

**WALSALL COLLEGE
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE LEARNING & QUALITY COMMITTEE
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 30 SEPTEMBER 2020 AT 1630 HRS
VENUE: VIA ZOOM**

PRESENT:	Alan Woods Paul Averis (from 1720 until 1845 hrs) Jo Hughes Mary Mahoney	Chair
TOGETHER WITH:	Jat Sharma David Turner Richard Brennan James Norris (Item 08.21) Jayne Holt Helena Platt (Item 10.21) Victoria Lynn-Robinson (Item 11.21) Alison Buick	Principal Assistant Principal Quality and HE Assistant Principal Curriculum Assistant Principal Commercial Development Assistant Principal Workforce Development and Learning Services Head of English and Maths Curriculum Manager, HE Clerk to the Corporation
APOLOGIES:	Jaswinder Dhillon.	

01.21 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the 2020-21 academic year and thanked them for their attendance. He was delighted to have been appointed as the new chair of a committee that was at the heart of the college business. There were many new and challenging initiatives ahead for the college, as well as the continuance of well-established areas of teaching and learning.

A particular welcome was extended to Mary Mahoney, attending the committee for the first time.

02.21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Jaswinder Dhillon.
Paul Averis would arrive late.

03.21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Alan Woods declared his employment as Chief Executive of an awarding body and that there was a small contract in place between his organisation and the college. Full details had been included in his declaration made in July 2020.

Mary Mahoney noted her employment at the University of Wolverhampton.

04.21 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2020, having been circulated, were taken as read and approved.

05.21 MATTERS ARISING

Governors reviewed the Action Points Record for Learning and Quality Committee and noted the following:

Item 27.20

The Freedom of Speech Policy had been drafted but not yet submitted as there was no immediate deadline from OfS. Jaswinder Dhillon had been invited to comment. It was **agreed** that the policy should be published and an update provided if comments were received after this.

Item 28.20

The QIP had been updated.

Item 40.20.1

Virtual Learning Walks for Governors were being scheduled. The Chair confirmed that he had attended with the Workforce Development Manager last week, and had seen an excellent session on Maths.

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE noted that there had been some technical difficulties for another Governor and that these were being looked at by IT. The Assistant Principal Curriculum thought this may be related to security settings on Moodle. The Clerk added that an alternative option for those without access to Teams was to provide a recording of the Learning Walk.

Item 40.20.2

The Ofsted report on student experiences in lockdown had been circulated as agreed.

Item 41.20

The HE position statement had been provided to Corporation in July 2020 as agreed.

06.21 DATA REPORT

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE commented on his report. It was important for Governors to have a view of current performance, although much of the data had yet to settle at this early stage of the academic year.

There were a significant number of results to be processed. However, it was confirmed that this would be completed by the next ILR deadline of 22 October.

Ascertaining starting points for new students was proving challenging, as their GCSE grades were based on Centre Assessments and the majority had been out of learning since March.

The Assistant Principal Curriculum commented that due to the ending of QCF qualifications, students that had started in 2019 had been enrolled onto two year qualifications. This would reduce the number completing in 2019/20 and therefore a drop in achievements had been forecast and discussed previously with Governors. ESFA were aware of this as an issue for the sector.

It was confirmed that there would be no published performance data for colleges this year due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Assistant
Principal
Quality
and HE

Results for GCSEs had improved, with 28% high grades achieved for English and 20.8% high grades for Maths. The final figures were subject to change as more results were processed.

A Governor commented that the Data report was clear and very helpful. It was recognised that it was too early to do any detailed analysis. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE confirmed this as a standing agenda item that would be updated for the next meeting.

The Chair asked if there had been any appeals against GCSE results. Around 40 appeals had been received, which was higher than in previous years. There were also 700 requests for autumn term re-sits, of which 430 were for Maths.

The Principal commented that the CAG process had been managed with integrity. The uplift at Walsall College had been 4% compared to 7% nationally. There were some concerns about the number of GCSE exams to be accommodated safely in the autumn term and the preparation required to get students ready for these.

There was a discussion about the need for formative assessments for vocational qualifications. These were important to provide evidence at year end if assessments were delayed or cancelled again. The Vice Principal Quality and HE confirmed that there were ongoing discussions about this with Pearson.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Data Report.

