



GOVERNORS' MEETING

Minutes of the meeting

on 17 September 2020 by video-conferencing

Present: Mr Adrian Allan, Ms Michelle Balcombe, Mr Graham Biggs, Mr Andy Clarke, Mr Peter Cooper, Miss Caitlin Jenkins, Mr James Miller (Chair), Mrs Vicky Orsmond, Mr Andrew Roberts, Ms Beth Rudolf, Mrs Danielle Thompson, Mrs Catriona Ward, Sarah Woodall (13)

In attendance: Mr Robert Gorman (Clerk), Mrs Sallyanne Griffiths (Finance Director), Mr Phil Tranter (Vice Principal), Mrs Catherine Brearey (Vice Principal)

The Chair announced the resignation of Dr Andrew Black from the Board. The resignation of two of his partners and practice manager, and Covid-19, has meant significant changes to his working week.

Before the business of the meeting, Mark Ridgeway, Director of IT and MIS, gave a short presentation on moving to just using MS Teams to access Governors' files, with documents stored in the Cloud. This removes the need for the sync between files in both Remote Access and Governors' Documents links, in order that sync issues cannot arise in the future, and will work on various devices. A simple guide would be available for Governors and also training for those who need to copy and edit files.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

(0)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS AND GIFTS

None.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 11 JUNE 2020

The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

The Principal stated that the College's planning permission for the provision of 4 mobile classrooms of teaching space on the College's existing site, expires in February. Approval of a Reserved Matters application, costing around £15k, would avoid losing planning permission. [Outline planning permission lasts for 2 years from the date reserved matters were approved, or 3 years from the date of the outline planning permission, whichever is the later]. The Finance Director supported the application, adding that the cost would be capitalised, and the rental cost of the mobile classrooms expensed. After a brief discussion, the Chair, and all Governors **supported** the application.

The Principal went on to give an update on MAT developments, noting that King Edward VI Stourbridge had been approved by the Regional Schools and FE Commissioners to join Heart of Mercia Trust.

5. CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

In response to the Chair, the new Governors confirmed that they had completed, or were working on the online safeguarding training, as part of their induction. The Clerk confirmed that Governors would be reminded by the College's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) when their refresher course was due.

6. CLERK'S REPORT

Board strength now stands at 13, including the Principal, and Student Governor. A new 1st Year Student Governor would be elected in early October.

The Clerk went on to outline the Board Attendance statistics for 2019/20. The aggregate attendance at HSFC full Board meetings was 86.2%, last year 89%. By way of benchmarking, interim attendance statistics gleaned from the Clerks' network, based on returns from roughly one third of colleges, gave an average attendance at governors' meeting of 83.8%, within a range of 63% to 96%. A schedule of individual attendance statistics was circulated.

Sarah Woodall joined the meeting at this point.

7. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Principal presented his report, and confirmed staffing was more stable after last year's reorganisations, including new Chaplain and Personal Tutors. The Staff Governors confirmed to the Board that the new structure was working well.

Staff absence continues to be relatively low. The average number of days absent dropped from 4.5 in 2018/19, to 3.9 in 2019/20, low compared to public services figure of around 6.9 days per year.

The Principal, indicating that Enrolment and results would be dealt with fully later in the meeting, drew Governors' attention to the effect of transport problems on enrolment, currently standing at 2100 in total. It appears, with Covid-19 restrictions in place, that HSFC students (and also students from the other Folly Lane colleges) have not been allowed on to trains on the Newport - Shrewsbury line, and directed to buses, which of course take considerably longer to complete the journey. The position seemed different for HCS pupils, who were allowed on the trains, and Governors expressed considerable concern. The College has involved the local Council and Hereford MP, who has chaired a virtual meeting with senior Transport for Wales (TfW) officials and representatives from H&LC, HCA, and Herefordshire Council. TfW made a vague commitment about 'exploring options to improve capacity' but expressed concern at the seeming discrimination against non-HCS students. The Principal felt that the evolving transport problem was frustratingly beyond the College's control, but will impact on students' work and enjoyment of College and have a significant effect on student numbers.

The Principal went on to say the new tutorial system has started well, with 8 new Tutor appointments. Parent Governors gave good feedback to the Board.

In relation to Covid-19, testing of staff may be a problem, with the possibility of staff having to work from home, with video link to the classroom. Student attendance was good, 95% at present. Communication with parents, staff and students is seen as paramount, as the College has to be flexible in planning. In response to the Chair's request for their feedback the Student Governor said that lessons have been 'more normal' than expected, although social distancing was difficult. The Staff Governors felt that the system had settled down and the 'new normal' was working well. Parent Governors shared positive feedback from their sons/daughters, and another Governor had received good comments from parents.

Vicky Orsmund left the meeting at this point

In relation to Accommodation, the College will again submit a College Improvement Fund (CIF) bid for a new block to replace old mobile units, after the College's bid was rejected last year, when very few substantial builds were approved nationally. More covered outside areas were urgently needed and could be provided by specially designed canopies. A local company run by an ex-student of the College, had been contacted to quote. Provision of the canopies would take approximately 8 weeks. The Vice Principal outlined the need for this space, and Governors were happy for this to be put in hand.

