

Minutes of Full Board

Date: 27th Mar 2025

Time: 4.30 - 6.25pm

Location: Itchen College, S10

Present:

Mr B Jones - Chair	Mr A Scott - Principal <i>[left 455pm, item 4]</i>
Mr T Grant	Mr A Fitt
Mr D Batten	Mr M McCauley
Mrs M Harris-Bridge	Mrs S Hammett
Mr R Parke	Miss C Wilson
Dr C Carpenter	Mrs S Smith
Mr J Johnson - online via teams <i>[left 530pm, item 6]</i>	

Apologies:

Mrs D Shepherd	Mr C Breckenridge
Mrs I Henson	Mr E Unuigbo

In attendance:

Mrs R Stratton - Deputy Principal	Miss F McIntyre - Clerk
Mrs S Carter - Vice Principal	Mr M Jones - Vice Principal

1 Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received and accepted as above.

- 1.1 The board was informed that Mr M Brown has stepped down at the end of his second governor term and Miss S Duggan has resigned her student governor position. The chair wrote to both, to thank them for their service to the college.

2 Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

3 Minutes of the last meetings

Minutes of the previous meeting held on the 5th of December 2024 were reviewed and agreed as a true record.

3.1 Actions

9 - RS - attendance provision and age groups. Will be in the QIP update.

10.2 - all chairs to consider areas for in-depth audit - ongoing

12.1 - code for approval - completed

4.3 RE commissioner reviews - completed.

Discussed at S&G and decided it would be too many reviews if all committee chairs were included and will continue with the informal reviews undertaken by the Chair at the end of the academic year. Formal reviews of chair and clerk to be retained.

4 Principal's Report

The Principal has another evening meeting with Southampton City Council so will leave early, the agenda items would be reordered to accommodate this.

- 4.1 Tomorrow would be a sad day for the college when the funeral takes place of Glenn Colmer, who was the Curriculum Director for sport and Protective Services. Glenn contributed much to the growing success of the college. He influenced many young people with his enthusiasm and strength of character. Itchen college will miss Glenn.. The procession will pass by the College, with nearly sixty staff members attending the service.

Steve Perkins will be speaking on behalf of the College at the service. The governing body will be represented by Colin.

The new building will be named after Glenn. An event will be arranged to open the new building in the coming months. Details to follow.

- 4.2 Progress is slowly being made on the future funding of the College. Information is not being released at a given point, news on funding streams remains complex. This situation is often the case when there is a change of government. The in-year funding for growth has now been confirmed and amounts to £384,000. There are ongoing issues with capital funding. The Chair and Principal have written to the local MP, who serves on the Governments Education Select Committee, to request information on capital funding for further education and skills. Our MP made the question on college capital funding, to be the subject of his first question to that committee. .

- 4.3 The handover of the new build was initially scheduled for Monday 31 March 2025, but while practical completion will occur on that day, the final handover will be delayed by one week.

- 4.4 Applications for places at the college for the upcoming term remain positive.
Q: Does the pattern of applications from various schools appear normal for this time of year?
A: Yes

4.5 The Principal drew governors' attention to the changes being suggested to Ofsted which he highlighted in his report and the s report from AF. The issue was discussed at the C&Q committee and all agreed it was important to have a response from the governing body. Governors to send any comments directly to AF to collate.
Q: 'On student achievement, measured by national data with no contextual data to benchmark'...is that correct?
A: Yes, that is correct. We do not know details yet but the achievement data does not include contextual information.

4.6 Questions:
Q: Where there are fluctuations in applications from schools, can we identify the reasons for increases or decreases?
A: There are fluctuations each year, due to variables such changes in staffing e.g. the head of year and the timing when students are asked to submit applications. For example, Bay House in Gosport has seen a return to application levels from the 2022/23 academic year, and Brookfield's applications are slightly down by eighteen, though the three-year average remains on track. The College expects to receive one hundred applications out of three hundred pupils. G&E looks at conversion details.

Q: Has the Ofsted result had an impact?
A: Yes, but conversion is where it will have more impact.

Q: Comment: good breakdown on applications. Interestingly, the out of area applications are up.
A: The increase in applications from outside the area can be attributed to families moving to that part of the city for employment opportunities at the general hospital. Additionally, the basketball academy is significant draw for out-of-area applicants.

Q: Will the new build open after Easter?
A: Yes, in the first week.

