

External Review of Governance – Overview and Summary of Review Outcomes

The External Review of Governance was carried out by Jim Aleander (JA) between November 2023 and March 2024. The review followed DfE guidance and considered:

- How governors discharge their role as charity trustees
- The effect of board culture (and college values) on decision-making, including encouraging appropriate challenge and contribution, and on the culture and tone of the organization
- How the board sets and communicates strategy
- How the board models and promotes good diversity practice
- Governor recruitment, induction, development and succession-planning
- The role, input and influence of the governance professional
- Governor, chair, governance professional and senior leadership team dynamics and effectiveness of working relationships
- The board's interaction with students and stakeholders
- The impact of governance, including policies, practices and structures and means of engagement
- Ofsted

The above-mentioned lines of enquiry provided evidence for three areas: people, structures and processes.

The review activity included planning, desk top review of documents, one to one meetings with governors, Principal, staff and the Clerk, observation of Governing Body and committee meetings, interim report and final report. JA's final report was presented by him to Governing Body on 20 March 2024.

JA made the following recommendations in his report:

1. Decide on the future of the Fircroft College Trust by 31 July 2024
2. Negotiate an extension on the lease for College premises and land, and decide on College's interest in the Woodbrooke estate
3. Have policy contribution reviews at each Governing Body meeting
4. Set strategic objectives before the start of each academic year and have an annualised governor development programme (with provision for Clerk also) linked to achieving the strategy
5. Review strategic stakeholders and partnerships and scope for governors' involvement in these
6. Consider additional associate governors in selected areas to increase capacity and enhance responsiveness
7. More governors carry out "learning walk" style visits to deepen understanding of the adult residential curriculum and students' needs
8. Private session between Audit Committee (and Clerk) and auditors at each Audit Committee meeting
9. Ensure Lead Governor role descriptions cover strategic oversight only.

JA suggested that further consideration could also be given to whether some reserves could be released affordably, for the benefit of students/charitable purpose of the College; having a Lead Governor or reporting governor for Health and Safety; more explicit consideration of equality, diversity and

inclusion in the Governing Body's cycle of business, as the College's approach is a strength; and asking governors whether they enjoyed being a governor in the last year as part of self-assessment.

This overview of the review, including the summary outcomes, has been agreed with Jim Aleander. He has also been consulted on the action-plan and his comments taken into account.