

CHELMSFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Minutes of a meeting of the GOVERNING BODY held via Teams at 8.00am on Friday 8th July 2022

Present:	Steve Miles	Chair of Governors
	Richard Vass	Vice Chair of Governors
	Stephen Lawlor	Headteacher (from 8.10am)
	Mary Argent, Andrew Bonwick, Sarah de Souza-Ingle, Jenny Fowle, Chris Lamberti, Funmi Osilaja, Priya Rangaswamy, Aisha Sohail, Lauren Smith, Svetlana Warhurst	
In Attendance:	Wendy Newton	Clerk to Governors
Apologies:	Richard Brown, Sarah Clements, Jason Oster, Emma Matthews (Deputy Head), Melissa Mulgrew (Business Manager)	

1. The Chair opened by welcoming Svetlana Warhurst, newly elected Parent Governor, to the Governing Body and to her first Full GB meeting.

ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Richard Brown, Sarah Clements, Jason Oster, Emma Matthews and Melissa Mulgrew. The Chair advised that the Headteacher would be a little late joining the meeting due to the need to deal with a safeguarding matter.

ITEM 2 – DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

3. There were no declarations of business interest further to those already stated on the Register of Business Interests for 2021-22, or conflicts of interest, or receipts of gifts or hospitality.

ITEM 3 - MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

4. The minutes of the Full GB meeting and Company AGM, both held on 25th March 2022, were agreed as a true record.

ITEM 4 – MATTERS ARISING

5. There were no matters arising from either set of minutes which needed further discussion.

8.10am – The Headteacher joined the meeting.

ITEM 5 – CHAIRS’ ACTION & EMAIL ACTION

6. Chairs’ Action. A summary of all Chairs’ actions since the last meeting was received.
7. DfE & ESFA Letters. No DfE or ESFA letters requiring full Governor distribution had been received since the last meeting.
8. School Management Accounts. Governors confirmed receipt by email of the School Financial Management Accounts from February to April 2022 and had noted their content.

ITEM 6 – GOVERNING BODY MATTERS

9. Item 6.1 – GB Membership - Decision. Details of current GB membership, terms of office and committee membership were received for general information. It was confirmed that following a parent election Dr Svetlana Warhurst had been appointed as a new Parent Governor and was to join the Staff & Student Matters Committee. The Clerk advised that only one email nomination had

ACTION

been received for the role of Chair of Governors for AY 2022-23 and had been for Steve Miles to continue in the role. No further verbal nominations were received, and Steve Miles agreed to continue in the role of Chair of Governors for AY 2022-23. No email nominations for the role of Vice Chair of Governors had been received and the Clerk asked for volunteers. There were no verbal nominations and Richard Vass agreed to continue in the role of Vice Chair of Governors for AY 2022-23. The meeting unanimously **approved** both the appointments.

ACTION

10. **Item 6.2 – GB Structure - Decision**. The meeting was reminded that the GB had previously agreed to adopt the new DfE-preferred academy structure which required three new Company Members plus new articles of association. The proposed articles of association were reviewed and discussed. It was noted that the document should state the academy company would have a minimum of five members, as opposed to the model articles minimum of three. The Clerk **agreed** to amend the articles accordingly. With this one amendment, the revised CCHS Articles of Association were **approved**. The Clerk **agreed** to forward the new articles to the Secretary of State for approval. It was hoped the new academy structure would be in place by September.

Clerk

Clerk

8.20am – At this point in the meeting there was a short break whilst the Chair of Governors thanked Mark Rowell, a Staff Governor until December 2021, for his 8-years’ service to the Governing Body. The Chair of the Facilities & Finance Committee voiced his own thanks for Mark’s contribution to the committee.

11. **Item 6.3 – GB Meeting Dates - Decision**. The proposed dates for Full GB and GB sub-committee meetings for AY 2022-23 were received and **approved** as presented.

All

12. **Item 6.4 – Multi Academy Trusts (MATs)**. Four documents concerning the Government’s current 2022 Schools White Paper and the issue of MATs had been received for information and the Chair summarised the situation. The general intent was for all schools to be either in or moving towards joining a MAT by 2030, this was noted as being a very unusual move. The Headteacher summarised the current issue and the options for the School. It was noted that CCHS had been one of the early convertors becoming a Single Academy Trust (SAT) in January 2011 and that the concept of being in a MAT had been considered previously and rejected by Governors. It was stressed that it was very early days and that nothing would be final until the White Paper passed into law. A summary of actions undertaken already by the Headteacher was received. It was unclear at this point as to whether the concept of having a grammar school MAT would be allowed by the DfE. Initial discussions had begun with non-MAT schools in both the GSHA and MESH, in addition to contact being made with non-MAT members of the SSGS and local non-MAT primary schools. The Headteacher had requested a meeting with the Regional Schools Commissioner, Jonathan Duff, to discuss the issue.

