

PETER SYMONDS COLLEGE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS
HELD ON
MONDAY 9 DECEMBER 2019

Present:

Tim Rogerson (Chairman)	Anthea Palmer
Lynne Evans	Graham Rockett
Harmesh Bhambra	Sara Russell (Principal)
Roger Huxstep	Alan Sydney
Michael Kazim	Tina Thorne
Barry Neaves	Joanna Townsend
Amanda Storey	Michael Wesley
Leo Buckley	Rob Sykes

In Attendance:

Dave Cartwright	(Vice Principal)
Nick Allen	(Deputy Principal Quality)
Lucy Edevane	(Deputy Principal Welfare & Progression)
Irfan Khan	(Director of Finance)
Vicky Owen	(Clerk)

Item		Action
1.	Apologies - Apologies received from Chris Edwards and David Williams.	
1.1	TR welcomed IK to his first full Board and thanked VO for covering as Clerk.	
2.	Minutes of the meeting dated 14th October 2019 The minutes were accepted as a correct record save for a typing error at 10.9, which the Clerk noted and amended.	
3.	Matters arising from the minutes 14th October 2019	
3.1	Point 10 -This was a reminder to all to be alert to safeguarding issues.	
3.2	Point 11.2 – This is an action for the return of HW.	Clerk
3.3	Point 12.5 – VO confirmed that the Mercers’ previous nominee was unable to proceed but informed the Board that the Mercers have identified an alternative candidate subject to approval at a forthcoming Mercers’ meeting. TR, SR and HW will meet with the nominee and this is likely to come to Search early in the New Year.	Clerk
3.4	Point 12.12 – NA confirmed that the typo in the Strategic Objectives had been corrected.	
3.5	Point 12.16 – a recommendation re the adoption of the AoC Remuneration Code is on the agenda.	

3.6	<p>Point 15.2 – thanks expressed to the governors who kindly volunteered to conduct Oxbridge practice interviews. The Board requested feedback on their contribution if this is available.</p> <p>There were no matters arising on the Confidential Minutes.</p>	Clerk
<p>4.</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p> <p>4.3</p> <p>4.4</p> <p>4.5</p> <p>4.6</p>	<p>Finance Report <i>Papers circulated:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Reconciliation Statement, Income/Expenditure for 2018/19</i> • <i>Income/Expenditure for the two months ending September 2019</i> • <i>Financial Report for Policy & Resources Meeting 18th November 2019</i> • <i>Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2019</i> <p>IK reported that full detail had been presented to P&R, with figures for 2018-19 remaining substantially unchanged. The c£57k surplus as reported previously by PB stands.</p> <p>IK also reported that no changes are suggested to the figures previously presented for the first two months of 2019-20. The overall outcome is currently forecast to come in on budget, with cash flow as indicated by PB and the balance sheet strong.</p> <p>IK explained that we are currently in discussion with the LGPS Hampshire pension managers regarding their assessment of risk, with the hope of achieving a change in our classification from ‘medium to high’ to ‘low’. If achieved, there could be significant financial savings.</p> <p>IK also mentioned recent announcements re improved funding for 2020-21. We await further detail.</p> <p>Referring to the Cashflow Forecast (Financial Report for P&R p2), the Board queried whether some of the c£3.2m in the Lloyds current account should be moved to achieve a higher interest-bearing account. IK replied that the auditors had suggested this and he would be recommending such to P&R. The Board asked what the notice period is on the Nationwide account which IK did not know but he will find out.</p> <p>The Board referred to recent media coverage of significant increases to overdraft charges at some banks which are expected to become more widespread and asked if this is likely to affect the College. IK said that we will keep this under review and report back if necessary but we tend not to run an overdraft.</p>	IK
<p>5.</p> <p>5.1</p>	<p>Principal’s Matters <i>Paper circulated: Principal’s Matters prepared by SR dated November 2019</i> SR confirmed that this paper is unchanged from that presented to P&R on 19th November.</p> <p>Funding Announcement – SR said that this appears to be significantly positive for us, particularly as there is more funding for Maths and Science</p>	

