

CARDINAL NEWMAN COLLEGE

BOARD OF GOVERNORS – GOVERNANCE AND SEARCH COMMITTEE

A meeting of the above Committee was held at 2.00 p.m. on Wednesday 3 February 2021 on Microsoft Teams.

Members present:

Richard Ainscough, Chair (F)
Nick Burnham, Principal
Peter Halpin (F)
Len Hampson (F)
Adrian Metcalf (F)
Helen Seechurn (F)

Officers in attendance:

Bob Deed, Clerk

MINUTES

1. Opening prayer

The meeting commenced with a prayer.

2. Welcome, introductions and apologies

No apologies had been received.

3. Declarations of interest

There were no interests which required declaring.

4. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16 September 2020 were approved as a true record.

5. Matters arising from the minutes

The Chair asked the Principal for an update on academisation. The Principal said that the prospect of academisation had receded as changes for Roman Catholic sixth form colleges had not been included in the FE White Paper.

The Chair asked about the use of Rob Peacock as an external reviewer of governance. The Clerk said that this was complicated by Rob Peacock being Chair of the Rigby Education Trust and a RET trustee. He said that this did not preclude Rob Peacock supported the College in the future, including in an external review of governance, but at the current time with only five RET trustees, including two connected to the College, this would be an unhelpful complication. The Maths School was having to ensure there was always a quorum of unconflicted trustees when decisions were made.

There was a discussion on the timing of an external review given the exceptional circumstances of the pandemic. The Clerk suggested deferring until May 2021.

The Committee resolved to re-visit the issue of an external review of governance in May 2021.

6. Principal's update

The Principal said that the move to online in Lockdown 3 was seamless. He suggested that the blended timetable was a success with its inbuilt flexibility. He said that a small group of students were coming into College to use the Library and IT facilities, there was a rota for a College Leadership Team presence and there were some support staff working onsite on a distanced basis.

The Principal updated the Committee on the lateral flow testing. He said that it was working well but raised concerns about scalability and mass testing if this was a government requirement. The Principal noted that the government's plan for serial testing had been abandoned.

The Deputy Chair asked about the personnel involved. The Principal said that College staff had volunteered. The Principal assured the Committee that the health and safety of staff was being safeguarded but he was conscious of the risks associated with the situation.

A governor said that in Liverpool volunteers were being offered vaccinations. The Principal said that would be an interesting option.

The Chair asked if there was guidance from the local authorities on testing. The Principal said that there was no guidance but he noted that authorities in other parts of Lancashire had put in the special arrangements including military support for testing in in East Lancashire.

The Principal said that the College had about 200 laptops with students with IT access issues. He said that a further small group were being given dongles. Since last week there were arrangements for the Department for Education to supply a further 200 laptops.

The Principal said that there was a list of vulnerable students and arrangements for checking on the welfare of these students. He noted the importance of counselling.

The Principal said that staff morale was holding up despite the national situation. He said that online teaching was particularly hard work. He said College management were aware of this. For example, teaching staff were not currently being asked to undertake interviews for applicants – applicants were being offered a conditional place. A governor noted the positive results from the SPOCS students survey on online learning.

The Chair asked how senior leadership were able to gauge staff morale. The Principal outlined how the SLT could pick up on issues including talking to individual staff and union representatives.

The Principal outlined his views on the exams consultation which ended on the previous Friday. He was concerned about the details and inconsistencies in the proposals.

The Principal updated the Committee on the national pay agreement for teaching staff in sixth form colleges. The agreement provided for a 2% rise from September 2020 and a further 1.25% (on 2019/20 scales) from May 2021.

The Clerk confirmed that the September 2020 rise was allowed for in the approved College budget 2020/21 and that the forecast outturn in the management accounts assumed that the pay agreement is adopted. But whole pay agreement would require approval by the full Governing Body.

The Clerk suggested that to avoid any ambiguity Chair's Action could be given, after Committee discussion, to implement the first element of the agreement pending the Governing Body considering the whole agreement at its meeting in March.

Governors noted the financial context and the contribution of teaching and other staff through the pandemic and the site closures.

