

## **CORPORATION**

### **Minutes of the hybrid meeting held on 26 March 2025 at 2.00pm**

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

#### **Absent:**

The agenda was discussed in the following order: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.6, 6.1, 7, 8

#### **1. Declaration of Interests and Apologies for absence**

A Duffety, C Higgins, E D'Souza, J Wakelam, M Chatt, S Daley and S Snowden 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.

No other conflicts of interest in relation to the items of the agenda were declared.

Apologies for absence were received from J Drake and J Gazzard.

The Chair informed that the Corporation operates a committee structure, where the majority of scrutiny is undertaken by the specialist committees, with high-level summary reports coming termly to the Corporation for review.

The Chair welcomed Sue Snowden as a newly appointed Governor.

#### **2. Feedback from 'First Hand' activities**

Governors received and considered the First-Hand activity feedback forms provided from visits to University and Professional Development centre and to schools of the Trust in the spring term.

M Downes fed back on his visits to Exning Primary School and Duke of Lancaster School.

E D'Souza informed that this term Home Start and ESNEFT visited the College to see what we do to support our community, and reflected they were highly complementary.

#### **3. Minutes of the meetings:**

- **Corporation meeting on 11 December 2024**
- **EEG Strategic Conference on 17 January 2025**

#### **Action**

- **Joint Trust Board and Corporation meeting on 3 February 2025**
- **Joint Trust Board and Corporation meeting on 7 March 2025**

The minutes of the meetings above were **agreed** as an accurate record.

The Governance Professional **noted** that, in January 2025, the Corporation reappointed Paul Frazer Gale as a Committee member serving on the Audit and Risk Management Committee and appointed Josie Finch and Mike Cadman to the SEND Educational Excellence Committee.

The Governance Professional **noted** that, in February 2025, the Corporation appointed Karen Points to the SEND Educational Excellence Committee.

The Governance Professional **noted** that, in March 2025, the Corporation established and appointed members to the joint Finance Committee and wound down the SEND Educational Excellence Committee.

L Chapman joined the meeting at 2.10pm

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

Four of the five matters arising from the meetings were complete, with one scheduled for completion in the summer term.

MA5 – The Governance Professional provided the updated terms of reference and scheme of delegation to reflect the changes made to our governance structure agreed on 7 March 2025. Governors **agreed** the updated documents.

#### 5. **CEO's Briefing**

##### 5.1 **EEG Highlights**

Governors received and considered a report on student achievements, student development including trips and experiences, an update on business and partnerships, shows and exhibitions, staff news and successes, and on progress against our sustainability strategy. The report also included links to the Group's newsletters to students and their families.

The CEO informed that the DfE have approved the redesignation of Chalk Hill from an Alternative Provision school to a SEMH special school. The CEO summarised the implications for the redesignation and informed that we are working with Suffolk County Council to relocate the school from its Sudbury premises to Bury St Edmunds and to increase its residential capacity.

Governors queried when these changes will take effect. L Chapman informed that the redesignation will be from September 2025 and the relocation is likely to be January 2026. The CEO explained this gives us time to prepare the children and staff for relocation.

S Howard joined the meeting at 2.22pm

Governors queried how families and staff have responded to these changes. L Chapman informed that we have informed families and consulted staff and noted that many of the families do not live local to Sudbury and their children reach school by taxi, so it is not as impactful as children in mainstream education settings.

Governors queried how the relocation will be funded. The CFO informed that Suffolk County Council are funding the relocation.

S Howard left the meeting at 2.28pm

The CEO informed that Ofsted have published their report for Sunrise Academy which achieved 'good' judgements. The CEO and R Bamford commended the Group's joined up approach to support the SEND schools to improve and achieve strong outcomes. The CEO informed of the Trust's plans to invest to improve the learning environment at Sunrise Academy.

Governors queried how we will strengthen the leadership of the SEND schools to lessen the demand on the Group's leadership capacity. The CEO summarised how we are bringing together the leaders of the SEND schools to implement robust systems and to develop KPIs which allow

trend analysis, continuous improvement and support informed decisions. The CEO informed that the Headteachers are being supported by mentors and Group leaders, and we are fully integrating the schools into the Group so they can benefit from our established and proven systems.

Governors commended the strength of leadership by the CEO and Senior Executive Team, and discussed the impact on the staffing structures of the SEND schools.

The CEO commended the Incident Management Group led by Louise Carroll and Steve Hope, to professionalise how we coordinate responses to emerging situations across our large Group, e.g. re-arranging three overseas student visits when Heathrow Airport was closed due to the nearby fire.

## 5.2 Strategic update

Governors received and considered a report updating on key developments in education policy, funding, governance, and strategic initiatives affecting colleges, schools, and further education in England, including parliamentary updates, regulatory changes, funding challenges, and new government initiatives. The report also included a link to the 'dear accounting officer' letter from the DfE regarding the closure of the ESFA.

The CEO summarised the implications of the changes to Ofsted. Governors queried whether there are likely to be further changes. R Bamford advised that it is not yet known, though summarised possible changes.