Q: Given the increase in student numbers, is the funding for these students adequate?
A: Funding has been adjusted this year, with the College funded for 1,839 students. The college is caution about admitting more students. There could be a risk of not receiving additional funding.

Q: Once the new build is completed will the current temporary car park still be in use?
A: Will be used as a car park for open evenings only.

[AS left 455pm]

5 Chairs Update

The Chair started with a tribute to Glenn Colmer as a valued long-time member of staff and former student. He had a significant impact on students.

5.1 Merger and Collaboration Conference

The Chair will attend a conference in Leeds on 28 March 2025, where discussions will focus on strategic Partnerships and Mergers. and potential ways of collaborating with others.

Some College mergers took place several years ago ,so the results of that collaboration can be told. The new government appears keen on organisations working together and sweeping away similar structures which duplicate and serve no purpose. As a college Itchen has confirmed it wishes to remain independent, a standalone entity, able to move forward with confidence.

The chair thought it important to discover what are the real advantages of mergers, to question what has been lost from a given areas following mergers and to hear the reality of 'merger conversations' between higher education institutions and FE, FE institutions and new devolved local authorities or very simply organisations like Itchen, that gain much from working together but have no interest in formal mergers. Unsure as yet where the current government stands on such issues.. The Chair stated the College remains open to listen to different approaches but is not actively seeking out roads to mergers or structural collaboration with others..

5.2 Principal Recruitment

It was previously decided to use a recruitment partner for the Principal recruitment process especially finding a suitable cohort of dynamic and visionary leaders to serve as the principal of our college. A review of the process from eighty years ago was conducted, and the previous clerk's file was consulted.

The College approached FE Associates (FEA), the Association of Colleges (AoC), and Peridot. All submitted a tender then attended an interview. After careful consideration, FEA was chosen as the recruitment partner by the Search and Governance committee.

AoC' and Peridots offering was close. But the committee though FEA had the 'edge' A meeting was held today with the appointed recruitment partner, FEA, to begin the process. Information about the College was shared, so they can effectively represent the institution. It was reiterated that the College is in a strong position and is not looking for significant changes. However, it is acknowledged that the world and education landscape are evolving.

5.3 Recruitment Process

The Chair had prepared a briefing document for Governors but following the meeting with FEA today will make revisions prior to distributing.

S&G have spent time reviewing the interview process. The initial plan for a three-day interview schedule, which included a tour of the College and a social aspect, (that aspect of the program received mixed feedback.....Other Colleges, after staging such event within the recruitment process, questioned what had been gained). FEA suggested that this may not be the most effective approach and has suggested two days only.

The revised plan for Day 1 includes a series of structured interviews and sessions based on the governor committee structure. It is important to involve all governors in the interview process. However, not all members will conduct interviews; some will participate in panels or as observers ..

Following feedback from the first day, the aim is to narrow down the candidate pool for day two, to a possible group of three.

On day one, a further group on leadership and strategy will be formed. Additionally, two executives from Southampton City Council will be involved, given their importance in future funding discussions.

It's important to consider notice periods, as the desired start date for the successful candidate is 1st January 2026.

5.4 Revised timeline:

Closing date 19th May 2025

Short listing 22nd May 2025

Two days interviews 3rd and 4th June 2025

5.5 Questions & discussion

Q: Will students be involved in the interview process?

A: Yes, students will play a role, though the exact method of their involvement is still to be determined. Their participation is critical, as they can ask direct and insightful questions.

Q: Could the first day be too overwhelming for applicants, given the full schedule with committees, leadership boards, students, and staff? Will this impact their performance on Day 2?

A: It is hoped not. The post is a challenging one and as governors we must make the correct choice. Shelagh Legrave the Further Education Commissioner described the role of Principal as 'tough and lonely'. S&G have asked Alex to be a key adviser on the selection process. One task Alex will perform will be to talk with prospective candidates and individually give them a tour of the college. FEA also emphasised the need to avoid overloading candidates on the first day and building into the program space for rest, food and recovery..t.

Q: Could candidates demonstrate teaching skills by presenting a topic to a varied group?

A: Yes, different groups will take different approaches to assessing this

Q: Will Itchen HR be involved in the process?

A: Yes, HR will be involved especially checking on qualifications, time spent by candidates at various colleges /universities and workplaces.

Q: Will HR be part of the interview process?

A: This is yet to be decided, but it is recommended that HR play an advisory role given their expertise.

