

SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
held on 21 January 2021 at 3.30 pm
via videoconference

¹PRESENT: Z Carter (E); J Emm (SCS); T Floyd (E); N Hopkins (E, Chair); J Lander (E); M Lauder (E, Co-Vice Chair); J Milburn (P); N Moody (E); S Morgan (E); A Neal (E); A Owen (E); R Palmer (E); H Perry (S); C Wilson (E, Co-Vice Chair)

In attendance: J Baker – Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt College)
S Grant – Deputy Principal
B Stokes – Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover College)
A Whitworth, Director of Finance
S Willson, Clerk to the Corporation

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

1. There were no interests to declare.

COVID-19 LOCKDOWN AND TESTING

2. The Principal and members of the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) provided verbal reports on the latest developments following the commencement of a national lockdown on 5 January, supplementing regular emails updates and briefings on Covid-19 matters which Board members continued to receive. In addition, the Board had received the latest update of the College Group Covid-19 risk register and a letter to HE institutions from the Office for Students (OfS) (14 January 2021) on regulation during the current phase of the pandemic.
3. The Principal confirmed that the College was complying with the Department for Education (DfE) FE lockdown guidance (Restricted Attendance), with limited numbers of staff working on campus in critical areas, such as animal care and the farm, and appropriate face-to-face teaching and support being provided to vulnerable students attending the Sparsholt College and Andover College campuses.

Risk management & operational updates

4. The Principal, Director of Finance, Deputy Principal and Vice Principal (Sparsholt) reported on each of the Covid task groups which they led, headlines of which included:
 - Medical: Lateral flow tests had been provided on site since the first week of January, with the testing regime planned to change from 25 January in line with the latest government requirements and a potential opportunity to join a Hampshire saliva testing programme being progressed;
 - Residential: there were two HE students (no FE students) in self-catering residence, with wardening and wellbeing support in place.

¹ (E) = External; (P) = Principal; (S) = Staff; (SCS) = Sparsholt College Services Staff Governor; (St) = Student

- HR: staff risk assessments had been updated in line with the latest guidance, the Health & Safety Officer had conducted checks on site and there was a focus on the health and wellbeing of staff working from home. Although no staff had been furloughed, some had been redeployed temporarily to different tasks.
 - Catering: all catering facilities were currently closed, and discussions were ongoing with the outsourced catering suppliers as the financial position, with actions discussed at the previous Board meeting currently on hold awaiting more information.
 - Transport: all College procured student coaches had been stood down to at least Reading Break and the financial sustainability of the coach suppliers and the approach of Hampshire County Council in relation to education transport was being closely monitored to mitigate potential longer-term risks.
 - Industrial work placements: DfE had confirmed that there would not be any financial clawback if the minimum hours were not met, providing that colleges continued to arrange work placements and the College was still seeking placements towards the end of this academic year and looking ahead to the following year.
 - ICT: c200 students had confirmed that they had some difficulties with engaging with remote learning and the College was providing support through the purchase of Chromebooks, 50 data cards donated by Vodafone and College devices being repurposed for student use.
 - Teaching & learning: most of the teaching was taking place via MS Teams, with timetables on both campuses reviewed and innovative teaching activity being developed to engage learners and deliver practical aspects of learning remotely. Online learning was also being delivered to apprentices, with end point assessments face-to-face if safe to do so and required for a licence.
5. The Director of Finance also reported that the internal auditors had undertaken an audit of the College's risk management register and processes in relation to Covid-19. No significant issues had been identified and the report was due to be presented at the next meeting of the Audit Committee for review.
 6. The Principal highlighted the key updates to the College Group Covid-19 risk register as a result of the lockdown and Covid-19 onsite testing, noting that the risk assessment would be further updated to recognise that some students (such as Vet Nursing) had been on campus in order to complete assessments.
 7. The Chair of the Audit Committee commended the SLT for reviewing and updating the Covid-19 risk assessment regularly and using it actively to understand and manage risks.

Office for Students

8. The Deputy Principal summarised key points of the correspondence from the OfS which asked HE institutions to undertake a review during the first half of the spring term and provide assurance to the governing body of ongoing compliance with ongoing condition C1 (guidance on consumer protection law).
9. The Deputy Principal confirmed that management had continued to monitor provision and communication to students to ensure compliance with consumer law requirements,

building on a clear internal audit of CMA obligations in Spring 2020, and would provide an assurance report. Given that the next Board meeting was 25 March, it was proposed in consultation with the Clerk to the Corporation that the report be presented to the Quality & Standards Committee.