<p>5.1.1</p> <p>5.2</p> <p>5.3</p>	<p>subjects which are a large area for us. Importantly, however, this is for 2020-21 onwards, so the situation remains very difficult for 2019-20.</p> <p>The Board asked for clarification as to how this would be calculated, given the lagged funding system. SR explained that we would receive funding at the enhanced rates next year, based on enrolments this year but including the uplift.</p> <p>NJC Support Staff Pay Claim – SR updated on the national negotiations which are still ongoing and which should result in a new SFCA pay scale as well as any cost of living settlement.</p> <p>NEU Sixth Form Colleges Industrial Dispute – SR informed the Board that NEU members at our College went on strike on 20th November as indicated in the paper. This was the third day of action and the only one in which our staff participated. Initially our College did not meet the threshold for action but were re-balloted and we met the threshold the second time due to an increase in turnout. Further provisional dates have been put on hold.</p>	
<p>6.</p> <p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p> <p>6.3</p>	<p>Report from the P&R Committee (incorporating Personnel matters) <i>Papers circulated:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Draft minutes of the meeting 19 November 2019</i> • <i>Finance papers and Principal’s Matters as above</i> • <i>Staff Development Report</i> • <i>Report on Staff Absences</i> • <i>Report on College Loans</i> • <i>Report on Legislative Changes</i> • <i>Annual Report on Trade Union Facility Time</i> • <i>Personnel policies for review: Loans to Staff, Professional Association Subscriptions, Recruitment Procedures, Staff Development, Ill-health Retirement, Recruitment of Ex-offenders, JNCC Terms of Reference</i> • <i>Wellbeing Policy</i> • <i>The principles governing the setting of fees for adult courses 2020-21</i> • <i>Memo Boarding Fees 2021/22</i> • <i>Minute of the Meeting Regarding CIF Bid December 2019</i> • <i>AoC Senior Postholder Remuneration Code</i> <p>AS said that the key items in the meeting were finance and the Principal’s Matters which have been discussed. The Committee also heard the business of the Personnel Committee which was cancelled due to the absence of the Clerk.</p> <p>Adult Course Fees – AS said that the Committee heard that the principles are consistent with previous years, with fees being reviewed in the light of costs and tested against the market.</p> <p>Boarding Fees – AS said that a 2.5% increase in fees for 2021-22 had been proposed to the Committee which recommended agreement. In the Committee, SR had made the point that if we charge higher fees we raise expectations and have to improve our facilities. SR informed the Board that we have just appointed a new Head of Boarding to start in January 2020. In</p>	

	<p>the recruitment process the panel told candidates that we will be looking for a move from previous reactive maintenance and improvement to a planned programme informed by research and visits to other boarding settings.</p>	
6.3.1	<p>The Board asked if a 2.5% increase covers increases in costs. SR said that it is hard to predict costs due to such factors as uncertain pay settlements and DC confirmed that food costs are increasing. The Board asked if Boarding is delivering a contribution and SR said it is.</p>	
6.3.2	<p>LKE has recently returned from a visit to the Falkland Islands which she found most interesting. The Board asked whether there are concerns re the renewal of the FI boarding contract. SR said that numbers coming from the FI are less than previously, so we are less dependent than we were on FI students. LKE explained that there are some potential changes that could impact the number of FI students coming to our College: a high proportion of FI students taking a vocational route post 16; the construction of a new training centre, the curriculum of which could include A levels; an increasing percentage of the population coming from Chilean heritage so more likely to look to that country for post 16 education.</p>	
6.3.3	<p>The Board asked if there are significant demographic changes in the number of young people in the FI and LKE said she was unaware. The Board also asked if FI young people are able to elect to study in the USA and SR said she was unaware but that crucially the British government guarantees to cover FI students' costs to come to the UK which is presumably not the case if they go elsewhere.</p>	
6.4	<p>Personnel Policies – AS said that the Committee looked at the reviews of policies as circulated, as well as a draft new Wellbeing Policy.</p>	
6.5	<p>Appointment of consultants re the CIF bid – AS explained that an impromptu meeting had been held of SR, DC, TR, AS and BN. This was because the opportunity arose to apply for CIF grant funding and we needed to appoint contractors quickly. IK had a look at different quotes which were comparable but there was too little time to run a tender process. Importantly, if we fail in the bid, there will be no fee payable. Under the Financial Regulations, the Chairman is able to make such a decision which he did, for the appointment of Chawton Hill. This was reported to P&R and now to the Board.</p>	
6.6	<p>AoC Senior Postholder Remuneration Code – AS explained that, as we are adopting the AoC Code of Governance, it is sensible to adopt the Code.</p> <p>Resolved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) the Board approved the principles governing the setting of fees for adult courses 2020-21 as per the paper circulated with the agenda for this meeting. All in favour. ii) the Board approved the boarding fees for 2021-22 as set out in the paper from LKE dated 18th November 2019 and circulated with the agenda to this meeting. All in favour. 	

