PETER SYMONDS COLLEGE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

HELD ON MONDAY 22nd FEBRUARY at 3.00 PM via VIDEO CONFERENCE

Present: Tim Rogerson (Chairman) Barry Neaves

Harmesh Bhambra Anthea Palmer

Mehmet Colakaglo Sara Russell (Principal)

Chris Edwards Amanda Storey
Lynne Evans Alan Sydney
Georgia Gregory Rob Sykes
Estella Hurlock Tina Thorne
Roger Huxstep Joanna Townsend
Norman Levy Richard Watney

In Attendance: Dave Cartwright (vice Principal)

Nick Allen (Deputy Principal Quality)

Lucy Edevane (Deputy Principal Welfare and Progression)

Irfan Khan (Finance Director)

Hilary Walsh (Clerk) Sheriyar Alamgir (Item 3 only)

Item		Action
1.	Apologies – Michael Wesley and David Williams.	
2.	Appointment of staff governor and Reappointment of two Foundation governors.	
2.1	The Board ratified the appointment of Norman Levy duly elected as Support staff governor for a term of three years commencing 22 nd February 2021.	
2.2	The Board approved the reappointment of David Williams as a Foundation governor for a term of 3 years commencing 6th March 2021 and the re-appointment of Alan Sydney as a Foundation governor for a term of three years commencing 9th October 2021 (both recommended by the Search & Governance committee (see draft minutes at agenda item 10). All in favour.	
3.	Presentation by Presentation on Prevent by Regional HE/FE Prevent Lead Sheriyar Alamgir	
3.1	SA's presentation covered the current risks and threats to students from extremism and Ofsted's expectation of governors regarding their responsibilities relating to Prevent.	

- The Board noted that Prevent does not look at one ideology in isolation. The regional Prevent team liaises with local police to determine local risks and threats.
 SA reported that the current biggest threat and risk locally is the emergence of a right-wing parrative both online and offline. This parrative
- SA reported that the current biggest threat and risk locally is the emergence of a right-wing narrative both online and offline. This narrative has gained traction from both Brexit and Covid -19 and its premise is that all of the UK's current issues link to immigration and immigrants. Its proponents seek to recruit students from colleges.
- SA highlighted and gave examples of a variety of online social media platforms which promote such extremist views and emphasised that whilst most are non-mainstream, non-regulated freedom of speech alternatives, they can infiltrate regulated platforms too.
- SA then referred to Ofsted's expectation of governors. Primarily, Ofsted seeks assurance and evidence that governors understand the processes in place in the College to contact vulnerable students and ensure they are being protected from relevant risks and threats. If management reports to governors show no referrals on Prevent then the Board should question why this is the case.
- Governors can best scrutinise Prevent by promoting on-line safety through awareness training of staff and monitoring that the systems in place are fit for purpose.
- 3.7 SA reminded the Board that there is an inevitable acceptance of risk in carrying out its responsibilities under Prevent should the College highlight to students the existence of unregulated social media sites and run the risk of this being considered promotion of the risk or should the College simply advise students that the College internet is filtered to keep them safe.

3.8 Questions

- The Board enquired as to the resources in College to determine what is happening in the Prevent arena.
- 2.10 LKE reported that there has been whole staff training on Prevent and a revamping of the tutorial for students on Prevent. In addition, since she started in her role at the College, LKE has developed an ongoing working relationship with SA and other local groups for updates on the local picture. This information then feeds into training needs and is cascaded down to staff.
- In addition, LKE reminded the Board that there is a stand-alone Prevent Risk Register which is discussed at each Risk Management Group meeting and Prevent is high on the College's agenda.
- The Board asked the approach taken with students i.e. are they alerted to the fact that the various platforms can be found on the internet.

