

**Wednesday 25th June 2025 at 5.30pm
Remote Online Meeting**

Minutes

Present:

Patrick Kwong – Associate Member
Anna Mason – Staff Governor
Nader Sheta – Chair of Governors/ Foundation Governor
Graham Thompson – Principal

In attendance

Clare Baskott - Clerk to Governors
Ciaran Graham – Associate Principal (Observer)
Margaret Searle - Director of Finance & Resources

Apologies:

No-one

Absent without apologies:

Sarah Medicoff - Foundation Governor

The meeting was quorate throughout.

All reports had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Item 1 Opening Prayer and Welcome

The Principal opened the meeting in prayer at 5:31pm

Item 2 Election of Chair of the Committee

The Clerk took the Chair and invited nominations for Chair of the Committee.
Nader Sheta was appointed as Chair of the Committee, until Patrick Kwong is appointed as a Foundation Governor.

Item 3 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.
Sarah Medicoff was absent without apologies.

Item 4 Declarations of Interests

None.

Item 5 Notification of Any Other Business (notified to the Chair and Clerk prior to the meeting)

Change of date of next meeting was agreed as an item of AOB.

Item 6 Minutes of previous meeting, Tuesday 4th March 2025: for review and agreement

The minutes of the previous meeting, Tuesday 4th March 2025, were approved by the Committee.

Item 6.1 Matters Arising for this meeting not on the agenda

None.

Item 7 Premises/Estates

Premises and Accommodation Report – Graham Thompson – Principal

The Principal gave an update and reported that the college had been successful with the two Condition Improvement Fund bids.

The Principal gave an overview of the two bids:

- Bid one: Fire safety and electrical improvements
- Bid two: Roof refurb and associated works.

The College will fund 5% of the works at a cost of £175,000.

College representatives had met with the academy estates to discuss the two projects. Contractors were still to be appointed. The projects were both behind schedule due to the late notification of the CIF bids.

Governor question: How will the college's allocation be funded?

Response: The college allocation will come from the Reserves, and we have pared back on the annual programme of works, which will make savings of £100k.

Governor question: How much time are the proposed works expected to take?

Response: The roof works are expected to take around three months and this will take place during the autumn term. We had hoped to begin the electrical works during the summer holidays; however, this has been impacted by the late notification of the bids. We are hoping to minimise disruption by organising for some of the work to take place in the evenings and weekends. We have arranged to visit another college who undertook a similar project to see how they managed it. From the beginning we raised concerns about how invasive the works will be, and the importance of avoiding disruption the college.

Governor question: Is there likely to be any impact on student open days?

Response: We have been through the college calendar and identified key dates to avoid, and this includes the main open day in October. However, the works will show that we are continuing to improve the college estate.

The Principal reported that the Health and Safety Compliance Officer had left in March 2025, to focus on his own business and the college was actively seeking a replacement. In the interim the Principal was managing the H&S of the college.

The Annual plan had all been completed, except for the purchase of four EVAC chairs, which will be replaced throughout a two-year cycle.

The Principal gave an overview of the annual cycle of works.

The Committee thanked the Principal for the update.

Item 7.1 Insurance update – Margaret Searle - Director of Finance & Resources

The Director of Finance & Resources provided an update on the college insurance retender, which had been overseen by a consultant. The Director noted that there was a limited market of insurers due to consolidation within the industry.

The college had received two bids, both of which had been scored according to established criteria. Gallaghers had been recommended as offering the best value and service. The proposed contract will deliver savings of £12,000 compared to the current arrangement.

The two bids received were:

- Hettle Andrews: £60,000

- Gallaghers: £48,000

Governor Question: Is the cover provided by both insurers similar?

Response: Yes, the coverage is comparable between both providers.

It was agreed that the full report would be circulated to the Committee. **Action: Director/Clerk** to distribute report to Committee members.

The Committee approved the recommendation to proceed with insurance coverage through Gallaghers.

Item 8 Annual Health and Safety Report: – Graham Thompson – Principal – *for recommendation to the Full Governing Board*

The Principal gave an update an overview of the annual Health and Safety Report.