07.21 QUALITY ASSURANCE

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE presented his report. The college wished to be seen as an outstanding provider in all aspects of data, teaching & learning and the development of skills in its students and staff.

The following aspects were drawn to Governors' attention:

- The term had started well;
- There were secure systems in place for meeting and greeting students, as well as keeping students in bubbles. Expectations had been made clear at induction and were being re-enforced in tutorials. All students had designated social areas, including in tents that had been put up at the front of the college;
- The buildings felt safe;
- Attendance was 92% on average in the first weeks of term, compared to the target of 90%;
- Behaviour on the whole was exemplary in college. However, there had been some feedback from local employers, including Tesco, about behaviour in the town centre. The college was not accountable for student behaviour outside of college, although the Assistant Principal Quality and HE had written to all students to remind them of expectations in and out of college (including social distancing and wearing of face masks);
- Learning Walks were now taking place;
- There was a focus on the areas for development in the Ofsted report, particularly improving the consistency of teaching and learning;

The Chair noted the inclusion of the quality cycle information and asked for this to be issued to committee members in hard copy as they were difficult to read.

- The emerging SAR and QIP was noted. The college had ambitions to return to an Outstanding grade, but inevitably the pandemic had delayed some of the necessary actions. There would be a refocus on this during this term.

The Chair asked what the reaction to the re-grading had been in the local community. The Principal responded that there was no adverse impact on enrolments or the college reputation so far. There was a discussion about the ways on which the college worked with the local authority and other stakeholders to support the community. The college corporate strategy was being aligned to the priorities of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA). Walsall College was working on a series of pledges put forward by West Midlands colleges to WMCA. It was noted that the University of Wolverhampton was working on a public and community engagement strategy. It was **agreed** that the Principal and Mary Mahoney would discuss this further outside of the meeting.

The Chair asked the Staff Governor how staff generally felt about the college plans to regain Outstanding. The Staff Governor reported a mixed picture. Many staff were enthusiastic about the challenge of this, whereas others were concerned about workload implications. It was also the case that some staff were more willing to take risks in their teaching to make improvements, whereas others were more cautious in their approach.

- The college needed to focus on raising aspirations for the local communities. A student survey in lockdown suggested engagement of around 75%. The feedback from the survey was informing current planning.

A Governor commented that the feedback rating for Business and Computing were surprisingly low. It was confirmed that management were looking at this and were aware of some specific issues that had affected the feedback. The Courses in Intensive Care programme for the year included several of the programmes from this Cluster.

Feedback was starting to emerge from classes that were currently online due to self-isolating since the start of term. Students that had experience of online learning from last year had adapted better to this than those that had not.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Quality Assurance Report.

08.21 APPRENTICESHIPS AND COMMERCIAL REPORT

The Assistant Principal Commercial Development presented his report

The report covered:

- Projected year-end outturn for apprenticeship provision;
- Apprenticeship provision in intensive care for 2020/21;

- Subcontractor activity for 2020/21;
- Impact of Covid-19 on apprenticeship provision;
- Strategy for learning walks and staff development for the apprenticeships team in 2020/21; and
- Employment Gateway activity.

The college was on track to meet the 74% target outturn, although there was still much work ongoing to close down the year. End Point Assessments had been a particular challenge due to Covid-19 restrictions. There had been delays in booking for electrical and healthcare. There had been some breaks in learning for apprentices but fewer now than earlier in the pandemic.

There had been only four confirmed redundancies for apprentices, which was a pleasingly low number. The expected national dip in apprenticeship numbers had not happened, although there were concerns about what would happen when the furlough scheme ended in October.

Much had been learnt from online delivery, and aspects of this would be retained going forwards. Blended and online learning had worked well.

Two areas in intensive care were discussed.

Learning walk focus would be on supporting and reviewing the trainer assessor review process. This was in line with the Ofsted feedback. Particular development areas would be:

- Compliance and paperwork;
- Maths and English;
- Recognition of prior learning;
- Personal development;
- Identification and delivery of additional support in apprenticeships.

There were three subcontractor partners for the year. Two of these were for AEB contracts.

