

**WALSALL COLLEGE  
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATION  
HELD ON THURSDAY 2 JULY 2020 AT 1730 HRS  
VIA ZOOM**

- PRESENT:**
- |   |                              |
|---|------------------------------|
| Allan Pinnegar - Chair                              | Jat Sharma – Principal       |
| Alastair Scales                                     | Dave Wheeler (from 1800 hrs) |
| Alan Woods (until 2000 hrs)                         | Mary Mahoney                 |
| Jaswinder Dhillon                                   | Fiona Macmillan              |
| Stuart Pedley-Smith (from 1740 hrs until 2000 hrs)) | Khuram Mahmood               |
| Graham Ward   | Paul Averis                  |
| Charlotte Bosworth                                  | Jo Hughes                    |
- TOGETHER WITH:**
- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| Paul Dale (until 2005 hrs) | Associate Governor  |
| Deb Rajania                | Director of Operations and Resources                            |
| Andrea Packer (Item 72.20) | Designated Safeguarding Lead                                    |
| Matthew Brown              | Director of Finance & MIS                                       |
| David Turner               | Assistant Principal Quality and HE                              |
| John Adams                 | Director of Commercial Projects                                 |
| Richard Brennan            | Assistant Principal Curriculum                                  |
| Jayne Holt                 | Assistant Principal Workforce Development and Learning Services |
| Alison Buick               | Clerk to the Corporation  |
- APOLOGIES:** Aisling McGowan

**65.20 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and thanked them for attending this and other recent virtual meetings. It was noted that two Governors would join the meeting later and that as there had been no contact from the Student Governor it was now assumed that he had left.

**66.20 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Aisling McGowan.

**67.20 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Alan Woods and Jaswinder Dhillon made their usual declarations relating to employment and membership of commercial, educational and other organisations.

Alan Woods also noted a new declaration regarding his organisation entering into a contract for provision of a small amount of barbering and beauty related provision with the college. The contract value was estimated at £5.5k. An email with full details had been submitted to the Clerk.

**68.20 RE-APPOINTMENT OF GOVERNORS**

The Clerk reported the recommendation of the Search and Governance Standards Committee to re-appoint both Jaswinder Dhillon and Graham Ward for further three-year terms of office. Jaswinder's term would extend from 10 July 2020 until 9 July 2023 and Graham's from 19 October 2020 to 18 October 2023.

Both proposals were unanimously **approved**.

## **69.20 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2020, having been circulated, were taken as read and approved.

## **70.20 MATTERS ARISING**

Governors reviewed the Action Points Record and noted the following:

### Item 53.20

The latest KPI update had been added to Convene.

### Item 55.20

LCCA had been discussed in detail at the Learning and Quality Committee in June and would be covered later in the agenda.

### Item 56.20

The link to the item in the previous Curriculum Report would be provided.

### Item 59.20

One to one meetings for Governors with the Chair were being set up.

## **71.20 GOVERNORS' SAFEGUARDING TRAINING**

The Designated Safeguarding Lead attended to present the Governors' annual Safeguarding training, and was welcomed by the Chair. The training focused on Mental Health Awareness. Areas covered included:

- That statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education, had been updated for September 2020;
- Mental health issues could be an indicator of safeguarding concerns;
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACES) could also impact on mental health, behaviour and engagement. Staff had received training in ACES;
- The safeguarding statistics for Walsall College this year compared to last, which showed that the number of mental health concerns reported had increased;
- A report by the MIND charity that had surveyed the impact of coronavirus on young people with mental health needs;
- Perceptions of mental health;
- Contributing factors to poor mental health, including academic pressure, social media, bullying, poverty and lack of availability of professional mental health support. It was also the case that often key figures in a young person's life could spot when a young person was struggling but not know how best to help;
- Particular factors resulting from Covid-19 may make situations worse, such as loss of routine and social connection, as well as other factors such as sexuality, ethnicity, family problems, being in care or stigma as a result of negative reactions;
- Stigma had the biggest impact on young people and how they saw themselves. It could put them off of applying for jobs or college;
- The importance of talking about mental health;
- The approach of Mental Health First Aid England to supporting those in need.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Chair asked about the resources available to the Designated Safeguarding Lead to support her work in college. It was confirmed that there were no concerns about the resources, although acknowledged that the number of referrals was generally increasing. The team had continued to support many students during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## **72.20 SAFEGUARDING ANNUAL REPORT**

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) presented her report. It was confirmed that college practice ensured that legislative and moral duties to safeguard students and support their wellbeing were being met, and that there were also appropriate steps to safeguard staff. Policies and procedures were well established and proven to be effective in practice. Working relationships with external partners were strong and ensured that the College was best-placed to safeguard students.

