

AUTUMN TERM MEETING OF THE CORPORATION OF THE SOUTH HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE GROUP

Boardroom, Fareham College, Bishopsfield Road
Wednesday 2 April 2025 at 17.00

MINUTES

Present:	Jennese Alozie Anna Mae Castillo (Student Gov) Celie Fulcher (Student Gov) Ian Harris Gregory Kitchin (Staff Gov) Collins Ntim Sandra Prail (Chair) Andy Wannell	Fran Butler Nick Cheaney Sarah Harder-Collins Andrew Kaye (CEO) Emily Morey Colin O'Donoghue Benita Raphael (Student Gov) Phillip Wright
In attendance:	Georgina Flood Danielle Jiranek Pete Jodrell Michael Johnson Anoushka Ottley Partnerships	Director of Governance Chief People Officer Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality Chief Operating Officer Executive Director of Business & Civic

48/24 Item 1: Deep Dive – Student Engagement

The Corporation received a 'deep dive' session on Student Engagement by Tanya Richardson – Assistant Principal of Quality & Student Experience. The Student Governors also provided an update on the same topic as part of this presentation. A copy of the presentation will be uploaded to the portal after the meeting.

Members queried how the questions used to seek student feedback are formulated – do they come from staff or via students? APQ&SE confirmed they were mainly driven by staff and seeking views on something the College are interested in students views on, but there have been occasions where students have driven the agenda. All agreed it would be positive to develop some student driven feedback.

In discussing the suggestion for dedicated student led budgets, the Chair reminded the COO and the DPC&Q of a previous action to investigate supplying some support and budget for the development of pin badges for the changemakers group. It was agreed they would work with student governors to deliver this potential project.

ACTION: DPC&Q and COO to work with student governors re: pin badge project

Members discussed the challenge of effectively delivering the 'you said, we did' aspect of student engagement. APQ&SE noted some SHCG departments do this well - it can and should be done at group and local/department level, suggesting the tutorial programme can be leveraged for this. Members went onto discuss how to turn the conversation round asking students how they would like us to engage with them, encouraging them to influence our methods of engagement. APQ&SE noted that the ongoing Changemakers programme is hoped to generate a pipeline of student engagement, talent, and resource. It was agreed that an open invitation to join the Board or C&Q Committee should be extended to all student Changemakers.

ACTION: APQ&SE and DG to provide an invitation to all Changemakers. to join a Board or C&Q Committee

49/24 Item 2: Welcome and Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Hollie Swift and Caroline Perrett.

50/24 Item 3: Declarations of Interest

Members were asked to declare any interests relevant to the agenda. There were none.

51/24 Item 4: Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes from the previous meetings held on 4 December 2024 for the Joint Corporation/Audit Committee, the Corporation Meeting held on 10 December 2024 and the Governors Training Meeting held on 29 January 2025 were reviewed for accuracy. Members agreed the minutes were an accurate reflection of the meetings held.

DECISION: Minutes for the meetings held on the 4 December 2024, the 10 December 2024 and the 29 January 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

52/24 Item 5: Actions & Matters Arising

Members reviewed the outcome reports from the previous meetings, noting most actions were either complete or underway. There were no items of note.

The Corporation received this report and noted the assurance provided.

53/24 Item 6: Ratification of between meeting decisions: None:

54/24 Item 7: Student Voice – Student Feedback

It was noted that the Student Governors provided their update as part of the earlier deep dive.

55/24 Item 8: Chief Executive's Autumn Report

The CEO introduced this report (circulated in advance) to provide an overview of those factors external to the college which affect its operation and strategic direction.

Highlights were noted as;

- Noted KPI & Risk register as Appendix
- Lots of potential regional and sector specific updates - more to share at the May Strategic Planning day.
- the complexities of funding announcements, with some clarity on the 2025/26 allocation provided but uncertainty regarding in-year additions for the current academic year.
- proposed changes to Ofsted's inspection methodology with a new 5-point grading scale to replace the overall effectiveness grade seems to not be particularly popular (notably within FE sector)
- the Turing scheme, which has enabled international trips for students, enhancing their educational experiences has been notably successful e.g. trips to Gambia, Bali, and the USA.

The Corporation received this report and noted the assurance provided.

