

# **CHELMSFORD COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**

## **Minutes of a meeting of the GOVERNING BODY** **held remotely via Zoom at 8.00am on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

Present: Steve Miles Chair of Governors  
Richard Vass Vice Chair of Governors  
Stephen Lawlor Headteacher  
Andrew Bonwick, Richard Brown, Sarah Clements, Ros Cornish,  
Sarah de Souza-Ingle, Jenny Fowle, Funmi Osilaja, Jason Oster,  
Priya Rangaswamy, Mark Rowell, Lauren Smith, Aisha Sohail

In Attendance: Emma Ledwidge Deputy Headteacher  
Melissa Mulgrew Business Manager  
Wendy Newton Clerk to Governors

Apologies: Mary Argent

1. The Chair opened by welcoming three new Governors, Funmi Osilaja, Priya Rangaswamy and Aisha Sohail, to their first Governing Body meeting.

### **ITEM 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

2. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mary Argent.

### **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 2020-21, or conflicts of interest, or receipts of gifts or hospitality.

### **ITEM 3 - MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

4. The minutes of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> October 2020 were agreed as a true record.

### **ITEM 4 – MATTERS ARISING**

5. Item 12, Para 27 – Admissions Policy 2022. The Clerk confirmed that the Admissions Policy 2022 had been revised, put out for public consultation and then approved by the GB by email.

6. Item 21, Para 43 – Traffic Concerns. Traffic congestion around the School had deteriorated further as a result of recent changes to the layout of Broomfield Road and the Headteacher had written to Essex County Council to report his concerns. However, a new hatched box junction had now been installed as previously requested by the School. New traffic lights outside the School were not yet operative and recent failures of the temporary traffic lights had caused major concerns for the safety of the students arriving at School. SLT and other staff members had manned the crossing for two hours on one occasion and the action was commended by Parent Governors. The Chair asked for his thanks to be passed on to all staff members involved.

### **ITEM 5 – CHAIRS’ ACTION & EMAIL ACTION**

7. Item 5.1 - Chairs’ Action. A summary of Chairs’ actions and approvals since the last meeting was received and noted.
8. Item 5.2 - DfE & ESFA Letters. The Clerk advised that no DfE or ESFA letters requiring Full GB distribution had been received since the last meeting.
9. Item 5.3 – School Management Accounts. Governors confirmed receipt of the School’s Management Accounts, Balance Sheets and Cashflow Forecasts for September to December 2020 and no questions were raised on the accounts.

**ACTION**

**S Lawlor**

## **ITEM 6 – GOVERNING BODY MATTERS**

## **ACTION**

10. **Item 6.1 – GB Membership.** Details of current GB membership, terms of office and committee membership were received for general information and noted.

11. **Item 6.2 – GB Structure.** The Chair advised that recent changes in DfE guidance concerning the structure of academies required the CCHS GB to review its own governance structure. It was stressed that the CCHS academy trust had been set up in 2011 in accordance with the DfE model in place at the time. The Management Committee, who through their specific roles become the academy trust members, had already addressed one issue with the removal of the Headteacher from the role of company Member with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2021 – the Headteacher’s role as an ex-officio Governor remained unchanged. An explanatory paper was received and the Chair of Governors summarised the situation. There was now a new DfE preference for company members to be a separate level of governance above the academy body (GB) and for school employees not to be academy trustees (governors). The meeting was advised that whilst the new DfE guidance was only a recommendation and that the ESFA had confirmed in December 2020 that the CCHS academy trust could remain with its current structure, it was wiser to change to the new DfE-preferred structure. The new structure required setting up a separate panel of at least three members, but DfE preferring at least five members, the majority of whom should not be Governors. The primary function of company members is to ensure that the academy trust complied with all relevant regulations (charity, company and education) and a summary of their responsibilities was received. It was reported that the change in structure was to have a separate mechanism in place to ensure that all GB decisions were in the best interests of the School.

