



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ESHER SIXTH FORM COLLEGE ACADEMY TRUSTEES

Wednesday, 4 December 2024 at 6.00pm

Present:

Tim Oliver (Chair)
 Dan Hards
 Emma O'Brien
 Daniela Rivas
 Liz Gilroy-Scott
 Natasha Meade

Jane Duscherer
 Alex Cronje
 Claire Douglas
 Sophie Cook
 Mark Aulds

David Irving (Member), Terry Price (Member), Clarissa Wilks (Member), David Lavarack (Member), Martin Blackburn (Member)
 Sagar Patel, Deputy Principal, (Advising Officer)
 Stephanie Wiles (Director of Finance and Estates)
 Catherine Davies (Clerk)

1. REGISTER OF INTERESTS

Mark Aulds (Parent Trustee) declared an interest as the Link Trustee for Health & Safety and Careers at Esher Church of England High School.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mark Nelligan, Dave Roberts, John Thater, Tom Clark and Paul Collyer.

3. CONSTITUTION

3.1 Parent Trustee

The Chair thanked Stephanie Fudge for her service as Parent Trustee and in the Role of Safeguarding and EDI Link Trustee.

The Safeguarding and EDI Link Trustee role vacancy was discussed, 2 Trustees put their names forward to take on this role jointly. The Chair thanked Sophie Cook and Liz Gilroy-Scott for their interest and more details and training details will be sent to them.

Mark Aulds was welcomed to the Board as a Parent Trustee elected by the Parents on 10th November 2024.

3.2 Recruitment of External Trustees

The Chair informed the Board that he will be stepping from the roles of Chair of the Board and Trustee at the end of the academic year. During his 9-year term as a Trustee and 8 years as Chair he has overseen academisation, an outstanding Ofsted assessment and supported a new Senior Leadership Team.

Terry Price thanked the Chair for his service to the Board and outlined the process to appoint a new Chair of the Board.

The Members met to discuss the process to recruit an external Trustee with a view to the applicant being elected as Chair by the Trustees. The Members favoured an open process seeking a wide field of applicants and Further Education Associates (FEA) was selected to run the recruitment process. The advert for Chair will be launched on the 10th December, the closing date is 5 February and interviews will take place on the 24/25 February 2025. All external Trustees are encouraged to apply for the role and will go through the same recruitment process as external candidates.

4. MINUTES OF THE ACADEMY TRUST MEETING HELD ON 25TH SEPTEMBER 2024

Part 1

The Board approved the minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting of 25th September 2024 (Part 1).

5. MATTERS ARISING

There were actions arising from the last meeting:

AT01-001 Deputy Principal to report back on options for the re-sitting of examinations at the College by former students. **The Deputy Principal updated the Board that there are several reasons why the College is unable to offer former students this option including room availability, staffing invigilators and safeguarding. Instead, the Exams Officer provides former students with a link to the JCQ list of exam centres that accept private candidates.**

AT01-002 Assistant Principal to circulate on-line safeguarding training information to Trustees and Members. **(DONE) The Clerk confirmed that all Trustees and Members had completed the training.**

AT01-003 Clerk to seek legal advice to amend the Articles of Association to extend the number of External Trustees from 10 to 12. **The Chair updated the Board that to extend the number of External Trustees, the Academy Trust would need adopt a new model Articles of Association and this would lead to issues regarding the roles of Staff and Student Trustees. The Members and Chair have agreed to keep the total number of Trustees making up the Board at 16 and look to extending the number of external trustees at a later date.**

AT01-004 Strategy and Policy Committee to consider observer status for Staff at meetings and a rolling programme of staff presentations. **The Clerk informed the Board that a Terms of Reference for Staff Observers will be presented at the next Strategy and Policy Committee meeting.**

6. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Principal briefed the Board on the following:

- New Staff roles from January 2025 including a new Head of Biology who is an external appointment.
- A pay grant of 3.65% is in place but this offer has not been made to non-academized sixth form colleges. This has resulted in the situation of the College having the funding to provide teaching and support staff with a pay award but no national pay agreement. The principal advised that this situation is reviewed by the Board at the next meeting.

The Director of Finance and Estates added that the 2024/25 budget will be re-modelled in January to consider the pay award and national insurance increase.

