

CORPORATION

Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 11 December 2024 at 2.00pm

Present physically:	C Higgins, Vice Chair	M Williams
	E D'Souza, Chair	N Savvas, CEO
	K Chapman	R Cannon (part)
	M Chatt	S Daley, Vice Chair
	M Searcey (part)	
Present virtually:	C Chua (part)	R Hetherington (part)
	M Downes	S Howard (part)
In Attendance:	A McGarel, CFO	
	C Shaw, Group Principal Sixth Form Provision	
	G Grainger, Chief Information Officer	
	L Chapman, Regional Director – SEND and Outdoor Learning	
	L Moody, Group Principal University and Professional Development	
	S Gales, Governance Professional	
Apologies:	S Graham, Chief People Officer	
	A Duffety	J Wakelam
	J Drake	K Gwara, Student Governor
	J Gazzard	

Absent:

1. Declaration of Interests and Apologies for absence

C Higgins, E D'Souza, M Chatt and S Daley declared their roles as Trustees of the Eastern Education Group Trust.

S Howard declared her role as a Member of the Eastern Education Group Trust.

N Savvas declared his role as CEO of Eastern Education Group Trust.

Apologies for absence were received from A Duffety, J Drake, J Gazzard, J Wakelam and K Gwara.

The Chair welcomed Marnie Williams and Martin Chatt, and governors introduced themselves.

R Cannon joined at 2.12pm

2. Feedback from 'First Hand' activities

Governors received and considered the First-Hand activity feedback of governance members visits across the Group between July and December 2024.

S Daley fed back from her visit to the Haverhill PPL and E D'Souza fed back from attending the Conservatoire EAST performance this term.

K Chapman (as Governance Lead for People) fed back from her meeting and commended the HR team for effectively managing the merger.

The Chair noted the report from J Wakelam (as Governance Lead for Safeguarding) commended the strength of safeguarding arrangements and wrap-around support for students.

3. Minutes of the meeting on 10 July 2024

The minutes of the meeting on 10 July 2024 were **agreed** as an accurate record.

Action

4. **Matters Arising from meetings from the above meeting**

Four of the five matters arising from the meetings were complete, with one to be added to future revision of the Financial Regulations.

5. **CEO's Briefing**

5.1 **EEG Highlights**

Governors received and considered the CEO's Briefing which provided a termly update on student achievements, student developments, staff news, shows and exhibitions, sustainability, support of our communities, business and partnerships, and Group newsletters.

The CEO informed that following a 4-day Ofsted inspection in November, we achieved Outstanding across all provision types and 'strong' evidence of meeting the skills need, and informed this makes us the only FE College in the east to achieve this and an incredibly strong education Group with three Outstanding post-16 providers. Governors queried if the outcome remains embargoed or can be shared with our stakeholders. The CEO advised it is embargoed until the report is published, which we expect before January 2025, and summarised plans to share the news with our stakeholders both locally and nationally.

The CEO informed that staff feel energised to have their hard-work and commitment recognised by Ofsted and feel inspired to share best practice to further enhance the quality of education across both our post-16 provision and with the specialist SEN schools within our Group.

Governors commended the report and noted it is accessible for sharing externally. Governors suggested adding a short introduction to explain the Group.

CEO

5.2 **Strategic Update**

Governors received and considered the update report which included Bridget Phillipson's post-election priorities, key outcomes from the governments latest budget, sector intelligence, an update on the staffing unions and national pay negotiations, an update on key changes affecting Ofsted, the DfE and ESFA, the Local Authority (devolution), and national policy – e.g. Getting Britain Working white paper, Skills England, Child-Centred Government, SEND, Children's Social Care, HE fees and reform, Managing Public Money, Qualification Reforms – and national trends.

The CEO informed of how we are preparing and positioning the College and the Group to best align to national and regional policy strategy to maximise opportunities.

Governors discussed that as part of our Group strategy we need to carefully consider local forecast population and demographic data, to ensure we create appropriate provision to meet local need and remain financially sustainable. The CEO confirmed this is central to our plan and we are also looking to expand our specialist SEN capacity to meet the rising need.

