

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE BOARD OF LEICESTER COLLEGE CORPORATION HELD ON 29 JANUARY 2026

Present: Danielle Gillett (Chair) Steve Munro
Vipul Bechar Robert Radford
Kyle Cameron Nicky Randall
Shawn George Jackie Rossa*
Lesley Giles* Lee Soden
Shabir Ismail Vipal Karavadra
Chan Kataria* Tom Wilson
Neil McDougall*

In Attendance: Louise Hazel Director of Governance and Policy
Mukund Narshi Associate
Rob Lawson External Board Reviewer

*Joined meeting online via Teams

1 WELCOMES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

- 1.1 There were no declarations of interest.
- 1.2 Nicky Randall was congratulated on her appointment as Director of BECT which she would be job sharing with Yvette Sexton, as well as retaining her Head of Curriculum role.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Sophie Strevens-Robinson.

3 EXTERNAL BOARD REVIEW

- 3.1 The Chair invited Rob Lawson to present his report on the external board review. The following points were highlighted.
 - 3.1.1 The board and management team were thanked for their involvement in the review; the reviewer had enjoyed it and learned a lot from the review.
 - 3.1.2 Overall, the review found that Leicester College had an effective, high-performing Board with an excellent array of skills, backgrounds. The concluding judgement was that there was strong evidence that the Board was highly proficient and consistently impacted on College effectiveness and outcomes.
 - 3.1.3 The AoC had agreed some standard statements for board reviews and this was the best statement a board could be given.
 - 3.1.4 The effective mix of skills and backgrounds, particularly in the finance and education sectors enabled governors to scrutinise and challenge with knowledge and insight although challenge could be too robust on occasion.

- 3.1.5 The diversity of the Board meant it had a range of perspectives and approaches which further strengthened and informed the Board. Governors knew that further diversity was needed to address imbalances in gender and ethnicity. Diversity of thought was a particular strength.
- 3.1.6 The Board and committee chairs were effective. However, on occasion governors could get too operational.
- 3.1.7 Evaluation, and the Board's approach to risk and compliance were a strength, while its approach to hearing the student voice and wanting to understand the experience of students was exemplary.
- 3.1.8 Governors would like more opportunities to meet staff and felt that committees could feel too siloed.
- 3.1.9 There was good awareness on the Board of the AoC Code of Good Governance, but less awareness of the Nolan Principles. This was a common theme across college boards.
- 3.1.10 There was a thorough approach to succession planning and recent improvements had made the induction process more thorough.
- 3.1.11 Safeguarding was a real priority, evidenced through the documentation explored and meetings observed.
- 3.1.12 There were effective working relationships between SLT and Board and a strong working relationship between the triumvirate.
- 3.1.13 The report made twelve recommendations.

3.2 Members asked a number of **questions** and made the following **comments**.

- 3.2.1 **Did the comment that the website could be easier to navigate mean there were changes that were needed?** All the information was on there and it was up to date which showed a good degree of transparency but some things were a little hard to find.
- 3.2.2 **It was a positive report and good to see that there was evidence of scrutiny as well as some examples of good practice. The comments about governors getting too operational was a bit surprising and it would be useful to understand what was behind this so that this could be addressed.** This had come through surveys, the 1:1 interviews and through the reviewer's own observations. There had been comments on this from governors and members of the Executive. This was often a grey area and sometimes a governor's experience was critical and so could stray into operational matters. However, there were a few too many examples of this and with new governors being recruited there was a need to be clear about what was and was not acceptable and not allow certain behaviours to become accepted practice.
- 3.2.3 **Were the comments about challenge being too robust common across the Board or just specific to some committees?** This was not frequent but there had been a couple of instances where questioning had also become managerial. The Board worked effectively with the Exec and it was important to make sure that relationships were not damaged.
- 3.2.4 **The recommendation about rebalancing the diversity on the board was an ongoing consideration and challenge, the Board tried to think about diversity in different ways. It was worth noting the**

proportion of staff and students who also came from the County. Noted; that helped put things in context. This was one of the most diverse Boards the reviewer had worked with but it needed to be, given the diversity of the local population.

