

WALSALL COLLEGE
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATION
HELD ON THURSDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2020 AT 1730 HRS
VENUE: VIA ZOOM

- PRESENT:**
- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Allan Pinnegar, Chair | Jat Sharma, Principal and Chief Executive |
| Alan Woods | Jo Hughes |
| Fiona Macmillan | Graham Ward |
| Alastair Scales | Mary Mahoney |
| Aisling McGowan | Dave Wheeler |
| Stuart Pedley-Smith (from 1805 hrs) | Charlotte Bosworth (from 1805 hrs) |
- TOGETHER WITH:**
- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| James Norris | Assistant Principal Commercial Development |
| David Turner | Assistant Principal Quality and HE |
| Richard Brennan | Assistant Principal Curriculum |
| Matthew Brown | Director of Finance & MIS |
| Jo Broderick | Interim Head of Apprenticeships |
| Rachel Davies | Head of Cluster, Foundation and Community Learning |
| Alison Buick | Clerk to the Corporation |
- APOLOGIES:** Jaswinder Dhillon, Paul Dale, Louise Miller

20.21 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS AND APPOINTMENT OF A NEW GOVERNOR

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. The purpose of this key meeting was to review, and if agreed, approve both the SAR and the Statutory Accounts for 2019/20.

Governors were asked to observe usual virtual meeting protocols by raising their hand if they wished to speak and remain muted if not speaking.

The Clerk reported that an application had been received from a prospective new Governor, and that following the individual meeting the Chair and Vice Chair, the Search and Governance Standards Committee wished to recommend their appointment.

Governors **resolved** to **appoint** Dr Heather Lodge as an External Governor for a three-year term of office ending on 25 November 2023.

21.21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Jaswinder Dhillon, Paul Dale, Louise Miller.

22.21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

23.21 DRAFT SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2019/20 AND DRAFT QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2020/21

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE presented the report, which related to the draft Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2019/20. The overall judgements were that the college was graded

as good in all four of the key Ofsted Common Inspection Framework areas, these being:

1. Quality of Education;
2. Behaviour and Attitudes;
3. Personal Development;
4. Leadership and Management.

This mirrored the judgements in the published Ofsted report following the inspection in March 2020. Provision for High Needs learners was also self-assessed as outstanding, which matched the Ofsted report. Safeguarding was effective.

As Governors were aware, the self-assessment was against the new Ofsted inspection framework in place since September 2019.

Evidence would be presented to Governors to validate the judgements and at the end of the meeting, Governors would be invited to confirm whether they agreed with the judgements and were happy to approve the SAR and QIP. Governors were reminded of Ofsted's expectations of their role in respect of the quality of teaching, learning and the student experience. The completed SAR would be uploaded for Ofsted to review. This was not mandatory but college staff felt that it was best practice

Governors were also reminded of the college-wide process, through which every curriculum and support area had completed a SAR and QIP. This had been followed by a validation process led by the Assistant Principal Quality and HE. The SAR process had included HE, even though this was not within scope for Ofsted review, as the college felt it important to ensure that a consistent and robust quality assurance process was in place for all types of provision.

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE then referred to both his written report and a powerpoint presentation, noting the following aspects for Governors:

- The college had done well to change the culture and mindset to reflect the new EIF;
- Issues identified in the Ofsted report largely related to a lack of consistency in provision, so some pockets were being reviewed;
- The SAR highlighted the strengths and areas for improvement;
- There was a six-page QIP;
- There was a clear ambition to return to an Ofsted grading of outstanding across all provision by July 2022. However, progress had been hampered by Covid-19. The Ofsted visit had been in the first week of March and by the third week of March, most provision had moved online due to Covid-19. Further information on the impact of Covid-19 was on page 9 of the SAR document;
- Ofsted feedback had been that teaching and learning generally was very good;
- Plans were in place to work on performance management and CPD to improve teaching and learning further;
- The Behaviour and Attitudes grade was good due to some areas of low attendance. The ambition for attendance remained high, with this year's target being 90%;
- Personal Development had been graded as good as there were challenges around careers advice and industry placements;

- The Governance SAR validation meeting had taken place with the Chair of Corporation, and it had been agreed that it was again excellent;
- Recent student surveys indicated a high level of satisfaction with the college and that they felt well supported despite the challenges due to Covid-19;
- Ofsted had carried out a virtual visit to the college in June to review the student experience in lockdown as part of a wider review being done in the sector. There was no specific report for Walsall following this, but feedback had been provided to Governors at the time. This included Ofsted's recognition of the innovation shown and the college's support for students;
- The final part of the SAR document gave the contextual background for the college, which was an important factor;
- The QIP included a number of actions that had not been closed down in 2019/20 due to the pandemic. Where relevant, they had been rolled over into the new year.

Questions and comments were invited.

Governors discussed:

- The extent to which the detailed actions and timelines were shared with Ofsted;
- The ways in which staff were receiving support to improve consistency in teaching and learning;
- The QIP priorities.