	<p>iii) the Board approved the changes to the Personnel policies as circulated with the agenda to this meeting: Loans to Staff, Professional Association Subscriptions, Recruitment Procedures, Staff Development, Ill-health Retirement, Recruitment of Ex-offenders, JNCC Terms of Reference. Also the new Wellbeing Policy. All in favour</p> <p>iv) the Board approved the adoption of the AoC Code of Governance and thereby AoC Senior Postholder Remuneration Code as per the copy circulated with the agenda to this meeting. All in favour (SR abstained.)</p> <p>v) the Board approved the recommendation that, when any cost of living increase be agreed nationally and for implementation in this College with effect from 1 September 2019, it should be paid to Senior Postholders. In the event of a differential pay increase being agreed, the Senior Postholders are to receive the same percentage increase as awarded to Teachers at the top of the pay scale. All in favour (SR abstained.)</p>	
<p>7.</p> <p>7.1</p> <p>7.2</p> <p>7.3</p> <p>7.4</p>	<p>Report from the Audit Committee</p> <p><i>Papers circulated:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Draft minutes of the meeting of 25th November 2019</i> • <i>Report of the Audit Committee to the Board and to the Principal which annexes the Annual Report of the college for the year ended 31st July 2019, together with</i> • <i>The Final Audit Findings Report from RSM Audit UK LLP for the year ending 31st July 2019</i> • <i>Draft representation letters from the College to RSM Audit UK LLP</i> • <i>Annexes to the Audit Committee Annual Report</i> <p>BN referred to the Report of the Audit Committee (the Report), which annexes the Annual Report for the year ending 31 July 2019. He reminded the Board that the business of the Committee in the last meeting was the external audit as prepared by RSM Audit UK LLP.</p> <p>Referring to section 5 of the draft minutes of the meeting of 25th November 2019, BN said that several points had been raised and resolved. He also drew the Board’s attention to the Minutes of the Risk Management meeting.</p> <p>BN said that the external auditors had discussed with the Committee the method of reporting to the Board and the capacity of the Finance team. On the latter point, the auditor felt that this should be looked at but did not express a view.</p> <p>IK said that since the papers had been sent to the Board, there was one change to the Annual Report on page 40 regarding the relationship of the Principal/Chief Executive’s pay and remuneration expressed as a multiple. The figures for 2019 were now 5.36 (total) and 5.48 (basic) as opposed to 5.42 and 5.39 respectively. This relates to the recommended method of calculation to reflect the change of postholder on the retirement of SC and appointment of SR.</p>	

	<p>Resolved:</p> <p>i) the Board approved the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31st July 2019 as per the copy circulated save for the amendment described by IK in 7.4 above and authorised the Principal and the Chairman of Governors to sign it on behalf of the College. All in favour.</p> <p>ii) the Board authorised the Principal and Chairman of Governors to sign the Letters of Representation as per the drafts sent electronically to the Board by email on 2 December 2019. All in favour.</p> <p>iii) the Board approved the appointment of RSM Audit UK LLP as the Financial Statements and Regularity auditor for the year ended 31st July 2020 at £13,930 plus VAT and the teachers' pension audit of £1,375 plus VAT. All in favour.</p>	
<p>8.</p> <p>8.1</p> <p>8.2</p> <p>8.3</p>	<p>Risk Register <i>Paper circulated: Risk Register and matrix (summary of high risks) as at 14th October 2019</i></p> <p>DC gave a verbal report of the meeting of the Risk Register Group on 5th December 2019. He explained that the Group went through sections 1-3 which are Achievement, Teaching & Learning and Resources, making no major changes.</p> <p>The Group discussed whether to add a new risk relating to whistle blowing in response to a request from the Audit Committee. The Group decided against as they felt that this was covered under other parts, but they will go back to the Committee to understand the driver for this request.</p> <p>DC said that, in the light of more encouraging news relating to future funding, the Group felt that they could remove the upward trend regarding funding, although the risk from inadequate funding remains in the top corner of the matrix.</p>	Clerk
<p>9.</p> <p>9.1</p>	<p>Report from the Curriculum and QA Committee <i>Papers circulated:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>OfS Conditions of Registration Grid and Higher Education AHED Report October 2019</i> • <i>College SAR & Development Plan 2019-20 and Key Priorities</i> • <i>Confidential report on curriculum causes for concern & E&D analysis</i> • <i>Annual Report on Safeguarding</i> • <i>College Operational Plan 2019-20 and Review of Operational Plan 2018-19</i> <p>RS said that, relating to AHED, OfS compliance paperwork had been undertaken promptly including putting a Freedom of Speech Policy in place. The Committee discussed student survey results, including some that were not positive, but felt that caution should be observed in over-interpreting some results. The SMT is conducting a review of the area which will come to the next meeting.</p>	

