CORPORATION MEETING
4.00pm Tuesday 26th November 2019
Room BT3, Plumpton College, Ditchling Road, Plumpton, East Sussex, BN7 3AE

MINUTES

Present: Stan Stanier (Chair), Jeremy Kerswell (Principal), Julie Dougill (Vice Chair), Mike Atkinson, Leeni Lear, John Evans, Helen Atkinson, Bill Pepper, Ruby Franklin-Goddard (Student Governor), John Moore-Bick and Sarah Blake (Support Staff Governor)

In attendance: James Hibbert (Deputy Principal), David Stokes (Vice Principal), Alison Kent (Vice Principal), Chris Knell (Director of Finance), Laura Holt (Clerk to the Corporation), Sarah Jeffers (Head of HR) (item GOV/1920/42 only) and Liz Hobby (Head of Marketing, Communications and Customer Experience) (item GOV/1920/42 only).

Apologies: Tim Laker, Sally Kinsey, Stephen Waite, Robbie Nicolle (Academic Staff Governor), Helen Key (Co-opted Member) and Doug Jackson

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<th>Minute no.</th>
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<tr>
<td>GOV/19 20/41</td>
<td><strong>Governor Training – KPI Data Dash Board delivered by the Principal</strong></td>
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<td>The Data Dashboard has been developed as an information management tool to allow managers from across the college and governors, to more effectively use a central data capture to monitor performance and drive continuous improvement and intervention. The KPI’s monitor and measure progress against the priorities set out in the Strategic Plan (and articulated annually through the Operational Development Plan (ODP), with a separate tab in the spreadsheet for each Strategic Aim. Targets for the year are based on comparisons with previous years and industry benchmarks (where applicable), both of which are shown in the dashboard. Targets will be approved by Corporation on an annual basis at the same time as the ODP in July. The dashboard is a snapshot of performance for that given point in time in the reporting period, and will be produced monthly and shared with all members of Corporation and the College Management Team. Some KPI’s are reported monthly, others quarterly or annually. A grey cell in the spreadsheet indicates that no data is due to be reported in the period e.g. pass rate is not reported until the end of the year. The dashboard does not replace the use of daily/weekly live data sets used</td>
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Development of the dashboard is an iterative process, which will need to be reviewed annually to check that we are looking at the right things. A working group has been established to create a later iteration of the dashboard which is automated.

A top sheet for the Data Dashboard is produced each month. This top sheet will show just the KPIs due to be reported in the period and the RAG rating. The RAG rating is as follows:

- **Dark Green** - Outstanding - above target and above national benchmark
- **Light Green** - Good - at or marginally below target and still above national benchmark
- **Amber** - Requires improvement - below target and at or marginally below national benchmark and previous year
- **Red** - Insufficient - below target and below national benchmark

Corporation should apply particular scrutiny and challenge to any KPI that is RAG rated as light green or amber. Corporation may request a drill down into the data set and/or an action plan from SMT. A red RAG rating should trigger extraordinary intervention.

Link Governors should drill down further with their relevant link Managers.

**Q:** Why is the data for students with protected characteristics reported on a termly basis? Why is the data not reported monthly?

**A:** To enable enough time to see the impact of interventions.

**Q:** Will you review the data sets in light of the SAR validation meeting?

**A:** The Principal and Vice Principle will review the dashboard in light of the meeting.

**Governor suggestions - It would be helpful if:**

- each KPI could have a code e.g. 2a, 2b etc.
- generic definitions were included
- sample size was included (this will need to be included in a later iteration).

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**Operational Development Plan 2019/20 (ODP) – Strategic Aim 6**

The Chair advised that this item had been brought forward on the agenda to allow Sarah and Liz to attend. Sarah Jeffers (Head of HR) and Liz Hobby (Head of Marketing, Communications and Customer Experience) gave an update on progress in the 2019/20 ODP in relation to Strategic Aim 6: ‘To attract, retain and develop an ambitious, high performing and professional workforce committed to delivering excellence to all.’

