



The Role of a Member of the Corporation

The importance of the further education sector is increasingly recognised for the significant contribution it makes to the success and development of its students and, through that, to the achievement of national objectives in education, training and employment.

Kingston Maurward College is a specialist land-based College set in 750 acres of farmland, parkland, gardens and conservation area located two miles from Dorchester in Dorset. An integral part of our curriculum is delivered within fully commercialised enterprises that promote learning within 'real life' working scenarios. These include a commercial farm, Animal Park and gardens, a visitors' centre and extensive hospitality and conferencing facilities. Within this culture students very quickly develop high aspirations, are well motivated and progress rapidly to become work ready.

The College has a breadth of provision with clear progression routes from Entry level to Higher Education. A good range of vocational courses for students aged 16-18 and a variety of both part-time and full-time programmes for adult students are offered in land based and other sectors,

The College has a broad range of excellent partnerships and outstanding relationships with local employers which enables it to expand its presence in the region. For example, the Dorset Studio School opened in 2014 in direct response to the increasing number of 14+ students seeking to study at the College and moved into purpose built brand new accommodation in September 2015. These students have the benefit of the College estate and specialist land based teachers alongside National Curriculum activity.

What is Further Education Corporation?

Colleges became incorporated (a legal body) as a result of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. Each corporation has its own Board and may use a variety of terms to describe it. These include: Corporation, Board, or Governing Body.

The College is an Exempt Charity for the purposes of the Charities Act 1993, although does not fall under the direct supervision of the Charities Commission. In this respect the Secretary of State is appointed Principal Regulator and Board Members are also considered to be Trustees with certain legal obligations. Our Board operates the tradition committee style of governance and consists of 20 members, including the Principal, 2 Staff members and 2 Student Members.

What are the Instrument and Articles of Government?

The Board regulates its proceedings within the boundaries of the Instrument and Articles of Government; these are the documents which set out the framework within which the College must work.

The Instrument of Government is concerned with the constitution of the College and explains the arrangements that are required for meetings of the Board and its Committees. The Articles of Government define and describe the powers and responsibilities of the Board and the Principal and set out the basis for dealing with certain financial and staffing matters.

Providing it satisfies the basic requirements established by the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, and complies with the Instrument and Articles of Government, it is for the College to decide how it wishes to conduct its business.

What does a Member of the Board of the Corporation do?

In the further education college sector in England there are some 8,000 individuals who are governors of further education (FE) and sixth form colleges – volunteers committed to the success of their college. The Governing Body, together with the Principal, constitute the highest level of decision-making in the college, having overall responsibility for the strategic direction and financial health of the institution.

Board members are at the heart of how a college operates. They are responsible for determining what education and training the College will provide and the strategy for delivering it. They also lead the drive for improved standards in teaching and learning by ensuring good control systems and challenging areas for improvement.

The Board is also responsible for the appointment and remuneration of Senior Post-Holders, including the Principal, and the Clerk.

The Corporation has certain formal duties, powers and rights in accordance with the Instrument and Articles of Government. The Board has ultimate responsibility for the running of the College, taking key decisions and setting objectives. However responsibility for the day to day management lies with the Principal, who is also a member of the Board.

The Corporation requires a range of skills with Board meetings covering a wide variety of topics ranging from the College's business strategy; quality of teaching and learning; buildings and financial investment; business model and delivery, including partnership working. Boards will also discuss recruitment and succession planning, including of the Board itself and its performance. Board members will consider performance indicators and financial information on all aspects of the College's activities and will need to be able to interpret and use this information to collectively develop a clear and comprehensive strategic plan.

A Board is entrusted with a significant level of public funds and oversight of important local assets, with a particular duty to fulfil the highest standards of corporate governance at all times. They are accountable for ensuring effective and efficient use of resources and safeguarding the College's assets, property and estate.

The Board's ultimate responsibility is to the students and the wider community the College serves. To achieve this, the Board members must work in partnership with and support the Principal and Executive Team, asking searching questions when necessary to maintain a rigorous focus on improving standards and the quality of teaching. They also need to work in partnership with the College's many key stakeholders and partners, including employers, local authorities and the Local Enterprise Partnership.

In performing these duties Board members are expected to follow a Code of Conduct which has regard to the accepted standards of behaviour in public life including leadership, selflessness, objectivity, openness, integrity, honesty and accountability. The Code of Good governance for English Colleges also establishes a common set of recommended standards of good governance practice for college governing bodies.

How are Board Members accountable and do they have a legal liability?

The Board is authorised by law to act as a single person while maintaining a separate legal identity from its individual members. As such, College Corporations are directly responsible and accountable for the governance of the College. In addition to its legal responsibilities, the Corporation is also accountable to the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) for the use of the money it receives and for meeting any conditions attached to that funding. As previously mentioned, Board members are also Trustees and have a legal responsibility in this regard.

The Board's responsibilities and accountabilities, including those for monitoring the effectiveness of Board members' own performance, are shared equally by each individual member of the Board.