Governors discussed the new FE provider dashboard and queried if this will create additional work for the Executive. C Shaw explained how it is expected to work.

Governors discussed the government's plan for a policy change in relation to our National Insurance contributions and likely impact.

Governors commended the report and clarity, though queried the main operational priorities for the next term. The CEO confirmed that each Senior Executive Team member is leading on projects linked to these strategic areas and their areas of expertise, and noted we continue to align and share best practice within the Group's post-16 provision, and to prepare our estate for the growing student numbers. The CEO informed that he is also focussing on integrating the specialist SEN schools into the Group, to support and enhance their quality of education.

Governors queried the anticipated impact of the changing policy in relation to apprenticeships and the apprenticeship levy. The CEO advised that it unclear at this early stage.

The Chair informed we will continue discussions at the Strategic Conference to inform our new 2025-28 Strategic Plan.

The Chair commended the strength of Ofsted feedback and informed of the congratulations from the DfE/ESFA, the FE Commissioner and other key stakeholders. Governors congratulated the staff for the outstanding outcome.

6. Committee Chair's Summary Reports

The Chair informed that the Corporation operates a Committee structure whereby the specialist Committees look in detail at KPIs and reports, and report back to the Corporation for assurance and make recommendations for approval in line with our scheme of delegation.

6.1. EEG SEND Educational Excellence Committee Overview

Governors received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions and recommendations of the Committee meetings in the Autumn Term.

The Committee reviewed, approved and recommend the Committee's Terms of Reference and Committee Skillset. The Committee considered the Risk Register Extract. The Committee considered KPIs and updates in relation to student enrolment, progress and experience so far in 2024/25 and student outcomes and destinations in 2023/24. The Committee discussed plans for improving quality and student experience across the schools. The Committee discussed the use of Pupil Premium and Sports and PE Premium at each school.

The Governance Professional informed that the Committee is currently focussed on the specialist SEN schools and in the fullness of time will include College information, to ensure there is a cohesive curriculum offer with progression pathways into the College's specialist SEN provision and mainstream curriculum offer.

6.1.1 Safeguarding Termly Report

Governors received and **noted** the termly report which was scrutinised by the Committee.

6.2. EEG Post-16 Educational Excellence Committee Overview

Governors received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions and recommendations of the Committee meetings in the Autumn Term.

The Committee reviewed, approved and recommend the Committee's Terms of Reference and Committee Skillset. The Committee considered the Risk Register Extract. The Committee reviewed and recommend the 2023/24 Self-Assessment Report. The Committee considered KPIs and updates in relation to student enrolment, progress and experience so far in 2024/25. The Committee discussed the intended curriculum for 2025/26 and plans for teacher and staff development linked to our quality assurance and improvement framework. The Committee discussed how the College is meeting the skills need. The Committee also reviewed and recommend policies in agenda item 7.

S Daley, as Committee Chair, summarised the discussions by the Committee and noted, despite the strength of the Ofsted judgement, the Executive remain focussed and have created a quality improvement plan to drive continuous improvement and enhancement. S Daley noted we continue to closely monitor KPIs by a variety of EDIMs to ensure our provision remains inclusive and effective.

C Shaw commended the staff for their professionalism and high standards.

Governors commended the strength of the College's outcomes and leadership, and queried how sustainable this is. The CEO explained that our success is down to our focus on putting students at the heart of everything we do – and to intentionally support and develop middle managers and leaders, so they are empowered to trial and innovate to drive improvements in their areas (via autonomy, mastery and purpose), celebrating successes, sharing best practice and giving staff safe and supportive environments to try/fail/succeed.

6.2.1 Safeguarding Annual and Termly Report

Governors received and **noted** the report which was scrutinised by the Committee.

S Daley noted that student mental health and SEN needs are increasing and explained this is putting pressure on our wrap-around support teams. Governors queried if this is a national or

local trend, and whether we have sufficiently resourced this provision. C Shaw explained the local and national context, and how we are working with students, their families and the third sector to help and support students. C Shaw explained we have increased investment in the team, though explained there isn't specific government funding for this.

Governors commended the strength of the safeguarding team and support offered to students.

6.2.2 WSC Self-Assessment Report 2023/24

Governors received and **approved** the self-assessment report.