Sarah and Liz highlighted key points from the papers circulated in relation to this item including:

- Staff survey completed May 2019 (67% of staff completed the survey)
- Additional questions introduced into the survey in line with the new Ofsted framework (EIF).
- Those questions with a score of below 70% were grouped together into 5 key areas: Leadership, Communications, Development, Resources, Wellbeing & Value
- A staff survey action plan was created and shared with SMT, CMT and all staff through breakfast meetings (200+ staff attended). The action
plan compliments the OPD.

- Actions include:
  - Draft mental health and wellbeing strategy is being finalised and will be shared with CMT on 18th Dec.
  - First tier management programme completed
  - Two modules of the management coaching programme for Cohort 2 (new CMT managers) has been delivered,
  - Management embedding programme for cohort 1 and 2 (all CMT) designed and will be delivered in term 2.
  - Induction plans currently being reviewed
  - Staff Recognition programme currently being finalised (staff views sought at breakfast briefings) – to include fun awards at Christmas and long service.
  - Internal comms action plan shared in its entirety

- A separate survey was completed to drill down deeper into the reason for the low score regarding communication.

- A Communications Action plan was devised from feedback in this survey. Staff were consulted through staff conference and the action plan continues to incorporate feedback from staff breakfasts.

- Actions include:
  - Principals ‘open door’
  - Staff Ambassador initiative
  - Better guidance for 1:1’s, meeting etiquette, agendas and planning
  - Staff feedback up through the weekly meeting structure

Q: What were the main issues with internal communications? What was not being communicated?
Communication up was the main issue. Staff wanted management to be more consultative and for there to be a mechanism to feed up.

Q: 67% completion rate means that nearly one third of staff did not complete the survey. Is there anything that can be done to incentivise staff to participate?
67% completion rate is very high. Whist the survey is anonymous, most staff are happy to share their curriculum area. There was a strong correlation between staff satisfaction and those areas of the college last year where we experienced gaps in middle management positions. This was one of the reasons why we prioritised not having any management gaps/vacancies coming into this academic year

Q: Whilst there is a desire for anonymity, you do loose an opportunity for further analysis regarding equality of opportunity (male and female). Is there any way of differentiating responses for new members of staff (over the last 18 months) and long standing staff?
Feedback for new staff induction has been very good. There is a new starter day every fortnight, a cross college event to meet managers ‘speed dating’ and welcome breakfast. The feedback has been very positive but there is not a mechanism for capturing the feedback.
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<td>Q: Do you de brief staff who leave? All staff complete an exit questionnaire and are offered the opportunity to meet with SMT or HR.</td>
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<td>The Principal reported that he attended a workshop at the AoC conference by the Principal and HR Director of Bridgend College who were awarded the National FE College of the year. The main theme was people, culture and communication. The Principal was reassured that Plumpton were doing the right things and were doing more.</td>
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<td>The staff governor reported that there was a more contented feeling amongst staff, staff appeared more settled.</td>
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<td>The Chair reported that he had attended one of the breakfast consultation events at which staff were engaged and were keen to have the opportunity to get involved. <strong>Action:</strong> It was agreed that Sarah Bolland would bring an update on the Mental Health and Well Being Strategy to the January Corporation meeting.</td>
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<td><strong>GOV/19 20/43</strong> Welcome and apologies The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Tim Laker, Sally Kinsey, Stephen Waite, Robbie Nicholle (Academic Staff Governor) and Doug Jackson.</td>
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<td><strong>GOV/19 20/44</strong> Minutes from the last meeting and matters arising Members considered and approved the minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 22nd October 2019 and the Extra Ordinary meeting on 10th September as an accurate record of the meeting. The minutes were signed by the Chair. <strong>Approved (15.11.19):</strong> Corporation approved by written procedure the delegation of authority to the finance link governors, Mike Atkinson and Helen Atkinson, to approve the implementation of new credit facilities up to the value of the existing facility with Sancus. Mike Atkinson and Helen Atkinson considered an offer letter from Whitehall Finance to provide supply chain finance to the college. The key terms of the offer were: (Confidential) <strong>Approved:</strong> By delegated authority, Mike Atkinson and Helen Atkinson approved the college initiating a facility with Whitehall Finance, initially with 10 suppliers, and agreed that Chris Knell (Finance Director) and Jeremy</td>
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Kerswell (Principal) should be the authorised signatories.