3.13	LKE reported that the approach is not to advise students of the various sites. Rather, the approach is to provide students with the tools to equip themselves to deal with the situation should they come across such sites e.g. to approach judiciously and should they spot anything of concern to report it and step away.
3.14	LKE reported that IT flags up students looking into risky sites and when questioned by LKE, it is often apparent that they have strayed into them by mistake. The lesson then is for students to recognise the subtle and subversive nature of such sites.
3.15	LKE responded to the staff governor's question relating to the passing on of up to date online risks and threats. LKE reported that as soon as she receives the information from SA it is cascaded down to staff via tutorial material.
3.16	SA echoed the importance of cascading information to staff of up to date threats and risks so they can challenge a student constructively on why they are accessing a non-regulated free speech platform rather than a regulated one such as Twitter.
3.17	The Board acknowledged the challenge to the College as students are of an age where they are more advanced compared to staff in both their awareness and use of new social media platforms.
3.18	SA was thanked for his very helpful presentation.
3.19	SA left the meeting.
4. 4.1	Minutes of the meeting held on 14 th December 2020 These were accepted as a correct record save that the third sentence of 11.6 should read 'This term has seen' The Clerk to amend.
5. 5.1	Matters arising Point 5.5.5 – SR reported that the reference to the DFE guidelines for return to onsite learning in January had been overtaken by events. The College has published details of the delivery of online learning on the College website as required by the DfE. SR has and continues to be in constant dialogue with relevant bodies and the local MP.
5.2	Point 7.5.1 – this action point is referred to in the minutes of the Audit committee at agenda item 13.
5.3	Point 11.10 – the question was raised if this was an action point. TR reported that this related to an internal process and being operational was not an action for the Board to monitor.
5.4	Point 11.1 - the Clerk circulated the Skills audit to all governors.
6.	Principal's matters Paper circulated: Principal's matters 1 st February 2021

6.1 SR referred to her paper which covered remote delivery, Ofqual consultation, Teachers' pay agreement 20/21, Rapid flow lateral testing, funding, the FE White Paper and student recruitment 2021 and asked if the Board had any questions. 6.2 By way of update, SR reported that the Board had approved the Teachers' pay award electronically by way of a written resolution (agenda item 8 refers). 6.3 SR referred to the NHS Southampton University Hospital Covid -19 saliva Clerk testing programme which is outlined in a governor briefing (the Clerk to circulate to governors). 6.4 The programme has several benefits over lateral flow testing namely it is easier to administer (no additional staff or space required) and is more accurate. However, the timing of 'onboarding' the College onto the programme is dependent on its laboratory capacity being sufficient by the time the College returns on site. 6.5 Questions from the Board 6.5.1 The Board referred to the enrolment figures for 2021/22 and if this reflected the sharp increase in the number of 16-19 year olds in the next few years. 6.5.2 SR reported that 21/22 is just the beginning of the growth nationally in the numbers of 16-19-year olds. However, the College's position is more complex as the Winchester feeder schools cannot grow anymore, although there are pockets of feeder schools outside of Winchester where there is significant growth. 6.5.3 The Board noted that SR and other members of SMT had met with an architect just before half term to discuss possible areas for development subject to available funding. The Government has provided capital funding for expansion but as yet the process and eligibility criteria are still awaited. SR assured the Board that the College is positioning itself as best it can in the meantime to include regular contact with the relevant person in the ESFA. 6.5.4 NA reported that the size of students in Year 11 is set to increase year on year nationally to 2028 and in some areas the increase is as much at 26% each year whereas in Hampshire it is 15% year. 6.5.5 The Board enquired about the effect on a student on being on the College waiting list and in particular did it mean their future education is on hold. 6.5.6 SR reported that they advise the student that the College is unable to offer a place and recommend that they seek a place at an alternative college as it is very unlikely that they will be successful staying on the waiting list.