The CEO summarised the changes to education policy and funding. Governors queried how we will respond to these new priorities and initiatives. The CEO explained how this links to our Group approach and strategy, as well as to our wider stakeholder strategy.

Governors **noted** the 'dear accounting officer' letter from the DfE regarding the closure of the ESFA.

C Chua joined the meeting at 3.01pm

## 5.3 Executive structure update

Governors received and considered a report providing an update on the Senior Executive Team and their areas of responsibility, following several recent changes to the structure.

## 6. Committee Chair's Summary Reports

### 6.1. **EEG SEND Educational Excellence Committee**

Governors received and considered the report provided which summarised the discussions and recommendations of the Committee meetings in the Spring Term, noting the Committee was wound down in March 2025.

The Committee received and noted the termly safeguarding report, complaints and investigations, Ofsted reports and correspondence with the DfE, as relevant to the reputation of the Trust and the Group.

S Snowden as Committee Chair, summarised the discussions by the Committee and noted that due to significant quality of education and safeguarding concerns, there were multiple changes to the committee over the term to strengthen governance oversight. S Snowden thanked the Senior Executive Team and safeguarding team for their support of the SEND schools, and reflected their support was pivotal in the strong Ofsted outcome for Sunrise Academy.

#### 6.1.1 Safeguarding Termly Report

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

#### 6.1.2 Complaints and Investigations

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

S Snowden reflected that there were several 'qualifying complaints' at the SEND schools and sometime a significant delay before the local authority/Ofsted/DfE notify the schools of those

complaints. R Bamford summarised how we are working to improve reporting of complaints and relations with stakeholders to resolve concerns before they escalate into complaints.

6.1.3 Ofsted reports – Stone Lodge Academy and Sunrise Academy

Governors received and **noted** the reports which were scrutinised by the Committee.

6.1.4 DfE assurance letter request and response

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

The Chair reflected that the positive outcome for Sunrise Academy helped provide additional assurance to the DfE.

**6.2. EEG Post-16 Educational Excellence Committee**

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

The Committee considered the risk register extract, key performance indicators to monitor student progress and experience and discussed the First-Hand Feedback. The Committee reviewed progress on Quality Improvement Plan and updates in regard to student welfare and safeguarding. The Committee also reviewed and recommended policies in agenda item 7.

S Daley, as Committee Chair, summarised the discussions by the Committee and noted that the KPIs are showing strong performance, with performance near/above sector average. S Daley informed that the Accountability Agreement has been pushed back to the summer term to allow it to respond to the government's new budget and priorities.

Governors queried why adult attendance has reduced and what interventions are being put in place to improve attendance. L Moody explained the multiple factors which influence adult attendance especially on shorter skills courses and summarised how we are working with the students and industry partners to support adults to attend and engage. S Daley reflected that attendance is near the sector average and retention is very high, which indicates they remain engaged despite balancing changing personal circumstances. The CEO asked L Moody to investigate further and bring analysis to the new Post-16 Educational Excellence Committee.

L Moody

S Daley recognised the significant support provided by the Senior Executive Team to the SEND schools and commended their effort.

Governors reflected on the significant demand on the Executive and safeguarding teams to support the SEND schools and queried if there is a risk that management stretch/strain could be detrimental to the college. C Shaw explained that the Trust has created additional safeguarding capacity, under our Group safeguarding structure, to reduce this risk. J Wakelam, as Governance Lead for Safeguarding, added that we continue to closely monitor safeguarding across the college at the Student Services Board, which she attends.

Governors commended the reporting on electively home educated students, to ensure these students receive high standards of education.

6.2.1 Safeguarding Termly Report

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

Governors discussed the 'risk implications' section and queried if adverse impact to students should be added. C Shaw explained that we feel this is sufficiently mitigated by our safeguarding practices and this has been externally verified by auditors and Ofsted, so we feel confident it isn't a risk. J Wakelam, as Governance Lead for Safeguarding, agreed and reflected that the college has a very strong safeguarding culture, with students at the heart of everything we do.

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

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

The Committee considered the risk register extract, student numbers for this and next academic year, key performance indicators and received updates regarding Apprenticeship and HE student progress and experience. The Committee received updates in regard to the Access and Participation Plan inc. Investment Monitoring, the intended 2025/26 HE curriculum offer, and compliance with Office for Students regulation. The Committee also discussed first hand feedback, plans for teacher and staff development, and quality and how the college is meeting the skills need, as well as reviewing and recommending the two policies in agenda item 7.

#### S Snowden joined the meeting at 3.24pm

C Chua, as Committee Chair, summarised the discussions by the Committee and noted that the OfS have approved our Access and Participation Plan, though the committee remain cautious about HE student numbers and so recommended the uplift of the risk rating. C Chua commended the focus on improving quality and developing courses and reflected that the committee would like an additional member to join bringing in experience of the apprenticeship sector.

#### C Higgins joined the meeting at 3.29pm

Governors queried what actions are being taken to improve data reporting. L Moody explained how the CIO's team are working with the UPD team to strengthen our data inputting and reporting.