Members noted the matters arising report and all items were complete, in progress or scheduled.

**GOV/19 20/45 Recommendations from Committee meetings**

Members noted the above report. It was agreed that the recommendations to Corporation would be taken under the appropriate item on the main agenda.

**GOV/19 20/46 Principals report**

The Principal highlighted key items in his report:

- **Funding**
  - Whilst apprenticeship recruitment in Q1 was strong, this has still fallen over 20% short of targeted and budgeted new start numbers, which therefore represents the greatest current income risk. This is being mitigated for by re-aligning new start targets for Jan/Feb and Easter, with the new Head of Account Management focusing on high value areas such as the new viticulture programme, arboriculture and vet nursing.

- **Curriculum and Quality**
  - Of the four curriculum divisions that have been graded as Requires Improvement in the 2018/19 SAR, three of these (Animal Management, Machinery, Metalsmithing and Motor Vehicle and Equine) are expected to re-assess as good by Christmas. Foundation Learning will remain requires improvement.
  - Over 100 teaching staff participated in the launch of the College’s new ‘Lesson study’ approach to further improving teaching and learning standards.
  - Attendance is c3% below our college target of 90%, but improving due to the interventions that are being taken in curriculum teams.
  - 58 level 3 safeguarding referrals have been made in the year to date compared to 44 for the whole of term 1 in 2018/19.

**Q: This will be the third Head of Finance (HoF) appointment in a year, can you tell us a bit more?**

A specialist agency was engaged to ensure that the college attracted the right calibre of candidate. Mike Atkinson, Finance Link Governor, was part of the interview panel. The new HoF is experienced and will work effectively with people and managers across the college. She starts on 7th January 2020.

**Q: 16-18 numbers are down, what is the financial impact?**

Potentially £150k next year, however in year recruitment continues (SMT are tracking on a monthly basis) and is expected to reach a comparable number of students to 18/19.
### Q: How significant is the under recruitment of HE? Presumably this is irretrievable?
Curriculum Managers are responsible for generating income from other areas to make up the shortfall. There has been a general declining trend in the sector for HE numbers in FE. The average cohort size is greater and delivery is more efficient.

### GOV/19 20/47 ESFA data dashboard and correspondence
The ESFA have confirmed that based on the college's submission of its Financial Plan for 18/19, it remains as ‘requires improvement’. As a result, the college will remain in early intervention with the ESFA and will continue to submit financial data on a monthly basis.

**Dashboard**

Q: The total points increase from 120 in 17/18 to 160 in 18/19 yet the grade moves from satisfactory to requires improvement. Why?
The ratings for 2018/19 were changed to match Ofsted ratings (Outstanding, Good, Requires Improvement and Inadequate). The grade remains the same but the grade has been renamed from ‘satisfactory’ to ‘requires improvement’.

The Finance Director made the following observations regarding the dashboard:

- £1m of income is not included for the purpose of this analysis which will affect the ratios (including staffing ratio).
- Whilst the college was rated ‘good’ in 15/16 and 16/17 the score was 180 which is on the cusp of satisfactory/requires improvement.
- The data for 17/18 is taken from the finance record containing an error regarding the FRS102 adjustments. A revised finance record has been submitted. The revised score would be 160/180.
- The Finance Plan shows that the college will return to ‘good’ in 2019/20 (if we deliver our budget for the year) and outstanding within 5 years.
- The 18/19 data is based on the Financial Plan. Once the Finance record is completed it is likely that the score will be 180/160 i.e. on the cusp of good/requires improvement.
- The college scores highly for EBITDA and Borrowings, but scores low for the current ratio due to cash holding.
- Chart 3 Financial Health Grades for all Further Education Colleges – 30% of all colleges are graded as requires improvement or inadequate for this year.
- Chart 4 – Reliance on income streams. The student numbers in the financial plan are predicted to be stable. This is based on a cautious approach to budget setting. The grey area shows the large income from other sources which shows the complexity of the organisation and the resilience.
- Charts 5 & 6 – Solvency. The current ratio is consistently below the national average. The financial plan builds up the current ratio up to
and above the median for the sector. The cash days in hand consistently build in the plan.