10. **Resolved** – that authority be delegated to the Quality & Standards Committee to receive and review an assurance report on compliance with condition C1 (guidance on consumer protection law) on behalf of the Board of Governors and to confirm that there were no compliance risks identified.

Finance

11. The Director of Finance provided a verbal report on key financial developments since the Board of Governors had approved a revised 2020-21 budget in December and received the management accounts to 31 November 2020, noting that the situation was very fluid with a number of continuing uncertainties.
12. In particular, the Director of Finance reminded members that the revised budget assumed a maximum three-week lockdown and that a lockdown to the Reading Break or beyond would result in additional loss of residential income. The Director of Finance and her team were in the process of analysis reconciliations to the budget forecast, some positive and some negative. The Director of Finance gave a number of examples and noted that the net effect and a sensitivities table would be included in the management accounts to 31 December 2020 to keep the Board updated.
13. The Director of Finance confirmed that Landex and the AOC continued to lobby government about the financial impact on the FE sector, and land-based colleges in particular, and that the College had recently submitted updated data to Landex.
14. Following the report at the previous meeting on bank loan covenants, the Director of Finance reported that it remained in the balance as to whether the College would meet the covenants at year end and that this would continue to be closely monitored and reported.
15. The Board noted the update, acknowledging the range of uncertainties and that there continued to be a reasonable probability that the covenants could be met, albeit that the position could deteriorate with further unknowns.
16. Further to discussion at the previous Resources Committee and Board meetings, the Director of Finance updated the Board on position regarding the current market value of the College's small shareholding in Genus (the former Milk Marketing Board shares), confirming that indicators were that it would be beneficial to the College's financial position to sell the shares in the coming weeks/months. The ownership of the shares was historical and did not in itself provide other benefits to the College.
17. **Resolved** – that authority be delegated to the Chair of Governors to approve the sale of the Genus shares owned by the College, on the advice of the Director of Finance, at a time when market information confirmed that a good price could be achieved.

COLLEGE GROUP POLICIES

18. The Board had received the report of the Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover), the College's Designated Safeguarding Lead, and the HR Manager on proposed updates to

the College Group’s Safeguarding Learners Policy and Procedures and Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy.

19. It was noted that the Safeguarding Learners Policy was being updated in line with the Government’s updated Working Together to Safeguard Children policy and that the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy was being amended to reflect legal changes to the criminal records disclosure regime.
20. The Co-Vice Chair and Safeguarding Lead Governor commended the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures as clear and comprehensive, noting that it had been kept up-to-date to ensure the College met its statutory obligations and to respond to changing safeguarding factors during the pandemic.
21. **Resolved** – that the updated Safeguarding Learners Policy and Procedures and the updated Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy be approved.
22. The Principal reported that, after the meeting papers being distributed, management would like to also propose some updates to the College Group’s Work Placement Policy to further safeguard learners.
23. **Resolved** – that authority be delegated to the Chair of Governors to review and approve the updated Work Placement Policy.

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

24. The Clerk to the Corporation reported that, following invitations for nominations for the three student governor vacancies issued via the FE Student Councils (Sparsholt and Andover) and HE Student Association, three students had confirmed their interest in the roles. The nominations were uncontested.
25. **Resolved** – that:
 - a) Serena Ormes be appointed FE Student Governor (Andover College) from 1 February 2021 for the term of her enrolment at the College and be a member of the Quality & Standards Committee.
 - b) Ollie North be appointed FE Student Governor (Sparsholt College) from 1 February 2021 for the term of his enrolment at the College and be a member of the Curriculum, Employers & Market Requirements Committee.
 - c) Jane Plenderleith be appointed HE Student Governor (University Centre Sparsholt) from 1 February 2021 for the term of her enrolment at the College and be a member of the Quality & Standards Committee.
26. It was noted that the HE Student Governor would also be invited to attend meetings of the Curriculum, Employers & Market Requirements Committee in relation to HE matters, including the Access & Participation Plan, subject to her availability.
27. The meeting ended at 4.15 pm.