



**SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE AND STROUD COLLEGE**  
**FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION**

Approved minutes of a meeting of South Gloucestershire and Stroud College  
Further Education Corporation  
Held on 25 April 2024  
Via Microsoft Teams

<b>Present:</b>	Matt Atkinson	(Chair)
	Douglas Blackstock	
	Louise Bright	
	Sophie Chester-Glyn	
	Claire Charlemagne	
	Mike Croker	
	Phil Eames	
	Charmain Eaton	
	Andres Garcia-Knight	
	Kevin Hamblin	(CEO & Executive Principal)
	Yusuf Ibrahim	
	Dave Merrett	
	Irene Molodtsov	
Sarah Woodhouse		
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Rich Aitken	(Director of Operational Finance)
	Gavin Murray	(Deputy Principal)
	Jude Saunderson	(Chief Financial Officer)
	Sara-Jane Watkins	(College Principal)
	Sharon Glover	(Clerk)

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Lynne Craig and Gary Parsons. Viridian Joseph did not attend the meeting.

## 2. **Declarations of Interest**

The following declarations of interest were raised and noted:

- As Directors of SGSCSL, Louise Bright, Kevin Hamblin, Dave Merrett and Jude Saunderson in relation to the Executive report covering the sale of SGSCSL in item 10.
- Phil Eames (Trustee SGSAT) and Kevin Hamblin (CEO of SGSAT) in item 12.

## 3. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

Douglas Blackstock raised a minor correction within the second paragraph of minute 5a. Following this revision, the minutes of the meeting held 21 March 2024 were approved as a correct record, ready for signing by the Chair.

Douglas Blackstock reported that he had met with the three colleagues who presented changes to the Student Union at the last meeting. As part of the discussion, the lack of social space in some parts of the College was raised, which needed to feature in future strategic discussions.

## 4. **Corporation action log**

Members noted that all actions had been completed.

When asked, there were no requests received to un-star any of the starred items on the agenda.

## 5. **Strategic Update and Development**

Vision for Quality and Excellence – Members received the final Ofsted report, with an overall outcome of Good. There had been no judgement below Good with many areas on the cusp of outstanding. Ofsted were impressed by the College's courage to develop SGS Create with the commitment to support young people that have struggled with main stream education. The College had also received the strongest grade possible in relation to meeting local needs and the College's work with employers. Ofsted also commented about the high engagement in the staff survey with the positive outcome that 85% of staff are happy working for the College.

However, the College has recognised that there is more to do to achieve its vision of Outstanding by 2028, especially in relation to consistency across the organisation. Further areas of focus were presented by the Principal together with a blueprint for Ofsted Outstanding by 2028 and action plan. Having consulted with stakeholders across the organisation, the focus of the blueprint would be on consistency and

ambition for learners. The blueprint will also form the basis for target setting for line reports and assurance was provided that costs have been included in next year's budget. It was suggested that the blueprint becomes the Quality Strategy for the next four years.

Members felt this to be a clear ambition and raised that the column in point 6 of the action plan had been left blank. The Principal explained that the aim was for teachers to focus on teaching and for the College to provide the environment for this. However, the Principal was happy to review further.

Members questioned whether this strategy would impact on the College Vision and Mission and were informed that the Governors' strategy event would provide an opportunity for this consideration. Members raised the need to reflect on the requirements of the Corporation over the next 5-years and the governor skills and experience needed to provide insight and guidance to the College in the achievement of its strategy.

Members also raised the importance of reflecting on the adequacy of funding to support this strategy and to achieve the aspirations of the Digital strategy. It was recognised that finances will continue to be challenging and there needs to be realism with affordability and the balance between finance, quality and growth. Members were informed that there is an aspiration for all teaching staff to have their own portable device, as more cost effective than desktops. Confirmation was received that this has been budgeted for in capital bids. Members raised that the College is strong with employer collaborations but questioned the community perspective and impact on the ground to help shape success measures. Higher Education was also raised as there is a reduction in the international market with HE collaborations with Colleges being formed. Members also raised the need to ensure that the College continues to do what it does well whilst also ensuring that new and revised Ofsted standards are met and that all strategies are integrated and consistent.