24.21 SAR VALIDATION – CLUSTER AND DEPARTMENTAL PRESENTATIONS

Provision for Young People – Richard Brennan, Assistant Principal Curriculum

Governors were informed that the outturn for Young People was good when judged against the EIF. As always, there were pockets of outstanding provision and also some areas for improvement.

The written report highlighted the many key strengths which were summarised as:

- Progression and achievement rates were good;
- Teaching and learning were strong;
- The college was a busy, vibrant and respectful community. Behaviour and attitudes were good;
- Progress made in GCSE Maths and English was very strong. The college was in the top 25% of FE providers for Maths and the top third for English in terms of distance travelled. However, not enough students were gaining grade 4 or above, which was a key Ofsted focus;
- Curriculum intent being very strong in many areas;
- Strong and detailed feedback to study programme students.

The main areas for improvement related to:

- Improving achievement rates in functional skills English and Maths;
- Improving planning in areas identified with less strong progression, such as level 2 Health and Social Care;

- Improving the numbers of industry placements available to Level 3 students on study programmes; and
- Improving the achievement rates in some small pockets of provision;
- Improving attendance at GCSE Maths and English

Questions and comments were invited.

Governors discussed the importance of securing industry placements but recognised the challenges in the current circumstances. The Assistant Principal Curriculum noted recent Government guidance which meant that remote industrial placements were not permitted. The Principal stated that the Minister had been very clear on this in a recent meeting he had attended. It was confirmed that the Placements Coordinator and staff were working hard to ensure that employers understood what work experience requirements needed to be met.

A Governor asked how they would be kept up to date with T Level implementation, given the Government focus on this. It was agreed that T Level Leads would provide updates to the Learning and Quality Committee in February.

Assistant
Principal
Quality and
HE

Provision for Adults – Rachel Davies, Head of Cluster, Foundation and Community Learning

The Head of Cluster confirmed that achievement and progression rates for adults were very high, and that the quality of education was good. A significant distance had been travelled since the college had acquired WACC in 2018.

The presentation slides showed strengths and areas for improvement in respect of adult provision for each of the Ofsted judgement areas.

Governors noted the key aspects relating to provision for adults, including:

- Achievement on vocational programmes overall was high, although there had been a slight decline compared to the previous year. This was felt to be largely as a result of challenges with engagement of adults in lockdown;
- Attendance was low on some courses and progression to positive destinations was below the college average;
- Leadership and management was good. There was a need to ensure that adults had access to a wider range of support functions across all campuses and community venues

Questions and comments were invited.

Governors asked about issues identified in relation to Access to HE and Business. The Head of Cluster explained that some of the assessment practices in these areas needed to be improved. However, it was a very small percentage of the overall provision. The area had been in the courses in intensive care process in the previous year. A stronger teaching team was now in place and improvements were being seen in planning and delivery. The Principal added that his planned re-structure would further strengthen the coordination of the adult offer

A Governor asked how the college could address the issue of the gap between what Ofsted felt the adult offer should be include versus what adults actually wished to engage in. Adult courses needed to be relevant to be attractive. Staff agreed with the need to contextualise learning to workplaces and employment roles as far as possible. It could be difficult to balance the offer between student demand and Ofsted expectation. The use of online learning and bite sized additional courses to help students plan their next steps was key.

Apprenticeships and Wider ER Provision– James Norris, Assistant Principal Commercial Development and Jo Broderick, Interim Head of Employer Responsive

The Assistant Principal Commercial Development presented the SAR and QIP for Apprenticeships. The impact of Covid and the methodology changes on apprenticeships were outlined. Up until March there had been a good level of improvement seen, but since then the estimated downward impact on achievement was 8.2% compared to the previous year.

The self-assessed grade was good. This was based on the year-end outturn of 67.2% overall achievement. This was below target but felt to be reasonable taking onto account all of the circumstances affecting the year.

The key points in relation to apprentices were noted as:

- The achievement gap between frameworks and standards had narrowed;
- The analysis of achievements in different groups for age, gender, disability and ethnicity had been completed;
- Many strengths had been identified in the provision. There were also areas for improvement as set out in the written report and presentation;
- Quality of teaching and learning was good;
- Much CPD had been completed with trainer assessors in moving activities online. The success of this meant that activities would continue online where appropriate after the pandemic;
- Virtual learning was interactive, not just uploading of resources. There had been many online taught sessions, so this was a significant strength;
- Staff had continued to work throughout the summer period, and as a result had gained much valuable experience;
- EPA pass rates were high.

Questions were invited.

Governors asked how quality of teaching and learning in the areas was being assessed. The Interim Head of Apprenticeships outlined the processes in place, including learning walks, which had a focus on progress reviews.

There was a discussion about how colleges' apprenticeship delivery could be compared across the sector. There was currently no national data on this. Awarding bodies were keen to see this being developed.

The Assistant Principal Commercial Development commented on the Employment Gateway provision. This had been inspected by Ofsted as part of the adult provision and had been highly commented.