3.2.5 **How would the action plan be taken forward?** The recommendations would be added to the governance improvement action plan and this would be brought to the April Corporation meeting and then monitored by the Search and Governance Committee. There were also other suggestions within the report which, while not recommendations, would be considered and added to the plan.

3.2.6 **Was there confidence there was a robust succession plan in place?** There was and although this was discussed by the Search and Governance Committee, it was perhaps the case that this was not visible to all governors.

3.3 **The Chair thanked Rob Lawson again for his work and for a thorough report. The Chair reminded the Board about the scope of the review which included a request to look at where the Board could do things differently and better, as well as what was good practice.**

Rob Lawson left the meeting

3.4 **The Chair commented that, reflecting on the statement about committees working in silos, there was a lot of discussion at Search and Governance but perhaps that was not clear to all governors. That Committee had considered the report and challenged on a couple of areas which had been discussed at this meeting. It had agreed that robust scrutiny and challenge was not necessarily a bad thing but perhaps things could be done in a different way. The grey area between operational and strategic needed to be managed and perhaps some reminders on this and on the Nolan principles would be helpful.**

3.5 Members then discussed the report further and made the following **comments.**

3.5.1 **Robust scrutiny was a sign of a healthy board and the positive thing was that although there could be challenge and difference of views, all of the board stood by its decisions.**

3.5.2 **It would be important to hang on to the good things as well as address the recommendations.**

3.5.3 **Some recommendations appeared to be based on light evidence and it would be important to make sure that governor workload was considered when bringing in new things.**

3.5.4 **Could some of the recommendations perhaps be consolidated?**
They could.

3.5.5 **If the report highlighted that the board could be too operational, it was important to focus on this as it suggested it was not doing what it should.**

3.5.6 **The comments about governors being too operational was a helpful reminder.**

3.5.7 **It would be concerning if the Exec felt that challenge was too robust.** The Principal noted that it was not the fact of challenge but the

way in which it was done. There would be changes to the Exec and it was important that there was scrutiny and challenge, the Exec would welcome it and was used to challenge but governors should be mindful that other members of staff might need a different approach. It was important to get the balance right however between the operational and strategic; governors were coming from the right place but it was about providing challenge in the right way.

- 3.5.8 **It was important to look at the recommendations rather than getting hung up on the words used in the report. The comment about board diversity was right and the Board should and could do better.**
- 3.5.9 **It was important to hold onto what worked well and get the basics right. The tone of some of the challenge observed, rather than the content of the challenge, had been a surprise to a new governor.**
- 3.5.10 **More opportunities for governors to meet with staff could be picked up through other staff attending and presenting at meetings.**
- 3.5.11 **This was already happening at CSQI although there was more to do.**
- 3.5.12 **More thought needed to be given to how governors got to know about what was happening in committees. There had previously been formal feedback at each meeting but this had taken too long.**
- 3.5.13 **It was not clear what the issue was; chairs of committees could and did feed back on specific issues at Corporation.** If governors wanted to find out more, they could attend other committees, read the papers or speak to the chair or other members.
- 3.5.14 **Since there would be new Deputies shortly, should they be asked to come and give a presentation on what was going to be different?** This was for the ELT to manage. If there were strategic KPIs that were not being hit then it would be appropriate to ask for reports but there would be opportunities to hear from the deputies in the normal course of meetings and at the away day.
- 3.5.15 **Student governors commented that the Board seemed pretty diverse but it was something that it could continue to improve on.**
- 3.5.16 **The focus was inevitably on what the Board needed to do better but it was a very good report, there were lots of strengths in the leadership and the Board, and the College should be proud of this.**

3.6 **Members of the Corporation received the External Board Review Report.**

4 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- **16 April 2026**