

**College of West Anglia
Minutes of
The Search and Governance Committee
6 October 2021
11.50 am
Meeting Room, Principal's Suite, King's Lynn Campus**

Present Sharon Cambridge Governor (Chair)
Andrew Cave Governor
David Pomfret Governor (Principal)
Gary Webb Governor

Attending Stephen Halls Clerk to the Corporation

1 Apologies

There were no apologies for absence.

2 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting – 2 June 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2021 were reviewed and agreed as an accurate record.

4 Matters Arising

The progress against the outstanding matters from previous meetings was summarised in the report for Item 4. The matter regarding Chris Ashman potentially joining the Committee would be removed from the listing, noting that Chris continued to serve on 3 committees, the Board, and as a link Governor. The membership of all committees would continue to be reviewed on a regular basis. **ACTION-CLERK**

The Clerk advised that the AoC had published its updated Code of Good Governance on 1 October 2021, (the draft of which was reviewed by the Committee at its meeting on 2 June 2021). The Clerk had circulated the new Code to all governors on 4 October 2021.

5 Board Structure

- i. Current board and committee structure – The Clerk advised that in the near future he would begin the search for two new governors, one for the Finance & General Purposes Committee and one for the Audit Committee. The Clerk reported that the student body was still looking for 2 members to join the Board as Student Governors and would hope to have this process completed soon. The Clerk mentioned the organisation Unloc, which was on-hand to provide inductions and support for student governors. The Principal suggested the possibility of keeping in touch with Jacob Morton, former Student Governor (2020/21) to support and advise the College's future student governors.

- ii. The Clerk noted from his report the recent application that was withdrawn as the applicant was later offered a place on the Board at a neighbouring college. The Clerk would be mindful of asking future applicants about any other opportunities and positions they may be considering at the time of applying to the College to avoid this from happening again.
- iii. Re-appointments to the Board.

The following discussion was deemed “Confidential – Restricted.”

The Committee agreed that it would recommend the re-appointments of Chris Ashman and Alan Measures to the Board, at the Board’s next meeting on 13 October 2021.

- iv. Link Governors – The Clerk advised that the position of Link Governor for Careers remained vacant. He had included a paragraph in his report to the Board at its next meeting on 13 October 2021 asking again for governors to consider taking on this role.

The report was noted.

6 Register of Interests

The Clerk explained that the Register of Interests had been recently updated with the returns received from all governors, senior managers and staff with significant financial and decision-making responsibilities. The register was a public document and could be requested to be seen at any time. Governors asked if anyone had asked to review the document in the past year; the Clerk advised that only the external auditors had requested a copy of the register to review as part of their annual audit.

The Committee was mindful of the noted interests of Roderick Watkins and Lee Smith, both employed by Anglia Ruskin University. The Chair commented that at all meetings where higher education had been discussed that declarations of interest had been noted by both Roderick and Lee.

The Chair commented that no interests had been declared for Kay Driver, newly appointed co-opted non-governor serving on the Employment Policy Committee. The Clerk would check with Kay if there were any current activities that perhaps ought to be included and would update the register if necessary.

ACTION-CLERK

The report was noted.

7 Governor Attendance – Annual Review

The Committee reviewed the attendance statistics for all members and the summarised totals for each committee. The Clerk reported on the very high attendance rate of 94% achieved for 2020/21, reflecting on the commitment and dedication of governors and the use of remote meetings during the Covid pandemic throughout the year. Governors commented also that generally they were more available during the year under review as holidays were not being taken due to the pandemic.

The Chair commented that year-on-year comparisons of data would have to note that 2020/21 was an exceptional year due to the pandemic, and that it would be difficult to maintain the high level of attendance in the current year (2021/22) and future years, even though there was a mix of on-campus and remote meetings in the schedule for 2021/22.

The report was noted.

8 Governance Survey – Summer 2021 - Review

The Committee reviewed the results from the recent governance survey. The Clerk reported that the overall proportion of governors “agreeing” with the statements had marginally decreased on the previous year, with the proportion of those “disagreeing” with the statements marginally increasing. There was also a marginal increase in the number of “unsures” received, which possibly reflected the responses from the governors who joined the Board in March 2021.

There were no particular areas of concern although one governor had noted in their comments that they were unsure of the reporting plan which detailed the various reports received by the committees and the Board. The Clerk advised that this was available on SharePoint, (Agenda Framework) and that he would circulate this to all members.

ACTION-CLERK

The report was noted.

9 Individual Governor Self-Assessment – Summer 2021 - Review

The Committee reviewed the results from the recent individual governor self-assessment survey. The Clerk noted that for a number of the questions asked in the survey the response had moved from “Agree Completely” to “Agree Generally.” It was considered that this again reflected the addition of new members to the Board, and also possibly the disruption and uncertainty caused by the Covid pandemic during the year.

Several comments had been made regarding governors’ attendance at events other than business meetings, generally noting that events had not been held or were held remotely on Microsoft Teams because of the pandemic.

A number of Governors noted the difficulties they had experienced when trying to access the SharePoint portal. The Clerk advised that the responses had resulted in the matter being logged with IT and was currently under review. The Clerk would continue to monitor this until the matter was resolved.

ACTION-CLERK

The report was noted.

10 Governor Skills Audit – Summer 2021

The Clerk summarised the findings from the review: most areas showed a good number of governors with “Excellent” or “Good” skills and knowledge. The question relating to Law which had previously been poorly answered had been re-worded for the survey this summer and had resulted in an improvement in the responses received, with an increased number of governors now indicating that they had a level of skills and knowledge in relation to legal matters.

The Committee noted that one governor had indicated that they had no skills or knowledge in respect of Safeguarding. This was a concern as all governors should have received some training at induction and received the annual updates of the Keeping Children Safe in Education. Board members also received the Annual Safeguarding report from the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The Clerk was asked to review and consider with the governor concerned if further training was required.

ACTION-CLERK

11 Any Other Business

There were no items of other business.

12 Chair's items for briefing to Corporation

- The Committee noted the excellent attendance rate of 94% for last year. Board members would be thanked for their attendance and engagement at meetings.
- Governors completed 3 surveys over the summer period and the Committee reviewed in detail the results and feedback received. Thanks to be given to all governors for taking the time to complete the questionnaires. One or two areas had been noted for the Clerk to follow-up in due course.
- Several comments were received regarding the problems governors had experienced when trying to access SharePoint. IT had been asked to look at this issue of trying to access the system from home, and, once resolved, the Clerk would issue guidance.

13 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 2 February 2022 at 8.30 am.

The meeting closed at 12.29 pm