- 5.6 The Chair will circulate an update report explaining the program as it develops. Governors are asked to view such reports as a work in progress. Comments made/ suggestions etc., will be added where possible and appropriate. As the college moves into the month of May 2025 the program will be set. The chair thanked the S&G committee for their time interviewing the recruitment partners.

6 Finance Report

6.1 General update

The latest finance report has now been updated to include figures from February. Initially, a forecast of £300,000 was projected, but the actual outcome is £384,000, reflecting an improvement.

The College is on track to meet the budget, with an anticipated surplus of around £50,000 to £80,000, which is a positive outcome.

To date, 93% of expected income has been received or is receivable. This has now increased to 94%, with no identified risks. The College is in a strong financial position, seven months into the fiscal year. Maintaining this income is crucial.

6.1 Cash Flow (Page 3)

In November, cash flow dipped below the cushion level of £800,000, primarily due to lagged funding for the new build and capital drawdowns. However, the situation has significantly improved since then.

Key capital expenditures of £65,000 for improving/renewing toilet facilities around the college and £700,000 for a major heating project, have been incorporated into the cash flow.

The College has submitted a bid for a £670,000 for a new boiler/heating project, with the decision expected in May 2025. However, given the urgency of the project, it is recommended to proceed with the boiler installation regardless of the outcome of the bid.

The project is critical as there are currently 20-25 classrooms without heating, relying

on 150 electric heaters, which is unsustainable and poses a safety risk. If the bid is unsuccessful, the College can still afford the £700,000, but this will mean that no other projects can proceed. If the bid is successful, the £700,000 will be returned to college funds and used for other projects.

6.2 Financial Indicators (Page 4)

The financial indicators are mostly green, indicating that the College is on track to meet its benchmarks. The health score was 170 at the end of February 2025, since improving to 180, and is expected to remain strong through the end of the year. The College remains fully compliant with all bank covenants.

6.3 NI Grant and Budget Uncertainties

The National Insurance (NI) grant is anticipated to be received in October; however, details remain unclear.

The exact amount of the additional staff settlement grant is still unknown, as is the timing of its release. There are several uncertainties in the budget, but the overall financial position remains positive.

6.4 Income Streams

The nursery, catering, and community services continue to provide a stable income stream, contributing positively to the college's financial health.

6.5 End-of-Year Financial Projection

Borrowing currently stands at 12.4% of total income. This percentage is expected to decrease to 6% by the end of the year as anticipated income is received.

6.6 Heating and boiler Replacement

The college has submitted a SIF bid for funding for this project. The bid requires a concise explanation of the necessity of the funding within a 200-character limit. Last year, the bid was unsuccessful due to the failure to meet the immediate criteria. This year, however, the urgent need for boiler replacement, particularly due to the health and safety risks posed by electric heaters in twenty-five classrooms, has been highlighted. If the bid is unsuccessful and the boilers are not replaced by October, there is a risk of having to close certain areas of the college. The decision has been taken to proceed with the work, regardless of the bid outcome.

The potential savings resulting from the installation of new boilers remain uncertain. The new boilers are expected to reduce energy consumption, but specific savings figures are not yet available, given that electric heaters are in constant use throughout the day.

6.7 Maintenance of Toilets

Regular vandalism has been a persistent issue, leading to increased maintenance costs. To address this, the college is planning a full refurbishment of the toilets, which will be more durable and better suited to high-traffic use.

Quotes for the refurbishment are expected to range between £50,000 and £80,000.

6.8 Governors were informed that this would be Mrs. Carter's final meeting. Mrs Carter had done an outstanding job in her stewardship of the college's finances. The Chair thanked Mrs. Carter for her contributions and wished her well in her retirement.

[JJ left 530pm]

7 KPIs

The College's KPIs are identified and aligned with the strategic plan. The current KPIs are showing strong numbers, indicating a positive outlook for the College's performance across multiple areas. The financial position of the College is also on track to meet the set targets, suggesting a stable financial outlook for the year. However, certain aspects related to curriculum and quality are currently lacking national comparison data, which means that retention and achievement KPIs will need to be updated once national data becomes accessible.

Refers to the Standards Committee which is now named C&Q. **Action to amend.**

7.1 Overall attendance is not expected to meet initial targets. This shift in projections is largely influenced by the ongoing impact of the pandemic and post-pandemic trends. Despite this, attendance has shown a positive trend, with current figures exceeding those of the previous year, and this positive momentum continues to build.