6.5.7	The Board asked if there was capacity in the county for all 16-19 year olds to receive an education. SR confirmed that there is capacity but choice is reduced.	
6.5.8	The Board asked if there are plans for a programme over summer for catch-up for those students whose learning has been most affected by Covid. DC reported there are no plans but he was pleased to report that the College has been successful in receiving funding from the Mercers to deliver additional workshops. The focus will be U6 students and the most disadvantaged but will then revert to L6 once the U6 have left in early to mid June. The target of the funding is STEM subjects but this includes Product Design. DC confirmed that the funding is very welcome and will make a big impact.	
6.5.9	NA reported that students have engaged very well with online learning which reflects the huge amount of work by both teaching and support staff to enable students to access lessons.	
6.5.10	The Board asked if the applications by boarders for 21/22 are down as a result of Covid -19. LKE reported that applications are down from last year but there is still a surplus.	
6.5.11	SR reported that she had just received notice from the DfE that as part of the government's road map out of the current lockdown, all schools and colleges are back on site from 8 th March with associated Covid testing. SR confirmed that she will keep the Board appraised of developments.	
7.	Report from P&R committee Papers circulated: Draft Minutes of meeting 1 st February 2021; Financial Report for Policy and Resources Committee Meeting to include position Annual Report and Financial Statements Y/E 31 July 2020, ESFA Returns Update, Financial Report to end of December 2020 including impact of Covid-19, Financial Report to end of December 2020 and estates update; Equality Analysis 2021; Risk Assessment for on-site LFD testing 01 21; Covid risk assessment v 8; IT: request for Purchase Upgrade Storage prepared by Head of IT Feb 21.	
7.1.	AJS referred to the draft minutes and confirmed that the main items discussed by the committee were Principal's matters referred to at item 6 and the financial report. AJS then invited IK to present his finance report to the Board.	
7.2	IK reported that the finance report had been discussed in detail at P&R and therefore he would provide a summary and answer any questions from the Board.	
7.3	Annual Report and Financial Statements Y/E 31 st July 2020 - IK confirmed that the annual audited financial statements had been submitted to the ESFA.	

7.3.1 The financial health grade calculated by the ESFA finance record template is 'Outstanding' for the second year running and this should be confirmed by the ESFA to SR in due course. 7.4 ESFA Returns update - the Board noted a Covid -19 update is to be returned by the end of April which will require cash-flow forecast updates. The IFMCv2 will need to be submitted by the end of July. 7.5 Forecast 20/21 and the impact of Covid - IK referred the Board to the table in his report which provides a summary of three possible scenarios for future forecast changes. The three scenarios relate to different speculative dates when the College will reopen (after half term, after the Easter break and worse case the next academic year). 7.5.1 Each scenario shows the adjustment to the previous report on forecast to the Board of the net reduction in the Boarding and catering position together with the teachers' pay award set against the mitigation/savings from the continuation of the in-year growth and TPS employers contribution grant both of which have been confirmed by the ESFA. 7.5.2 The middle scenario shows similar financial impact from Covid to the year 20/21 but will be slightly better as it has today been confirmed that schools and colleges will be returning onsite from 8th March. IK confirmed that a decent surplus should therefore be retained. 7.6 Job Retention Scheme Extension -IK reported that there is an extension to the Job Retention Scheme until April 2021 and a claim has been made for all catering and boarding staff with the first payment for January received. 7.7 Cash flow summary – this remains strong but it should be remembered that it was prepared before the TPS contribution grant and the in-year growth payments were confirmed. 7.8 **2021 / 22 Funding Update** – IK confirmed the funding rates and weightings / targeted funding will be unchanged in 2021/22. In addition, the Spending Review in November will provide extra funding of circa £600k for 2021/22. 7.9 Estates update - IK confirmed that the CIF application was made for £264k (net of the College contribution) for two flat roofs – one at AHED and the other for Product Design. The outcome should be known in Spring. 7.10 **Questions from the Board** 7.10.1 The Board referred to the substantial cash reserves and whether there is any scope for reviewing the investment to provide a better return of interest. IK reported that the Treasury Policy restricts investment in the short term, which is in line with good practice. However, a review of the Treasury Policy is currently being explored by SMT including the possibility of looking at investments for charities which may have better returns. 7.10.2 IK reminded the Board that the Balance sheet circulated is at the end of December 2020 and due to the funding profile, the amount of cash