### **8.28am – Jenny Fowle joined the meeting.**

12. The Management Committee, in their role of Members, have the power to amend the current governance structure in order to comply with the new guidance and would be looking into how best to make the required changes in the forthcoming months, no immediate action was required. It had been suggested that the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors could remain as members and that at least three external people would become the new members, meeting a couple of times a year to review the compliance of the academy trust. The meeting discussed the situation in depth, querying the powers and accountability of company members. Governors stressed that the new external members would need to be in agreement with the School’s principles and ethos. It was stated that the members have the legal responsibility to act in the best interests of the school and were accountable to the DfE and ESFA and also must ensure that the charitable objects of the academy trust are met.

13. A second new DfE preference was for no other school employees, other than the headteacher, to be an academy trustee (governor). The rationale behind the DfE recommendation was to ensure clear lines of accountability through the Headteacher. The meeting discussed the concept and agreed that the input of staff governors was important and greatly appreciated on the CCHS GB. The meeting was reminded that there was no rush for any immediate changes and that the DfE guidance was only a recommendation. Further discussion would take place before any changes were implemented.

14. **Decisions.** It was agreed that:

- a. Any suggestions for people suitable for the role of new CCHS academy trust members should be sent to the Headteacher (cc Chair of Governors) for initial consideration.
- b. The Management Committee would continue to progress with the change in company structure and report back to the Full GB in due course. The academy Articles of Association would be revised accordingly in due course.
- c. The Clerk would make further investigations on the stance being taken by other schools in relation to staff governors.

**All**

**Chair**

**Clerk**

## **ITEM 7 – HEADTEACHER’S REPORT TO GOVERNORS**

15. The Headteacher presented a document entitled ‘Moving Forward Together’ which outlined the phases of recovery for the School through until the end of the next academic year following the

Covid-19 pandemic. The re-opening actions already completed were noted and the proposed actions for future terms were summarised. Lateral flow tests (LFTs) had been undertaken in School in the first two weeks after re-opening on 8<sup>th</sup> March and had involved SLT, a large number of support staff and parent volunteers. It was reported that parental consent for the tests had averaged 83%, varying from 75% to 88% in Years 9 to 11 respectively, these consent figures were much higher than in other schools. It was noted that testing was voluntary and could not be mandated. Students were now undertaking LFTs at home and it was hoped that the testing percentage would increase. The situation regarding public examinations was summarised, stating that school work and additional tests would be utilised to produce a student's final grade. Communications on the exam assessment system were being sent to students and parents as information became available. The Headteacher stressed that following the return to school, in addition to student wellbeing, staff wellbeing was a very high priority and that an external speaker on wellbeing was part of a recent staff Inset Day programme. An update to the CCHS Change project was reported along with a noted student outcry after the recent Sarah Everard case.

16. The Mid Term Review of the SDP 2020-21 was received and its updates noted. Some items in the SDP had not progressed due to Covid-19 and the school closure; any incomplete items would be carried forward to the next academic year. A query was raised as to whether any unfinished SDP items were a cause for concern for the School. It was noted that the inability to undertake the usual Fair Access work with primary students was very unfortunate but that it was hoped that the Fair Access summer school may still be possible. A staffing report was received for information and it was stated that changes in staff were addressed as they arose. Governors queried whether all staff had returned to work on re-opening, it was confirmed that all except one teacher, who was required to shield for medical reasons, had returned. It was also stated that staff were now undertaking LFTs at home and reporting their results to the School.

17. The Deputy Headteacher gave a summary on COVID catch-up funding and stated that a large part of the expenditure had been used to employ a dedicated teacher to assist students who had been identified as needing additional catch-up support. Other means of supporting students were also detailed. 57% of the catch-up funding had been spent to date and the Business Manager confirmed that it was possible to carry unused funding over to the next academic year. A query was raised as to what the School was doing to address the more able students in relation to them achieving their potential following lockdown. It was confirmed that the TA data of all students was assessed against what they should be achieving and intervention needs put in place at both ends of the academic scale. The current student 'bubble' system made it harder to undertake some of the usual additional activities given to higher achieving students but it was intended to re-instate these interventions after the Easter holiday. The Deputy Headteacher reported that students had missed out on many enrichment-related activities during the lockdowns, ie trips and visits, and that additional funding was available which could be utilised by students in the summer holidays to help rectify this issue. It was stated that overall there had been less academic loss than enrichment and extra-curricular loss at the School. It was intended to produce additional parent and student guidance to assist enrichment recovery.

