

# WQE & Regent College Group

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Corporation Meeting 13 December 2023, 16:00, Room G01,  
University Road Campus

**Members of the Corporation in attendance:**

Philip Parkinson (Chair), Orhan Ahmed, Joyce Black, Frances Bettsworth, Tia Brookes, Sofie Dadge, Shamir Ghumra, Neil McGhee, Jim Phillips,  
Sarah Thomson, Paul Wilson & Jimmy Zachariah

**Other attendees:**

Carolyn Davies, Andrew Jackson, Gareth Jones (RSM UK Ltd), Rachel Middleton, Tim Rogers, Alison Stone (prospective Support Staff Governor)

**Apologies:**

Bernadette Green, Nikki O'Brien, Sarah Oldfield, Julia Pastuszek, Donna Trusler

## PART 1 MEETING MINUTES

**1. Welcome and apologies for absence**

The Chair welcomed Alison Stone and Gareth Jones to the meeting.  
Apologies were received from Bernadette Green, Nikki O'Brien, Sarah Oldfield, Julia Pastuszek and Donna Trusler

**2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest in agenda items.

**3. Minutes and matters arising– Paper 001**

The minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 15 November 2023 were approved as a correct record, subject to correction of a typo in a Governor's name.

The action list was reviewed and updated accordingly.

The following actions were completed during the intervening period between meetings:

- Share presentations with Governors post-meeting via GovernorHub
- Organise Student Governor induction – completed on 11 December 2023
- Confirm award of contract of ERG to Rockborn

## OVERSIGHT OF FINANCE, RESOURCES & ASSETS

**4. 2022-2023 End of Year financial matters**

Gareth Jones, RSM

Emerging Issues Report from Auditors – Paper 002

Gareth talked Governors through the issues outlined in the Emerging Issues Report produced by RSM UK Ltd.

The themes included:

- An update on the ONS reclassification and the awaited College Financial Handbook.
- Financial reporting updates
- The future of post-16 qualifications
- Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) in education settings
- Cyber security and data sharing/communication
- AoC Code of Good Governance
- ESFA Subcontractor standard - common issues arising
- Ofsted's T Level thematic review and review of careers guidance provision in schools and colleges
- Higher education matters (lifelong learning, consumer protection law, international higher education students)

### **Papers recommended to the Corporation from the 28 November Audit & Risk Committee - Neil McGhee**

i. **WQE statutory accounts** – Paper 003

The Corporation received a slightly updated version to that viewed and discussed by the Audit & Risk Committee. The Corporation was asked to approve the statutory accounts. Approval was given, subject to a correction to Sofie Dadge's name within.

ii. **QED (Leicester) Ltd annual accounts for year ended 31 July 2023** – Paper 004

The Corporation noted that is a dormant company and the intention is to wind it up over the course of the year ahead. The Corporation approved the accounts.

iii. **Audit Findings Report** – Paper 005

The external auditors reported a clean audit with an unmodified set of accounts. There were no matters of concern arising. Gareth confirmed 122 student files were examined as part of the funding assurance element of audit. Only 2 minor points were found and resolved. This level of accuracy was noted as being very positive for the College and not the sector norm.

The Corporation thanked the external auditors for their scrutiny and asked Carolyn Davies to cascade on their thanks to the College's Finance and MIS teams.

iv. **Internal Controls Annual Report** - Paper 006

Neil reminded Governors that this report is compiled by the Executive Leadership Team and that the purpose for the Corporation is that it provides assurance to the board in order to be able to sign the letters of representation (agenda item 6i and 6ii).

The Corporation accepted the report on the basis of there being no financial irregularity.

Governors asked RSM to comment on how the College's external audit outcome and standard compares with the sector. The view of the external auditor is that the College is in the top quartile.

v. **Regulatory self-assessment Questionnaire – Paper 007**

The version received by the Corporation was slightly updated following the 28 November Audit & Risk Committee Report.

This questionnaire is completed by Carolyn Davies, reviewed by the Executive Leadership Team and the Audit Committee. The governance-related elements are completed by the Clerk to Corporation.

The areas outlined in the regulatory self-assessment questionnaire form part of the assurance for the external auditors' regulatory audit.

