

Governors Present: Gill Slater (Chair) Phil Douce
Matthew Adams Alex Gwinn
Rubia Amin Toby Hooper
Kat Bashar Sheena Payne-Lunn
Sheila Boniface Ed Senior
Paul Cumming Isabel Swift
Angela Davis Sarah Turner
Sean Devlin

In Attendance: Ruth Senior (Deputy Principal)
Sallyanne Griffiths (Trust Finance Director)
Jo Payne (PA to the Principal/Clerk to the Local Governing Body)

(Paul Cumming and Rubia Amin gave notice that they needed to leave at 7pm).

The formal start of the meeting was proceeded by a presentation from Ruth Scotson, Deputy Principal, on the recent SFCA Inspection Conference. The key judgements from the new Education Inspection Framework were outlined and the evidence that inspectors would use to form a judgement was considered. Governors' were advised to ensure they had clear knowledge of the College's strengths, weaknesses and strategies for improvement. Governors were asked what would be useful for them to receive from SLT and various suggestions were made.

1. Apologies and Appointments

Apologies: Apologies were received from Sam Lifford, Cathy Scott-Burt, Abi Stephenson and Cherry Yau.

Appointments

The Local Governing Body **approved** the appointment of Rubia Amin as a Student Governor and a member of the Curriculum and Quality Committee until July 2021.

The Local Governing Body **approved** the appointment of Sheena Payne-Lunn as External Governor and a member of the Curriculum and Quality Committee for a period of four years.

The Local Governing Body noted that there had not, as yet, been interest in the Parent Governor vacancy.

Isabel Swift had decided to resign from the position of Staff Governor and expressions of interest in the role had been invited with some early interest shown.

The Chair welcomed Rubia to the meeting and introductions were made.

2. Opening Standing Items

- (i) Gill Slater, Sheila Boniface, Toby Hooper and Phil Douce declared that they were Trustees on the Shadow MAT Board.
- (ii) No items were identified as confidential.

- (iii) A proposed amendment to the Admissions Policy was identified and would be tabled.

3. Minutes

(i) 18th September 2019

The minutes of the meeting were noted and approved as an accurate record. The action points were updated and the following points noted:

- Sam Lifford and Cherry Yau had met with the Trust's Executive Principal and Finance Director and the outcome of this had been satisfactory;
- Consultation had taken place with those with responsibility for adult education and a recommendation had been made by the Curriculum & Quality Committee which would be raised under consideration of the Committee's minutes.

The Local Governing Body **noted** the information provided.

4. Governance

The Clerk presented her reported and highlighted the main points as follows:

- Further to LGB approval for a one-off non-consolidated payment to be extended to support staff if affordable, the payment had been made to all staff in October pay;
- Trust approved employment and finance related policies, procedures and regulations had been shared with the Finance & Resources Committee;
- The South West RSC, supported by the West Midlands RSC, had approved the application for Cirencester College to join the Heart of Mercia MAT outside of the Headteachers' Board. A condition of this approval was that no Trustee could also be a local governor and this condition must be adhered to by the end of February 2020. The impact of this condition on the College's LGB was potentially extremely damaging given the experience of the governors whom this affected. The Clerk invited the LGB to consider this matter;
- The comments of a Clerk at a college subject to a recent inspection were noted, in particular, what had been required of governors as part of the inspection focus;
- The College's age range designation had been lowered to 15. Trust Directors had signed the required Deed of Variation and this had been submitted to the DfE to be executed by the Secretary of State;
- A draft programme for the Conference in February was focused on preparing for inspection;
- The current MAT structure and schemes of delegation were shared as members of the Finance & Resources Committee had thought this would act as a useful reminder.

In response to the points raised in the Clerk's report, the Local Governing Body voiced concerns that the decision for Cirencester College to join the MAT was driven by the RSC and did not adhere to the published procedure of requiring approval from the Headteachers' Board. The condition set on this acceptance, in that Trustees could not also be Governors, was not a requirement for other MATs nor set out in any legislation. Given the clear implications for the College's governance, it was suggested that the RSC be challenged as to why this ruling did not apply to other MATs within the region. Governors questioned the speed at which another College was joining HOMAT as the Executive Principal had said that this would not happen in the short to medium term when speaking at the February Conference (2019). Concern was expressed that the Board minutes did not contain any instruction by Trustees to proceed with admitting others to HOMAT but rather to explore opportunities where institutions had expressed an interest.

There was a consensus expressed that there should be a system of representation at Board level to provide an understanding of issues at local level. Concerns were also raised about the transparency of the process and the lack of consultation with Local Governing Bodies about MAT developments as outlined in the schemes of delegation. Subsequently, Governors requested that those who were also Trustees represent their concerns to the Trust Committees in relation to dual representation, the way in which Cirencester's application had been handled and the impact on Worcester Sixth Form College and also clarifying what the nature of the MAT charge as others join.

