



Ripon Grammar School Governors Full Governing Board Meeting Thursday 7 October 2021, 7pm, in Bishopton House MINUTES

Present: Elizabeth Jarvis (EJ) Chair, David Ball (DB), Matthew Bean (MB), Vikki Barton-Brown (VBB), Tom Cavell-Taylor (TCT), Stephen Chaplin (SC), Andrea Edmondson (AE), Kiran Fernandes (KF), Richard Grime (RG), Eric Medway (ERM), Helen Stiles (HS), Jonathan Webb (JMW), Stephen Williams (SW).

1. Welcome and Apologies

The chair welcomed all governors to the first face-to-face meeting for more than a year and thanked all for continued commitment during the periods of lockdown. The apologies of David Winspear, who was unable to make the rearranged date, were accepted.

2. Declarations of interest There were none.

3. Minutes of Meeting held on 21 June 2021

The minutes were unanimously approved an accurate record.

4. Matters Arising and Action Points not appearing in this agenda. There were none.

5. Governor Vacancies

Our LA-Nominated governor, Mike Chambers, had been keen to continue for a third term but was not allowed to do so by NYCC. The Council is reviewing its policy about governor nominations and so we have not yet received a proposal from them. In the absence of any progress, we should ask for Mike to be re-instated for a third term.

The process for electing two parent governors is running. The Chair has written to all parents outlining the role of governor and indicating the skills and experiences we would particularly like to recruit, based on the recent skills audit.

David Ball's term of office as a parent-elected governor has come to an end. His interest in co-option was sought and he provided the meeting with a statement of interest. David left the meeting and governors readily approved his co-option - for one year, in the first instance, at his request.

6. Headmaster's Report

The Headmaster had provided a full and wide-ranging report (Paper 06) and governors asked for further details on several aspects.

How is the letting of the 3G pitch being organised and managed. Are there any issues still needing to be resolved?

It is very busy, and we are often fully booked. Issues have arisen with some groups (e.g., dogs on site, bad language). HM has written to all hirers and brought their attention to the T&Cs. If there are further infringements, booking will be cancelled. We need someone to work 1600-2200h to supervise all lettings. This is financially possible now that lettings are in full swing.

What measures are in place to safeguard boarders now there are more strangers onsite?

Boarding staff are present if boarders are engaged in activities outside the houses.

Boarders are escorted from the houses to/from central dining.

We had planned for SLS to manage all aspects of lettings. How is this being done now?

The Bursar is taking bookings and dealing with payments etc. using dedicated software. The management of kit etc. is being done by the estates team.

KF observed that there were three times more than the usual numbers of withdrawals from UCAS before results. Why was that?

The Head did not have the detail to hand. He would seek explanation from the Head of Sixth Form.

JMW

The school roll is very large again. Can our infrastructure support this?

Yes. We are at PAN in Years 7-11. With the sixth form, increased flexibility regarding social and study spaces is helping.

There is planned expansion of Ripon. Has the Head had any conversations with NYCC regarding the size of the school?

None. We have considerable spare capacity for in-catchment children. As the population of Ripon rises our proportion of in-catchment entrants will as well. There will be fewer out-of-catchment places available.

7. Safeguarding – Action Plan post-NYCC Review

The Action Plan had been shared with governors (Paper 07). DW (governor for safeguarding) has been in school to meet key staff and confirms that the SCR now meets every requirement. In his absence, he has submitted comments for the board which the Chair will circulate.

EJ

The Head commented that many improvements to site security had been made but there were still some to complete. The ease of communication for duty staff and their recognisability had been improved. There had been lock-down training for the whole school and, while this will be repeated regularly, like fire drills, it should not be too frequent, or students will become complacent.

Governors questioned the Head about staff and student responses to strangers on site. Is everyone prepared to stop and interrogate (or, for students if they prefer, refer to the nearest member of staff) any unbadged persons on site?

The Head replied that there was much better student awareness and that training had occurred for all, which would be an annual event. RG, as staff governor, commented that there was a real uptick in staff awareness and preparedness to intervene.

Governors asked if the awareness post-training had been tested by getting an “unknown” and unbadged adult to walk the school.

No – but the suggestion is a good one and noted.

JMW

Governors were unanimous that measures must be reasonable and proportionate to the measured risk. To do otherwise would be detrimental to the open and welcoming atmosphere of the school. High vigilance is better than high fences.

The Chair asked about CPOMS. Was it being used effectively? Can we interrogate the database to flag trends – particularly regarding vulnerable groups such as pupil premium, boarders?

It is being used very extensively, probably too enthusiastically and we need to be more directive about the level of concern that should be entered or risk the significant being swamped by the irrelevant. The software does have analytical tools, but we are still getting to grips with those, and this will be a task for the new Data Manager.

The Head was asked about the detection and reporting of derogatory or abusive language among students.

A questionnaire had been given to all staff and students. It has revealed that there is evidence of this but mainly outside school or on social media. The problem isn't endemic, but staff and students are asked to take a zero-tolerance approach.

8. Financial Matters

SW referred governors to the latest monitoring statements. We are broadly on-track. There has been some good news (better than anticipated Covid payments; much increased lettings; an accord with catering contractors) but also some unavoidable additional costs. The in-year balance is likely to be about zero.

There was then a discussion about the school's discretionary spending, largely on capital projects, whether we are managing these in a sufficiently long timeframe, and whether there were budgetary areas that were inefficiently managed and could give greater savings or yields. It was agreed that SW would write a paper for the Board's strategy day later this term.