6.3. **WSC Apprenticeship and Higher Education Educational Excellence Committee Overview**

Governors received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions and recommendations of the Committee meeting in the Autumn Term.

The Committee reviewed, approved and recommend the Committee's Terms of Reference and Committee Skillset. The Committee considered the Risk Register Extract and Office for Students compliance. The Committee considered and recommend the 2023/24 Self-Evaluation Document. The Committee considered KPIs and updates in relation to student enrolment, progress and experience so far in 2024/25. The Committee discussed the intended curriculum for 2025/26 and plans for teacher and staff development linked to our quality assurance and improvement framework. The Committee discussed the new Access and Participation Plan and how the College is meeting the skills need. The Committee also reviewed and recommend policies in agenda item 7.

C Chua, as Committee Chair, summarised the discussions by the Committee and explained the rationale for the expanded remit of the Committee to include apprenticeships, focus on links with employers and progression routes, and to develop CPD to deliver high-quality teaching.

C Chua commended the wider remit and Executive membership of the Committee and noted that the inaugural meeting was highly effective and showcased the synergies and opportunities for further collaboration across our UPD provision.

Governors discussed the objectives of our 2025-29 Access and Participation Plan, and L Moody explained the rationale for these objectives and gave examples of how we are working with students to remove barriers to higher-level learning.

Governors discussed the recent change of HE leadership and evolution of our UPD strategy, and commended the successful transition and progress achieved.

The Chair commended the recent in-house Ofsted training by provision type delivered to governance members and queried whether it would be appropriate to provide in-house training on HE and OfS. L Moody noted there is significant change within OfS so advised we may wish to deliver this later in the year. The Governance Professional to arrange.

Gov.
Prof.

6.3.1 US Self-Evaluation Document

Governors received and **approved** the self-evaluation document.

C Chua and S Howard left the meeting at 3.50pm

6.4. **EEG Resources Committee Overview**

Governors received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions and recommendations of the Committee meeting in the Autumn Term.

The Committee reviewed, approved and recommend the Committee's Terms of Reference and Committee Skillset. The Committee considered the Risk Register Extract and received updates on People (including key performance indicators for HR and wellbeing), Compliance (including the termly Health and Safety Report), Virtual Infrastructure (including a Data, Systems and Processes update and IT update) and Physical Infrastructure (including Estates and Property update and a Sustainability update). The Committee also reviewed and recommend policies in agenda item 7.

C Higgins, as Committee Chair, summarised the discussions of the Committee and thanked the Vice Chair for chairing the autumn meeting. C Higgins noted the joint Committee has been very effective in furtherance of delivering our Group strategy and removed unnecessary duplication.

The CFO advised that additional evidence has been provided to the Internal Auditors in relation to the Procurement audit which may improve the assurance rating.

Governors thanked C Higgins for his service as Committee Chair.

6.4.1 Health and Safety Termly Report

Governors received and **noted** the termly report which was scrutinised by the Committee.

C Higgins, as Governance Lead for H&S, feedback from attending the termly H&S Board meeting and commended the rigorous approach taken by staff.

6.5. Finance Committee Overview

Governors received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions at and recommendations of the Committee meetings in the Autumn Term.

The Committee reviewed, approved and recommend the Committee's Terms of Reference and Committee Skillset. The Committee considered the risk register extract and proposed mitigations. The Committee considered student enrolment data, the monthly management accounts and financial KPIs to monitor performance so far in 2024/25. The Committee considered and recommend the 2023/24 outturn position, the going concern report, the Group services value for money report and the 2023/24 audited accounts. The Committee also reviewed and recommend policies in agenda item 7.

M Chatt, as Committee Vice Chair, summarised the discussions by the Committee and commended the successful year-end outturn with a better-than-budget surplus position, whilst re-investing in people and infrastructure.

C Chua re-joined at 4.07pm

Governors commended the 2023/24 achievement, especially given the additional 'challenge' budget.

M Chatt outlined the forecast 2024/25 year-end position and explained the rationale for the new 'challenge' budget. M Chatt summarised the key variables being monitored by the Committee and the 2024/25 enrolment compared to the budgeted/funded position.