The Every Compliance software had helped to significantly improve how the college recorded and reviewed all accidents and incidents. Over the last year, eighty-four incidents had been logged on the platform, twenty-two of which had been classed as ‘significant’. A ‘significant’ incident was an “Injury or illness that resulted in the person needing to go home, disruption to normal routine of 1 full day or less, or damage to items or buildings that require repair costing up to £100.”

See confidential item 1.

This was the first year of the new mass communication system which had proved a useful tool for passing on messages and managing the behaviour of students around the college. The system had not yet been tested for the Lockdown procedure; this had been scheduled for the autumn term. The system also allowed the college to tailor communications across the site, and it will also be a key part of the colleges critical incident procedure and communicating via the audible system and screen announcements.

Item 9 Financial – Margaret Searle - Director of Finance & Resources/Chair of the Committee Monthly Commentary and Accounts – monthly accounts up to 31st May 2025

Management Accounts and CFFR Overview

The Director of Finance & Resources gave an overview of the management accounts for the period ending 31st May 2025 and the College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR). The Director explained that the May management accounts also formed part of the CFFR, which provided a comprehensive summary of the college's financial health including cash balances, staff and student numbers, and capital investment.

Financial Health

The Director reported that staff costs had increased, and the college's financial health was currently forecast as 'Requires Improvement'. However, with additional DfE funding, the college was expected to be able to improve its financial position this year and was predicting its financial health rating would achieve the 'Good' status.

Key financial variances this year included:

- Reduced salary costs due to fewer teaching staff.
- Savings on utility bills.
- Higher costs for IT and construction projects.
- The most significant variances were in salaries and additional in-year funding.

Pay increases

The Director outlined that they were forecasting a 4% pay increase for staff and had budgeted a 3% increase for the following year. A support staff pension review was also expected.

The college had not built growth in student numbers into the forecast. The budget had assumed recruitment would occur for T Levels, which should help balance the budget, although there could be in-year funding claw back to consider.

Cash Flow and Future Planning

Cash balances were diminishing as the college was not currently generating sufficient income. However, the college will maintain the minimum balance of £1m. The salary budget will be reviewed if enrolment fall short of expectations.

A NJC meeting with unions was scheduled for the coming weeks.

The Director gave an overview of the financial forecast, maintaining current funding rates for prediction purposes and highlighted:

- CIF bids were included in the forecast.
- Capital investment had been kept at the same level.
- The Nursery provision was doing well, and Corporate lettings were gradually growing.
- A full commentary will be circulated prior to the FGB.

Governor question: Will depreciation be higher?

Response: Yes, but it is match funded and does not affect the college's financial health score.

Governor question: Is there any contingency for overspend?

Response: No, we have been explicit that there is no room for any overspend. We have to manage the bids in the budget awarded. Our top priority is to get a contractor for our budget.

Governor question: Will there be project meetings?

Response: Yes, there will be regular project meetings.

Governors raised concerns regarding budget slippage, noting that even a 5% variance represented a significant financial impact given current bid values.

Question: What assurance could be given about cost control?

Response: The contractors have been explicitly informed that quotes are fixed, with no tolerance for cost overruns.

The Committee agreed that project delivery was critical to maintaining financial stability, particularly given the importance of successful September enrolment.

Student Recruitment and Retention Strategy

The Principal reported that the college was implementing targeted strategies to improve the current conversion rate of 33% which included:

- Collaboration with the Department for Education (DfE) on conversion rate enhancement.
- Development of new marketing strategies.
- Launch of an updated college website.

Attrition Rate Focus

Funding calculations were based on student numbers recorded on the 42nd day of term and reducing attrition rates has been identified as a strategic priority. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) was working closely with the DfE to develop effective retention strategies.

Governor question: How will we measure the success of recent open events?

Response: The recent open events have been completed, with their effectiveness to be evaluated during the enrolment period. This assessment will inform future planning.

Future Challenges

The Committee discussed long-term planning considerations, particularly the declining enrolment in local primary schools. This demographic trend was expected to impact future college recruitment.