Covid-19 had changed the approach, but the overall service to young people continued to be excellent. The recent Ofsted visit had confirmed arrangements were effective.

Questions and comments were invited.

A Governor asked about support for looked after learners. The DSL explained processes in place, which were being reviewed with the help of the Safeguarding Coordinator. Looked after learners were particularly vulnerable and there was always scope to provide more support.

Governors also asked about support for staff, especially at the moment. The DSL noted the support and guidance provided by the HR team to staff. This included reminders to take breaks, keep in touch with their teams and hold regular one to one meetings.

The support to be provided to students on protection plans during the summer holidays was questioned. All such students had been identified and plans would be in place. External support was available from MASH if needed.

There was a discussion about the need for support for learners that had suffered loss or bereavement during Covid-19. Counselling support was available and the safeguarding team could be contacted throughout the summer. Support was available through Local Authorities that the college worked with, although it was noted that they often asked for information in different formats. The college was working to standardise formats as far as possible.

It was **resolved** that Governors **approved** the Safeguarding Annual Report.

## **73.20 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY APPROVAL**

The report was presented by the Director of Operations & Resources. The policy had previously been approved by Governors and there were no significant changes to report. Minimal changes had been made. A new section on Contagious Diseases had been added to the Health and Safety Policy at Section 30.

Health and Safety was well managed at the college, with strong management processes as well as oversight by the committee. Alastair Scales continued to be the Link Governor for this committee.

It was **resolved** that Governors **approved** the Health and Safety Policy.

The college had also started work on a new Environmental Policy. A presentation on this had been made at the Governor Training event on 15 June 2020. Governors were reminded that a new Environmental Strategy Committee was to be set up, chaired by the Director of Operations and Resources. The Committee would meet three times per year and a Governor attendee would be sought. An Annual Report from the committee would be presented to Corporation annually, with updates in year as part of the Principal's Report as needed.

Governors asked about the composition and remit of the new committee. There would be four work strands, each with a lead manager, and students would be represented via a working group.

It was **resolved** that Governors **approved** the Environmental Policy.

#### **74.20 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

The Principal presented his report, covering a wide range of activities and performance reporting for the current year. Some aspects, such as Finance and Quality, would be picked up in more detail during later agenda items. Particular attention was drawn to the following:

- The latest letter issued by the Secretary of State, which had been emailed to Governors earlier in the day;
- That Eddie Hughes MP was due to visit the college on 3 July;
- A staff conference was planned for 10 July. This would re-iterate the focus on recruitment for September. Enrolment had begun to catch up following the campaign from the last staff conference in June, but it was clear that more focus was needed;
- The college continued to have a high level of engagement with DfE, including some input to shaping emerging guidance. There appeared to be a strong expectation of business as usual, which was not the case;
- Curriculum planning for September included that around 20% of delivery would continue to be online;
- Staff were being encouraged to keep in touch with their staff;
- It was hoped that funding may be available for project re-start and for apprenticeship recruitment. Bids were also being submitted for innovation and NEET related projects. There was a lot of bid related activity;
- The Finance and Resources Committee had recently approved match funding of £300k for a Digital Skills Centre at Wisemore as part of the T Level provision;
- The Prime Minister had made a speech at Dudley College earlier in the week, and this included promises of flexibilities for apprenticeships and opportunities for work placements. Further details were awaited;
- Work was ongoing on the college Corporate Strategy update. However, it was clear that more time was needed on this, to reflect on changes that would be necessary in the autumn term;

- Staff sickness had reduced. There were no concerns about staff turnover. The HR and IT teams had worked hard to provide a Covid-secure workplace. Unions had been supportive of changes made;
- It was expected that much support would be needed for student and staff mental health and wellbeing as college returned to normal over the next term;
- Dialogue had re-started with CITB;
- New DfE guidance for September had been received today, but needed to be reviewed. It was clear that full lessons, timetables and audit requirements would be delivered from the start of the autumn term;
- There had been a meeting with the LEP this week;
- Capital funding of £200k for the sector had been announced this week. Walsall would look to see what opportunities this presented;
- Change in September was inevitable. There was a possibility that this may require some re-structuring, although no decisions had yet been made.