The central principle is one of individual accountability. No Board member serves in a representative capacity or may serve mandated by an external body. Each individual serves to promote the overall success and solvency of the College within the relevant statutory framework and Instrument and Articles of Government.

As an individual Board Member you must do the following:

- Act in line with the seven principles of public life; Selflessness; Integrity; Objectivity; Accountability; Openness; Honesty and Leadership.
- Identify your own skills, ideas, experiences and knowledge and use them for the benefit of the College and to take an active interest in the work of the College.
- Ensure you have enough information and advice to make the best decisions possible.
- Work effectively with other Board Members to take decisions through analysing risks.
- Accept corporate responsibility for decisions taken by the Corporation, even when you do not agree with them.
- Check the minutes of the governing body's work adequately record the thinking behind the decisions made.

The Corporation has arranged Board Members' Liability Insurance cover for a sum of up to £5 million for any one claim, although we stress that it would be extremely unlikely for any claim to be brought or upheld against an individual Board Member.

Disclosure

Members of the Board are required to declare all interests relevant to their appointment in a Register of Interests which is maintained by the Clerk and available for public inspection.

Appointments to the Corporation

Board member appointments, other than staff and student members, will be confirmed following consideration of advice from the Search and Governance Committee. This Committee will keep under review the mix of skills, knowledge and experience of the Board Members and make recommendations to the Board as appropriate. The Board also tries to ensure gender balance and is always conscious of its age and ethnic profile.

The Board needs to be made up of members with a variety of skills, expertise and experience⁴ in relevant areas, such as finance, human resources, public relations, marketing, building, estate/facilities management, professional and vocational training, as well as the various academic areas, and its overall mission.

Generally, Board members will be expected to have:

- Experience in dealing with strategic and long-term issues
- Leadership experience
- Knowledge of business principles and financial management
- An ability to participate constructively in deliberations
- A willingness to exercise authority in a collective manner
- An understanding and interest in post-16 education and training
- Skills to provide challenge and support

Subject to the provisions of the Instrument and Articles, Board members will serve for a term of 3 years unless otherwise agreed in the resolution making the appointment.

Staff members will hold office for a term of 3 years and have openly applied, been interviewed, and recommended, by an agreed panel, for appointment by the Corporation.

Student Members will hold office for a 1 year term and will have been nominated from the whole student body and recommended, by an agreed panel, for appointment by the Corporation. The College is about education and training, therefore it is important for the Board to have the 'student perspective'.

At the end of their term of office, Board Members are eligible for re-appointment to a maximum of 12 years, unless specifically approved by the Board for extraordinary circumstances, which have to be recorded.

Regular information and development sessions are arranged to support Board Members and enable them to bring their experience to the Corporation. You will also need:

- to be interested in the College as a whole;
- to have common sense and judgement to enable you to make decisions in the best interests of the College;
- to be able to communicate;
- the ability to understand the "big picture";
- the ability to work as part of a team and become an effective part of the Board;
- a willingness to accept the decision of the Corporation;
- to maintain confidentiality.

How much of my time will it take?

Members of the Board act in a voluntary capacity, with the governance of the College being wholly voluntary and unpaid. The Secretary of State does not permit payment to members for their services, although the College will pay reasonable travel and subsistence expenses to Members on College business. A Board Member's workload will vary depending on the member's area of responsibility. The Board Member's role may include involvement in the following activities:

- **Full Corporation Meetings:** 6 times a year, usually on a Tuesday evening, starting with a training/information session starting at 4pm, followed by the Board meeting at 5.30pm for approximately 2½ hours. There is an expectation that each member will achieve at least 70% attendance rate.
- **Strategy Days:** Twice a year and are whole day events.
- **Committees:** The Corporation has 5 Committees to fully scrutinise and monitor the progress of the College. Board Members are expected to join at least 1 committee.
- **Strategic Working Groups:** of which there are 3; The Farm, Property and Commercial. These groups explore and advise in relation to the strategic management and operation of these areas and membership is a mix of Board members and College Executive.
- **Papers:** Board papers should be read before each meeting and are available a week before each meeting via an electronic portal, Governors Virtual Office (GVO), for which training will be given.
- **Visits to the College:** to become more familiar with the work of the College, including 'learning walks' and 'link visits' in curriculum and support areas.
- **Attendance at College events**
- **Attendance at internal and external training and development events.**

The Rewards

The role of a College Board member is exciting and extremely worthwhile. It provides enormous insights into the social and economic challenges facing local communities and offers opportunities for direct contact with external businesses and community bodies.

Becoming a Board member enables individuals to make a significant and very real contribution to the success of the College, helping the students to develop and achieve their full potential. It allows those who want to be engaged with a college to make good use of their existing skills and provides them with the training and support to develop new ones. These can include making staff appointments, financial management, chairing meetings and team and project working.

The rewards of the role to the College, community and the individual are clear and Board members are supported every step of the way to ensure both they and the College benefit from their valuable contribution.

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