It was proposed that, should this form the new Quality Strategy, it can be monitored by the Learning and Quality Committee and that impact measures need to be included in the document.

Members raised that there is so much focus currently on AI and the pace of change and what this means for individuals and questioned whether there is a place for this within the strategy. The Principal advised that the digital strategy is to be presented later in the meeting. It was reported that AI solutions are being investigated operationally and although AI is embraced there needs to be learner awareness and considerations relation to safeguarding concerns.

The Chair summarised that there is support for the direction of travel, subject to consideration of the Vision and Mission and that the Learning & Quality Committee undertake more detailed scrutiny of the Quality Strategy with consideration given to resource implications and progress monitoring. The Principal was thanked for such a forward-looking document.

**The report was noted.**

**Action: Principal.**

6. **Performance Monitoring Report**

The Principal reported that the areas of continued focus are Adult/ESFA funding and Attendance. Although there were apprenticeship staffing recruitment concerns, confirmation was received that this area is now fully staffed. Members were informed of delays in DISE provision payment which has impacted on cash days. Members asked when this payment is due and it was anticipated within the next two weeks. It was reported that cash is in a healthier position due to receipt of a FE Capital Transformation Fund grant.

Members sought assurance on the red/amber KPIs and were informed that the under recruited areas have been provided for in the overall financial forecast which is monitored on a monthly basis and the data relates to the original budget. Members were informed that the report is based on judgement and tends to be on a prudent basis.

**The report was noted.**

7. **Digital Plan and Information Security**

Due to the pace of change the Principal presented a refreshed Digital Strategy, having also worked with another College on its development. When asked about the supplier of the systems infrastructure, members were informed that this was a separate consideration and had not been included as part of the Digital Strategy. The main aim of the Digital Strategy was to look at digital opportunities to improve operational efficiencies. Members raised the need for the Digital Strategy to be underpinned by the IT infrastructure plan. Members were informed that a separate team works with JISC and that there is a 3-year hardware/software plan in place. The Principal offered to put governors in touch with the relevant staff in order to seek assurance.

Although content with the vision and ambitions of the strategy, members raised the need for the inclusion of a road map to document milestones, timelines and how achievements are to be measured in order that the Corporation can be assured of the progress being made. Members also raised the need for the College to be innovative and for staff to be developed to be digitally competent, with leaders developed to understand the power of digital. Members were informed that digital champions are in place across the College and due to the fast pace of change there is a need for the strategy to be flexible.

Members raised about cyber security and were informed that the College has achieved cyber essentials and the internal auditors have undertaken an audit on cyber security for presentation to the Audit Committee. Reference was also made by one member to the national cyber security centre toolkit which outlines Board responsibilities. It was suggested that it may prove helpful to have a facilitated discussion about these responsibilities. The Clerk was asked to pick this up outside of the meeting with the member who raised it. The outcome of discussions was for the Principal to revisit the Digital Strategy to take on board feedback provided and to also check the supporting documents that are in place or may be needed. The Digital Strategy is then to be re-presented for approval at a future Corporation meeting.

**Action: Principal.  
Clerk.**

8. **Accountability Agreement**

The Principal explained the government's local need duty which is a statutory requirement and of the need for production of an annual Accountability Agreement, approved by the Corporation, as a requirement of the ESFA funding agreement.

Following scrutiny of the Accountability Agreement members congratulated the College on its target achievement and questioned whether those not yet achieved will be rolled forward. Members were informed that a view has been taken where targets are no longer applicable. Members discussed in detail the work of the College with SMEs and the positive engagement the College has with these through the Employer Partnership Boards. Members suggested that the context of SME engagement is clearer in the Accountability Agreement. The Chair also took the opportunity to remind governors of the next round of Employer Partnership Board meetings taking place in May 2024.

**It was resolved:  
To approve the Accountability Agreement 2024/25, subject to change discussed.**

**Action: Principal.**

9. **Management Information**

Members received the management accounts dated 31 March 2024. The Director of Operational Finance reported that the latest forecast surplus, income and pay figures are just below budget with non-pay above budget and a "good" financial health is forecast. Members were informed that pay is below budget as vacancies aren't being

filled. However, non-pay is above budget as budgets are vired to agency costs. Members asked that these costs are reported within the pay costs in order that figures are not skewed.