- Charts 7 & 8 – Profitability. This year and future years the performance ratio will be above the median for the sector. The ratio for staff costs is affected by the £1m income which is not included in this data. The peak in staff costs correlates with the dip in profitability.
- Charts 8 & 10 – Borrowing. The total borrowing as a percentage of income is significantly less than the median for the sector.

Discussion took place regarding chart 2 – forecasting which shows that the college is consistently over optimistic with forecasting. SMT advised that a more prudent approach with sensitivity analysis had been taken with budget setting this year, as previously discussed when the 19/20 budget was approved by Corporation Governors will expect to see the Finance record for 2018/19 and future years to more closely align to the Financial plan.

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<td>GOV/19 20/48</td>
<td><strong>Curriculum and Quality</strong></td>
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<td>Alison Kent highlighted key points from her report including:</td>
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<td>• More students passed their qualifications in 18/19 with slightly improved classroom based qualification achievement to 82% an improvement of 1% on the previous year and on the national rate.</td>
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<td>• Achievement of Diploma Qualifications requires improvement; retention over 2 years had an impact on achievement rates for these programmes. The current achievement rate is 3% below the national rate.</td>
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<td>• Achievement of GCSE and Functional Skills Maths and English Qualifications for 16-18 year olds has improved on the previous year.</td>
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<td>• Achievement of GCSE Maths and English is good and above the national rate. High grade achievement is below the national rate.</td>
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<td>• Significantly more apprentices achieved their apprenticeship within the required timeframe and this is now above the national rate.</td>
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<td>• More apprentices achieved their apprenticeship qualifications than in the previous year, 74%, a 3% improvement above the national rate.</td>
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<td>• Achievement of vulnerable groups and students with protected characteristics are below that of their peers. Students with declared learning needs achieve 8% below their peers</td>
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Discussion took place regarding vulnerable groups as a priority. Link Governors were requested to ask questions about these groups during visits, do teaching staff know who these students are?

Discussion took place regarding the importance of focus on attendance data in 2019/20 due to the impact it will have on retention and therefore achievement rates. There is a cleaner data set this year with a change in culture to ensure that all course changes are made before the 42 day window.

**Action:**

Ali Kent to provide an additional detailed reports to a future meeting on:

- Attendance
- Progress and achievement being made by vulnerable groups in
Management Accounts P2

Members noted the period three management accounts. The Finance Director reported that Planning and Performance meetings (PPM) have been held with every academic manager in September, and every academic and support manager in October. Through this a number of financial risks and pressures have been identified and incorporated into the forecasts. £218k would remain in the Principals contingency if all identified pressures were to fully materialise, however management action is taking place to manage and mitigate these risks and pressures.

The top income risks are:
- £122k Apprenticeship (circa £80k reduced carry-in and £40k delayed enrolments)
- £75k HE (£19k year to date rising with estimate of in-year withdrawals),
- £60k Residential (£15k year to date rising to £60k if increases in part time accommodation are not achieved)

The top expenditure risks are:
- £63k Transport (new contract includes £19k initial payment to ERA and £44k under achievement of savings year to date)
- £50k Utilities (£17k electricity contract renewal and £33k water due to issues with bore hole),
- £45k Maintenance (year to date maintenance and repairs ahead of budget).