The Corporation accepted the report.

vi. **Health & Safety Annual Report for 2021/22– Paper 008**

The report is viewed by the College's Health & Safety Committee. It is then discussed by the Audit & Risk Committee, which noted the introduction of a new health and safety compliance system – MyCompliance, which will track actions to address and flag these for review on a cyclical basis. The Committee expects an updated report on how well the system is being embedded and its initial impact on the College.

Carolyn confirmed that tier three leaders will have access to review all of the actions applicable to their areas of work and that all members of the Executive Leadership Team will be able to view the areas to address across their directorates.

The Corporation accepted the report and asked for an update at their next meeting on whether actions relating to Priority Level 2 actions from the 2021 fire risk assessment had been completed. **Action CD**

vii. **Headline Risk Register and Plan – Paper 009**

Neil reminded the Corporation that the top two pages of the document provide an overview of all of the significant risks to the College. Most of the risks are marked as 'stable' and there are no rising risks which have been RAG-rated amber.

Neil highlighted two significant risks which are RAG-rated as red and 'rising' - staff recruitment and retention (risk 24), and capital projects (risk 28). The Principal provided a short commentary to the Corporation explaining why this was the case.

The Corporation also noted two risks RAG-rated green and 'rising' - Data protection breach (risk 22) and health and safety breach (risk 23).

The Corporation accepted the Risk Register and thanked the Principal for updating this.

**5. Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report – Paper 010**

Joyce Black

Joyce summarised the work of the Committee, outlining the fact that the biggest challenge faced by the Committee had been the stability of its membership. She reassured the Corporation that membership had now been secured for the 2023-24

year and encouraged Governors to join the Committee if they had capacity, as it provides an excellent opportunity for drill down into a diverse range of topics. Sofie Dadge confirmed she would be content to join the Committee as she had attended a number of meetings last academic year. The Corporation thanked Sofie for her commitment.

## **6. Letters of representation from Auditors**

Carolyn Davies

- i. WQE Audit Letter of representation (financial statements) – Paper 011
- ii. WQE Audit Regulatory Assurance Letter – Paper 012

The Corporation approved the letters of representation, noting that there were no non-standard representations contained in these proposed letters.

## **7. Revised budget commentary Paper 013 – For approval**

Carolyn Davies

The Corporation had received and approved the 2023/24 budget at its June 2023 meeting. The revised budget was presented to the Corporation for approval.

Carolyn highlighted the following points:

- A revised 16-19 funding allocation, reflecting increased funding rates to support the funding of a cost of living pay settlement of 6.5% for 2023/24. The original budget had already assumed cost of living increases for the year of 6.5%, this has therefore had a positive impact on the revised budget.
- An update from the actuary in relation to estimated FRS 102 charges for 2023-24. The impact of high interest rates on the discount rate used in the valuation of the College's share of the LGPS pension position has continued to reduce the estimate of FRS 102 charges for 2023-24.
- Updated costs for refurbishment projects, both actual for the Phase 2A works (summer 2023) and estimated for Phase 3 (summer 2024). An allowance is also included for property survey works to facilitate the next steps of the College's estates masterplan.

Governors asked questions relating to the estates plan focusing on whether a contingency budget had been in-built into the overall budget. Additionally, they asked about the deployment of an external consultant to review quality in relation of building project delivery. They also asked for more information about the areas of funding which the Wolfson Foundation supports – confirmed as media, science and the creative arts.

The Corporation approved the revised budget.

## **8. Monthly management accounts (October) - Paper 014 - To note**

Carolyn Davies

The Corporation noted the October management accounts.

## OVERSIGHT OF STRATEGIC DIRECTION

### 9. **Strategic Plan 2021-24 Summary Review - Paper 015- *For information and questions*** Paul Wilson

The Corporation noted the additional two companion documents circulated by email. Paul outlined for the Corporation how the first document provided an internal audit of how the College has met the objectives within the Strategic Plan.

The second document outlined how the College has added capacity to systems and structures over the period of the Strategic Plan. Many of the KPIs have been captured ongoing through discussions at Corporation meetings.

The next step in the process is to consider future planning.