SW

9. Capital Developments

a) Summer Capital Projects

EJ reported that she had viewed all the building projects. The standard is first class, and all was on time and on budget. She would recommend governors to find the opportunity to view. She had written to Andy Hogg to thank him for his work. She had also written to Jon Slater to thank him for the smooth and successful IT system upgrades. The Head added that the Food Tech Room refurbishment had been supported by the Wolfson Foundation (£20k) and that more might be available for suitable projects.

b) Estates Development Plan

The Estates Development Committee had been disappointed with what architects Squires & Brown had produced. Governors discussed the pros and cons of appointing a new practice. It was agreed that EJ, JMW, DB and Graham Livesey (Director of Strategic Operations) should progress this for report to the next FGB.

EJ/JMW/DB/GL

c) Outline of proposed Capital Projects for 2021-22

It was agreed to defer this until after the Strategy Day, apart from one item, an expansion of the staff car park to create a further 20 spaces. The Head reported that parking was causing great anxiety for staff, with some having to park on the road some distance from school. Inevitably, they included individuals who, on a particular day, were arriving "last minute" because of some unavoidable domestic incident. Governors considered relieving stress for staff an essential part of staff welfare and approved the project.

10. Strategic Development Plan and SEF

These were circulated in advance. The SEF had used the latest Ofsted guidance on grading. We were grade 1 for all aspects, but this doesn't mean there is no room for improvement. Earlier iterations of both documents had been discussed by governors and so few further questions were necessary. It was agreed that the monitoring of SDP would be done by the relevant governor committees or, for a few aspects, FGB.

Committee Chairs

11. FGB Annual Self Review 2020-21

ERM presented a summary of the results from the questionnaire. There was a 100% response. Scores were all satisfactory and the fall off in rating for governors' interaction with parents was clearly caused by the lack of opportunity due to Covid restrictions. However, it was noted that an open invitation for a MS Teams meeting for Y9 parents with governors brought the lowest attendance to date. It was worthwhile, nonetheless.

12. FGB Annual Report to Parents

This was approved for publication.

EJ

13. Single Central Record Check

This has been done by DW. All is OK.

14. Membership of Committees

A draft for 2021-22 was presented. DB agreed to continue as Governor for H&S for the year. The list was agreed. **ERM**

15. Reports From Governors' Committees

a) Admissions Committee

The minutes of the recent meeting were available. There were no questions.

b) Finance & Personnel Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting of the last academic year were received. All matters had been covered in minute 8.

c) Staff Pay Committee

The open minutes were received. ERM said there were also confidential minutes detailing the pay progressions for named staff. He described the way the meeting works, assuring governors that no pay progressions were automatic. The annual review of performance was considered in every case. He also drew governors' attention to Minute 6 of the meeting concerning the lack of any cost of living pay rise for teachers who had had "one hell of a year". There was agreement in the Board that this was very concerning and opportunities to make an RGS pay award were discussed. Governors were struggling to find the balance of benefit to students between remunerating teachers better (so ensuring retention) and using that revenue more directly for teaching and learning resources. There is also the consideration that any award becomes built into future salaries. The meeting agreed to take no steps this year but determined to reconsider if teachers' pay is frozen again next year. With unemployment falling and private sector wages rising, teacher retention may become difficult. **ERM/EJ**

d) Any Urgent Committee Business – none.

e) H&S Issues from Any Committee – none.

16. Governors With Specific Areas of Responsibility

a) Child Protection and Safeguarding Governor

In his absence, DW has written a report which will be made available. **EJ**

b) CEIAG Governor

TC-T had met with careers staff for a packed agenda. There is much activity, and the team is doing an excellent job. We are reconsidering the format for the careers evenings, perhaps making them part virtual.

c) H&S Governor

DB referred to the physical improvements to the estate, mentioned above, which were making the separation of students and traffic much more effective. All H&S matters and accidents or near-misses are now on a database, with alerts to HM. On his arrival, the Director of Strategic Operations will be the SLT lead for H&S.

d) Inclusion Governor

HS reported that interviews for the inclusion manager post were being held on 21 October. Meanwhile, the retired incumbent has returned temporarily.

e) Staff Welfare Governor

AE had met Helen Keelan-Edwards and seen the staff survey data. They had discussed a range of initiatives and improvements, including making it known to staff when improvements have been made because of their suggestions. She also could obtain funds from her husband's company, for her work as a governor, as part of their outreach, and these would be used to enhance staff welfare.

17. Complaints

EJ reported that a governor panel had heard a parental complaint regarding management of student behaviour and the communication to parents, at the end of last term. The complaint had been resolved amicably. There were actions for the school to take and these have been completed.

18. Governor Training

Autumn Term – Safeguarding, Ofsted Framework, PSHCE, Digital Strategy – mid November, date to be confirmed. **EJ/JMW**

Spring Term – Staff Welfare

Strategy Day – in December after arrival of Director of Strategic Operations – date to be confirmed. **EJ/JMW**

19. Policies for Approval – none.

20. Off-site Visits

These were now possible again. RGS had decided to allow only UK based visits this year.

Two overseas visits are planned for 2023 which need approval:

World Challenge – three groups, each to two of Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, leaving at end of summer term.

Year 8 Water Sports Holiday, Ardeche, leaving at end of summer term.

Governors approved both overseas visits. **JMW**

21. Calendar

Governors were urged to consult the school calendar for co-curricular events. Often early booking is essential!

22. AOB – there was none.

Meeting closed 2120h.

Date of Next Meeting: Monday 6 December 2021, 1900h.



Approved 6/12/21