Governors asked about the SARs for CITB and the Cannock retail development. It was confirmed that these would be included within the different provision types for next year's SAR. Work had already started with CITB staff as part of their onboarding process.

It was suggested that further information on how improvements identified as necessary would be made would be helpful, as would the expected impact. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE confirmed that this would be covered at Quality Summit meetings in term 2 and at Learning and Quality Committee in February 2021.

The Chair concluded the discussions by thanking the staff for their presentations and reiterating that the Corporation was required to approve the SAR and QIP.

It was **resolved** that Governors **agreed** to approve the SAR and QIP.

25.21 COLLEGE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The Director of Finance & MIS presented his report, noting that the details had been considered at the Finance & Resources and Audit Committees as appropriate. It had been hoped that the accounts could be signed at this meeting, but this was no longer possible. KPMG were unable to sign their audit opinion due to delays in the ESFA issuing their final income statement for the year. It was not known when this would be received but was not expected until January. No changes were expected to any of the documents presented to Governors at this meeting, other than that the post balance sheet events wording would need to be changed to reflect the purchase of CITB.

Finance and Resources Committee had scrutinised the detail of the accounts at a meeting earlier in the week.

Given the delays, Governors had the option to delegate the signing of the accounts to the Chair and Principal once KPMG had completed their work, to convene an extraordinary Corporation meeting or to wait until the scheduled Corporation meeting on 28 January 2020.

Governors were reminded of their responsibilities in signing the accounts, including being comfortable with the assurances provided in the various documents, taking account of the views of the Finance and Resources Committee and Audit Committee, and being satisfied that the college was a going concern at the point of signing the accounts.

Governors' attention was drawn to the following highlights:

Draft Financial Statements

The financial outturn for 2019/20 was a statutory accounts loss of £21m and the audit opinion was unqualified. This was after a range of accounting adjustments, including the FRS17 actuarial loss. There had been a substantial movement in the pension liability. This had resulted in an accounting adjustment that had impacted on the overall reported result. Excluding the effects of this, the underlying operating position was good.

The report cover sheet set out the reconciliation from the July management accounts to the year-end statutory accounts. The accounting adjustments

were explained. The underlying trading performance had been good. Financial health at year-end was good, the ESFA had no concerns and KPMG had not raised any recommendations in their management letter. The internal audit annual report had a clean opinion.

Attention was drawn to the narrative of the accounts, which included commentary and key metrics on staffing, performance and governance. Governors were assured that the college framework of internal control was well managed and was subject to scrutiny through a variety of methods, including work that was presented to Audit Committee.

The Statement of Comprehensive Income and Expenditure was set out on p34 of the accounts and was in accordance with FRS102.

The Balance Sheet on p36 showed net assets of £16.9m.

Governors were reminded of their responsibility to conclude on the going concern of the college before approving the accounts.

There was a discussion about some of the narrative information included, whether some additional details should be included and whether some minor changes were needed to ensure consistency of wording. It was suggested that actions to mitigate the main risks be included. A final review of the contents would be undertaken prior to the sign off.

KPMG Audit Highlights Memorandum and Management Letter

- The paper was included for information as the detail had been considered at the November Audit Committee;
- There were two low priority control recommendations that had been agreed with management;
- As usual, a number of useful sector updates were included within the document. Governors were encouraged to read these.

Letter of Representation

This was the standard letter required under auditing standards. The contents were generic, with no college specific representations required.

Governors **resolved to approve** the statutory accounts and the Letter of Representation subject to any further adjustments resulting from receipt of the final ESFA income statement, and agreed that the Chair should sign both on behalf of the Corporation when KPMG had completed their work.

Regularity Audit Self-Assessment

This had been considered at both the Finance and Resources Committee and the Audit Committee. It was being presented to Corporation as the Chair was required to sign, in addition to the Principal. KPMG had used this when undertaking work to inform their Regularity opinion.

Broadway Training Limited, Student Trust Accounts and Student Union Accounts

All of the above were provided for completeness and information.

Internal Audit Annual Report

The paper was included for information as the detail had been considered at the November Audit Committee. A clean audit opinion, based on the work undertaken in the year, had been provided.

Audit Committee Annual Report to Corporation

The report had been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Post 16 Audit Code of Practice in place for the year, with the overall conclusion on page 9. This stated that the Audit Committee is satisfied as to the adequacy and effectiveness of the Corporation's assurance arrangements, framework of governance, risk management and control processes for the effective and efficient use of resources, solvency of the institution and the safeguarding of its assets. This would be submitted with the signed accounts.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Broadway Training Limited, Student Trust and Student Union accounts, as well as the Internal Audit Annual Report and the Audit Committee's Annual Report.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 28 January 2021 at 1730 hrs.

The meeting ended at 2005 hrs

How Governors challenged management		Impact of meeting on College	
24.21	Questioned how the college could address the gap in what Ofsted felt the adult offer should be versus what adults actually wished to engage in.	24.21	Approved SAR and QIP.
		25.21	Approved the statutory accounts and the Letter of Representation for signature by the Chair once KPMG had finalised their audit work.