**The report was noted.**

10. **Executive Report**

Confidential Item.

11. **Audit Committee**

Minutes from the Audit Committee meeting held 28 March 2024 were noted. Mike Croker, Chair of the Audit Committee, reported the following:

- a) There had been good discussions relating to risk management arrangements, with good internal audit reports presented.
- b) The Financial Regulations were reviewed and are being recommended to Corporation for approval. Members were informed of some of the key changes made and that the Financial Regulations would require further review in light of the newly published College's Financial Handbook. Members asked if there were any significant changes that the Corporation needed to be aware of. Members were informed of some changes to financial approval limits, following benchmarking with other Colleges. When asked, members were informed of how these changes will be communicated to staff.
- c) Also presented were recommendations for the re-appointment of Bishop Fleming as Financial Statements Auditors for 2023/24 for SGS College and SGS Commercial Services Limited.

**It was resolved:**

- a) **To approve the Financial Regulations.**
- b) **To approve the re-appointment of Bishop Fleming as Financial Statements Auditors for 2023/24 for SGS College and SGS Commercial Services Limited.**

12. **SGSAT Statement of Assurance 2024/25**

The Chief Financial Officer reported changes to services provided to SGS Academy Trust that necessitated re-approval of the Statement of Assurance. Members were informed of the total cost of services charged at cost.

Phil Eames and Kevin Hamblin refrained from the following resolution.

**It was resolved:**

**To approve the Statement of Assurance for the two-year period 1/9/24 to 31/8/26.**

13. **Corporate & Social Responsibility Statement**

The Clerk presented the report which addressed the feedback from the last Corporation meeting in relation to a suggestion to replace the CSR statement by ESG reporting. Following research, CSR and ESG are two different types of reporting with the conclusion that the CSR statement is still required but had been updated to include a section on Governance.

**It was resolved:**

**To approve the Corporate & Social Responsibility Statement.**

14. **Review of Governance Self-Assessment Action Plan and External Governance Review Action Plan**

Members received a progress update against the Governance Self-Assessment action plan and External Governance review action plan.

**The report was noted.**

15. **College Financial Handbook 2024**

Members received a report outlining details of the newly published College Financial Handbook 2024, that comes into effect from 1 August 2024.

**The report was noted.**

16. **Strategy Away Day**

The Chair advised that due to the number of apologies received for the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2024 Strategy Away Day it had been proving challenging to re-arrange this event to maximise attendance. It was therefore proposed that the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024 Corporation meeting is used as a strategic event with agenda items being carried forward to the July Corporation meeting. This proposal was endorsed by the Corporation. Sarah Woodhouse offered her apologies in advance as she was unable to attend on the 6<sup>th</sup> June.

17. **Items of Urgent Business**

The Chair reported that there are two items of urgent business and one of them will be discussed as a confidential matter at which point members of staff, including the Staff Governor, will be invited to leave the meeting.

- a) Absence policy – Members were informed of new legislation for carers introduced from 6 April 2024. Apologies were provided that the policy had not been presented earlier to Corporation but AoC guidance had been awaited. When

asked, confirmation was received that revisions to the policy were in line with AoC recommendations.

**It was resolved:  
To approve the Absence Policy and Procedure.**

At this point all members of staff, including the Staff Governor, were invited to leave the meeting.

b) Confidential Item.

18. **Confidentiality**

Members agreed that due to business and personal sensitivities, the Executive report and addendum (item 10), confidential Audit Committee minutes (item 11), SGSAT Statement of Assurance (item 12), confidential item of urgent business (item 17b) and minutes 10a-d and 17b should be treated as confidential.

19. **Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting scheduled for Thursday 6 June 2024 at 5pm, Stroud Campus will become a Strategy event starting at 4.00pm.

The meeting commenced at 4.02pm.

Rich Aitken joined the meeting at 4.04pm (during item 3)

Sophie Chester-Glyn joined the meeting at 4.17pm (during item 5a)

Rich Aitken, Kevin Hamblin, Andres Garcia-Knight, Gavin Murray, Jude Saunderson and Sara-Jane Watkins left the meeting at 6.05pm (after item 17a)

The meeting closed at 6.40pm

The meeting was quorate.