The Committee agreed that it was appropriate for the Chair to use Chair's Action to approve the implementation of the 2% pay rise from September 2020 already included in the annual budget.

7. Ofsted and Mission & Ethos inspection

The Principal said that after the pandemic, Ofsted would be prioritising new training providers and weaker colleges. He said he was working with the Deputy Principal and the Vice Principal on preparing for inspection. He suggested that Ofsted might be shifting their focus further from results and value added toward other issues including pastoral care and safeguarding.

The Principal noted that the Ethos inspections were unlikely to start this year. He said that the national framework was being put in place and the national Ethos inspections were due to start this month. He outlined the likely points of focus.

8. Governors and Committees

The Clerk introduced the paper on Governing Body and Committee membership. He apologised that Peter Towers had been omitted from the list of governors on the Quality, Curriculum and Staffing Committee

The Clerk noted the Foundation governor and co-opted governor vacancies. He also observed the forthcoming elections of student and teaching staff governors.

The Clerk commented on the high levels of interest generated from strong candidates in the recent parent governor appointment process.

The Clerk noted the appointment of Clare Batson as a co-opted member of the Quality, Curriculum and Staffing Committee for a one-year term after she was interviewed by the Chair of the Governing Body and the Chair of the QCS Committee.

9. Governing Body Recruitment: Join Our Board document

The Chair introduced the paper. He noted that several colleges were inviting interest in joining governing bodies on their websites. He said that the document was intended to provide background as well as expectations of governors. Once adopted and styled in College branding, it could be put on the website.

The Clerk said that the Chair's draft helpful collated information from a range of College documents including the Code of Conduct, the governor role description and the board recruitment policy. He said that it would be useful in inviting interest in joining the Governing Body but also explaining the role of the Governing Body in, for example, staff governor elections.

A governor asked about whether the document would be tailored for specific vacancies if there were particular skill gaps. The Clerk said this had been discussed and his preference would be for the document to be kept generic with specific requirements being detailed on the website.

The Deputy Chair suggested that there should be more information on the College mission. The Chair agreed that the mission statement should be included in the document. The Deputy Chair suggested some other changes to the document.

A governor asked whether the desirable requirement for “senior management experience” might discourage women from applying. There was a discussion about whether this could be either removed or reworded.

The Committee resolved to adopt the document with:

- **The addition of the mission statement.**
- **The inclusion of a reference to faith references.**
- **The rewording of “skills” to “skills and knowledge”.**
- **The change in the desirable attribute to: Understanding of how management and governance works in a large or medium scale organisation.**

10. Update on Governor Training and Development

The Clerk introduced the report showing governors high levels of participation in governor training and development activity. Governors noted the value of the SFCA webinars.

The Chair asked about the cyber risks training which Bob Eastwood had enabled the College to access. The Clerk said that it was useful. He had attended as had two governors from the Audit Committee and two members of the Networks team. The Chair of the Audit Committee said that the session was useful. He informed the Committee that the Audit Committee was to receive an update from the Network Team.

A governor asked about whether the report included all relevant training and development. The Clerk said that governors were encouraged to let Claire Eccles know when they had done any relevant sessions.

11. Summer conference

The Chair noted that it was unlikely that a SLT/Governors’ conference would be practical in the summer. He did say that he was keen to discuss big issues around the strategic challenges for sixth form colleges.

The Deputy Chair said that he expected that distancing would be required in the summer but suggested that a virtual conference could be useful. A governor said that an online conference would need to be a half-day in case of Zoom fatigue. Another governor said that there could be a whole Governing Body training session and a session to reflect on how effective the Governing Body was in discharging its role.

A governor asked about the practicality of physical conference with distancing. This was discussed.

The Chair agreed that a strategic conference later in the year might be appropriate. A governor asked if there were particular strategic issues requiring attention. The Principal noted the issues around the Maths School and growth. He said that prospect of academisation had gone away for now.

The Committee resolved that the timing of the Conference be considered at the May meeting of the Committee.

12. Risk register: termly update

The risk register was noted. The Clerk confirmed that there were no significant changes since the last meeting.

13. Determination of any items to be treated as Confidential

There were no items deemed Confidential.

14. Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for 12 May 2021.