It is likely this will need to include increased focus on:

- Sustainability
- Digital strategy
- The Young Professionals Programme and working with employers
- The College's position within the FE sector
- Capital projects and meeting future demographical needs.

A Governor observed that the College should consider responding to the more recently published local skills improvement plan (LSIP) led by the East Midlands Chamber of Commerce. The Principal confirmed the College had to produce an initial accountability agreement in advance of the actual publication of the LSIP and was fully engaged in this work locally, including being a member of the Local Skills Accountability Board.

Governors commented on staffing capacity and explored where the College has potential gaps. They asked about workforce development and whether there could be any link between this and staff retention. The Principal confirmed that retention remains very high for teachers, with retirements being the primary factor, but that it can be more challenging to recruit and retain in some support staff functions.

### 10. **Quality Improvement Statement 2023-26 and achievement targets- Paper 016 – *For information and questions***

Tim Rogers

Tim provided a summary of the approach to quality improvement and confirmed the proposed ambitious targets to the Corporation. These were accepted and approved.

### 11. **Executive summary of SAR and QIP - Paper 017 – *For information and questions*** Tim Rogers

Tim presented the headline SAR statements and judgements, which were noted and confirmed that Governors would, in keeping with usual practice, receive the full SAR (2022-23) and QIP (2023-24) to scrutinise. Governors will be asked to raise any queries with Tim directly and to consider whether they are broadly in agreement with the judgements. If this is not the case, then Governors are invited to get in touch with Tim to discuss matters before the end of January deadline for the SAR to be concluded and shared with external agencies as required. The Clerk will circulate the

SAR and QIP to Governors and inform them of the response deadline. **Action TR, RM and all Governors**

Governors asked for clarification on the gradings relating to Colleges meeting local skills needs. Tim confirmed these to be 'limited', 'reasonable' and 'strong'.

The vast majority of Colleges nationally are grading themselves as 'reasonable'. The College's curriculum offer, which is mainly academic rather than vocational steers the College to determine its provision as 'reasonable'.

Governors were reminded that there is a local skills accountability requirement for the College to engage but not necessarily to directly deliver programmes where this is not feasible.

Governors asked whether teaching staff had a mindset of talking to students in their curriculum area about skills development and application. The College confirmed that looking at how curriculum areas support the Young Professionals programme is being built into curriculum planning and embedded in schemes of work. The Teaching Staff Governor gave her perspective on how this occurs and is already well embedded in her department.

Additionally, the College is recruiting internally for four Professional Skills Co-ordinators to drive this work forward.

The Principal confirmed he had outlined to the ESFA in the College's annual strategic conversation the College's status as a collaborative partner supporting local skills delivery.

The Corporation suggested to the Principal that he invite Minister Halfon to the College to discuss the Young Professionals programme and local skills delivery/development.

Governors asked how the College was measuring students' eagerness to learn. This is being measured through lesson observation, attendance rates, discussions with students who are articulate about why they have chosen the College as their place of study and the benefits of being at WQE. Lesson observations confirm the view that students are not disengaged in lessons and that classrooms are orderly environments for teaching and learning. Students' opinions are canvassed in questionnaires and destinations data also provides a snapshot of student engagement.

A Staff Governor commented on her experience of Level 3 students being able to express a clear pathway for themselves once they leave WQE, whereas Level 2 students require additional input to consider their future study, apprenticeship or employment options.

## **OVERSIGHT OF STUDENT OUTCOMES & EXPERIENCES**

### **12. Two-year Course Retention Monitoring Report - Paper 018 – *For information and questions***

Tim Rogers

Tim provided a summary to Governors and indicated that the report covers the period

October 2022 to October 2023, factoring in data collected at census points.  
Tim highlighted a small cohort of A Level students who are receiving interventions and being monitored by the Student Outcomes Task & Finish Group.  
Tim reaffirmed the College's commitment to the retention of students.  
Governors queried whether the data indicated a link between disadvantaged students or students with SEND and lower retention rates.  
Tim confirmed there is a gap in retention between academic and vocational students.  
The Student Outcomes Task & Finish Group asked Tim for data on linkage between disadvantage and SEND and student retention to be factored into discussion at the February 2024 Task & Finish Group meeting. **Action TR**