The CEO informed of plans to continue to strive to achieve pay parity within the Group, to keep College salaries competitive with the school's sector for which the DfE funds any pay uplifts arising from the national pay negotiations. Governors queried how College staff have responded to this approach. The CEO informed that it is a continuous challenge to work with staff to support understanding of the challenge and our approach to create equity wherever possible given the budgetary constraints.

6.5.1 Going Concern Report

Governors received and **approved** the going concern report.

6.5.2 Annual Group services Value for Money Report

Governors received and **approved** the annual report.

6.5.3 Annual Report and Financial Statements

Governors received and **approved** the report, subject to the amendments on page 21 to note the appointment of the Student and Staff Governors in December 2024. Governors **authorised the Chair and CEO to sign**.

6.6. Audit and Risk Management Overview

Governors received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions at and recommendations of the Committee meetings in the Autumn Term.

The Committee reviewed, approved and recommend the Committee's Terms of Reference and Committee Skillset. The Committee considered the findings reports of the internal auditors so far in 2024/25 and reviewed the Executive's audit recommendation tracking report to monitor implementation progress. The Committee received updates regarding GDPR, subject access requests, freedom of information and data breaches to ensure proper process was followed and effective measures put in place to lessen the risk to the organisation. The Committee scrutinised the Risk Register to ensure that pertinent risks were identified, and that appropriate and effective mitigations were in place to minimise risk; and recommends the Risk Register to the Board. The Committee also considered and recommends the Committee's annual report, the external auditor's findings report, the internal auditors annual report and the regularity self-assessment questionnaire. The Committee also reviewed and recommend policies in agenda item 7.

K Chapman, as Committee Chair, summarised the discussions by the Committee and commended the improvements made to the Risk Register and to replicate the approach of the risk register extract, to share the internal auditor's findings reports with the specialist committees.

6.6.1 Risk Register

Governors received and **noted** the Risk Register.

Governors commended the new Group risk register and risk radar to help visualise the risks.

6.6.2 Annual Report of the Audit Committee

Governors received and **approved** the report.

6.6.3 Annual Report of the Internal Auditors

Governors received and **noted** the report.

6.6.4 External Auditor's Findings Report

Governors received and **noted** the report.

Governors reflected that in 2022/23 we experienced some challenges throughout the external audit process and queried whether the experience in 2023/24 was improved. K Chapman summarised the feedback and commended the clean audit.

6.6.5 Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Governors received and **approved** the report and **authorised the Chair and CEO to sign**.

6.7 **Nominations and Governance Overview**

Governors received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions at and recommendations of the Committee meeting in the Autumn Term.

The Committee reviewed, approved and recommend the Committee's Terms of Reference and Committee Skillset. The Committee considered the current Constitution and analysed members EDI, attendance and skillset, to inform succession planning and the training and development plan. The Committee recommend the training and development plan for 2024/25. The Committee reviewed and recommend the updated governance documentation. The Committee recommend the appointment of Governance Leads. The Committee shared the letters from the DfE.

The Governance Professional fed back that activities this term have focussed on integrating and on-boarding the transferring governance members, arranging core training, arranging first-hand governance meetings, and recruiting student and staff governors.

Governors discussed how best to support new governance members to gain the skills, experience and feel part of the culture. Newly appointed governance members fed back on the effectiveness of their onboarding, induction and mentorship; as did their mentors.

Governors thanked the Governance Professional for her support and coordination of governance across the Group.

6.7.1 Membership

Governors **noted** that on 24 July 2024, Helen Arnold was appointed as a Committee member of the Apprenticeship and HE Educational Excellence Committee for a 1-year term of office commencing on 1 September 2024.

Governors **noted** that on 13 September 2024, Richard Attwell stood down from and Roger Inman was appointed to the SEND Educational Excellence Committee.

Governors **noted** that on 9 October 2024, Jasmine Leeder withdrew from the College and as such ended her term as WSC Student Governor.

Governors **noted** that on 19 November 2024, John Malone stood down from the Nominations and Governance Committee and Resources Committee.

Governors **noted** that on 2 December 2024, Marnie Williams was appointed as WSC Staff Governor for a 3-year term of office and serving on the Post-16 Educational Excellence Committee.