## **ITEM 8 – CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT & FINANCIAL UPDATE**

18. Item 8.1 – SSEF Status & Project Report. An SSEF project status report dated 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2021 and Progress Report 13 were received for information and the Business Manager gave a verbal update on project. The status of the teaching block was now classified as Amber as five weeks progress had been lost due to Covid-19 closure, supply chain issues and adverse weather. Additional slippage had been expected but the project was currently due for completion of the teaching block on 24<sup>th</sup> May and sports hall on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2021 and priority was being given to the completion of the teaching block. Overall the project was on trend to meet the end deadline. A couple of scope changes were reported and explained, and included the need for an additional soakaway on the sports field. The next phase of the SSEF project was the repurposing of the Old Gym into a new Library and tender packages were due out the following week with completion aimed at September 2021. The installation of the solar PV roof panels was nearly complete and the new electrical sub-station awaited final agreement from the Secretary of State for Education. The Business Manager advised the GB that with the School's maximum student capacity it should officially have 72,000m<sup>2</sup> of green space, however the School had just less than 39,000m<sup>2</sup> the result

of the compulsory purchase of part of the School grounds in the 1980s for the adjacent by-pass. The issue of unrecoverable VAT was still being investigated and the project still had a very healthy contingency and no financial project risk was anticipated. It was reported that there was much lettings interest in the new sports hall but that there had also been some reduction of football hirers. The Chair of Governors commended the Business Manager and construction firm, Horizon, for keeping the SSEF project on time and within budget.

19. **Item 8.2 – Internal Controls Evaluation (ICE) Report.** The first of the bi-annual Juniper ICE audits had occurred in January 2021 and their report was received for information. Only one very minor information finding had been raised which related to staff governors and the discussion of audit matters at the Facilities & Finance Committee meetings. Governors noted the finding. The Chair stressed the exacting level of scrutiny of the ICE audits and thanked the Business Manager and Finance Team for their continuing hard work.

### **ITEM 9 – GDPR**

20. The Business Manager advised that there was nothing particular to report in relation to GDPR. The requirements of GDPR were now embedded within the culture and procedures of the School and the School worked closely with the ECC Data Protection Officer. The annual GDPR audit was due in June but no problems were anticipated.

### **ITEM 10 – RISK REGISTER**

21. **Decision.** The Full CCHS Risk Register was received for annual review and approved as presented. The Clerk confirmed that some committees had made additional pandemic-related risks to their sections since the last full review.

### **ITEM 11 – GB SUB-COMMITTEES**

22. **Decision.** The minutes of the following GB sub-committee meetings were received and approved and no issues were raised for additional discussion:

- a. The Management Committee meetings held on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2020 and 5<sup>th</sup> March 2021,
- b. The Facilities & Finance Committee meetings held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and 10<sup>th</sup> February 2021,
- c. The Curriculum Committee meetings held on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2020 and 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021, and
- d. The Staff & Student Matters Committee meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

### **ITEM 12 – POLICIES**

23. **Item 12.1 – Behaviour Policy - Decision.** The School Behaviour Policy was received for review with minor staff title changes. A query was raised as to whether any amendment was required for the increased use of mobile phones in lessons by students. The Headteacher clarified the difference between students using mobile phones in supervised lesson situations and their prohibited unsupervised use during break and lunchtimes. It was stated that the lessons learnt on the use of mobile phones during lockdown would be reviewed and may lead to a revision of the policy in the future. It was confirmed that all students could access the School's internet system so that no students would be hindered by data issues on their mobile phones. The School Behaviour Policy was approved as presented.

