MEMBERS

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 9 November 2022 at 2pm

Present physically:	N Wingfield-Digby	
Present virtually:	J Bloomfield (part)	S Howard
In Attendance:	E D'Souza, Chair of the Trust Board N Savvas, CEO S Gales, Governance Professional	
Apologies:	J Gazzard M Wagner	

Action

1 **Election of Chair**

The Members elected Sarah Howard to Chair the meeting.

2 **Declaration of Interests and Apologies for absence**

E D'Souza, N Savvas and S Howard declared their roles as Governors of West Suffolk College. No other conflicts of interest were declared.

Apologies for absence were received from J Gazzard and M Wagner.

3 **Minutes of the AGM meeting held on 1 March 2022**

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2022 were **agreed** as an accurate record, though N Wingfield-Digby updated all that the potential royal visit is on hold following the death of the Queen.

J Bloomfield joined the meeting at 2.10pm

4 **Matters Arising from the AGM meeting on 1 March 2022**

All matters arising from the previous meeting were complete.

5 **Update on Trust's performance in 2021/22**

Members received and considered the annual report which included the students' results; students awards and accolades, as well as an overview of student experience, quality of provision and the financial position.

N Savvas noted last year was incredibly successful, with ASFC being awarded the highest possible judgement with 'significant progress' in all 3 key areas and with OSFC gaining an Outstanding Ofsted following a four-day full inspection; strong student exam and EPQ results; a significant number of students gaining awards and accolades, and a strong financial year-end position contributing to reserves to continue to maintain and invest in our outstanding facilities. S Howard congratulated the CEO and his team on the financial strength of the Trust and noted this strength will support the Trust through the challenges of the next few years.

Members commended the team on the performance in 2021/22.

6 **Update on Trust Board's Governance**

Members received and considered the update report provided which included detailed information on the Trust Board's structure, membership, skillset and equality, diversity and inclusion data.

N Savvas summarised the work undertaken by the Trust Board in the year. Members noted the attendance of Trustees and queried whether there is concern about the Trustees with lower attendance. S Gales noted that the Trustees attendance is only against the three Trust Board meetings, so does not reflect their attendance at Committee meetings and extraordinary Trust Board meetings and their wider contribution to the Trust, and provided additional information and context. The Members requested that future reports provide this information. S Gales

S Gales noted that, at the end of this academic year, five Trustees' term of office are due to expire and outlined the process by which their reappointment will be considered before making recommendations to the Trust Board and Members.

Members discussed the diversity metrics of Trustees and noted whilst overall the Board does represent the community, it has less diversity in regard to disability and LBTQ representation. E D'Souza noted that following the recent experience at West Suffolk College, future appointments would be filled following a national specialist recruitment campaign which allows us to target the best prospective Trustees and ensure a fair approach and diversity of candidates. N Savvas also noted that the Trust Board has appointed a Trustee lead for EDI who helps to champion awareness of diversity and to ensure sufficient consideration has been given to ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion prior to decision making of the Trust Board.

7 **Update on Group strategy (Trust and its sponsor)**

Members received and considered the report provided which included an update on the Trust's vision, mission and values; the formalisation of the strategic alliance with the sponsor via the collaboration agreement; and an update on operations including the operational structure and related party transactions. The paper also horizon scanned and discussed potential partnerships and growth opportunities.

N Savvas presented the ECG Strategic Plan 2022-25. S Howard noted the state of the economy with rising inflation, a cost-of-living crisis, with cuts to public transport and national pay negotiations and strikes; and queried how the Trust is planning to support those most vulnerable in our community. N Savvas summarised how we are working with stakeholders across the community to tackle the complex but interconnected societal issues; for example working with businesses to replace bus routes, working with primary and secondary schools to support them to deliver STEM subjects, working with NHS and other care sectors to support our students welfare needs, and working internally to review our structure to upskill and reskill staff to support them to work in higher qualified, higher wage roles.

N Savvas noted that we have a new CFO starting in December and outlined his skillset and background, as well as the plan for the handover period. N Wingfield-Digby queried regularity and depth of regular oversight of the financial position during this period; E D'Souza outlined how there is governance oversight via the Finance Committee.

Members queried how relations are with the local governing bodies. N Savvas noted that the Trust operates with a singular Educational Excellence Committee, with a parent committee member local to each college, and confirmed that relations are good. E D'Souza noted the guidance about local governing bodies is changing with more understanding of the unique governance responsibilities within a MAT, whereby the Trustees are ultimately responsible and there is limited delegated authority given to the Committees by the Trustees. N Savvas noted that we have done significant work to improve governance, clarify responsibilities and to train those involved in governance in their roles; which has greatly improved relations at all levels of governance.

N Savvas noted that the Trust is now considered as a best practice example, and we are in a very strong position; and informed that as such we are being approached by government stakeholders, other Trusts and local authority schools to discuss joining our Trust. N Savvas noted that these are very early discussions and outlined the process by which the Trust will evaluate these opportunities, including detailed due diligence.

8 **Any Other Business**

None.

The meeting closed at 3.27pm