<p>9.2</p> <p>9.3</p> <p>9.3.1</p>	<p>Relating to the SAR & Development Plan, RS said that the Committee discussed two areas with large student numbers which are causing some concern but where management action is being taken. The Committee felt that, while they must spend time looking at these areas, this should not distract from the fact that the great majority of provision is very successful. RS reported that the Committee approved the Quality Assurance Policy.</p> <p>The Board asked about the reference in the Committee draft minutes (6.2.5) to encouraging students to move from A level to BTEC Law, asking what the difference is, what advice is being given to students and what do universities feel about the BTEC?</p> <p>NA said that the BTEC might be more suitable for some students, particularly those with lower GCSE attainment. It would also suit those who prefer ongoing internal assessment as opposed to terminal examinations. NA said that it is normal in the sector to run both and that the BTEC students would be more likely to take a vocational route thereafter. The Board noted that, for students wishing to study Law at university with a view to progression to the professions, many institutions do not seek A level law. Notwithstanding, NA commented that students nationally are more likely to go to university if they have studied BTEC. SR said that a previous college introduced the BTEC many years ago and the key thing is to be realistic about progression routes.</p>	
<p>10.</p> <p>10.1</p> <p>10.2</p> <p>10.3</p> <p>10.4</p>	<p>Report on staff perceptions of College</p> <p>SR showed a presentation on the outcome of a staff consultation exercise 'Love & Ideas' carried out at the start of the autumn term. Staff were encouraged to come to the Staff Room and write down on post-its both things they love about the College and things that they think we could do to improve. This was anonymous but, being public, promoted discussion between staff as they viewed existing contributions and added their own. SR collated the responses into themes and presented at an all staff meeting.</p> <p>The exercise was a reminder that, due to staff turnover, we need to repeat messages from time to time e.g. several requested that the site be smoke free whereas we know that this was tried across the sector and found to be impractical as students smoked in local roads, causing a nuisance and putting themselves at risk.</p> <p>Some things that staff 'love' include: feeling trusted and valued; being treated like professionals; positive atmosphere; wellbeing activities; feeling supported; SMT open doors; support teams; the Enrichment Programme; being relatively well resourced; curriculum offer; the students; CPD; Staff Room; campus; family friendly policies; colleagues.</p> <p>There were a number of 'ideas' and SR has brought together five key themes below. Others concerned the following: cleaning; smoking; career</p>	