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	reserves varies during the year and is at its lowest in the period January – April.	
7.10.3	The Board referred to the news today that schools and colleges will be returning on 8 th March and whether boarders will return on that day. SR confirmed that the plan is for the boarders to return at the same time as the other students. The saliva testing programme will hopefully be in place to provide assurance to both boarders and boarding staff. Meetings with both the unions and safety committee are scheduled this week and it is hoped that the relevant guidance will be available to discuss.	
7.11	Equality and Diversity analysis 21 – AJS reported that this covers the period 19/20. LKE's updates relate to the necessary adjustments in focus reflecting the changes in life during this period most notably student wellbeing during the pandemic and BLM.	
7.11.1	The analysis also confirms that the feedback from students from surveys both on the Owens Rd site (L6) and AHED is very positive.	
7.11.2	The data analysis of E&D across the College confirms that there are no areas of concern. The sole group who performs less well than typically are those students in the lowest income quartile as defined by postcode. However, caution should be exercised in over interpretation as the number of students in this group is extremely small (45) i.e. if one more student in the group had been retained it would have been positive.	
7.11.3	The E&D objective for staff is to enhance opportunities for flexible working.	
7.12	Risk Assessment for on site LFD testing 01 21; Covid risk assessment v 8 – both risk assessments were noted by the Board and the former will be significant if the saliva testing programme is not in place by 8 th March.	
7.13	Pay award for Teachers' 2020/21 – the committee was assured that the award was affordable and therefore recommended it be approved by the Board. The Board approved it electronically (see agenda item 8).	
7.14	IT – request for Purchase Upgrade Storage prepared by Head of IT Feb 21.	
7.14.1	AJS referred to the paper prepared by the Head of IT, which had been circulated to governors and the committee's discussion and recommendation set out in the draft minutes.	
7.14.2	The Board queried the long-term economic case for replacing 2 units at a time as proposed, compared to the current practice of replacing alternate units. DC reported that he believed it was a question to be addressed at the relevant time i.e. review the best deals available at that point in time.	
7.14.3	GG enquired if the proposed purchase will improve the performance of the IT system at certain pinch times in the year. DC thought this related more to issues with the data base and not the power size of the units.	

9.1	NA highlighted the excellent attendance of students both in the L6 and U6 over the past few months and that is higher than experienced for the same period in previous years.	
9.	Governor snapshot Paper circulated: Governor snapshot February 21 prepared by NA.	
	from 1st May 2021 a 1.25% increase on all pay points and relevant allowances.	
	from 1st September 2020 a 2% increase on all pay points and relevant allowances and	
	Teaching staff pay agreement for 2020/21 –	
8.2	Board approval of the staff pay agreement agreed by the JNC namely:	
8.1	The Clerk had prepared the paper to confirm the written resolutions approved by the Board electronically since the last Board meeting in relation to the Teaching staff pay awards for 2020/21. For the record, the resolution relating to staff pay award is as follows:	
8.	Confirmation of Written Resolutions Paper circulated: Details of electronic voting on a Written Resolutions made since the last Board meeting on 14 th December 2020 prepared by the Clerk	
7.14.8	Resolved: the Board approve the purchase of two Dell EMC Powerstores from MTI at the cost of £167,751.30 to include installation and five years' support. All in favour save for RH who abstained.	
7.14.7	The Board raised the Cloud as an alternative to the purchase being proposed. DC reported that whilst the College does have virtual servers, he is unable to advise why the proposal is preferable. DC reported he has trust in the Head of IT to have considered carefully all the available options, including leasing, and their associated cost before making his recommendation.	
7.14.6	DC reported that leasing had been considered in the past with regard to replacing hardware but he could not say definitively that it had been done on this occasion or indeed if leasing was available.	
7.14.5	IK reported that when he prepares the IT budget with the Head of IT, it is a five year revenue and capital plan. He feels sure that the Head of IT will have explored all possibilities.	
7.14.4	The Board enquired if leasing had been considered as an alternative to the proposed purchase as maintenance and updates are often covered in the cost. In addition, leasing would mean the cost could be met out of revenue and not capital.	