In respect of core KPI's a member queried why it was felt sickness absence would drop in the next quarter? CEO suggested this was likely due to the resolution of some longer-term cases as well as the reduction in the winter cold/flu. CPO confirmed it would be prudent to take this position as a revised baseline now all data is

driven from a single source.

Members discussed the return rate of the staff survey of 60% and discussed the high-level findings. It was noted that there was a notable proportion of staff in the 'neutral' category that we're hopeful to be easily moved into the 'positive' category. Staff governors were asked for their views with one noting in their delivery of two divisional sessions, the majority of staff reflect that they are feeling much more positive and upbeat than when they completed the survey – the timing of the survey in November (which is a pinch point in the Autumn term) and notably this year, may well have affected result. Staff were positive about the ability to decide within their own teams, their own 'factors to improve' (as well as those identified by the organisation). The CEO noted lots of work and projects are already underway to drive some changes e.g. delayed start of 2025 Autumn term, a dedicated wellbeing day, etc. The CPO noted that results from the August 25 survey will be testament to seeing if we've managed to make some changes.

A member queried if the strategic risk relating to systems should still be RAG rated as red/high. COO confirmed this related to one un-aligned system (which is now complete) and as such Resources Cttee felt this risk should be downgraded. A members suggested the addition of end dates /target end dates would help to drive improvement and 'move' risks more dynamically.

A member noted that the wider HE sector was really struggling and suggested without a notable 'USP' or step change to our current offer they felt it was unlikely we would be able to move our current 'under target' position. All agreed this reflected the discussion at C&Q Cttee that something fundamental will need to be done to really drive any change in this area – members acknowledged the opportunity to fully develop this discussion at the forthcoming Strategy Day.

56/24 Item 9: Resources Committee Update

The Chair of the Resources Committee introduced this item noting that the Cttee received positive updates in respect of procurement, the new act and its impact on our system and processes, details of the Group's strong financial position including the possibility of releasing some money to provide some additional support/relieve pressure from staff. Governors were reminded this came with the caveat any additional spending was to be used to relieve rather than add additional projects /pressures and that any spending should not directly impact the longer-term intention to meet the 'good' financial health score.

**DECISION: Members approved on recommendation of the Resources Cttee the following;
Family leave policy, EDI Plan 23-27 (inc the Gov QIP) and Sustainability Strategy
The Corporation received this report and noted the assurance provided.**

57/24 Item 10: February Management Accounts

The COO introduced this item noting the addition of section 7 – the statement from the Resources Cttee about additional spending. No more additional comments.

The Corporation received this report and noted the assurance provided.

58/24 Item 11: Capital Projects

The COO introduced this item noting that this report updates members of the Corporation on progress with capital projects and to give assurance that SHCG has adequate control and oversight of projects.

The Chair requested that the COO provide assurance that contingency planning of these multiple projects is in place to minimise effect to staff and students in the event of timetable slippage. The COO confirmed that PMC have placed particular emphasis in ensuring clear contingency planning as an integral part of all project briefs.

A member queried if planning permission for the Hamwic area had already been secured or if this eventuality had been factored into timescales. The CEO confirmed that planning permission 'in principle' is in place, however we intend to proactively manage timelines e.g. tendering for contractors whilst we wait to ensure we meet agreed timescales.

The Corporation received this report and noted the assurance provided.

59/24 Item 12: Cleaning & Security Tenders

The Chair noted the report contained commercially confidential data informing governors that if d specific questions around individual suppliers or costs needs to be raised, the meeting would need to move into confidential session. All agreed.

The COO introduced this report requesting an approval from the Corporation to appoint Vigilant as the security contractor for SHCG for a 3-year period from 1st June 2025 (with option to extend +1year +1 year) and also the approval to appoint Nviro as the cleaning contractor for SHCG for a 3-year period from 1st June 2025 (with option to extend +1year +1 year). Members were reminded there had been some juggling and use of rolling contracts to enable SHCG to move all 3 contracts into one contract at once, and as such this hasn't been subject to prior review by the Resources Committee. Members were also informed, despite procurement savings targets due to the climate in which these contracts were tendered (e.g. raises to minimum wage, increased employer NI contributions), maintaining costs and or 'standing still' was still considered to be unlikely.