Discussion took place regarding residential occupancy. The rooms were not all full in September. A part time residency package is being marketed to students. Part time residents are being offered a deal to move to full time residency. The lower residency rate has allowed RHS and National Trust apprentices to stay on site. The student governor suggested that weekend residency could be offered to Animal Management students who have to be on site for 3 weekends.

Discussion took place regarding the income risk from apprenticeships. The carry in will be resolved in the next few weeks. The number of new starts for September and October were 20% down. The target for January/February and April will be increased to make up the shortfall. A new Business Development Manager has been recruited. The team will strategically focus on high value apprenticeships. An increase in part time adult courses in year is also planned to reduce the shortfall.

The FD confirmed that the updated version of the management accounts had two amendments (all other data/commentary remained the same):
- Student numbers table was updated
- Number of cash days has been included

Discussion took place regarding PO usage, which was 97% in week 1 in November, 96% in week 2 and 100% in week 3. The PO usage figure quoted in the management accounts is year to date, current month PO usage is higher.

It was agreed that the RAG rating by managers could be removed as the RAG
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<td>rated risks are identified in the table at the bottom of each section. The FD outlined the cycle for producing the management accounts. The figures are completed on working day 6. The figures are reviewed by SMT at their weekly meeting the following Friday. Commentary is then completed by managers within one week. Discussion took place regarding the risks around the Environment Agency fine. A financial provision in last year's accounts has been made for the fine. There are also possible reputational impacts which could include risk of losing farm staff and increased difficulty in recruiting staff and partners to the college development plans. Action: The use of Whitehall finance will be off balance sheet. Governors requested an explicit commentary in the monthly reporting to Corporation.</td>
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<td>GOV/19 20/50</td>
<td>Funding Strategy paper</td>
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<td>The FD highlighted key points from his report including:</td>
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<td>- The Finance Link Governors (Mike Atkinson and Helen Atkinson) have worked with the FD to agree a new working capital facility through a ‘supply chain finance agreement' with Whitehall Finance. This is in addition to the 'education income advance' arrangement in place with Sancus finance.</td>
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<td>- The College currently has two major capital projects with Stanmer reaching completion in 2020 and Agrifood construction beginning in 2020. These two projects along with the College's currently unsecured borrowing with Lloyds present a peak borrowing requirement of £5.9m in 2022/23.</td>
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<td>- The College is currently in receipt of three sets of indicative lending terms for commercial mortgages to meet the funding needs. Arrangements will be made to meet with these organisations, the Finance Link Governors will be invited to attend the meetings. Once final terms have been secured these will be presented to Corporation for approval.</td>
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<td>- The terms offered by Lloyds for a loan were not favourable. Q: If we did nothing, when would we run out of money? What actions would need to be taken? A: March/April 2020. In the worst case scenario, action would need to be taken to value engineer the fit out at the Stanmer site and pause the Agri Food development. However there are other interim measures which could be put in place to prevent this scenario arising. The FD reminded Corporation that the college has three offers where initial due diligence has been completed by the lender. There has been difficulty and delay in separating the deeds of the houses, work is progressing to try to expedite this.</td>
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<td>GOV/19 20/51</td>
<td>Progress against FEC Action Plan</td>
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<td>Corporation noted the above report which showed good progress in all areas.</td>
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<td>GOV/19 20/52</td>
<td>AgriFood</td>
<td>Corporation noted the above report.</td>
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<td>GOV/19 20/53</td>
<td>Annual Report of the Audit Committee</td>
<td>The Chair thanked Mike Atkinson (Chair of Audit Committee) for writing the report.</td>
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| GOV/19 20/54 | Annual Report and Accounts | The Finance Director advised that since circulating the Annual Report and Accounts, he had received a recommendation from Mazars to make an amendment regarding the wording on accounting policies in relation to the assessment of impairment. The Finance Director advised Corporation that an investigation was currently taking place which may uncover an instance of fraud relating to the period of the management accounts. The Finance Director will advise the outcome of the investigation once it is complete. | Approved: Corporation approved the Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2019 subject to the minor amendments recommended by Mazars. Further to the recommendation from Audit Committee the following were Approved:  
  - Letter of Representation  
  - Regularity Self-Assessment  
  - Regularity Letter of Representation |
| GOV/19 20/55 | Freedom of Information policy | Corporation considered the above policy. Governors asked whether there was any changes from the last version as it seemed a fairly standard policy. The Principal advised that only very minor adjustments had been made. | Approved: Corporation approved the Freedom of Information Policy. |
| GOV/19 20/56 | Environmental Policy Annual report | Members considered the above report which covers progress within the key action areas as contained within the Environmental Policy and set in the context of the previous annual report. Discussion took place regarding the college's aspirational targets regarding environmental impact. The targets in the report to be achieved this year are based on budget and capacity (Development at Stanmer is completing and the Agri Food project is commencing). ‘Green’ grants (e.g. for solar panels) have been fully utilised, opportunities for further grants are therefore limited. | Approved: The following targets were approved by Corporation for the 2019/20 academic year subject to including the Farm figures: |
1. Increase solar electricity generation by 40% by year-end:
2. Stream water quality to average at 0.15 ppm ammonia:
3. Print volume reduced by 15% by year-end:
4. Accurate understanding of water consumption patterns to inform 2020/21 target setting by year end:
5. To increase total waste recycling (kg) by 200%.
6. An improvement in the energy performance rating for all our buildings over 1,000m² by year end from the following start points:

