

OPEN MINUTES OF SEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday 4 May 2021 5.35pm via Microsoft Teams



STANDING ITEMS

ATTENDANCE AND APOLOGIES

- Present:** Lloyd Taylor (Chair)
John Stebbing (Vice-Chair)
Karen Hucker (Principal)
- Minutes:** Alison Dennett (Clerk to the Corporation)
- Apologies:** None

NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There was none.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Search Committee meeting held on 15 September 2020 and Special meetings held on 2 November 2020 and 25 January 2021 were agreed and signed as correct.

MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

There were none.

MAIN AGENDA

SG20/14. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR & VICE-CHAIR 2021/22

The Committee considered the appointment of Chair and Vice Chair for 2021/22.

It was noted that, with the current Chair stepping down as a Governor in July, the Chairmanship of the Committee would be considered with a new membership at the September 2021 meeting.

RESOLVED: The appointment of Chair and Vice-Chair for 2021/22 be deferred to the September 2021 meeting.

SG20/15. CORPORATION MEMBERSHIP

The Committee noted the terms of office for the current serving Governors and considered the renewal of one Governor who would be reaching the end of first current Term of Office in July 2021. Given their commitment and contribution to the role of Governor, the Committee felt happy to recommend for Lorraine Brown's membership to be renewed for a second four-year term.

RESOLVED: That the Committee recommended to approve the renewal of one Governor for a further four year Term of Office from 02.07.21 – 01.07.25.

It was also discussed that one other Independent Governor would be coming to the end of their first Term of Office in July 2021 but would not be standing for a further four-year term. The Committee were asked to consider an extension of one week to Pat Strickson's expiring Term of Office, to allow for Pat who was also the Link Governor for Safeguarding and Health & Safety, to present a final safeguarding update to the Corporation meeting in July.

RESOLVED: That the Committee recommended to approve the renewal of one Governor for a one week extension to their current Term of Office from 02.07.21 – 08.07.21.

Recommendations would be presented to Corporation for approval via Written Resolution.

SG20/15. REVIEW OF COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND MEMBERSHIP

The Committee agreed that the current Committee structure worked well for the Corporation and consideration of a move to a different model of governance would not be appropriate at this time.

With regards to the membership of the Committees, the following points were considered:

Audit: The Vice-Chairmanship and membership of the Committee was considered in light of the current committee Vice-Chair not continuing for a second Term of Office in July 2021.

It was agreed that an additional Governor would not be appointed to the Committee at this time and this would be revisited at the September 2021 Search meeting. The Clerk would contact

the remaining Committee members to determine whether they would be willing to step into the Vice-Chair role.

Finance & Property: No changes

Personnel: No changes

Remuneration: The chairmanship of the Remuneration Committee was discussed, in light of a potential new Chair of the Corporation. It was agreed that, once the new Chair of the Corporation was appointed, the chairmanship of the Remuneration Committee for 2021/22 onwards would be reviewed if required.

Strategic Planning, Policy & Quality Assurance: A Governor was identified to be appointed to the Committee, given the fact that the current committee Chair would be stepping down as a Governor in July 2021.

It was considered that the Chair of the Corporation should be a member of the Strategic Planning Committee due to its terms of reference, regardless of the other Committees they were a member of. The Search Committee would review this once the new Chair of Corporation was appointed.

ACTION: Clerk to contact members of the Audit Committee to advise them of the situation regarding the Vice-Chairmanship of the Committee.

ACTION: Clerk to contact the current Chair of Personnel / Vice-Chair of Remuneration with regards to the chairmanship of those committees.

RESOLVED: That the Committee recommends the amendments to be made to the Committee Membership as outlined above, subject to the outcome of the appointment process for a new Chair of the Corporation in July 2021.

Recommendation will be presented at the Corporation meeting in July 2021.

POLICIES

The Committee had two policies to review at this meeting as follows:

SG20/16. **Corporation Links Policy SG4**

The policy had received minor amendment as part of this review which were highlighted within the policy including:

- changes to the terminology to reflect current practice;
- inclusion of a focus on work related learning which had been highlighted by Ofsted. It was considered that a focus on this area during Governors' Mornings would help to re-establish its importance; and
- moving to review the policy every three years, as opposed to two, in line with other policies.

The Committee were happy with the amendments proposed and recommended the policy to Corporation for approval.