The Local Governing Body **noted** the contents of the Clerk's report and **approved** the draft conference programme although accepted that this was subject to change.

5. Stakeholder Voice

The Chair invited Sarah Turner and Sean Devlin to highlight the key points from their recent link visits.

Sarah Turner reported that, after meeting with the Deputy Principal and Senior Leader for Quality Assurance, she was reassured about the College's approach and preparations for an inspection under the new framework. The new management structure this year included more new middle managers and, with inspectors implying that they would speak more to this group of staff, ensuring that adequate support was in place was crucial and reassurances had also been offered in this respect.

Sean Devlin explained that he had initially met with Ruth Scotson and Julie Ferman, Senior Leader for Student Wellbeing and Designated Safeguarding Lead, in June to familiarise himself with the College's procedures. He met with Julie again in October. He noted that the College had different practices to Hereford Sixth Form College in relation to the information shared with staff about students. Whilst sharing information increased the risk of a GDPR breach, the County Safeguarding Advisor had been satisfied with the arrangements and details that were shared. The Principal added that he trusted the professionalism of staff to treat all information confidentially and that it enabled them to cater more for the individual needs of students. In her capacity as Safeguarding Governor for the Trust, Sheila Boniface, said that she would meet with the link Safeguarding governors from both Colleges in the MAT.

The contents of the link visit reports were **noted**.

6. Quality Assurance

(i) Curriculum & Quality Committee minutes: 06.11.19

The Chair of the Committee presented the minutes and the following points were raised:

- Declining numbers on adult daytime, Access and evening classes were considered and the Committee agreed to recommend the withdrawal of adult education provision from next academic year;
- Current enrolments suggested that the College would meet its target student number. The Principal added that the ILR deadline was 5th December and student numbers would be confirmed at this point;
- The Committee monitored governor performance in 2018-19 and the proposed targets for 2019-20 were recommended for approval.

In response to questions it was noted that:

- Governor attendance, in some instances, had been impacted by unforeseen changes to the meeting cycle;
- Maths and English GCSE had offered important provision and similarly the Access course was well-run and offered good progression, however, numbers had significantly diminished and alternative provision was available. The Principal added that this provision was no

longer cost-effective and had required significant time and resource more recently in response to ESFA Early Intervention which also risked reputational damage. Governors were reminded that Early Intervention was related to retention of students on evening class Maths and English GCSE and not linked to achievement which had been good.

- The Principal had consulted with those responsible for adult education and although disappointed, they were understanding of the reasons. It was noted that as part of their manifesto, the Labour party were promising freely available adult education, so whilst the recommendation stood, governors should be reminded of this should there be a change of government;
- A decision on adult education provision was needed before Christmas as the admissions process for courses began in the spring term and it was preferable not to have offered a place which then had to be withdrawn;

The information was noted. The Local Governing Body **approved the withdrawal of adult education provision** from next academic year. Governor targets for 2019-20 were **approved**.

(ii) College Self-Assessment Report

The Deputy Principal explained that the format of the College SAR reflects the new Inspection Framework judgements and was in a common format also used by Hereford Sixth Form College. The Leadership and Management section of the SAR was considered and particular attention drawn to question D9. Each section looked to identify the College's strengths and areas for improvement. The Deputy Principal invited feedback from governors and the content of this section and advised that the whole SAR would be finalised before the end of the term and would be shared with members of the Local Governing Body.

The moderated subject grades were received and the Deputy Principal explained that those subjects with an ALPs score of 7 or below were participating in Quality Improvement Reviews.

The Local Governing Body **noted** the information provided.

(iii) Quality and Development Plan 2019-20

An updated version of the Quality and Development Plan was circulated with section reflecting the inspection framework and incorporating areas identified for improvement as detailed in the SAR.

The Local Governing Body **noted** the information provided.

7. **Finance and Resources**

(i) Finance & Resources Committee minutes: 13.11.19

a) Annual Report and Accounts 2018-19

The Trust's Finance Director advised that the Local Governing Body were required to approve the final accounts for WSFC for the period August 2018 to April 2019 and noted the contribution of the former Finance Manager in preparing these.

The Clerk thanked Sam Lifford for her detailed scrutiny of the accounts as requested by the Finance and Resources Committee and required amendments were reflected in the final version of the accounts presented to the Local Governing Body.

The Local Governing Body **approved** the annual report and accounts and the Chair duly **signed** the required documentation.

b) Student Council Accounts 2018-19
The Local Governing Body **approved** the Student Council Accounts for 2018-19.