**13. Student Voice: Early Weeks Questionnaire - Paper 019 – For information and questions**

The Principal provided a top-level summary of the paper in Sarah Oldfield's absence. Governors noted the larger response rate than in previous years as well as the upturn in positive views of the College and feeling able to recommend it to other students. Developing the enrolment process over the last couple of years and heightened matching of students to appropriate courses has benefited students and this is also reflected in the positive feedback.  
The Link Safeguarding Governor suggested that she explore the topic of feeling safe and secure in College with Donna Trusler, during her next visit to the College.

### **EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE**

**14. Appointment of Support Staff Governor – For approval**

Joyce Black

The Corporation noted that there had been two candidate nominations and that the subsequent elections resulted in Alison securing a majority of the votes. The Chair will be personally thanking the other candidate for standing.

Joyce invited Alison Stone to introduce herself to the Corporation as the Corporation's newly elected Support Staff Governor. Alison outlined her experience and also her aspirations for governorship.

The Corporation approved the appointment and welcomed Alison to the Board.

### **ROUND-UP**

**15. Any Other Business**

- i. **External Review of Governance** – The Chair informed Governors that a questionnaire would be issued to all Governors as part of the ERG early in the new year and that all Governors were asked to address this in a timely manner in support of the smooth running of the ERG process – **Action all Governors**
- ii. **Governor Insight Visits** – Governor Insight Visits are underway or planned. The Chair thanked Governors for calendaring sessions and reminded Governors to complete visits and submit their reflection forms to the Clerk by Easter 2024 at the latest - **Action all External and Parent Governors**

## 16. Confidentiality

Subject to discussions during the meeting, the Corporation considered there were no confidential minutes or papers to redact.

## 17. Next Meeting – 13.12.23

A confidential agenda item relating to the recommendations of the Remuneration Committee was discussed in a closed Corporation meeting immediately following this meeting, for External and Parent Governors only. Minutes from this meeting have been captured in a set of confidential minutes and will not appear in the public domain.

## 18. Next Corporation meeting

5.00pm, Wednesday 24 January 2024, Room G01, University Road campus

<b>Actions arising from 13 December 2023 Corporation meeting</b>	<b>Who is responsible?</b>	<b>Date for completion</b>
Update the Corporation on whether fire assessment actions have been expedited	CD	At the 24/01/24 Corporation meeting
Issue full SAR and QIP to Governors and submit queries to Tim Rogers ahead of external submission deadline	TR, RM and all Governors	
Table for discussion at SO T&F Group meeting in Feb a discussion on whether there is a link between disadvantaged or SEND students and retention	TR	SO T&F Group – 13/02/24
External Review of Governance – return complete questionnaires in a timely manner	All Governors	Likely to be late Jan/early Feb 2024
Governor Insight Visits – completion and submission of reflection forms by Easter 2024	All External and Parent Governors	End of Spring term 2024 – 22/03/24
<b>Actions arising from 04 October 2023 Corporation meeting</b>	<b>Who is responsible?</b>	<b>Date for completion</b>
Update on sexual abuse action plan to be tabled at January 2024 Corporation meeting	DT	By 24/01/24
<b>Actions arising from 24 May 2023 Corporation meeting</b>	<b>Who is responsible?</b>	<b>Date for completion</b>
Amended - NMcG to contact Carolyn Davies to support College work on decarbonisation	NMcG, CD	As soon as possible
Set a specific target for GCSE attendance for 2023/24 and to report on this to the Corporation	AJ	At appropriate points on the 2023/24 Business Plan
Provide a bar chart outlining the spread of attendance percentages, as part of future attendance reports to the Corporation.	AJ	At appropriate points on the 2023/24 Business Plan

Table discussion about Artificial Intelligence on a Corporation agenda	RM	At an appropriate point on the 2023/24 Business Plan
<b>Standing item</b>	<b>Who is responsible?</b>	<b>Date for completion</b>
To refer any matter which could be externally assured to the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee	All Governors	

The meeting closed at 18:00

Signed : .....

Chair of Corporation

Date: .....