9.2	The Board noted areas on SMT's radar namely the lower attendance of Level 2 students, which is a very small group this year, and lower tutorial attendance. The latter is probably not surprising given the current context.	
10.	Report from the Search & Governance committee Papers circulated: Draft minutes of the meeting dated 18 th January 2021.	
10.1	TT referred to the draft minutes of the meeting 18 th January. The committee received from the Clerk a report on the governor skills audit and noted the improvement since the last audit in the areas of Audit and IT skills. Overall, the report confirmed that there is a good balance of skills on the Board with weaker areas in H&S and Personnel. There is also a need to maintain finance experience once TR steps down in October.	
10.2	The committee also considered the content for the governor training day on 22 nd March and the skills audit had highlighted Prevent, which has been provided today and understanding the College finance - IK is to deliver his presentation deferred from last year. The committee also felt that the Board would benefit from diversity training.	
10.3	With reference to succession planning, the committee recommended the reappointment of both Bishop David and Alan Sydney as Foundation governors (agenda item 2 refers).	
10.4	The Board noted that the committee structure and Link governors continues to be reviewed and is work in progress.	
11.	Report on induction and settling-in survey and survey on remote learning NA reported on the findings from the L6 induction and settling-in survey carried out last term and the staff survey on how they have found the delivery of remote learning for the period before Christmas.	
11.1	Both surveys reflect the experience of last year and the innovative way in which the College has responded e.g. the online Welcome day, online enrolment. It confirms an incredible contrast with the start of the first lockdown and the extraordinary work done in the last nine months.	
11.2	The findings of the student survey are very positive, particularly given they are a cohort who stopped full-time education in March 2020 – 90% attendance at the Welcome day (up from 84% on the previous year), 88% found it both informative and useful. 98% found enrolment easy and straightforward.	
11.3	With regard to settling-in 92% agreed they are challenged and inspired by their courses. This is excellent considering over 1000 students last term experienced health challenges or had to self-isolate. 95% felt they are fully supported by their tutor and at the end of the most challenging of terms, 98% would encourage someone else to apply to the College.	

11.4 The survey confirmed that almost all students could access the College intranet and online resources from home (99.7%) and 99.3% can access a laptop/tablet to work from home. 11.5 Whilst 97.1% had access to reliable broadband at home this does in fact mean that 1 in 30 students do not and a greater number (3.8%) do not have access to a room at home to enable them to focus and concentrate on their studies. 11.6 The staff survey was also very positive with 97% confirming that they were able to deliver all their lessons live at the scheduled time and most felt the lessons were as good as that broadcast live from a classroom. 11.7 NA shared the qualitative feedback from teachers and whilst most felt confident to deliver remotely it was more difficult to develop spontaneity and the vibe of a live lesson. 11.8 NA shared with the Board the many positive messages about online learning posted on the College Facebook page from students and parents/guardians. 11.9 The Board enquired if the experience of the last year encouraged blending learning as a way forward for the future, which could also be effective in managing the future increase in student numbers. 11.10 DC reported that the use of online resources such as lectures pre-recorded as a lead lecture to consolidate classroom learning could be the way forward. This would not only free up time but also enrich independent learning. 11.11 GG reported that the Maths department have a useful set of resources including re-caps for revision together with technology tools to assist students in learning certain aspects of the course. 11.12 MC reported that he personally had found learning online really difficult particularly maintaining an attention span and he missed group working with peers. 11.13 SR reported that it should be remembered that MC's experience is personal and relates to one subject area and does not correspond with the experience of the student body as a whole as confirmed in the surveys (1500 out of 2000 responded). However, the SU at its most recent meeting with SMT stated that they do miss the classroom experience, which unfortunately is the downside of the pandemic. 11.14 The Board congratulated staff for the way they have adapted so quickly and ably to virtual teaching and learning. The Board agreed with SMT that the way forward is to adopt those practices and events online which have worked well.