- c) Finance & Resources Committee minutes: 13.11.19
The Chair of the Committee presented the minutes of the Finance & Resources Committee meeting and the following points were raised:
- There had been discussion about the MAT charge and a request for clarity to be provided particularly with another institution set to join. The Committee wanted to know whether any surplus at the end of each year would be refunded or, if retained, what initiatives this money would be used to support;
 - The Committee had recommended a proposal to the Local Governing Body in relation to a change to the College's Equality Duty which was **approved**.

The Trust's Finance Director advised that the Trust's Financial Regulations did not detail what should happen to surplus monies or what the charge would be. She agreed to raise the request for clarity at the meeting of the Trust's Finance and Resources Committee.

(ii) Finance

The Trust's Finance Director presented her report and the latest accounts and advised that:

- Heart of Mercia MAT updates for August and September were considered by the Finance and Resources Committee with key points reflected in the minutes;
- The budget update showed a positive EBITDA of £395,000 for the five month periods. There had been a number of ESFA announcements which included an increase in the funding base rate from £4,000 to £4,188 and proposed additional funding for some high value courses which enabled the College to be cautiously optimistic. The revised budget reflect the increase in funding per student;
- The budget was based on a teachers' pay award of 1.6% which mirrored last year's settlement. The SFCA were continuing to negotiate with unions and employers. It was noted that each 1% increase equated to £30,000;
- The update for October did not take account of the reversal of accruals and pre-payments. The cash flow position was sufficient and improving.

The Local Governing Body **noted** the information provided.

(The Finance Manager left the meeting at 6.26pm).

(iii) Property Update

The Principal reported that the Property Strategy had been updated to identify more realistic short term priorities. Whilst phase 2 of the Science Centre was not being abandoned, it was not feasible in the short or medium term to identify funding for this, whereas, it was realistic to consider refurbishment of the existing science labs and external sources of funding for this refurbishment was being explored.

The Principal outlined some of the other short term priorities which included a Condition Improvement Fund bid for the flat roof over the tutorial rooms and replacement of a circuit board.

In response to questions the Principal advised that:

- Repairs on student toilets came out of general maintenance and the issues raised by the student governor should be raised with the Premises Manager;
- The College could not access funding from section 106 linked with demographic growth and house building. This could only be accessed by primary and secondary schools.

Governors **noted** the information provided.

8. Closing Standing Items

- (i) Chair's Action: The Local Governing Body **noted** the use of the Chair's action in relation to the appointment of a SEND Governor. The Clerk noted that the appointed governor had arranged to meet with the Learning Support Manager on 12th December and would complete a link visit form to be presented at the next Local Governing Body meeting. Governors **noted** use of the Chair's action.
- (ii) Health and Safety: None.
- (iii) Risk Management: Governors identified managing the impact of the RSC decision on the College's governance as a risk. Requesting that the views of governors be presented to the MAT Board would hopefully mitigate this risk.
- (iv) Impact: The Local Governing Body identified its discussion about local governance and MAT issues were to ensure that actions were taken in the best interest of the College and its students.
- (v) Any Urgent Business
The Principal presented some proposed changes to the College's Admissions Policy
- (vi) Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, 4th March 2020 (Conference on Saturday 1/2/20).

The meeting closed at 7.34p.m.

On behalf of the Local Governing Body, the Chair thanked Isabel Swift for her contribution, as Staff Governor, to the LGB and Curriculum & Quality Committee.

Signed:
Gill Slater (Chair)

Date:

LGB ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM MEETING ON 27TH NOVEMBER 2019

| Report Reference | Action Point | Person Responsible | Completion | Check |
|-------------------------|--|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| LGB/27.11.19/4 | Raise concerns in relation to dual representation and the way in which Cirencester's application had been fast-tracked with the MAT Board. | GS | December 2019 | |
| LGB/27.11.19/7(i)c | Request clarity on the MAT charge and intentions for any surplus at year end. | SAGR | November 2019 | |

ACTION POINTS BROUGHT FORWARD

| Report Reference | Action Point | Person Responsible | Completion | Check |
|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| | | | | |

ACTION POINTS COMPLETED

| Report Reference | Action Point | Person Responsible | Completion | Check |
|-------------------------|---|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| LGB/18.09.19/7(i) | Volunteer governors to meet with Executive Principal and Finance Director with the Clerk to co-ordinate a mutually convenient time. | JJP | ASAP | ✓ |
| LGB/18.09.19/9(i) | Consult with staff who have responsibility for adult education and provide data on numbers on this provision in the current and recent years. | EYS | November 2019 | ✓ |

* Denotes amended action point.