Questions and comments were invited.

A Governor commented on the local Covid-19 lockdown in Leicester and asked what the plans were if something similar happened in Walsall and surrounding areas. The Principal responded that there was regular contact with the Walsall Borough Partnership team. There was no doubt that a further lockdown would be very damaging. Re-opening of pubs could be problematic. Health officials in Walsall were monitoring the potential hotspots and issues.

A Governor asked about the support for learners' digital skills to ensure that no-one was left behind as delivery continued largely in this way in the autumn. The Principal explained the IT support available for vulnerable students, including provision of laptops. The Director of Finance & MIS added that the approach to provision of devices was being tailored to individual needs as far as possible. Decisions needed to be made about the best possible mix of devices to be issued. It was also confirmed that student interviews were asking about access to devices, that digital skills would be covered at student induction and that the college had a digital pledge in place.

The Assistant Principal Curriculum explained the enrolment process currently ongoing, which had three elements – new students, re-enrolling students and expected walk ins. The current position was broadly in line with expectations for this time of year, but a local lockdown could have a severe detrimental effect.

Governors asked about transport to college but it was noted that there was limited information about this currently available. The college was discussing this with the transport authorities. Students were being asked about their planned modes of transport during enrolment.

There was a discussion about adult provision. The college and WMCA were discussing this. However, adults did not appear to be a Government priority at present. It was expected that there would be funding available to

support re-training and upskilling in due course. Arrangements with the WMCA would be complex.

A Governor asked about college support over the summer for students eligible for free school meals. The Director of Finance & MIS confirmed that the voucher scheme had been in place for several months and that vouchers were topped up every two weeks for those that were eligible. This would continue, via students' college email addresses, until the end of the summer break. Take up was fairly low, so it was hoped that funds could be used to fund electronic devices for students instead.

The college's media plans for GCSE results day were discussed. It was expected that there would be much media interest in this, given the calculated grades that would be issued this year. Preparations were in hand for this.

It was expected that students may wish to re-take GCSEs in the autumn if they did not get their expected grades. This would be challenging to timetable, both for the extra tuition needed and for the exams themselves. It was not yet clear whether there was any funding for colleges in the tutoring programme recently announced by Government. Details were awaited on this.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Principal's Report.

## **75.20 CURRICULUM, QUALITY AND HE UPDATE**

The Assistant Curriculum commented on plans for delivery from September 2020. It was expected that around 20% of delivery would continue to be online. The latest guidance would permit maximum group sizes in rooms, but risk assessments would be completed to look at the impact of this. Curriculum Managers had engaged well with the need to change ways of working, which would differ in each area.

Some contingency planning had started in case of a local lockdown.

Staff were planning using 'bubble templates' provided by Exec. These would allow staff to interchange between cohorts in particular areas of college buildings, but limit the movement of students. There would be staggered start, finish and break times. This would be challenging to implement.

It was confirmed that catering facilities were available. The salon would be opening three days per week, but for hair appointments only, not beauty treatments.

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE commented on his elements of the report, and Governors noted:

- The intention to set up an HE Student Voice Committee for 2020/21;
- That student assessments continued to be completed where possible;
- That messages to staff about expectations for September were being finalised;
- That staff were working well with students that were back in the building;

- That the student survey results would be analysed once the 3 July deadline had passed. This would assess how students were working during lockdown. Results to date appeared positive;
- Remote learning walks were continuing;
- Staff training for remote delivery was ongoing through the Digital Educator programme;
- The Ofsted report had been published in the previous week. The high level elements and timeline of the Quality Improvement Plan had been included in the written report;
- Ofsted had also provided feedback on their review of student experience of remote learning, which had included Walsall and 15 other colleges. Details were in the written report;
- The current position with HE. Planning was difficult, but it was clear that there were some opportunities in this area. The OfS cap on student numbers was explained. An exit plan for LCCA was being worked on.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Student Governor welcomed the setting up of an HE Student Voice Committee.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Curriculum, Quality and HE Update Report.

