

# QUEEN ELIZABETH SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

## **Minute of the meeting of the Search and Review Committee held on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2019**

Present Mr C Wiper, Chair  
Mr T Fisher, Principal  
Mrs J Hillyard  
Mr C Kipling

Apologies Mr D Warman  
Mr S Wilson

In attendance Mr S Dowson, Clerk

10/19 Welcome and Thank You

The Chair welcomed Mrs Hillyard and Mr Kipling and thanked them for attending the meeting in place of Mr Warman and Mr Wilson.

11/19 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

12/19 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 10 January were approved as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

13/19 Matters arising

Ref 06/19

Mr Fisher said he had experienced some difficulty communicating with St Aidan's Academy about the possibility of recruiting a female member of St Aidan's staff to the QE Governing Body. However Ms Jo Barrett from Hummersknott Academy had recently joined the Governing Body as an Independent Governor and Ms Victoria Snowball had joined as a Staff Governor. These two appointments had helped to redress the gender imbalance.

14/19 Governance Quality Improvement Plan 2018-2019

Mr Fisher said he thought the Governors' QIP was a useful tool which added value to the work of the Board. Mr Fisher led a review of progress of the 5 actions.

Action 1

The strategy event had not yet been organised because of staffing changes at the DfE.

Mr Fisher said he would like to meet Janet Renou's replacement, Katherine Cowell, before making any plans for the future.

One of the main strategic decisions facing the College remains whether or not to convert to an academy. Under current rules, if QE converted to an academy it would be able to reclaim VAT of approximately £250,000 a year. A disadvantage of converting to an academy would be the potential loss of some of the freedoms enjoyed as a sixth form college.

Mr Fisher explained that funding, which had effectively remained static since 2013, was becoming a serious issue for the sector and the College could not easily overlook the financial and other advantages of academisation.

#### Action 2

A number of external guests had attended Governor meetings.

#### Action 3

Key staff and governors continue to be involved in local and national establishments, organisations and events.

#### Action 4

Governors and senior staff from outside QE had attended induction and training at QE. More had confirmed a wish to do so in future. The regular updates had been well received. Anecdotal evidence suggested that responses to recent public consultations, as a consequence of the updates, had been effective.

#### Action 5

More Governors were taking advantage of the opportunity to attend and take part in College events. The Governor Handbook had been updated to make the governor/staff links clearer.

In reply to a question from the Chair the Clerk said a record was kept of each Governors attendance at training and/or college events and this was listed on each Governors 1:1 review. A combined list of all Governors attendance at training and college events would enable the Board to see which Governors were taking advantage of the opportunities to visit the College and indicate how effective the Governor Handbook had been.

#### 15/19 Governance Development and 1:1 reviews

The committee approved the Clerk's proposal to include an opportunity for Governors to add their own comments to the 1:1 questionnaire for 2019.

#### 16/19 Darlington Governors' Support Network

In addition to the success outlined in Action 4 of the Governors' QIP the Clerk explained that communication between schools as a consequence of the Darlington Governor Network was ongoing. Hummersknott, The Education Village and Darlington College were particularly receptive, primary schools not so much. The Clerk is continuing to work at improving links with St Aidan's and hopes that Swift Academies (Hurworth and Longfield plus Rydal and Skerne Park) will become more actively involved soon.

17/19 Governor Membership

With 17 members, the Governing Body is well within the, 'not less than 12 and not more than 20' prescribed in the Instrument and Articles. In reply to a question from the Chair the Clerk said that it would be possible to recruit a further independent, parent and student governor [to make the maximum 20 governors]. Mr Fisher said the current trend was for smaller governing bodies.

The Committee discussed the need for governors with financial qualifications in addition to Mr Deane. Mr Wiper said that some governors had sufficient financial experience, for example as a consequence of running their own successful businesses. The Clerk replied that if the college got into financial difficulty in the future it would be difficult to defend a decision not to specifically recruit governors with financial qualifications in the past. Mr Fisher said that the FE Commissioner had recently written to all colleges saying that boards of governors must have financially qualified governors on the board. *[FE Commissioner's letter to all colleges 7 May 2019, 'Boards of governors MUST include two financially qualified members, who are able to offer support and challenge to the Principal/CEO and FD.']*

The Committee considered the difficulty of recruiting accountants from local firms who might wish to bid for auditing or other work at the College in future. Becoming a governor at the college would create a conflict of interest which could exclude the company concerned from working for the college.

The Clerk suggested putting together a job description for a financially qualified governor and advertising the position(s), as other schools and colleges were beginning to do.

Mr Fisher said that he would speak to a parent he knew who had financial qualifications. If the parent himself did not wish to become a governor he may be able to suggest other lines of enquiry.

18/19 Confidentiality

There were no confidential matters.

19/19 Date of next meeting

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2019