13. Governors noted and commended the pro-active work undertaken to date on the MAT issue. The Headteacher noted that he and the SLT will stay on top of the information and issues to advise and guide the GB, who will eventually need to decide what course of action to take. The Headteacher shared his personal view - the support of girls’ education was a paramount principle and options to maintain it, if permitted, needed to be investigated closely. Governors noted: the possible loss of independence for the School; the need to ensure there are observable benefits for the students themselves, and the need for due diligence over the MAT investigation process. It was suggested that the lack of proof of the benefits of being in a MAT was currently stopping schools joining a MAT, and the need for greater flexibility in the MAT situation was required. The Headteacher suggested that it would be beneficial to have a small Governor working party in place before the end of the current academic year. Governors queried if there was to be any public consultation on the issues proposed in the White Paper and were advised that there had been consultation on specific parts of the White Paper; but they had now concluded. Governors were encouraged to make their own investigations on the White Paper MAT proposals. It was noted that there was no current information on what would happen if a school wished to stay as a SAT or if this was to be permissible.

ITEM 7 – HEADTEACHER’S REPORT TO GOVERNORS

14. The Headteacher’s Report dated July 2022 was received and the Headteacher gave a verbal update on current school situation. Covid had returned to the School and it was experiencing its

highest level of staff absence since the start of the pandemic - 10 members of staff were currently out with Covid and a further 6 staff members were unwell. This was causing significant organisational challenges for the School; some classes were to be taught together in the School Hall. The nature of the end of year activities would help alleviate the situation the following week. The Headteacher advised that the data in the report still related to 2019 outcomes, the last set of true public examinations, and that it would be superseded by Summer 2022 data in due course, this would be the data that Ofsted would use for an inspection. The School's current KS4 Progress 8 figure was 0.80 i.e. students performed 4/5 of a grade better than similar ability students. The School's own data tracking suggested that the KS4 Progress 8 figure was still at this level. There had been some issues concerning the public examinations nationally, but the exam boards were aware of the problems and results would be adjusted before there was any negative impact on students.

15. The meeting was advised that the School's Fair Access work had been re-established during the year, recently culminating in the Year 5 Summer School. More CCHS-awareness trips out to primary schools had taken place and had been well-received. There was frustration about the lack of entrance test registration from PPG girls which remained low despite the work undertaken by the School. It was reported that the current CEM Year 7 entrance test would no longer be available after September 2022 and that a new test would be required. The School was currently investigating alternatives and would present its findings to Governors in the Autumn Term. Governors commended the School on advertising its outreach work through Twitter as this would get the Fair Access information out to the community. The continuing erroneous views of local parents about grammar schools were noted. It was suggested that more could be done to publish press releases about the Fair Access work, especially around results day. The Headteacher noted a determination for the School to be even more ambitious with Fair Access work, including rebranding the work as social mobility. Governors queried what other schools were going to do in relation to the CEM test and suggested that contact should be made with them to discuss the new options. It was noted that few other schools had specific Fair Access categories in their admissions policy.

ITEM 8 – FINANCE MATTERS

16. Governors received the proposed School Budget for 2022-23 and 3-year forecast for approval, both items had been previously reviewed by the Facilities & Finance Committee and were recommended for approval. In the absence of the Business Manager, the Chair of the Facilities & Finance Committee went through the budget and the assumptions within the budget. The proposed budget for 2022-23 showed an in-year surplus of £39,975, and deficits of £(9,260) and £(22,982) were forecast for 2023-24 and 2024-25 respectively. Taking the whole 3-years, the School would be in surplus. It was stated that the School had prepared a safe and conservative budget. There were uncertainties about future utility costs and staffing costs, and both items were deemed to be beholden to national input. The level of student funding in the future was also unknown and the assumed student numbers on which the budget and 3-year forecast were based were very prudent. Higher student numbers and increased lettings could increase overall income. Inflation assumptions between 2% and 5% had been included in the budget based on Bank of England guidelines. A £40,000 contingency had also been included in the first two years of the budget.

17. The meeting discussed the forecast pupil numbers and noted that every additional Sixth Form student currently brought £4,542 income to the School. The predicted future Sixth Form student numbers were considered to be cautious given the expansion of the Lower School. Governors challenged the low Year 12 figures forecast and suggested that by July 2025 Year 11 would be up to 180 students and that this figure could be a possible entry figure target for Year 12 in September 2025. The Headteacher gave some historic background relating to students leaving after Year 11 and the decisions to leave CCHS at that point. The Headteacher stated the School worked hard to recruit external students into Year 12 to fill as many spaces as possible but that there was still room to expand Year 12 further to possibly 160 or 170 students.

18. **Decision.** The School Budget for 2022-23 and 3-year forecast, along with its associated assumptions, were approved as presented.

ITEM 9 – CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT & SSEF PROJECT

19. The Headteacher advised that the SSEF project was in its final stage and a few defects were still being addressed. The retention period for the project ends on 31st August 2022 and the final settlement for the project would occur in September 2022. The Business Manager was thanked for her hard work on the project bringing it in on time and on budget with a very high level of quality.