Governors **noted** that on 9 December 2024, Kacper Gwara was elected as WSC Student Governor for a 2-year term of office and serving on the Post-16 Educational Excellence Committee.

6.7.2 Appointments and training/development plan

Governors **appointed** Martin Chatt to the Resources Committee and as Committee Chair for 2024/25.

Governors **appointed** Sue Daley as EEG Governance Lead for Careers Education and Guidance.

Governors **appointed** Julia Wakelam as EEG Governance Lead for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Governors **appointed** Chris Higgins as EEG Governance Lead for Health and Safety.

Governors **appointed** Karen Chapman as EEG Governance Lead for People.

Governors **appointed** Julia Wakelam as EEG Governance Lead for Safeguarding (post-16).

Governors **appointed** Sue Snowden as EEG Governance Lead for SEND.

Governors **appointed** Karen Chapman (as Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee) as WSC Governance Lead for Whistleblowing.

Governors **approved** the training and development plan for 2024/25.

6.7.3 Updated Governance Documentation

Governors **approved** the WSC Standing Orders for 2024/25.

Governors **approved** the Governance Lead role descriptions for:

- Careers Education and Guidance
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Health and Safety
- People
- Safeguarding (post-16)
- SEND
- Whistleblowing

Governors **approved** the EEG Scheme of Delegation for 2024/25.

Governors **approved** the Committee Terms of Reference and Committee Skillsets for:

- Apprenticeship and Higher Education Educational Excellence Committee

- Audit and Risk Management Committee
- Finance Committee
- Nominations and Governance Committee
- Post-16 Educational Excellence Committee
- Remuneration Committee
- Resources Committee
- SEND Educational Excellence Committee

Governors received and **noted** the letters from the DfE.

6.8 EEG Chair's Advisory Group

Governors received and **noted** the report provided which summarised the discussions of the Advisory Group meeting in the Autumn Term.

R Hetherington left the meeting at 5.00pm

7. Policies

Governors received, considered and **approved** these policies:

- EEG Admissions policy – Special Admissions Board
- EEG Body Camera policy
- EEG Disability Access policy
- EEG Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy
- EEG Online Safety and Social Media policy, plus Appendixes
- EEG Bullying and Harassment policy and procedure
- EEG Special Educational Needs and Disability policy
- EEG Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development in college policy
- EEG Student Code of Conduct and Behaviour policy
- EEG Student Course Ambassador and Student Council procedure
- EEG Student Disciplinary and Appeals procedure, plus Appendixes
- WSC Electively Home Educated Provision policy
- WSC Prevention of Modern Slavery policy
- WSC Quality of Education Conflict of Interest policy
- EEG Internal Progression into HE Policy
- WSC Health and Safety Policy
- EEG Educational Visits Policy
- EEG Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure
- EEG Personal Relationships at Work Policy
- WSC Fee and Charging Policy
- WSC Financial Regulations
- WSC Bursary Policy
- EEG Whistleblowing Policy
- EEG Equality Objectives

which were reviewed and recommend by the Committees, subject to an amendment to the Financial Regulations to include the matters arising item.

CFO

The CPO explained how policies are reviewed across the Group and progress to harmonise and reduce the volume of policies. Governors queried if the Group policies have been reviewed to ensure they specify which schools and/or colleges it applies to. The CPO confirmed that they do and noted where appropriate policies are either Group, phase of education, by school and/or college.

M Searcey left the meeting at 5.09pm

Governors discussed which policies need to be approved by governance or could be delegated to the Executive to approve. The Governance Professional informed of plans to further review the policy approval framework, to ensure that governance approval is only sought when required.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 Review of the meeting

The Chair welcomed feedback on the efficacy of the hybrid meeting. Governors fed back that there were effective discussions and the high-quality reports. Governors discussed the volume of the papers and agreed there was a balance with sufficient information to provide assurance without duplicating the work of the committees or too much detail. Governors commended the boardroom culture, in that the meetings are vibrant and engaging, and discussions have a strong focus on students.

The Chair thanked everyone for their support and wished them a great Christmas break.

The meeting closed at 5.22pm