Minutes of the meeting of the Corporation held on 1 February 2016, in Room 017, Orient House.

PRESENT: Pat Edwards (Chair); Asiia Abassi; Lewis Coakley; Mark Carroll (Vice-Chair); Steven Crane (Vice-Chair); Hannah Eaton; David Hatchett; Taiyabah Ijaz; Alex Jackson; Barbara Matuskovicova; Naihum Levi Stevens; Sonia Watson and Kevin Watson (Principal)

In Attendance: Ian C Wilson (External Reviewer)

Clerk to the Corporation: Michael Wood

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No Governor declared an interest in advance of the meeting.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from: Coral DeCourcy and Katherine Hewlett.

WELCOME

The Chair formally welcomed Sonia Watson, the newly-elected Support Staff Governor to her first meeting, and extended a welcome Ian Wilson (External Reviewer).

MINUTES

46.15 The Minutes of the meeting of the Corporation held on 30 November 2015 were approved, subject to clarification with regard to Minute 36.15, namely that SAR Teaching & Learning and Management & Leadership grades needed to be in alignment, in accordance with latest Ofsted guidance.

MATTERS ARISING

47.15 (Minutes 43.15 refers): it was reported that the Search Committee would next meet on 23 February to review Corporation membership, informed by the External Review of Governance report.

STAFF REVIEW (APPRAISAL) POLICY & PROCEDURE

48.15 The Corporation approved a revised Staff Review (Appraisal) Policy & Procedure. It was commented that the changes to the Policy had been prompted by the new Sixth Form Colleges’ pay progression scheme. It was requested that in future, any revised policies presented to the Corporation should show clearly where the policy had been amended for the ease of reference of Governors.

Note: Mr S Crane declared an interest in respect of this time

PROCEDURE FOR MANAGING STAFF SICKNESS
49.15 The Corporation approved a revised Procedure for Managing Staff Sickness. It was enquired if return to work interviews were documented. The Principal commented that as part of the return to work pro-forma, a section had to be completed by line managers in respect of interviews (reviewed by HR). It was noted that the College’s sickness absence rate was significantly below the sector average and that a Staff Well-Being Committee was in existence in accordance with the College’s IiP commitment.

50.15 As part of a review of the Corporation’s annual cycle of business, the Clerk was asked to include a schedule of policies and procedures that would be subject to approval or re-approval.

Draft SAR, 2015; Improvement Action Plan, 2015/16 and Review of Improvement Action, 2014/15

51.15 The Principal introduced discussion of the revised draft Self-Assessment Report (SAR) for 2015 (including the Improvement Action Plan and Review), commenting that the Report had now been subject to external validation by a former HMI, as requested by Governors at the last meeting of the Corporation. Arising out of detailed discussion, the following key points were noted:

i) that the Executive Summary had been amended to reflect the comments of the external validator;

ii) that the external advice received was to proceed with the grades as determined by the College;

iii) that the SAR was coherent and easy to read;

iv) that rather than use the terms ‘weaknesses’, a better term may be ‘areas for development or improvement’;

v) that some reference should be made to the personal development and welfare of staff;

vi) that the apparent disparity in the two Action Plans with regard to the GCSE Numeracy Strategy and Policy related to the fact that guidance had now changed (ie students moving from E to D was now regarded as progress and not a fail).

52.15 The Chair invited the Staff Governors to comment on the SAR and both were in accord that the Report was strong and reflected the true situation in the College.

53.15 The Corporation approved the SAR, 2015.

AREA REVIEW UPDATE

54.15 The Principal provided an update on the the Post-16 Area Review process, referring to two briefing papers that had been circulated on this matter. It was noted that all Principals and Chairs had met on 8 January, there being a strong desire on the part of Sixth Form Colleges to retain their independence, whilst at the same time some being open to forms of partnership (eg Haringey SFC is now working with Haringey and Havering FE College in reviewing future developments). Arising out of detailed discussion, the following key points were noted:

i) that it would be helpful to have some guiding principles that the Corporation could refer to when considering any future options;
ii) that more background information on academisation and what the implications might be for the College should be provided;

iii) that guidance from the SFCA should be circulated to Governors;

iv) that there were examples of where a ‘union’ of FE colleges and schools could increase standards;

v) that the College should promote its standing and strengths more widely to DFE, local MPs and others influencers, in that it had been judged ‘good’ twice by Ofsted and had much to commend it by way of the student experience;

vi) that the Chair and Principal would attend a further briefing session at Waltham College on 9 February.

55.15 The Chair summarised the discussion commenting that, given the importance and implications of the Area Review process, Governors should be given the opportunity to debate matters in depth and with as much information at their disposal as possible. Accordingly, it was agreed that a Special Meeting of the Corporation should be held before the next scheduled meeting on 21 March (the Clerk to consult on possible dates).

56-58.15 Restricted confidential items – not for publication

PROPOSED OUTLINE FOR DEVELOPMENT DAY

59.15 The Corporation considered a draft programme outline for a proposed Development Day to be held in May 2016. Arising out of discussion, it was agreed that it would be helpful were the day to be divided into two halves: one devoted to the programme as outlined and CPIs; the other to the Area Review process.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

60.15 The Corporation received for information Management Accounts for the period ended 31 December 2015, which indicated that the College was substantially on target with regard to its profiled budget for the year.

61.15 The Chair encouraged those Governors who had yet to undertake the online Safeguarding and Prevent training module to do so. The Clerk agreed to circulate details in this regard.

62.15 The being no other business the meeting closed, the date of the next ordinary meeting being confirmed as 21 March 2016 at 6.15pm.

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