The Chair asked how far behind were students at this stage, and in response the Vice Principal said that a clearer picture would emerge after assessments in the next few weeks. All departments have reported that some students have done better than others. In response to a further question, the Vice Principal said that early university applications (October as opposed to January) should not be affected.

Calendars of fixtures and events for Music, Musical Theatre, Sports and Drama are available in the Governors' shared area, and the Principal encouraged Governors to attend.

Governors **NOTED** the report.

8. **FINANCE REPORT**

The Finance Director presented the report covering:

Summary Results

The Finance Director presented the Summary Financial Results for the year to 31 August 2020, indicating that the results were prior to audit and pension scheme adjustments. The external auditors would begin work in two weeks.

Earnings before Interest, Taxation, Depreciation and Amortisation (EBITDA) for HSFC looks positive at this stage with a surplus well in excess of the £292k budget, helped by pay and pension cost funding streams not included in the budget and tight payroll control. Other key performance ratios included Payroll cost% to Income at 75%.

Referring to the HSFC Balance Sheet, the Finance Director indicated that it remains strong, with net current assets of £2.5m.

The ESFA's Financial Health measure, using a combination of 3 financial ratios, has been continued, and calculated as 'Outstanding'. Maintaining 'Outstanding' financial health will be increasingly difficult when facing potential fall in student numbers, increasing payroll pressures and increased Employer pension contributions.

Governors **NOTED** the Summary Results for the year to August 2020.

2020/21 will see an increase in funding, but also on expenditure and temporary accommodation, making it difficult to predict at this stage. In response to a Governor's question about temporary buildings, the Finance Director confirmed that groundworks are capitalised, but rental costs are expensed. Asked about Examination fees expense, the Finance Director confirmed that £25k had been received back but a further credit note was being sought.

Insurance Renewal

The Finance Director presented an Insurance Renewal Report for 2020/21 covering all insurances within the General Policy, indicating that costs were in line with what was previously agreed. The agreement renegotiated with the current insurer was very competitive with total insurance schedule premiums 3.83% up on last year. The Estates Manager was happy with the level of service and good working relationship with insurers. In response to a Governor's question as to the level of cover for students on the sports field and a recent article in the press, the Finance Director said that Personal Accident cover for students was in range depending on incident, but sums insured can be reviewed.

9. **CONSIDERATION OF 2020 LEVEL 3 LEVEL 2 RESULTS**

The Vice Principal presented schedules of 2020 results for level 3 and Level 2. Results day had been very challenging for the team involved, then followed by over

856 grade changes out of 2086 entries, but very few changes were escalated to the Principal.

A schedule of Initial A Level results by subject indicated a pass rate of 98.8% overall, with 51.0% A* to B. Results after the decision to award Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs) produced 99.9% overall, 62.2% A* to B. Some 50% of students gained places at Russell Group universities.

Analysing value added and comparing institutions will make no sense this year. There was also concern at the impact on the College, and new students, from misleadingly high GCSE results at schools.

A schedule of Level 2 GCSE results, where grades awarded were the CAGs, indicated a pass rate of 69.8% grade 9 to 4, 18.9% more than last year. It was noted that the appeals process was still being gone through for Vocational courses.

Governors **NOTED** the report.

10. CHANGES TO CURRICULUM AND COURSE MASTERFILE

The Vice Principal presented a schedule of changes to Level 3 and Level 2 courses for 2020/21. At Level 3 a new Forensic Science BTEC will be introduced from January, but Tourism BTEC will no longer be offered. At Level 2, Computing will not be offered, but will probably be brought back next academic year.

Governors **SUPPORTED** the changes.

11 ANALYSIS OF ENROLMENTS

The Vice Principal presented various schedules and briefly outlined enrolment statistics over the last few years. The College's analysis of Year 11 enrolment from Main Partner schools, 42% of the year's cohort, was discussed. There was concern at the impact on the College from worryingly low standards at some feeder schools. Visits to schools have been restricted to virtual communication, as was the College's Open Event. Virtual Enrolment had gone well, but obviously not as good as face to face.

Overall numbers of New Student Enrolling at 1135 were slightly up on last year at this stage, and demonstrated an application conversion rate of 79.59%.

The detailed Analysis of New Students Enrolling 2016-20 highlighted slightly reduced enrolment from partner schools, but an increase in enrolments from Gloucestershire, with Worcestershire and Shropshire as previous years. The number of enrolments from schools in Wales also showed a decrease.

The Chair thanked the Vice Principal and his team for achieving a very good result in very challenging circumstances, and Governors **NOTED** the report.

12 RETENTION 2019/20

The Principal presented Retention statistics for 2019/20 noting that retention remains at a relatively high level, in spite of all, at 94.0% for Start to July and 96.0% from Nov to July. Last year 2018/19 were 93.3% and 96.0% respectively.

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Governors expressed their appreciation as to how well all Covid-19 arrangements had been handled by management and staff.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 22 October 2020, at 6.00pm.