RESOLVED: The Committee recommended the amended Corporation Links Policy SG4 to Corporation for approval.

SG20/17. **Removal of a Governor Policy SG5**

The policy remained largely unchanged with only minor amendment to the language proposed.

After discussion, in order to avoid negative repercussions arising from meetings regarding the removal of a governor, the Committee considered that point 5 on page 26 of the Policy should be amended to read as follows:

5. The Corporation shall decide whether or not the Governor should be removed from office. In either case the Clerk shall notify the Governor of the decision in writing as soon as practicable after the meeting and, in any event, within **seven days and the decision will be effective immediately.**

Subject to the amendments outlined, the Committee recommended the policy to Corporation for approval.

RESOLVED: The Committee recommended the Removal of a Governor Policy SG5 to Corporation for approval.

SG20/18. **FE WHITEPAPER: SKILLS FOR JOBS: LIFELONG LEARNING FOR OPPORTUNITY AND GROWTH**

The Committee considered the report which gave an update on the governance implications of the Governments' FE White Paper, Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth that was published in January 2021.

The Paper set out plans to reform further education and included recommendations aiming to strengthen the governance of colleges by taking a clearer position on what good governance and leadership looked like.

Governors' attention was drawn to a series of reforms contained within the paper with commentary from the Principal and Clerk on the implications of these for the Corporation. It was noted that most of the reforms aimed to solidify examples of best practice that were already covered in some way by the Corporation's governance processes, however some may need to be developed further as the detail was confirmed.

A discussion was held around the view that the governance recommendations arising from the White Paper aimed to encourage Corporations to adopt a specific Code of Governance, and whether it may be prudent at this point to consider again the adoption of a specific Code. It was advised that there was a current consultation on an updated version of the AoC Code of Good Governance for English Colleges which recognised that the White Paper would have implications for Governance; the consultation closed in early May. It was agreed for the Clerk to undertake a review of the revised AoC Code, once published, and for this to be reported to the September Search meeting.

ACTION: Clerk to undertake a review of the refreshed AoC Code of Good Governance for English Colleges and for this to be reported to the September 2021 Search meeting.

SG20/19. **SELF ASSESSMENT PROCESSES FOR 2020/21**

The Committee noted that the system for the Corporation Self Assessment continued to work well. It was considered important that the Self Assessment Survey should take place as normal, given the current ongoing situation with the Coronavirus.

The Committee discussed the length of the survey and considered that a more concise question base may produce more in-depth responses from Governors. To this end it was agreed that the Principal and Clerk would re-examine the questions to condense to a smaller and more concise selection.

In light of recommendations made in the White Paper discussed elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting, it was agreed that the Clerk would research into options for external reviews of governance in order for these findings to be reported back to the Committee in September.

ACTION: Principal and Clerk to review the Self-Assessment questions for 2020/21 and for these to be circulated to the Committee once the review was complete.

ACTION: Clerk to undertake a review of the options available for external reviews of Governance and for these to be reported to the September 2021 Search meeting.

SG20/20. **TRAINING FOR SUMMER 2020/21 AND THE FIRST HALF OF 2021/22**

It was agreed that the remaining Corporation Training date for 2020/21 being held on 21st June, would be used to provide a review / workshop session on the Vision, Mission and Strategic Objectives as Corporation would be asked to review and approve these in July.

It was discussed that a possible topic for the first Corporation Training session of 2021/22 being held on 11th October 2021, could be development of the Risk Register and the College's approach to Risk Management. This had been a suggestion from the Chair of the Audit Committee which had arisen from a training session held in March specifically for the Audit Committee.

The Committee also considered that a session on the AoC Code of Good Governance for English Colleges could be a useful for Governors, especially if the Corporation were to look to adopt the code in future. The Clerk would investigate at options for the provision of a training session on the Code and report back to the Committee in order for a decision to be made on the content of the October training session.

The Clerk had also identified a number of past and current webinars from the Sixth Form Colleges Association that would be useful to send to new Governors as part of their induction. It was also agreed that all Governors would be provided with links to the complete range of webinars available for their information.

ACTION: Clerk to research options for the delivery of a training session on the AoC Code of Good Governance for English Colleges and report findings back to the Committee.

ACTION: Clerk to send details of the Sixth Form Colleges Association's webinar programme to Governors for information.