<table>
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<th>Building Designation</th>
<th>Energy performance operational rating (average = 100)</th>
<th>Approved 2019/20 Target</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Animal Management (E)</td>
<td>104 101 101 86</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equine (E)</td>
<td>135 115 130 130</td>
<td>130</td>
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<tr>
<td>Workshops (B)</td>
<td>17 26 23 15</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Building (E) – now (D)</td>
<td>113 104 100 99</td>
<td>95</td>
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<tr>
<td>Farm Teaching (C)</td>
<td>62 57 52 55</td>
<td>55</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winery &amp; Wales Lane (B)</td>
<td>18 32 34 17</td>
<td>32</td>
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**GOV/19 20/57 Governance SAR and QIP**

Discussion took place regarding the above, it was agreed that further work was needed to expand the weaknesses section to include ‘so what’.

**Action – comments to be sent to the Clerk via e-mail.**

**Action - Governance SAR and QIP to be added to the agenda of the December Corporation meeting.**

**GOV/19 20/58 Impact of Governance in month**

Governors reported on link activity which they had completed since the last meeting:

- Julie Dougil met with Alison Kent to discuss the process of the completion of the whole college SAR and how the different levels contribute. Julie and Leeni Lear attending the SAR validation panel meeting. The meeting was well managed, and there were some good suggestions and challenge. The college is not celebrating its achievements enough.
- Leeni Lear has spent some time with the Motor Vehicle students as part of the pilot ‘follow a cohort’ programme. The students were making go carts where they were using their planning, teamwork and maths skills. All students were engaged and behaviour was excellent.
- John Moore-Bick reported that he had met with staff from Floristry/Horticulture and Arboriculture and seen very different
cohorts of students, 14-16 year olds and more mature students in the National Trust and RHS cohorts. He has also met with the Governor of Ford Open Prison. The college will be providing training for offenders, likely to start in January.

- Stan Stanier attended the Apprenticeship Awards ceremony celebrating student success with employers, students and parents.

**GOV/19 20/59**

**AOB**

- John Evans asked for an update on the progress at Stanmer, will it open on time? There is a time pressure and risk regarding receiving the keys on 16th December, which may delay the move in date. The development of the car park is the biggest risk to opening on time. There is a course information event at Stanmer on 7th December 2019, if any governors are interested in attending.

- The Principal highlighted the turnaround in the statutory accounts from a £600k deficit in 17/18 to a surplus in 18/19. The Principal thanked everyone in the room for their contribution.

Meeting closed at 7.45pm

Signed__________________________________________ Date________________________