Employment Gateway activity had been slow over lockdown as referrals from Job Centre Plus were low. However, this area was starting to pick up again.

Work had continued for the WMCA Connecting Communities project during lockdown, and delivery had moved to telephone and online.

Questions and comments were invited.

Governors asked if there was scope to explore, broaden or increase provision to reflect the employment needs at present. It was noted that growth areas were education, business admin and healthcare. Recruitment to all of these at the moment was very high, as was construction. Governors noted this, and asked whether sufficient resources, including staff, were available to support this growth. The Assistant Principal did not have any concerns to highlight at the moment. Collaboration between the apprenticeship and curriculum teams was working well.

Some pre-employment training programmes were due to start. A new Professional Services traineeship would start in a few months. The Chair suggested that a data report for apprenticeships be provided for future meetings. He also asked where the responsibility for delivery of off the job training was. The Assistant Principal confirmed quality processes in place, such as learning walks and use of smart assessor.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Apprenticeships and Commercial Report.

09.21 CURRICULUM REPORT

The Assistant Principal Curriculum presented his report, which gave updates in the following areas:

- Enrolment to T Levels;
- Courses in intensive care process;
- Enrolment for young people;
- Enrolment for adults; and
- Planning for curriculum changes within adult provision.

T Levels

There had been a strong start in Construction, with 19 starts. Students had been co-interviewed with Balfour Beatty. There were 13 starts in Education & Childcare and only nine in Digital.

All T Level students had confirmed placements.

Other colleges were reporting similar numbers at this stage, with Construction appearing to be the most popular subject.

Courses in intensive care

The list of courses in intensive care was noted. There were various reasons for inclusion, including in some cases that courses were new and needed to be monitored.

Enrolment for young people

Recruitment had gone well, especially in Construction, Engineering and Science, and Health and Public Services. This was attributed to a high level of intervention to keep in touch with students and to do keep warm activities with them.

Take up for GCSE Maths and English was similar to last year. Walsall remained a low performing area for achieving five GCSEs at grade 9-5 including Maths and English.

All areas had elements of online learning, but these varied according to the subject. There was more synchronous and asynchronous delivery.

There had been some positive cases of Covid-19 in college. Staff were quickly learning how to deal with these, in terms of advising about self-isolating, providing guidance and identifying close contacts. There was additional monitoring and support in place for students doing remote learning.

Enrolment for adults

Recruitment was strong in some areas, including Construction, Engineering and Science. Additional student groups and more workshop spaces had been created.

There was a discussion about planning the adult curriculum, given that 90% of AEB was commissioned by WMCA with a focus on higher level qualifications. This did not always match the needs of the local communities for lower level qualifications. The Assistant Principal Curriculum was looking carefully at the adult offer, with the intention of engaging with WMCA early in the process to understand their requirements.

Governors asked how the Industrial Strategy was being used to inform curriculum planning. The Assistant Principal Curriculum confirmed that it was a key document being taken into account when considering the necessary curriculum innovation for the future.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Curriculum Report.

10.21 ENGLISH AND MATHS REPORT

The Head of English and Maths attended to present her report. The Chair noted that he had recently attended a Learning Walk for Maths, which had been a very useful experience.

This was the first English and Maths report since the Ofsted inspection in March 2020. The following were noted:

- Ofsted had completed deep dive reviews of functional skills Maths for adults and GCSE English;
- For Maths, inspectors had seen many good sessions, but had noted some concerns about attendance, achievement and stretch & challenge;
- In response, the college had appointed a new course leader for Maths and had changed to a longer, thinner teaching model. Stretch and challenge was a priority;
- In English there were more strengths than weaknesses identified. Attendance and achievement were the main concerns. Progress for English was good, but not recognised by Ofsted;
- Centre Assessed Grades (CAGs) had been awarded for over 3,000 learners in the summer. High grades had increased by 5% in both subjects;
- Online learning engagement in lockdown was very low.

Governors acknowledged the difficulties in calculating CAGs and thanked the staff for the work undertaken to ensure that this was done with integrity. It was explained that processes were in place to do assessments in year in case CAGs were needed again in 2021. Government plans for exams in 2021 had not yet been confirmed. It was agreed that the Head of English and Maths would discuss this further outside of the meeting with her Link Governor.