7.2 Staff retention has not been a feature of the past two strategic plans but has been raised as a consideration for future inclusion.

8 Culture Canvas

The work on cultural identification began during the summer of last year. The rationale behind this initiative is that Itchen College is undergoing a pivotal transition, marked by the end of the strategic plan, the arrival of a new Vice Principal for Finance in April 2025, and a new Principal starting in January 2026. This period offers an opportunity to reflect on the changes that have occurred and to examine the drivers behind these changes, which are rooted in the college's evolving culture. This shift is reflected positively in both the staff survey results and in the recent Ofsted report.

This initiative presents a valuable opportunity to reflect on the culture of Itchen College, to engage staff, and to define how the culture aligns with the future direction of the institution.

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) initiated the process by developing a "Culture Canvas" document. This document was designed to reflect the current culture of the college and serve as a tool to highlight the desired future state. While the document remains in draft form, it is the starting point of a broader process.

The SLT found the exercise enjoyable and insightful. Subsequently, further exercises were facilitated by MJ and EB with the leadership group across the college. Then the support staff managers also participated in these sessions. During an inset day in February, all staff engaged in small group discussions that explored the process further.

A total of twenty-six different versions of the document were produced and have since been consolidated into a draft. The draft was shared with staff for feedback, with an emphasis on reflecting whether the document truly represents Itchen College.

One positive aspect that emerged was the appreciation of the college's staff meeting 'ritual', which, although previously receiving some negative comments in surveys, is now viewed more favourably.

The Culture Canvas is intended not only for internal reflection but also as part of the recruitment process. By sharing it with potential staff, it provides insight into the values and daily practices at Itchen College. This will help new hires, both teaching and support staff, better understand the working environment and culture of the institution.

A question was raised regarding the potential for involving students in the culture process. It was affirmed that this will be addressed alongside the staff development work, with the intention of integrating student input into the ongoing development of the college's culture.

The Culture Canvas is viewed as a living document, one that will evolve as the culture of the college continues to grow and change.

The Chair thank RS for the work she had done to bring this project to life.

9 Reports from committee Chairs

9.1 Estates

An additional meeting was held today, prior to the full board meeting regarding the new build. The building, originally due for completion two weeks ago, has encountered delays but is expected to be completed within a week. The consultants have indicated that the college will accept practical completion of the building on Monday, which will allow funding sign-off by the set deadline. The final snagging process is expected to be completed in two weeks. The space will be 'set up' during the Easter break and will be ready for use the following week. Final discussions regarding the building's costs are ongoing.

Other works in the pipeline have been mentioned in the meeting - the boilers/heating system and college toilets.

9.2 Finance

The budget is on track, with a surplus anticipated.

Regarding transport, a tendering process was carried out with five companies, and the decision has been made to continue with Xelabus. A service-level agreement (SLA) will be finalized by the end of April, which aims to improve the support and proactivity of the service.

9.3 Curriculum & Quality

The Curriculum and Quality Committee recently met and covered the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Topics included the achievement gap between boys and girls, with plans to address this through staff CPD. The committee also discussed curriculum development, including the introduction of T Levels and new subject offerings. The Ofsted consultancy was also a topic of discussion, along with the new FE dashboard, which raised some questions regarding its functionality. There was also discussion around AI and how it will be used within the college. Staff training on AI is planned for the summer 2025, and governors will be updated on its impact and usage at the next training session for governors in the autumn.

Q: Does College have AI policy for staff & students?

A: Yes, and the awarding bodies are clear on this as well.

9.4 G&E

CC chaired the last G&E meeting and gave the following update:

The meeting covered safeguarding, student profiles, and tutorial activities. The success of the careers fair was noted, as well as the importance of the relentless support mentioned in the cultural canvas.

SLT attend but also head of student support and safeguarding lead. This provides valuable information so governors can appreciate the extent, breadth and depth of all activities.

10 Policies

There were no new policy updates.

11 Governance Matters

Scheme of Delegation - deferred.

Key documents - added to TG.

12 Impact and action review

Impact:

- Application process for new Principal
- New build position
- Finance report
- Good discussions and questions
- Culture canvas - future work with students and how it could be applied.

13 AOB

It was queried how the governor visits are progressing and there has been an uptake of visits linked back to committee agenda items. The careers fairs and the Greenlight classrooms have had a good presence.

There are plans to recruit a new student governor.

14 Date of next meeting - 3rd July 2025

Meeting concluded at 6.25pm