12.	Report on Oxbridge applications made 2020/21 Paper circulated: Support for Oxbridge applicants 2020/21 prepared by Sabina Labrow Oxbridge Tutor.	
12.1	LKE confirmed that the number of offers this academic year hold-up when compared to previous years shown as set out in the report.	
12.2	The data shows that there is a strong correlation between a high GCSE score and success rate with those with a score of 7.0 or below being very small in number (2). Applicants in STEM subjects did slightly better than the previous year but not as good as in 2019. The highest number of offers made this year are in Humanities and Arts.	
12.3	LKE highlighted the benefit of the practice interviews with governors and thanked all those who volunteered. 50% of those who had a practice interview with a governor were offered a place.	
12.4	The Board noted the context of the process this year with interviews conducted online and all the students adapted well to this change. The College purchased graphic tablets and loaned them to students applying for science subjects as these were needed for the online interview.	
12.5	Most of the visits this year to Oxford were online due to lockdown but one trip managed to take place just before lockdown in March which was specifically targeted at disadvantaged students. This had a very positive effect on those attending and resulted in one student applying who would not otherwise have done.	
12.6	JT enquired if the students were asked to use the graphic tablets in the STEM subject interviews. LKE will check and let JT know the outcome as it will assist JT in future practice interviews.	LKE
12.7	The Board also referred to the issue of support from one of the STEM departments. LKE reminded the Board that the additional support from subject departments is based on goodwill as it is not part of the teaching or tutor time. As a result, the amount of support with Oxbridge preparation varies from subject to subject.	
12.8	JT reported that the feedback she had received from practice interviews with students applying in STEM subjects was that the particular department provides support once an invitation for an interview is made.	
12.9	The Board thanked SL for all her work and keeping up the numbers in this difficult year.	
13.	Report from the Audit committee Paper circulated: draft Minutes of the meeting 8 th February 2021.	
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13.1	BN referred to the draft minutes of the meeting 8 th February. The internal auditors, Mazars, attended and provided an update on the annual internal audit. Two new audits commenced this month - Learner Number Systems and Higher Education Funding and Governance. NA had confirmed to the	
	committee that he was happy with the progress of the annual plan so far.	
13.2	Mazars presented to the committee its findings on the internal audit of safeguarding at the College. The audit received substantial assurance with 3 recommendations, all of the lowest 'housekeeping' category. SR had reported to the committee that students learning off -site did not lessen the responsibility of the College to students regarding safeguarding.	
13.3	The follow-up audit confirmed that there were 2 areas not actioned but the committee was assured by SMT that these had been overtaken by events.	
13.4	The committee looked at Risk Management and the recent review of s6 Leadership and Management to which DC will report under agenda item 14.	
13.5	Mazars had no issues of concern to raise in the private discussion with the audit committee.	
14.	Risk Register - Papers circulated: copy of the minutes of the Risk Management Group meeting on 4 th September and changes to section 4 of the Risk Register.	
14.1	DC reported that the Risk Management Group (RMG) had reviewed section 6 of the Risk Register relating to Leadership and Management. In addition, the RMG reviewed the Prevent Risk Register when any new local threats are added.	
14.2	DC reported that the RMG agreed to increase the trend of the risk 'failure to fill boarding places' to the highest level. This reflects the impact not only of Covid-19 but also Brexit. However, DC is hopeful that all places will be filled in the forthcoming academic year.	
14.3	GG referred to risk 6.1relating to the risk of low mood of staff working from home during the pandemic and that positive feedback from student and parents on the experience of home learning helps alleviate low mood. SR reported that she does pass on feedback at staff briefings and ensures that she feedbacks to any individual member of staff who has been specifically praised.	
14.4	DC will pass on to the Clerk the latest Risk Matrix to circulate to the Board.	DC
15.	 Any other business the Governor Training day is 22nd March and is online – time to be confirmed but probably to start at 3 pm 	

	 the summer Board meeting has moved from 28th June to 5th July at 3 pm to facilitate the completion of the IFMCv2 a reminder to all governors to complete the online safeguarding training. the Clerk reported that it was the last meeting for EH as her term as a Student governor ends shortly. The Board thanked her for her contribution and excellent attendance over the past year. 	
	GG,NL,EH and MC left the meeting.	
16.	Private business – this is recorded in a separate confidential minute.	
	Date of next meeting – Monday 26 th April at 3 pm	
	There being no other business the meeting ended at 5.30 pm	
	Date Timothy Rogerson Chairman	