to the Corporation	Lana Jackman (LJ)
College Group Clerking And Policy Officer	Carrie Brown (CB)
In attendance	Adam Fahey (AF) Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality Zed Mohammed (ZM) Interim Executive Director for Finance David Hughes (DH) Chief Organisation Officer Jayne Sheehan (JS) Vice Principal Innovation Ansar Mahmood (AM) Vice Principal MIS, IT and Marketing 1 x vacancies for FE Student Governor
Apologies	Roney Brooks (RB)

The meeting was quorate.

Item	Action lead
0.00 Agenda RA took the Chair of the meeting. Recommendation from the Extraordinary Corporation Board meeting. SL proposed the recommendation from the Extraordinary Corporation Board meeting that RO Chair of the Corporation Board until 9 July 2024. The Corporation Board AGREED that RO will be the remunerated Chair of the Corporation Board until 9 July 2024. RO joined the meeting.	

1.00 **Chair's Welcome and Introduction.**

The Chair welcomes everyone to the meeting and introduces new Governors PGr, AT, SA, SC and JC.

2.00 Preliminary Items.

2.01 Apologies for absence and declarations of interest.

Apologies for absence from Roney Brooks were received in advance of the meeting.

There were no other new declarations of interest other than those already standing ⁱ(in accordance with the requirements of section 177 of the Companies Act 2006).

2.02 Urgent business notified in advance.

None.

2.03 Ratification of HE Student Governors Appointment- Jodie Curtis.

The Corporation Board **AGREED** to ratify Jodie Curtis as the HE Student Governor.

2.04 Ratification of Committee Membership.

The Corporation Board **AGREED** the Committee membership as outlined in the documentation with the exception of AT and SC who are meeting with the Chair to discuss their membership further.

2.05 Backstage Centre Ltd- Corporation Board to ratify appointment of Chair.

The Corporation Board **AGREED** to David Hughes becoming the Chair of the Backstage Centre Ltd Board of Directors.

3.00 Minutes and matters arising.

3.01 Minutes of meeting held on 10 July 2023.

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2023 were accepted and **APPROVED** as an accurate record. The Minutes will be filed in the Approved Minutes Folder.

3.02 Matters Arising.

The following matters arising were discussed from the minutes:

- BB and GB have met to discuss the careers matter fully.
- DH noted that the CFFR is reviewed once a year in July.

4.00 Principal and CEO report.

The Corporation Board **NOTE** the Principal and CEO report.

4.01 Strategic Plan Projects.

DB presents an update on the Strategic Plan Projects noting:

- The disappointing recruitment this academic year and the conversion rate of applications to learners and this needs to be a focus for next year to realise the growth ambitions.
- The need to a tighter plan for the AEB numbers to build this inhouse provision.
- HE recruitment has been positive this year as the predicted shrinkage did not realise.
- Revise 15% of staff turnover as the sector average is 19% but staff turnover has reduced.
- Agency costs are still a cause of concern.
- Finance rating is 'requires improvement' which is an improvement from the 'inadequate' which was forecast.

DB notes that this is a 'rocky' start but this is a clear baseline to move forward from.

LF asks if there will be an update on the financial reclassifications? ZM notes the work around the SECG Balance Sheet to make this clearer for Governors.

AT asks if the staff survey response on purpose at 66.5% is good enough to be green? DB responds that she would like this to be 75% but the figure is significantly improved from previous years.

The Corporation Board **NOTE** the Strategic Plan Projects update and **APPROVE** the nudge targets (which will be reviewed at Committee level for the relevant Committees).

5.00 Curriculum, Quality and Learner Experience.

RO gives the following feedback from the Curriculum, Quality and Learner Experience area:

- RO noted the disappointment in the achievement rates this year (however 3 of 4 levels did show improvement)
- RO notes the disappointment in the enrolment process
- Curriculum Planning process was discussed with the movement towards a 3-year plan
- SL highlights the work experience point and the Entitlement+ point in the Curriculum and Quality Committee minutes.

The Board have an in depth discussion about employer engagement noting that SECG are looking for more employer engagement at all levels from curriculum engagement to industry placements. JB adds the need to have a stand for parents at open evenings to build in their industry links. HP notes that most companies have a social action policy and SECG is more than happy to aid businesses to fulfil this.

LF asks about the engagement from the local LEP- DB responds that due to the devolution deal the local LEP is being dissolved.