SG20/21. RETURNING TO FACE-TO-FACE MEETINGS

With the introduction of the Government's roadmap towards the easing of national lockdown being put into place, Governors had been asked to complete a survey to determine their thoughts on the return to face-to-face meetings as and when this may become possible.

The Committee considered the responses to the survey, which demonstrated a fairly even split between a complete return to face-to-face meetings and Corporation meetings being held in person & Committee meetings being held virtually. A relatively even split had also been seen in the responses for virtual versus physical presence at meetings, although it was considered that a mixture of in person and remote attendees would be difficult to manage in practice.

In light of the responses received to the survey, the following points were agreed in preparation for the UK entering into Step 4 of the Government's Roadmap out of Lockdown which meant the removal of all legal limits on social contact from 21st June:

- From September 2021, plan for Corporation and Committee meetings to return to be held in person, with the option for Committee meetings to be held remotely if a sensible option (according to agenda size); all Committee members would need to be in agreement.
- To address the question of a mix of in person and remote attendees at meetings, it would be clarified that, once permitted and so long as certain factors continued to be met, the expectation would be that all Governors would participate in Corporation meetings in person and Committee meetings in the agreed format for the meeting.
The Committee noted that this approach was meant by way of a plan for when 'normal service resumed' and was not an instant expectation for Governors to attend meetings on site as soon as restrictions lifted. The situation with the Coronavirus would continue to be carefully monitored and a return to face to face meetings only made as and when it was considered safe to do so.

The Committee agreed that this approach should be solidified by amendment to the Standing Orders as follows:

3. Conduct of Meetings

- i. Meetings are normally held at Bexhill College.
 - ii. **Corporation and Committee meetings are normally held in person. The option for Committee meetings to be held remotely shall be considered on a meeting-by-meeting basis if this is a more appropriate option for that meeting and all members of that Committee are in agreement. By exception decisions can be made by written resolution by approval of the Chair.**
 - iii. **Under normal operating times, the expectation is that all Governors will participate in Corporation meetings in person and Committee meetings in the agreed format for the meeting. Requests by Governors to attend meetings via telephone or video-conferencing means will be considered on an individual basis by the Chair of that meeting.**
- Given the success of the remote Governors' Morning that had been held in November 2020, an additional virtual / remote Governors' Morning event would also be scheduled in for March/April 2022.

RESOLVED: The Committee recommended the amended Standing Orders to Corporation for approval.

ACTION: Clerk to confirm the plan for the reintroduction of face-to-face meetings from September 2020 to all Governors, should this be possible in line with Government restrictions.

SG20/22. GOVERNORS' MORNING NOVEMBER 2020

The Committee noted the very positive feedback received from those Governors who had attended the Governors' Morning held remotely in November 2020.

It was proposed to plan for the November 2021 Governors' Morning to be held face-to-face, if restrictions allowed, and, as previously discussed, for a second remote event to be held in March / April 2022.

SG20/23. CORPORATION HANDBOOK 2021/22

The Committee considered the draft handbook prepared by the Clerk and noted that the overall content of the document remained largely unchanged.

Items such as the Governors' Gallery, Governors Profiles and Standing Orders would be updated in time for the beginning of the 2021/22 academic year once necessary approvals had been given by Corporation.

Action: Clerk to amend the Standing Orders once Corporation approval had been received.

Action: Clerk to amend the Gallery of Governors and Governor Profiles to reflect the current make-up of the Corporation.

SG20/24. REVIEW / INDEPENDENCE OF THE CLERK

The Committee noted the report which demonstrated that there were no concerns with the Independence of the Clerk.

The Committee discussed updates that needed to be made to the document including a change to the name of the College's solicitors.

SG20/25. REVIEW OF EFFECTIVENESS FOR SEARCH COMMITTEE FOR 2020/21

The Committee noted the positive review which demonstrated that the Committee continued to work effectively, covering all points within its Terms of Reference. Attendance was excellent at 100%.

SG20/26. RISK REVIEW

It was noted that there were currently no risks delegated to the Committee.

SG20/27. ANY OTHER NOTIFIED BUSINESS

There was none.

NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 14 September 2021 at 5.30pm, venue to be confirmed. The Agenda will close on Thursday 16 September 2021.

The meeting closed at 18.50pm.