The appeals process was discussed. Some of the students that had submitted appeals had missed some of their scheduled assessments, which had made it harder to award a grade due to limited information. It was suggested and agreed that assessment dates for this year should be published for students, to try to minimise the number missed.

Head of
English
and Maths

Governors asked about current attendance. It was reported that adult attendance was variable. There was also a need to maintain students in bubbles which was challenging. 80% of delivery was face to face at the moment. However, during lockdown the English and Maths teams had embraced the technology needed to delivery online, and were far more confident in doing so now.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the English and Maths Report.

11.21 HIGHER EDUCATION REPORT

The report was presented by the Curriculum Manager for HE, and gave an update on key aspects of the provision:

- Enrolment was healthy at 93%. A new Diploma in Education and Training and a PGCE with Birmingham City University had been added in the last week;
- Teaching had started last week with a mix of face to face and remote learning. Most courses had 11-12 hours of teaching per week;
- There were opportunities to expand higher technical qualifications. Demand may increase when the furlough scheme ends;
- The Annual Assessment Board had signed off the 220 results for HE;
- The Access and Participation Plan required by OfS had been completed in June 2020 after a lengthy process. ;
- The successful impact of the Aspire to HE team was noted;
- The college had notified OfS of the planned cessation of activity at LCCA as a reportable event. OfS has since advised that it is not a reportable event as it did not change the college income by more than 1%;
- The meeting cycle for HE Student Voice had been reviewed and confirmed.

There was a discussion about the requirements of OfS, which applied equally to Walsall College, with a small HE cohort, and to considerably larger universities.

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE commented on the provision at LCCA:

- There were 156 students actively enrolled;
- Meetings had been held with the new Principal and staff;
- LCCA had made some staff redundant;
- The college Partnership Manager continued to work with LCCA staff and had visited in September;
- There had been some health and safety issues that had meant there was no access to the building in Holborn. These were being resolved and access was expected again from early October;
- A final assessment board would take place in November and the college final withdrawal from the provision would be in February 2021.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Higher Education Report.

12.21 WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION REPORT

The Assistant Principal Workforce Development and Learning Services presented her report, which covered the progress against the workforce development plan:

- The staff within the department were in high demand to support development of digital skills in lockdown;
- Technical support and training was provided for a range of systems, teaching and pedagogy needs;
- Different strategies for learning were in use – tech talks, one to one sessions and the Digital Educator programme;
- Staff had worked hard to continue to provide the annual staff development programme, which was now all online;
- Staff had been provided with updates on the Walsall College Graduate full package;
- Staff training had been provided on the updates to Keeping Children Safe in Education;
- The college had been successful in winning several bids, as outlined in the written report.

Governors asked about mental health support for staff. The Assistant Principal responded that there were programmes in place with the University of Wolverhampton, and that mental health first aiders and counsellors were available to staff. There was also a helpline available through Simply Health.

The Chair acknowledged the challenges to staff in adapting to online teaching and learning. The report had shown that the college had a wide range of resources available to facilitate this.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Workforce Development and Innovation Report.

13.21 ANNUAL SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS

Governors were asked to note the number and nature of complaints in 2019/20, as well as the trends identified. There had been only ten formal complaints in year, which indicated that issues were being resolved at a lower level before being escalated to a formal process.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Annual Summary of Complaints Report.

14.21 COMMITTEE WORKPLAN 2020/21

The Chair noted the draft workplan that had been provided. It was important to keep the plan under review and to be aware of topics that may need to be added or removed as the year progressed. As usual, Governors were reminded that they could request agenda items. The workplan was a starting point for agenda setting, and this was flexible to accommodate changing needs in year.

Governors **resolved** to **note** the Committee workplan.

15.21 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 24 February 2021 at 1630 hrs.

The Corporation would also hold a SAR Validation meeting on Thursday 26 November 2020.

The meeting ended at 1920 hrs.

How Governors challenged management		Impact of meeting on College	
08.21	Asked if there was scope to explore, broaden or increase provision to reflect the employment needs of the area at the moment.		
09.21	Asked how the Industrial Strategy was being used to inform curriculum planning.		