5.01 Minutes of the meeting 16 October 2023.

The Corporation Board **APPROVE** the minutes of the meeting 16 October 2023.

5.02 Indicative Outcomes 2022-2023.

AF presents the SECG Indicative Outcomes 2022-2023 noting the distance that Entry Level and Level 1 courses are from national averages and details the mitigations that SECG is putting in place to prevent this happening again (detailing the reviews, monthly milestones, beginning forward of the assessment deadlines and management of the portfolio assessment).

Challenge is given by SA regarding the tracking of the critical success factors- AF responds detailing the checking of the tracking to ensure that it is evidence based. DB adds that attendance is a critical success factor and this year attendance is 5% up from this time last year and the highest that it has been in 3 years including E&M.

SL gives first hand feedback on the review process including the clarity of the expectations from staff and the engagement with parents on absence.

The Corporation Board **NOTE** the Indicative Outcomes 2022-2023.

5.03 QIP Themes and Format 2023-2024.

The Corporation Board **NOTE** the QIP Themes and Format 2023-2024.

5.04 Corporate Governance SEND Strategy.

DB asks that LJ and BB to have a pre working group to move this forward to expedite the process.

The Corporation Board **APPROVE** the Corporate Governance SEND Strategy paper which will form a Working Group to move this forward.

5.05 Number of CQC meetings to be confirmed.

DB raises that Ofsted would be looking to have an increased number of CQC meetings to monitor and challenge in this area.

The Corporation Board **CONFIRM** that CQC shall meet 6 times a year.

6.00 Policies and resources.

LF gives the following feedback from the PRC meetings:

- Staff Pay is a continuing issue.
- The positive feedback from the staff survey and the robust discussion about the two way path for communication.
- Finance is an ongoing concern- savings need to be found to facilitate any pay award.
- LF thanked ZM for his very clear reporting.
- The issue of the air handling units was detailed by the Chair.

DB adds that the AoC recommendation on the pay award is 6.5% and SECG has not scenario planned for an award as high as this however, SECG need to make a significant pay award for this academic year.

PGr queries the lack of compliance with the performance management process- DH responds that this process has been more robustly reviewed this academic year to improve compliance.

6.01 Minutes of the meeting 17 October 2023.

The Corporation Board **APPROVE** the minutes of the meeting 17 October 2023.

6.02 Finance paper- 31-10-23

The Corporation Board **NOTE** the Finance paper which highlights the adverse impact of increase energy costs and high agency costs. DB notes that the staff costs need to be adjusted due to the subcontracting. ZM notes the high EBITDA at SECG. ZM details the strong audit progress that has been undertaken by Scrutton Bland on the SECG cash and cash flow process which only had a one low recommendation. ZM details that this is a vast improvement from the SECG position in the previous 6 months.

AF notes that this progress has been a challenge across SECG with a lot of hard work and sacrifice across from the SECG staff team. The Board thanked the SLT, Executive Board and SECG staff for all the work that they have put in to move forward in this area.

The Board challenged on the income generation and how this could be increased.

Policy ratification.

6.11 Risk Management Policy (Annual)

The Corporation Board **DEFER** the Risk Management Policy. Circulate the Risk Management Policy.

6.12 Health and Safety Policy (Annual)

The Corporation Board **APPROVE** the Health and Safety Policy.

6.13 Safeguarding Policy.

The Corporation Board **APPROVE** the Safeguarding Policy.

6.14 Fees Policy.

The Corporation Board **APPROVE** the Fees Policy.

AT asks for clarity on the debt collection and the hardship refund and this is reserved for HE courses in the main. DH responds that the costs of the lanyard and course fees are not aggressively chased.

6.15 Subcontracting Policy.

The Corporation Board **APPROVE** the Subcontracting Policy.

6.16 Reserves Policy.

The Corporation Board **DEFER** the Reserves Policy. AT and PGr note that the first section of the policy are more relevant to a board paper and ask that the Reserves Policy reworded to reflect a policy and is recirculated via email.

7.00 Audit and Risk

PGr gives the following feedback from ARC:

- Scrutton Bland Internal Audits were discussed Subcontracting Standards and Funding Assurance.
- Scrutton Bland detailed the positive result for SECG in these areas noting that the College had performed better than others in the sector.