- £300 million will be released to Colleges in April 2025 to help with accommodating the expected population bulge, teacher pay and national insurance employer contribution increases.
- The outcome of the DfE Level 3 Review is due during the week of 10th December.

The Board welcomed the Principal's report.

6.1 Student Union Report

The Student Trustees briefed the Board on the activities of the Student Union starting with the Summer Fair that was held in the hall due to the adverse weather. The "Anything but A Bag Day" held in September raised over £600 for ECAT, the Student Voice meeting was well attended, and the SU continues to build on the relationship established last year with the catering company and provided feedback from students. A recent bake sale raised funds for Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness and the Winter Fair is taking place in the canteen next week.

6.2 Finance Reports (August and October)

The Director of Finance and Estates briefed the Board on the management accounts, cashflow forecasts and reports for the periods to the end of August and the end of October. The Director highlighted the EBITDA (Earnings before Interest, Tax, Depreciation and Amortisation) at 31st August was above budget. Regarding the October management accounts, Adult Education has been reduced to zero because the level of enrolments was not high enough to make the running of the courses cost neutral. Instead, the objective of supporting the local community is met via the letting of the facilities to local sports organisations. The General Fund income was below budget and adjustments are being made to the payment process to make it easier for parents to contribute. Higher than expected interest rates have contributed to interest income being above budget.

The Board approved the Management Accounts and Reports.

7. REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 AUGUST 2024 AND LETTER OF REPRESENTATION TOGETHER WITH THE AUDIT FINDINGS REPORT AND AUDIT COMMITTEE INTERNAL SCRUTINY REPORT

The Director of Finance and Estates introduced this item noting that the Audit Committee and the Finance and Estates Committee had seen these documents and recommended them to the Board.

After the Committee meetings had taken place, the actuary notified the external auditors and the Academy Trust that the total pension contributions per the actuarial valuation report for the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) were different to the Academy Trust's records. The difference was deemed to be immaterial, and the Academy Trust opted to not adjust for this item.

A Member asked for more information concerning the breach of the Academy Trust Handbook (page 23 of the report) and the Chair gave an overview of the issue that related to the breach.

A Member asked for clarification of the indemnity insurance purchased by the Academy Trust for the Trustees benefit and the Director replied that the Members are covered by the insurance policy, and she will ensure the text is amended in the next report.

The Board discussed using the College insurance policy which covers Student Union events for future claims related to Student Union Fairs (for examples costs incurred due to adverse weather conditions).

The Chair asked for the dates of appointment and resignation of Trustees to be stated more clearly in future reports.

Report and Financial Statements – The Board approved the Report and Financial Statements.

Audit Findings Report and Letter of Representation – The Board approved the Letter of Representation.

Audit Committee Internal Scrutiny Report – The Board approved the Audit Committee Internal Scrutiny Report.

The Board thanked the Director of Finance and Estates for her work on the reports.

Action: Director of Finance and Estates to amend the text regarding indemnity insurance benefitting Trustees and Members in future reports.

8. COLLEGE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2023-24

The Deputy Principal introduced the College Self-Assessment Report, noting that the Report had been considered by the Quality and Standards Committee. The Deputy Principal focused on highlights including:

- A Level, BTEC and GCSES results are above the national benchmarks. These are excellent results and reflect the hard work by both staff and the students.
- Teaching and Learning continues to be focused on creating effective, independent and resilient learners.
- In response to a query from a Trustee at the Quality and Standards Committee meeting, the Deputy Principal confirmed that 1353 students (67%) took part in the Student Survey that is featured in the report.
- The Personal Development Programme continues to improve student wellbeing, personal growth and to develop their independent skills.
- Behaviour of the students is exemplary.
- The College is committed to enrichment and complementary studies are offered to both year groups.
- The College Mission and Values are being embedded across all areas of the College.

The Deputy Principal introduced the QIP 2024/25, noting the Plan has been considered by the Quality and Standards Committee. The Deputy Principal focused on the Targets that had been commented on by the Committee.

Target 9 – Mental Health Strategy: The Director for Safeguarding and EDI has added indicators to this target.