A member commended the team on achieving an almost flatline cost within the current market especially considering the 2/3 and 1/3 split of the scoring matrix in favour of quality. In discussion of the level of detail included in the report, Governors noted they felt assured by the additional information and scoring methodology in providing assurance that a robust process had been used.

The Safeguarding Governor asked for assurance that the student services team had been suitably involved in the tendering process. The COO confirmed that the Group Head of Procurement had held meetings with the Director of Student Experience to ensure to ensure that the appropriate and any additional requirements were included as part of the new specification.

DECISION: The Corporation approved the appointment of;

- **Vigilant as the security contractor for SHCG for a 3-year period from 1st June 2025 (with option to extend +1year +1 year)**
- **Nviro as the cleaning contractor for SHCG for a 3-year period from 1st June 2025 (with option to extend +1year +1 year)**

60/24 Item 13: Governance Cttee/Corporation Chair update

The Chair of the Governance Committee introduced this item noting Charity Commission permission has been granted to remunerate the Chair position for a single term of 3 years.

Members were asked (and gave their approval) to the following items on recommendation of the Governance Cttee;

- **Appointment of NCVO as External Board Provider**
- **Link Governor Protocol, including new timetable for visits**

- **Governors Training & Appt policy**

The Corporation received this report and noted the assurance provided.

61/24 Item 14: Curriculum & Quality Committee Chair's Update

The Chair of the C&Q Cttee introduced this item noting that C&Q had held a successful meeting and were keen that the progression of the data and the prototype 'dashboard' is shared with the wider Corporation. The Cttee are confident the development and accessibility of the data sets will help support effective scrutiny. Additionally, the Cttee found assurance in the communication and responsive way management had dealt with a significant number of staff changes within the Safeguarding team. There was confidence that consistent cover and support was prioritised whilst future proofing had also been considered as part of identified solutions.

Members were asked (and gave their approval) to the following items on recommendation of the Curriculum & Quality Cttee;

- **SEND Strategy (with suggested outcome measures to be added)**
- **The appointment of Phillip Wright as SEND Link Governor**

A member commented on the increased response rate of 72% in respect of Destination data – how can we improve further? DPC&Q agreed the response was good because of returning the resources for this project in house. It was also noted the full completion rate was less positive due to some learners either not finishing all questions or opting out of some questions. Governors were formed that additional work is underway to review the type/frequency and quantity of questions focusing on those 'skipped' questions to see if we can improve response rate and data clarity in future years.

Members endorsed the addition of more quantitative measures to assess the success of delivery of the SEND strategy querying what these might look like. DP C&Q confirmed these would likely be based on ensuring that our achievement, attendance and outcomes data for SENS learners and non-SEND learners are as close as possible. It was agreed PW as SEND Link Governor would work with DPC&Q to develop these measures.

The Corporation received this report and noted the assurance provided.

62/24 Item 15: Curriculum & Quality Termly Update

The DPC&Q introduced this item noting that this report provides assurance that Curriculum, Quality & Safeguarding are robustly monitored and implemented across the College Group. The following items were of note;

- Attendance especially 16-18 FT and GCSE continues to be a key challenge. Recent interventions in GCSE M&E have started to show positive impact.
- Frustrations around changing apprenticeship data for (23-24). SHCG SAR validation achievement rate was 50%, QAR then said it was 60.3%, (which we disputed with ESFA) since then it's been confirmed that the data had been mismatched (an error due to c. 200 leavers pre-merger which came into the 23/24 data year) which means actual achievement was 51.6%. For 2024-25 we think our forecast will be c. 64% compared to national average of 60%.
- Significant Safeguarding staff challenges - recent appointment of a Director of Safeguarding & filling Safeguarding vacancies (particularly at Fareham College) has strengthened the groups resources to meet a growing need. The Safeguarding Governor reiterated her comfort that this had been well handled.

The Chair commended the M&E approach viewed at her recent visit to EC, how will the 'Intervention Tutors' -

as a finite resource be used to best effect? DPC&Q confirmed the hope will be to use them for multiple purposes. Initially to target those students that are inconsistent in their M&E attendance, then to work with those who don't attend M&E but do attend their course, then those who are not fully attending in both areas. As always, this support will be a combination of incentive/deterrent e.g., rewards and celebrations to help drive improvement. Governors requested any emerging patterns in respect of areas of curriculum or learner types to be fed back via the C&Q Committee.