## 76.20 FINANCE REPORT TO MAY 2020

The Director of Finance & MIS presented his report, which covered the Management Accounts position to May 2020. The position had been considered in detail at the Finance and Resources Committee in June.

Financial performance had continued in line with revised expectations. The majority of income for the year had been secured, although commercial was down due to the closure from March. There were no surprises in the year end position.

Financial health was expected to be 'Good' at year-end. The cash position remained healthy.

Funding for free school meals was being used to support additional learning. Covid-19 costs to date were around £50k, which were felt to be reasonable in light of the adjustments needed. More expenditure was likely to be necessary.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Chair commented that the outturn was a good result, taking into account all of the Covid-19 related challenges from the previous few months.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Finance Report to May 2020.

## 77.20 PROPOSED BUDGET 2020/21

The Director of Finance & MIS presented the highlights of his report, which showed the draft budget for 2020/21 and had been discussed in detail at the Finance and Resources Committee in June.

It was clear that the opening position would be affected by the financial impact of Covid-19 in 2019/20. The position was relatively strong, but the general economic outlook remained very uncertain.

The budget had been prepared after completion of the usual curriculum planning processes. The 16-18 offer had capacity for 3,820 students. A full adult offer was planned, and this was expected to draw in £7m of funding from WMCA. A prudent view of apprenticeships was being taken due to unprecedented disruption in the market at present. A broad apprenticeships curriculum was planned, although numbers may be down by 10%. It was hoped that this would begin to recover during the year. The HE offer would be changing due to the planned withdrawal from LCCA. Overall, the curriculum was being designed to be flexible to adapt to emerging circumstances and changing priorities.

EBITDA was budgeted at 6.1%, which was lower than in recent years, and financial health would remain at 'Good'. The management view was that the budget was realistic and could be delivered.

The Ofsted result had meant that college resources had been reviewed. Decisions on re-deploying to improve impact needed to be considered. Covid-19 had delayed debate on this but it was an area that needed further work.

There was no further progress in relation to CITB. Many of the CITB staff had been furloughed.

The revenue budget was a deficit of £633k. The capital budget was £750k.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Chair confirmed that the Finance and Resources Committee had gone through the budget and its assumptions in some detail in June.

A Governor asked about the planned subcontracting arrangement agreed with WMCA. The Director of Finance & MIS explained the background to this and the rationale for the decision. The overall risks, in both quality and financial terms, were deemed to be low. He was not concerned that the decision set a precedent for subcontracting to increase further, nor that it would create additional undue pressure on staff resources.

Governors noted that the staff costs to turnover percentage remained high.

There was a discussion about the need to ensure value for money in all aspects of the college provision. This was felt to be a key driver. The Chairs of Audit Committee and Finance and Resources Committee would be meeting to discuss this further. The difficulties in financial planning at this

time were noted. It was clear that focus needed to be on protecting resources and being agile enough to respond to changes in demand whilst continuing to provide high quality courses and student experience. The Director of Finance & MIS agreed. The approach taken had been to have a realistic baseline as accurate forecasting was extremely difficult.

A Governor questioned the impact of CITB, if acquired in year. The Director of Finance & MIS was confident that the diversification into commercial training in an area that would be critical to economic recovery would not de-stabilise the college. CITB staff were used to remote management, and the Covid-19 circumstances had given the college team experience of this. However, the decision to acquire CITB was on hold at this time, so would be brought back to a future meeting.

Governors **resolved** to **approve** the budget as presented.

**78.20 RISK MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT TO CORPORATION INCLUDING BOARD ASSURANCE UPDATE**

The Director of Finance & MIS presented his report, noting that risk management and Board Assurance continued to be a standing item for every Audit Committee meeting.