Governors queried how we gather information on student's reasonable adjustments. L Moody explained how this is gathered and how we try different approaches to overcome survey fatigue.

Governors queried whether HE applications for next academic year are on track. L Moody informed that applications remain as reported at the Finance Committee and summarised how we continue to engage with prospective students.

Governors commended the course progression pathway mapping.

#### 6.3.1 Complaints and Compliments report

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

#### 6.4. **EEG Resources Committee**

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

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).

M Chatt, as Committee Chair, summarised the discussions by the Committee and the key trends across the Group. M Chatt informed that the committee suggested it establish a few working parties to enable further discussion and debate, in readiness for bringing it back to the committee.

C Higgins, as Governance Lead for Health and Safety, commended the improved reports and informed that the next focus is on preventative mitigations.

J Wakelam, as Governance Lead for Sustainability, commended the progress against our sustainability goals.

Governors discussed absence management and queried how we are supporting staff to return to work. The CPO summarised the multistrand approach including direct support from HR and line managers and wellbeing support. The CEO explained that the highest levels of absence management is in the Trust's SEND schools and reflected that this is due to weak leadership and lower levels of accountability and explained how we are working to strengthen leadership at the SEND schools.

#### 6.4.1 Health and Safety Termly Report

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

### 6.5. Finance Committee

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

The Committee considered the risk register extract, management accounts and key performance indicators, reviewed student enrolments and applications compared to budgetary targets and reviewed and recommend the reserves policy.

A Duffety, as Committee Chair, summarised the discussions by the Committee and reflected that the amber KPIs reflect the mid-point of the academic year and the high levels of uncertainty and change in the funding. A Duffety commended the high standard of reporting which helps the committee to understand the risks and opportunities, and contextual understanding of the data.

A Duffety informed of plans to further review reporting to support the efficacy of the joint Finance Committee. The Chair reflected that it would take time for the newly formed joint committee to establish.

Governors queried why the income KPI is amber despite being above budget. The CFO explained that it is amber due to uncertainty about the funding and risks associated with additional corresponding expenditure.

#### 6.5.1 Reserves Policy

Governors received, considered and **approved** the Reserves Policy which was reviewed and recommended by the Committee.

### 6.6. Audit and Risk Management

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

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 Corporation. The Committee also reviewed the incident management updates and reviewed the skillset and suitability of the Committee's membership.

K Chapman, as Committee Chair, summarised the discussions by the Committee and reflected that there has been significant variance in the risks and risk rating, and commended the strong working between the Executive, Chairs of the Audit and Risk Management Committees, and with the other committees via the risk register extracts. K Chapman reflected there has been significant progress in the timely implementation of audit recommendations, which has helped strengthen the audit control framework.

The Chair thanked the Audit and Risk Management Committee for leading a strong culture of proactive risk management.

#### 6.6.1 Risk Register

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

S Howard re-joined the meeting at 4.25pm

### 6.7 Nominations and Governance

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



The Committee reviewed the membership of the Group's governance including the constitution and committee membership, as well as EDI analysis and skillset analysis, discussed the feedback from the Chair's annual 1:1 meetings with governance members and the results of the 360-degree survey on the performance and effectiveness of the Chair, CEO and Governance Professional, including the 3-year trend analysis of survey results. The Committee also reviewed and recommended the proposed changes to governance structure discussed on 7 March 2025.

The Chair and CEO commended the strength of governance and thanked all Governors for their highly effective support and challenge.

6.7.1 Membership

Governors **noted** the updated membership of the Group's governance.

6.7.2 Appointments

Governors **noted** the resignation of Kacper Gwara as WSC Student Governor on 18 March 2025 due to personal circumstances.

Governors **agreed** to appoint Mark Searcey as Vice Chair of the WSC Apprenticeship and Higher Education Educational Excellence Committee.

S Howard left the meeting at 4.35pm

7. Policies

Governors received, considered and **approved** the EEG Compliments and Complaints procedure and EEG Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy which were reviewed and recommended by the EEG Post-16 Educational Excellence Committee, and the HE Admissions policy and HE Admissions Appeals and Complaints procedure which were reviewed and recommended by the WSC Apprenticeship and Higher Education Educational Excellence Committee.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 Review of the meeting

The Chair welcomed feedback on the meeting. Governors reflected that the hybrid meeting remains highly effective and allows full participation. Governors appreciate the flexibility of hybrid meetings, though reflected it is reliant on the video conferencing set-up.

8.2 Reminder: Election of Chair and Vice Chairs of the Corporation for term starting 2025/26

The Governance Professional reminded all that in the summer term there will be an election for the Chair and Vice Chairs of the Corporation and explained the process for applying.

8.3 BSc Sport Science

L Moody informed that UEA have authorised UPD to offer this new course.

8.4 Memorial for former WSC Chair

The Chair informed that on behalf of the Corporation he attended the memorial for Richard Stewart, who was Chair when the college incorporated, to honour Richard for his service.

The meeting closed at 4.50pm