ITEM 10 – AUDIT ACTIONS

20. A Secure Schools Cyber Security Audit had been undertaken in April 2022 as part of the Juniper external audit package and the audit report was received. The report had previously been reviewed by both the Management and the Facilities & Finance Committees. The Headteacher noted that whilst there were a considerable number of action points, the School had found the audit thorough and very helpful. The School had already addressed some of the findings and was working to ensure the School IT system was robust and safe. Overall, it had been deemed a very positive report.

ITEM 11 – GDPR

21. The ECC Information Governance Service annual audit of GDPR had taken place on 6th May 2022 and their report was received for information. It had been a clean audit with only minor findings relating to suppliers. The Headteacher noted there had been no Subject Access Requests, four minor incident reports and nine Freedom of Information Requests that year, none of which were troubling for the School. All had been addressed by the School within the statutory deadlines.

ITEM 12 – SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

22. The Final Review of the School Development Plan 2021-22 was received and noted. The Headteacher advised that some items had been carried over from 2020-21 due to the pandemic. Most items had been completed and anything which had not would continue into the next academic year. A summary of the SDP 2022-23 headlines was received for information, these would form the basis of the SDP 2022-23 which would be presented at the next meeting. The meeting also received the draft CCHS Strategic Plan 2022-26. SLT were continuing to work on the plan which would be formally received by Governors in the Autumn Term. A query was raised about how the SDP was derived and the Headteacher gave additional explanation.

ITEM 13 – RISK REGISTER & SCHOOL CONTRACT LIST

23. **Decision.** The Full GB section of the CCHS Risk Register was received for termly review and **approved** as presented. The Clerk confirmed that a new Cyber Security risk had been approved and included in the Facilities & Finance Committee section of the Register. A summary of five School contracts over £10,000 was also received and noted.

ITEM 14 – SCHOOL ACTIVITIES – VISITS & TRIPS

24. A list of residential and overseas trips for 2021-22 and 2022-23 was received for approval. One residential Geography trip remained in the current academic year. Overseas trips were now being organised once again, the first being a Year 9 History trip to Ypres in October 2022. Provisional arrangements were being made for the German Exchange to Backnang and a Year 10 trip to Nice, both in the Summer Term 2023, and approval in principle was sought. The Headteacher advised that the Nice trip replaced the former French exchange trip.

25. **Decision.** The list of residential and overseas trips for 2021-22 and 2022-23 was **approved** as presented.

ITEM 15 – GOVERNOR REPORTS

26. Item 15.1 – Governor Visits. Four Governor visits had taken place since the last meeting and the meeting received written and verbal reports from the Governors involved in the visits: Lauren

Smith, Jason Oster, Andrew Bonwick and Richard Vass. The Chair encouraged all Governors to make regular visits to the School and advised that requests for visits (with possible dates and any preferred subject areas) should be sent via the Clerk.

ACTION
All

27. Item 15.2 – Governor Training. Lauren Smith, Training Link Governor, advised that in addition to the standard NGA subscription, the School now subscribed to the NGA online ‘Learning Link’ training package. All Governors were asked to register on the Learning Link, undertake some of the available training modules, and advise Lauren Smith and the Clerk of any completed courses. The Clerk **agreed** to include Learning Link details in her Weekly Governor Update later that day.

All
Clerk

28. Item 15.3 – Safeguarding. Jenny Fowle, Safeguarding Governor, had recently liaised with the Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) and gave a summary of the current safeguarding situation. The School’s pastoral team was very busy and the new Pastoral Hub was being well used. There had been an increase in issues post-Covid which included: anxiety, self-harm, eating disorders and exam anxiety. It was reported that the Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) intended to organise online safeguarding training for Governors next term. The whole pastoral team was busy and working hard, and confirmation had been received that the Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) was being well-supported by the School. The meeting was advised that the current Year 11 Year Leader was to become a new Senior Pastoral Leader in the Autumn Term.

29. Item 15.4 – Parents’ Association Matters. The Headteacher reported that the PA were a small but active group and that the current Chair was to move on in the near future. The support and generosity of the PA was commended and thanked by the Headteacher.

30. Item 15.5 – Better Buildings Committee. In his absence, Jason Oster, Link Governor to the Better Building Committee, had prepared a written Better Buildings Update which was received and noted.

ITEM 16 – GB SUB-COMMITTEES

31. The minutes of the following GB sub-committee meetings were **approved** as presented:
- Management Committee – 17th June 2022.
 - Facilities & Finance Committee – 27th April & 22nd June 2022.
 - Curriculum Committee – 11th May 2022.
 - Staff & Student Matters Committee – 15th March 2022.

No additional input was received from the sub-committee chairs.

ITEM 17 – ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

32. Vote of Thanks. On behalf of the School staff, the Headteacher thanked the Governors for their support and encouragement throughout the past year. It was hoped that the next academic year would be even more normal than the previous two years.

33. Governor Email Addresses. The Clerk advised that because of GDPR and the need to strengthen email security, the School was requesting to issue all Governors with a School email address in the near future. Further details would follow in due course.

ITEM 18 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING

34. Decision. It was **agreed** that the next Full Governing Body meeting would be held in the School at 8.00am on Friday 14th October 2022.

All

The meeting closed at 10.20am.

Agreed as a true record.

S Miles, Chair of Governors 14th October 2022