24. **Item 12.2 – Child Protection Policy - Decision.** A revised Child Protection Policy dated March 2021 was received for review. The Essex-model policy now included additional content relating to the return to school post Covid-19. The Policy was approved as presented.

### **ITEM 13 – SCHOOL ACTIVITIES – VISITS & TRIPS**

25. The Deputy Headteacher advised that new DfE guidance had just been received on overseas and residential school trips following the Covid-19 outbreak. Outdoor trips were now permissible from 12<sup>th</sup> April and indoor trips from 19<sup>th</sup> May 2021. The School was assessing which trips the students had missed to see what could be covered in the future. It was noted that some of the

younger students had missed both their Year 6 final primary school trip and the CCHS Year 7 trip to Normandy. It was hoped that the current Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh trips would be able to go ahead in June as well as some other general enrichment trips in the Summer Term.

### **ITEM 14 – GOVERNOR REPORTS**

26. Item 14.1 – Governor Visits. There had been no Governor visits to the School since the last meeting as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

27. Item 14.2 – Governor Training - Decision. The Clerk reported that Governor Induction training had either taken place already or was booked for the three new Governors. It was noted that the Juniper training courses were now being held online which may be more convenient for some, and all Governors were encouraged to participate. A competency audit had been distributed to all Governors in January and Lauren Smith had volunteered to take on the role of Training Link Governor. It was suggested that further guidance on which courses were the most useful. Lauren Smith and the Clerk agreed to liaise on useful training courses for Governors.

**L Smith  
Clerk**

28. Item 14.3 – Safeguarding. Ros Cornish, Safeguarding Governor, advised that she had recently received a safeguarding update from the Assistant Headteacher (Pastoral) and summarised their discussion. MyConcern had been much quieter during lockdown but had increased since the return to school and was anticipated to increase further. All MyConcern inputs were addressed immediately and referred on when necessary. Mental health first aiders were now available for both staff and students and a new School Nurse was now in place. Counselling had also restarted within school. Overall, students were very happy to be back at school. Confirmation had also been received that DBS checks and the Single Central Record were up-to-date. A query was raised on safeguarding alerts recently sent by the School to parents and the Headteacher gave additional clarification on the issue. It was reported that the messages and the associated actions of School staff were appreciated by parents.

29. Item 14.4 – Parents' Association Matters. Ros Cornish, PA Link Governor, advised that PA meetings were currently being held via Zoom and that the PA had managed to undertake a draw plus some online competitions in recent months but that fundraising was obviously reduced. The second-hand uniform shop was to open for the new Year 7 students and PA fund-raising activities would hopefully begin again soon. The Headteacher reported that there had been PA assistance with the staff LFT clinic and confirmed that letters of thanks had been sent. It was noted that there would be a lot of pristine second-hand uniform around following the past year of Covid lockdowns and suggested that a different method of uniform swapping could be considered by the PA, Ros Cornish agreed to take the suggestion back to the PA.

**R Cornish**

30. Item 14.5 – Better Buildings Committee. Jason Oster, Link Governor to the Better Building Committee, reported that the activities of the Better Building Committee had paused for the duration of Covid as it seemed inappropriate to ask for donations at this time but that a meeting was to be held shortly to discuss re-starting things in light of the near completion of the SSEF project. Alumnae engagement was to be discussed at the meeting.

### **ITEM 15 – ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

31. No other items of business were raised for discussion.

### **ITEM 16 – DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

32. Decision. It was agreed that the next Full Governing Body meeting would be held at 8.00am on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

**All**

The Chair closed the meeting by thanking the Headteacher and all the staff for their hard work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The meeting closed at 10.00am.

Agreed as a true record at the Management Committee meeting held remotely on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2021 and signed electronically due to the Coronavirus situation.

*S Miles*

S Miles, Chair of Governors

9<sup>th</sup> July 2021