<p>10.5</p>	<p>progression opportunities; cross college social events; more department time on training days; student sanctions; catering choices.</p> <p>SR said that she presented five key themes to staff at an all staff meeting arising from their 'ideas' and SMT's proposals in response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Need to improve communications – at the time of the survey we had already introduced a common meeting slot on a Monday afternoon but it had not taken effect. We also have the Friday briefing. ii) Tougher action on drugs – we realised that we need to make staff aware of what we are already doing. LKE said that we let staff know about our strong connections with police, our work with Catch 22, outcomes from drug dog visits, such as that held recently. We are planning training on spotting the signs of drug use. iii) Improvements needed to the Tutorial/Pastoral Programme – unfortunately we had a 'false start' this term due to staff changes, but we have just appointed a new Head. iv) Need better consistency across Faculties – we recognise that this is an issue and are working on joint communications, agenda planning and requiring Heads of Faculty to have frequent meetings with their Heads of Subject. v) We need to do more on sustainability – we have a vacancy for a Sustainability Officer. As this person reports to IK, we have consciously delayed the selection process until he has had time to settle into the College. Meanwhile, DC circulated to staff the Sustainability Report which previously went to governors, showing how much is in fact already happening. 	
<p>10.6</p>	<p>SR said that we are aware that, in addition to the ideas put forward by staff above, we need to get their feedback on the new timetable which was only just starting when the 'Love & Ideas' exercise was undertaken. DC is about to send out an online survey.</p>	
<p>10.7</p>	<p>The Board asked whether more staff responded with their views compared with the earlier online surveys. NA said that previously we got about 180 responses, a couple of which were from groups. He felt that those who participated on this occasion took time to do it justice and SR commented that some who had missed the deadline took the trouble to give in comments after the event.</p>	
<p>10.8</p>	<p>Referring to the recent drugs dog visit, the Board asked about the outcome. LKE said that about 18 students had been identified by the dogs which means that they had been in contact with drugs. They were searched but only one had any paraphernalia on them. This student was suspended and the parents of all those identified were informed. Discarded material was found and it was felt that such exercises send a message to students regarding our expectations.</p>	
<p>10.8.1</p>	<p>The Board asked if the recent visit was part of an ongoing programme and NA explained that we have been doing this for about ten years.</p>	

<p>11.</p> <p>11.1</p> <p>11.2</p> <p>11.3</p> <p>11.4</p> <p>11.5</p>	<p>The Governors' 'Dashboard'/Snapshot of vital statistics <i>Paper circulated: Governors' Snapshot 2019-20</i></p> <p>NA drew the attention of the Board to Chart 3 Student Retention, pointing out that the November figure has historically been c91% but has increased to c93%. This has important positive funding implications.</p> <p>NA also commented on Charts 4 and 5 which related to Student Attendance. He explained that, with the new timetable, the pattern of lessons and the scheduling of tutorial are different and we wait to see the impact.</p> <p>The Board noted that attendance seems slightly lower than previously across the piece and asked if we need to be concerned about that. NA replied that there may be a statistical effect of the fact that a subject used to be delivered on four instances a week and is now on three. We will have a clearer picture at the end of the second half term.</p> <p>NA drew the attention of the Board to the Key Priorities, suggesting that these are the matters on which it is arguably most important that Governors hold the senior team to account. They are enshrined in SMT objectives.</p> <p>The Board noted (Chart 1) that AHED 16-19 enrolment numbers have halved, asking if this is due to a reduction in the number of courses running. NA replied that there may be a small reduction but there also could be an impact on the figures due to the following: Hair & Beauty students being recruited through the SFC systems; CACHE Childcare/Education course not running while we prepare for the introduction of T levels; possibly the impact of tougher entry requirements. NA said that applications are healthy so he is not concerned.</p>	
<p>12.</p> <p>12.1</p> <p>12.2</p>	<p>Governor/student discussion (student update)</p> <p>The student governors reported that the Students' Union has led a number of initiatives, such as 'Hash Brown Day' where free hash browns were given to those who had registered to vote, which they believe resulted in more than 300 students registering.</p> <p>The Students' Union has conducted internal elections for posts such as E&D. They are now looking to move ahead on proposals to go to the governors and SMT.</p>	
<p>13.</p> <p>13.1</p>	<p>Any other business</p> <p>Noted that there is a drama production (The History Boys) coming up shortly as well as a number of concerts. Please contact Karen Harper, PA to the Principal on kharper@psc.ac.uk for tickets.</p>	

13.2	<p>Change of meeting dates/launch of Integrated Financial Model for Colleges</p> <p>TR explained that the new Model has to be approved by the Board and submitted to the ESFA by 28 February. On our current meetings schedule this is not possible, so TR and SR had discussed and propose swapping the date of the next Curriculum & QA and Board meetings. Agreed. The next Board will therefore be on 24 February at 3 pm and the next C&QA on 2 March 2020 at 4.30 pm. The Model to be the final item on the Board agenda for 22 February.</p>	Clerk
14.	<p>Private business to include report from the Remuneration Committee (SMT members, staff and student members not present)</p> <p>Confidential minute</p>	
15.	<p>Date of next meeting</p> <p>The next meeting will take place on Monday 24th February 2019 at 3 pm. Please note the change of date as discussed in item 13.</p> <p>There being no further business, the meeting ended at 4.45 pm.</p> <p>..... Date.....</p> <p>Tim Rogerson, Chairman of Governors</p>	