Item 10 Recommendations from the Remuneration Committee (to note that account has been taken in the budget for any recommendations arising) – covered under 8.3

It was noted that the Remuneration Committee had met on 23rd June 2025. The Chair of Governors/Chair of the Remuneration Committee to liaise with HR and the Director of Finance and Resources regarding recommendations. **Action: Chair of Governors.**

Item 11 College Financial Forecasting Return including College Budget for 2025/26 – Three-year template and supporting commentary for filing with the EFSA by 31st July 2025

It was agreed that this had been covered above.

Item 12 Staffing update

The Principal gave an update and reported that the unions had put forward an above inflation pay award. The STPRB had proposed a 4% pay increases for school teachers which had been accepted. However, the unions had asked for RPI plus reductions in workload and working time. The college will also be impacted by the National Insurance increases.

Item 13 Treasury Management - Treasury Management: Monitoring Report

The Director of Finance & Resources gave an overview of the accounts, as outlined in the Treasury Mgt Report.

The Committee noted the above.

Item 14 Treasury Management Policy (annual review) for recommendation to the Full Governing Board

The Committee agreed to recommend the Treasury Management Policy for approval by the Full Governing Body.

A discussion took place about the £1M in the college current account. The Director of Finance & Resources explained that the £1M figure had been agreed by the Governing Body. The Director explained that other funds could be put into notice deposit account, but funds needed to be available for the capital works.

It was agreed that the Director of Finance & Resources will look at other deposit account options.

Action: Director of Finance & Resources.

Item 15 DfE updates including Strategic Conversation and April Dashboard report

The Principal gave an overview of the recent Strategic conversation which had focused on the financial health of the college. The Principal noted a bigger focus on the local skills agenda. The DfE will be supporting the college with a sustainability project this year. The next Strategic Conversation had been scheduled for Spring 2026.

Financial Dashboard

It was agreed that this will be added to the agenda for the Focus Morning. **Action: Clerk.**

College Financial Regulations and Associated Policies: update and revision for 2025 for recommendation to the Full Governing Board to include:

- Update summary

- Regulations
- Travel & subsistence

The Committee recommended the Financial Regulations and Travel and Subsistence Policy for approval by the FGB.

Item 16 Rateable value

No updates.

Item 17 FMCE Improvement Plan: to note progress report

The Principal gave an overview of the FMCE Improvement Plan. While the number of students who had registered was lower than two years ago, more students had accepted their offers, which had helped to narrow the gap.

Recruitment

A recent Open Afternoon had attracted 150-220 prospective students. The offer holder event (taster session) was scheduled to take place on 4th July 2025. Currently, 722 students had confirmed their attendance, with additional numbers expected as the college had received more interview requests. The Principal outlined the planned activities for the day.

Income Generation

The college was actively working to increase lettings income.

Item 18 Accountability agreement update – Graham Thompson

The Principal gave an overview of the Accountability Agreement for recommendation for approval by the FGB. It was noted that this must be uploaded to the college website by 30th June 2025.

The Committee approved the Accountability Agreement.

Item 19 SFX Corporate Services Ltd – Margaret Searle

The SFX Corporate board meetings had taken place on Tuesday 3rd June 2025 at 5:30pm via Zoom. The Director of Finance & Resources gave an overview. The Nursery was in a positive position. Corporate Services were being established by a new Marketing Manager and the new college's website was expected to raise the profile of the college's facilities for lettings.

Governor question: How long has the Nursery been in operation?

Response: The Nursery has been in operation for twenty years; it is a small setting with twenty places. Families moving out of the area can impact on numbers, particularly if they have more than one child in the Nursery.

Item 20 Committee review of effectiveness, membership, and skills: online questionnaire for completion after the meeting

Clerk to circulate. **Action: Clerk.**

Item 21 Has the Committee identified any new or heightened risks to be advised to the Audit Committee for the risk register?

No.

Item 22 AOB

None.

Item 23 Review and agree meeting dates and business for 2025/26

The proposed dates for 2025/26 were approved.

Item 24 Identification of any confidential items

None.

Item 25 Date of next meeting:

Tuesday 7th October 2025 at 5:30pm via Zoom

Item 26 Close of meeting

The meeting closed at 7:02pm.

The minutes will be electronically signed, following approval by the Committee.