A member queried if the data error for apprenticeships would have any financial impact either now or in the future. EDB&CP confirmed that no impact was expected.

DPC&Q shared the latest dashboard prototype on screen and confirmed that the data integrity will be improved because of the report being directly driven from the MISE system and that it was accurate in real time. It was noted that once the final template has been established (which is expected to be ready for C&Q Summer Term Cttee) we will be able to pull snapshot data at regular intervals (e.g., monthly) to help start to plot trends and identify wider data interpretation.

Members were informed that there were multiple uses for this report more widely within the business. A staff governor confirmed that the development of this report means there is a 'one stop shop' for all key data sets for those in management roles e.g., Curriculum Director, which will prove invaluable. Members commended the development of the dashboard and discussed options for its development, suggesting the use of Power BI as a tool to aid development. DPC&Q noted the limitations of governor access to MIS data report and noted there was potential scope in the future to develop this further.

The Corporation received this report and noted the assurance provided.

63/24 Item 16: Audit & Risk Committee Update

The Chair of the A&R Cttee introduced this item noting that the recent Audit meeting was the first meeting of new Internal Auditors Validera, and that the Cttee feel this is already an improvement. Members were provided with an overview of the tender process to appoint the External Auditor, including the addition of the incumbent provider (despite not scoring sufficiently to be shortlisted) to act as a benchmark (which proved a useful exercise). Members noted the intention to seek Corporation approval to appoint the new external auditors at the subsequent item of this agenda.

The Corporation received this report and noted the assurance provided.

64/24 Item 17: Appointment of External Auditor

The COO introduced this item noting that the Corporation are asked to approve a recommendation from the Audit & Risk Committee to appoint Buzzacotts as External Auditors to the Group for a 3-year term (with option to extend +1 and +1 year) with effect from 14 April 2025. Subject to this approval, the Corporation are asked to also approve the requirement to inform incumbent Auditors RSM that their current contract will end with effect from 13 April 2025. All approved.

DECISION: The Corporation approved the recommendation from the Audit & Risk Committee to;

- **appoint Buzzacotts as External Auditors to the Group with effect from 14 April 2025**
- **inform incumbent Auditors RSM that their current contract will end with effect from 13 April 2025.**

The Corporation received this report and noted the assurance provided.

65/24 Item 18: Information Pack

The Chair reminded members that items included in the information pack are intended for exception reporting/questions only. There were no additional queries and as such all approvals were agreed.

The Corporation approved the following items;

Recommended by Governance: EBR appointment/Link Gov Protocol/Gov training & appt policy

Recommended by C&Q: SEND Strategy/Appointment of Phillip Wright as SEND Link Governor

Recommended by Resources: Family leave policy/ Sustainability strategy/EDI plan 2023-27

Items provided directly to Corporation (with no prior review by Committee) approved were;

- **Information Security policy**
- **Public Value Statement**

66/24 Item 19: Any other business

The Chair noted the next meeting of the Corporation will take place on Wednesday 2 July 2025. Before then there is a scheduled training session on 23rd April (online) and a face to face strategy development day on 9 May.

67/24 Item 20: Reflections on the meeting

Members used a short SLIDO poll to reflect on the meeting and the impact of decisions made. The first part of the Corporation meeting ended at 18.35

IMPACT

- *Governors heard from students in respect of their views of current methods of student engagement, the College's role in collating and using this feedback as well as what they feel may work in the future*
- *Governors have used robust KPI and management information to receive assurance that core performance and wider strategic aims are being addressed, tracked and monitored across the business*
- *Governors reviewed and interrogated the strategic risk register making recommendations to better improve its use and timeliness*
- *Governors used horizon scanning and sector updates to anticipate areas of future discussion and strategy for the Board's forthcoming strategy day*
- *Governors have been provided with detailed financial information and strategy to inform the budget setting and wider financial health of the group.*
- *Governors have reviewed and received assurance on the procurement & due diligence practices for suppliers and made an informed decision on two significant cross group contracts*

- *Governors discharged their responsibilities within the Post 16 ACOP /College Financial Handbook and appointed a new external auditor in line with good practice*
- *The Board used reflective practice to assess their own contribution*