

**The College of West Anglia
Minutes of
The Search and Governance Committee
7 October 2020
11.40 am
Remote Meeting – Microsoft Teams**

Present	Sharon Cambridge	Governor (Chair)
	Andrew Cave	Governor (Vice Chair)
	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

Sharon Cambridge and Andrew Cave declared an interest in item 5, regarding succession planning.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting – 5 February 2020

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2020 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 Chair advised that a briefing session for the Board regarding T Levels, previously postponed from an earlier Board meeting, would now be covered as a topic during the training morning on 4 November 2020.

5 Board Structure

- i. Current board and committee structure – this was noted by the Committee;
- ii. Link Governors – Noting the comments within the report, it was agreed that Alan Measures would be asked to be the link governor for T Levels during the implementation period, noting that this particular link role would not be needed once T levels were embedded within the curriculum; Lucy Nethsingha would be asked if she wished to become the link governor for the Cambridge Campus; Dave Clark would be asked if he wished to cover any resulting vacancy within link governors from the aforementioned changes; Gill Rejzl would be asked to take on Safeguarding from Sharon Cambridge. **ACTION-CLERK**
- iii. Student Governors – the Clerk reported that in other colleges Student Governors were found to be serving on various committees. After much discussion, which included the limited number of appropriate committees, the additional commitment for

students and the possible adverse effects to attendance levels, it was decided to leave the current structure unchanged with Student Governors serving on the main Board, only.

- iv. Staff Governor – The Committee noted that Donna Woodruff, Programme Manager at the Cambridge Campus, had been elected as the new staff governor, replacing Adam Thompsett. This position would be ratified by the Board at its next meeting (14 October 2020). The Committee decided that Donna would serve on the Finance & General Purposes Committee.
- v. Succession Planning – the retirement dates of all governors were noted from the details supplied in Appendix 2 to the report. Of particular note were the impending retirements of Andrew Cave (Vice Chair and Chair of F&GP) in December 2021 and Sharon Cambridge (Corporation Chair) in May 2022. The Principal reported that the College had been offered assistance for the recruitment of governors via Andrew Tyley, Deputy FE Commissioner and that this could be utilised for the specialist recruitment for a Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Andrew Cave mentioned a former accountancy colleague with governance experience who could potentially be approached; he would make an informal approach to gauge interest.

ACTION-ANDREW CAVE

The Chair would speak informally with Committee Chairs to gauge their interest in potentially becoming Vice Chair and then acceding to Corporation Chair.

ACTION-CHAIR

- vi. Diversity – The Committee acknowledged that the Board’s current membership was not as diverse as it would wish. The Committee accepted the difficulties of recruiting individuals with the appropriate skill-set whilst trying to achieve a diverse membership. The Principal advised that the recruitment assistance offered via the Deputy FE Commissioner could possibly help in this matter. For future recruitment campaigns it was agreed that the Clerk would liaise with Rebecca Hamilton, Link Governor for Equality & Diversity, to look at alternative ways to recruit governors from various backgrounds, using resources from the AoC which was actively working with colleges to promote diversity on boards.

ACTION-CLERK

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.

The committee reviewed the register and discussed the need to maintain historic entries. For future updates, the Clerk was asked to move any historic entries to the bottom of each individual’s entry.

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 that attendance figures began to improve in the spring term following the resignation of two governors during the latter part of the autumn term. The March 2020 board meeting was poorly attended with only 10 governors present –

this being held just before the college closed due to the coronavirus pandemic. Committee attendance in the summer term improved with governors attending remotely. It was noted that the Chair's period of absence during the summer term had been included within the recorded apologies received, however, it was considered that as this was a known absence and that the Chair's duties were being covered by the Vice-Chairs, that this period of non-attendance should not have been included in the results; the Clerk would review this.

ACTION-CLERK

The following discussion was deemed "Confidential - Restricted"

The report was noted.

8 Governance Survey – Summer 2020 - 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 increased on the previous year, with the proportion of those "disagreeing" with the statements having reduced. There was an increase in the number of "unsures" received, which possibly reflected the increased number of new governors on the Board.

The report was noted.

9 Individual Governor Self-Assessment – Summer 2020 - Review

The committee reviewed the results from the recent individual governor self-assessment survey. The Principal noted that with regard to statement 1, asking if governors considered they had a good understanding of their role and responsibilities, 88% agreed completely; this was very positive after taking into account the number of new governors having joined the Board during the year.

The report was noted.

10 Remote Meetings - Review

The Clerk summarised the findings from the review: Governance had not suffered during the summer period by using remote meetings; there were a number of benefits to meeting remotely that governors found to be positive; governors were missing the social and informal discussions which would take place at the start and end of a usual meeting; governors were concerned that they were missing the opportunity of undertaking learning walks; report layouts could be improved to allow for better viewing on electronic papers; the security of papers and governance documents could be improved by the use of specialist electronic boardroom software.

The Chair agreed with the feeling of disconnect being felt by members, especially for the new governors who were still developing and needed to be on campus to experience college life and activities.

The Principal explained that the possibility of undertaking remote learning walks this term was being considered, however, teaching staff were currently uncomfortable with observers watching remote lessons taking place. This matter was due for discussion with college unions that afternoon. There was no wish for managers to unnecessarily unsettle teachers bearing in mind the difficulties currently being faced in the delivery of the curriculum using a mix of blended learning options. The usual on-site learning walks would not be taking place due to Covid-19 safety restrictions.

The Principal referred to the Clerk's comment for the need to improve report layouts so that they were suitable for electronic documents and advised that some of the additional data and

material being presented within reports had specifically been requested by governors, therefore it was not always possible to summarise all of the data to be reviewed.

With regard to specialist electronic boardroom software, although efficient and desirable, the cost of such a system was considered to be prohibitive at the current time. The Principal advised that there were a number of existing tools and features available on Adobe which governors could make use of. It was agreed that as part of the Governors' training morning on 4 November 2020 a session would be provided to cover the use of technology to enable governors to make full use of the features to aid reviewing reports. The Clerk would liaise with Clare Pelling, Learning Experience Manager, on this. **ACTION-CLERK**

11 Any Other Business

There were no items of other business.

12 Chair's items for briefing to Corporation

- Learning walks and how best to operate these going forward. SMT would be considering options and reporting back.
- The training morning for governors on 4 November 2020 would include a session on improving the use of electronic documents and Microsoft Teams.

13 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 3 February 2021 at 8.30 am.

The meeting closed at 12.35 pm