Target 20 – Update and Improve the Digital Strategy for 2025-28: This new target in the QIP was added following the Quality and Standards Committee Meeting. It links to Target 3 of the Strategic Objectives for 2023-25 (Student Experience and Digital Strategy). The Deputy Principal and Director of IT have drawn up the Actions and Performance indicators.

The Deputy Principal gave an overview of a recent Inset Day focusing on AI and the Principal added that the College is using Microsoft Co-pilot and has a business licence for ChatGPT. The Director of IT is overseeing the use of these licenses to inform how they could be used across the College.

The Board discussed using AI in the wider workspace and a Member suggested recording lessons would enable the College to record its uniqueness.

A Trustee asked for more details regarding Target 11 – Supervised Study - particularly for Creative Arts students who need additional resources to complete their course work or home work during learning sessions which take place in the Library or Learning Resource Centre. The Deputy Principal replied that he is working with the Divisional Director for Creative Arts to free up a room to create a Creative Learning Resources Centre; the room would have equipment for arts based subjects.

A Member commented on Target 17 – Recruitment and Retention – and noted the Mission and Values statement is a differentiator that can be used to attract candidates to the College.

9. TRUSTEES' QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024-25

The Clerk introduced the amendments made to the QIP since the last meeting which included a target for safeguarding training. A Trustee commented on adding in additional evidence such as minutes to the evidence section and the Clerk agreed.

The Board approved the Trustees' QIP subject to the comment made being actioned.

Action: Clerk to amend Trustees' QIP in line with comments made at the meeting.

10. REPORT BACK FROM COMMITTEES:

10.1 Strategy and Policy

The Chair briefed the Board that the March Board Presentation will be presented by the Progression Guidance Department.

10.2 Audit

The Vice Chair of the Committee gave an update on the Director of IT's proposal to test the IT Systems to meet the recommendation from the Internal Auditor regarding Disaster Recovery testing. The Vice Chair thanked the Director of IT for finding a solution to this outstanding issue.

10.3 Finance and Estates

The Vice Chair of the Committee gave an update regarding the renovation of Caretaker's Cottage. The planning application has been submitted and the queries raised by the planning department are being answered.

10.4 Quality and Standards

The Chair commented that the items discussed at the Committee Meetings have been covered in Item 8 of this Agenda.

11. LINK TRUSTEE REPORT

The Careers Link Trustee updated the Board as follows:

- Oxbridge mock interviews are due to take place this weekend.
- The College is competing in a regional heat of the National Bar Mock Trial competition.
- Over 800 UCAS forms have been submitted this term.
- The new Gatsby Benchmark 8 states that every student should have the opportunity for a meeting with a careers advisor and the Progression Guidance Department will work to achieve this target.
- The Higher Education Fair takes place in March.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair thanked Paul Collyer for his service over 3 terms as a Trustee; during this time Paul has led the Finance and Estates Committee as Chair and the Strategy and Policy Committee as Vice Chair.

The Chair briefed the Board on changes to the make-up of the Committees from January with Mark Nelligan taking on Chair of Finance and Estates and John Thater taking on the Vice Chair role of Strategy and Policy.

The Chair thanked Terry Price for his service as a Member of the Academy Trust and to the College for over 18 years.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - Wednesday 26th March 2025 at 6.00pm

*The meeting closed at 7.47pm
Attendance was 63%*

Signed and date

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

AT2 - 001	Director of Finance and Estates to amend the text regarding indemnity insurance benefitting Trustees and Members in future reports.
AT2 - 002	Clerk to amend Trustees' QIP in line with comments made at the meeting.

SUMMARY OF TRUSTEE CHALLENGE [C] / SUPPORT [S]

C/S	Minute	Topic
S	3	Terry Price thanked the Chair for his service to the Board and outlined the process to appoint a new Chair of the Board.
C	8	The Board discussed using AI in the wider workspace and a Member suggested recording lessons would enable the College to record its uniqueness.
S	12	The Chair thanked Paul Collyer for his service over 3 terms as a Trustee; during this time Paul has led the Finance and Estates Committee as Chair and the Strategy and Policy Committee as Vice Chair.
S	12	The Chair thanked Terry Price for his service as a Member of the Academy Trust and to the College for over 18 years.