7.01 Minutes of the meeting 19 September 2023.

The Corporation Board **APPROVE** the minutes of the meeting 19 September 2023.

7.02 Workshop outcomes 26 October 2023.

PGr detailed that the workshop reviewed the ToR and note the detail will be removed from the ToR's and the action plan will be to give feedback to LJ. PGr notes there is a need for a revised workplan.

DB notes that there were no officers at the workshop and there is a guiding principal that workplans are triangulated with the officers workplan.

DH updates the Board on the signing of the 2021-2022 accounts- however the accounts should be finalised by the end of the week. 2022-2023 accounts should be available by Christmas. ZM reflects positively on the meeting with the auditors detailing that Price Bailey should be on site to aid with the audit process.

8.00 Governance and Remuneration.

SL gives the following feedback from GRC:

- Discussion around the training of new Governors.
- Issue around the gender balance of the Board was discussed.
- Training for new Governors.

8.01 Minutes of the meeting 5 September 2023.

The Corporation Board **APPROVE** the minutes of the meeting 5 September 2023.

9.00 Governance Matters- Update,

9.01 Formal adoption of the revised AoC Code of Good Governance.

The Corporation Board **FORMALLY ADOPT** the revised AoC Code of Good Governance.

9.02 Formal adoption of the SPH Remuneration Code.

The Corporation Board **FORMALLY ADOPT** the SPH Remuneration Code.

Current Link Governors

9.03 English and Maths- Sue Leonard.

The Corporation Board **APPROVE** that SL continues as the English and Maths Link Governor.

9.04 Safeguarding- Rick Olver.

The Corporation Board **APPROVE** that RO continues as the Safeguarding Link Governor.

9.05 Careers- Gerry Bender.

The Corporation Board **APPROVE** that GB continues as the Careers Link Governor.

9.06 SEND AND HE

The Corporation Board to defer to GRC.

9.07 College Link Governors.

To be discussed at the Board Development Day.

9.08 KCSIE.

All Governors **CONFIRM** that they have read and signed the KCSIE.

9.09 Confirmation that the following forms have been completed and returned:
Declaration of Interest and Eligibility Forms (including PEP)
Skills Audit
Self-Assessment Forms
Committee Self-Assessment Forms
Code of Conduct

All Governors **CONFIRM** that they have completed and returned the above forms other than one Governor.

9.10 Confirmation that all Governors have read the:
Instruments and Articles
Standing Orders
PowerPoint Induction Slide Deck

All Governors **CONFIRM** that they have read the above other than one Governor.

9.11 Confirmation that all new governors have completed the following:
College onboarding process including Governor Hub
Existing governors to volunteer to be Mentors
Update on FE Student and Staff Governors.

All Governors **CONFIRM** that they have read the above.

BB confirms that there is a discussion around the recruitment of the FE Student Governor.

10.00 Any Other Business.

AF detailed that SECG is expecting an Ofsted Monitoring visit in the near future.

11.00 Dates of future events and forthcoming meetings.

12th December 2023

08.30-10.00hrs Tour of Backstage Centre and Royal Opera House

11.00-16.00hrs Equality Diversity and Inclusion Workshop (Part 2 Induction)

18.00-20.00hrs Corporation Board Meeting

23rd January 2024- Board Development Day

26th March 2024

11.00-16.00hrs Strategic Leadership, Behaviour and Culture Workshop (Part 3 Induction)

18.00-20.30hrs Corporation Board Meeting

16th April 2024 - Chairs Forum

11th June 2024 - Board Development Day

9th July 2024 - Corporation Board

12.00 Motion of Confidentiality.
Motion of Confidentiality [THAT, because of its nature, the business to be conducted be treated as confidential and not for publication]

Staff in attendance, staff and student governors left the meeting at 20:15.

Item	Actions	Deadline	Lead	Status
Actions from 31 October 2023				
5.04	Corporate Governance SEND Strategy paper to form a Working Group to move this forward.		LJ/BB	
6.16	Reserves Policy to be recirculated via email for approval		DH	

ⁱThe code of conduct for Governors requires governors to be honest and open with regard to conflicts of interest (either real or perceived). Governors must not use their position for personal gain in business, political or social relationships. Therefore, a governor who has, or may be perceived to have, such a personal interest in a particular matter under consideration should declare that interest, withdraw from all discussions relating to it and take no part in any vote on such matter.