The College had effectively been in a business continuity position since mid-March with the COVID-19 issues. Management were working on a number of workstreams covering safeguarding, staff welfare, estate, curriculum and finances.

The emerging risks and current position were set out in the written report. Governors noted that all emerging risks related to Covid-19. Assurances were given that adequate management resource was in place to manage risks. The biggest long term risk was reduced enrolment in September. The actions being taken to mitigate this had been discussed in the Principal's Report earlier in the meeting.

An extract from the 4Risk system was attached for Governors to note. A more detailed exercise to review the Board Assurance Framework was planned for the autumn term. This would require Governor input.

A Governor commented on wording in relation to adult funding, and suggested some changes. The Director of Finance & MIS would action this.

It was **resolved** that Governors **approved** the Risk Management Annual Report.

**79.20 OBSERVATIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY, SAFEGUARDING AND HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE noted that the college website now had a statement on Black Lives Matter.

**80.20 CORPORATION COMMITTEE MINUTES AND REPORTS**

It was **resolved** that the following minutes and reports were **received and accepted**:

- Audit Committee 12 November 2019;
- Learning and Quality Committee 12 March 2020; and
- Finance and Resources Committee 7 May 2020.

**Director of  
Finance &  
MIS**

It was also reported that:

- Search and Governance Standards Committee met on 12 May 2020;
- Audit Committee met on 9 June 2020;
- Learning and Quality Committee met on 15 June 2020; and
- Finance and Resources Committee met on 23 June 2020.

No approved minutes of these meetings were yet available, although Governors noted the items discussed, as set out in the Clerk's paper.

Governors were advised that the recommendations of the various committees had been considered by Corporation earlier in the meeting or at previous meetings, with the exception of audit planning documents considered at Audit Committee. The audit documents were available for Governors to review on the secure governance portal, but the recommendation from the Committee was for all to be approved.

Governors **resolved** to **approve** the following:

- Internal Audit Strategy 2020/21 to 2022/23; and
- External Audit Plan and Strategy.

Governors **resolved** to **accept** the Corporation Committee Minutes and Report.

#### 81.20 CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair reported that he continued to attend the AOC's regular Chairs' online briefings. These were informative and gave confidence that Walsall was experiencing and dealing with similar issues to those of other colleges during the coronavirus pandemic.

The usual cycle of college meetings had been held, and he had attended some of the committee meetings as an observer. He continued to recommend this to other Governors. Audit was particularly interesting to give an overview of college activities for new Governors. Although the meetings cycle was now concluding, it was planned to hold one to one meetings with Governors and to have a virtual 'get together' in August. Dates would be confirmed.

The Principal was asked to pass the thanks of all Governors to staff for the work that they had continued to do for the benefit of students at this difficult time.

Finally, the Chair noted that this was Carol Flood's last meeting after almost a decade of dedicated service as a Governor. She had made a magnificent contribution to the work of the Corporation and its committees, notably as Chair of Learning and Quality Committee for many years. The comments of the Chair were echoed by the Principal and other Governors.

Carol responded by thanking the Chair for his kind words and acknowledging the contributions of current and former members of Learning and Quality Committee. It had been a pleasure to be a part of Corporation and she looked forward to keeping in touch.

Principal

**82.20 MATTERS OF REPORT**  
None.

**83.20 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**  
Tuesday 20 October 2020 at 1730 hrs.

The meeting ended at 2035 hrs.

How Governors challenged management		Impact of meeting on College	
71.20	Whether there were sufficient resources to deal with safeguarding matters.	68.20	Re-appointed two External Governors.
72.20	Questioned support for student and staff wellbeing.	71.20	Received safeguarding training.
74.20	Questioned the digital skills support to ensure that all students were able to access.	72.20	Approved Safeguarding Annual Report.
77.20	Questioned new subcontracting arrangement with WMCA.	73.20	Approved Health and Safety Policy.
77.20	Considered the impact of CITB if acquired in year.	73.20	Approved Environmental Policy.
		77.20	Approved budget for 2020/21.
		78.20	Approved Risk Management Annual Report.
		80.20	Approved Internal Audit Strategy, External Audit Plan and Strategy AND Funding Assurance Plan and Strategy for 2019/20.