

**WALSALL COLLEGE
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SEARCH AND GOVERNANCE STANDARDS COMMITTEE
HELD ON THURSDAY 8 OCTOBER AT 1400 HRS
VENUE: VIA ZOOM**

PRESENT: Allan Pinnegar Chair
Graham Ward
Alastair Scales
Dave Wheeler
Jat Sharma Principal

TOGETHER WITH: Alison Buick Clerk to the Corporation

APOLOGIES: Alan Woods.

01.21 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and welcomed all to the meeting.

02.21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Alan Woods.

03.21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

04.21 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2020, having been circulated, were taken as read and approved. There was a short discussion about matters raised by Ofsted in relation to publication of minutes, and it was **agreed** that approved minutes be uploaded to the college website at the end of every term in future.

Clerk

A Governor asked about the timeline for developing the updated Corporate Plan. The Principal confirmed that he would cover this in some detail at the Governor Planning event on 12 October. However, it was expected to conclude this in January/February 2021. The Chair asked whether the wider context, including the White Paper, would also be covered. The Principal responded that the White Paper was not yet issued; however he would cover some of the expected themes. Priorities remained on supporting students into jobs.

05.21 MATTERS ARISING

The Action Points Record was reviewed and the following updates were noted:

Item 32.19

The Clerk had drafted personalised role descriptions for chairs, and these had been included for review with the meeting papers.

Governors agreed that they were happy with the detail, subject to the addition of value for money as a focus for Finance and Resources Committee. The role descriptions would be added to Governance at Walsall College.

Clerk

Item 06.20

Due to Covid-19 restrictions, it was not appropriate to pursue the option of Governors making a video for the website. Instead it was agreed that the Governor testimonials already on the website be reviewed and if necessary updated.

Clerk

Item 19.20.1

Jaswinder Dhillon had been re-appointed.

Item 19.20.2

L&Q Committee had met in September with the new Chair in place.

Item 22.20

The next planned Governor Training event, on 12 October, would be recorded.

Item 29.20.1

This item was superceded as it was felt that there was now sufficient HE representation on Corporation. Recruitment focus was now on employer input.

Item 29.20.2

The Clerk had written to Tasleem Akhter as agreed.

Item 30.20

Virtual Governor meetings would continue for the foreseeable future and be reviewed at regular intervals.

Item 31.20.1

It was agreed that the action log for Student Voice Committee would be re-instated.

Clerk

Item 31.20.2

A virtual meeting of Chairs was to be arranged.

Item 31.20.3

The Chair of Audit Committee expressed his ongoing concerns about the updates to the Board Assurance Framework and the Risk Register. The Principal confirmed that this would be covered at Governor Training on 12 October.

Item 31.20.4

Governors present confirmed that they wished to continue to use Convene. In one to one discussions with the Chair, no significant concerns about Convene had been raised. It was suggested and **agreed** that a reminder about the Convene functionality be issued to Governors with training if required.

Clerk

Item 33.20

The Principal had provided regular updates to Governors during the summer period as requested.

Item 34.20

Sustainable and ethical governance would be covered later on the agenda.

06.21 CORPORATION MEMBERSHIP

Terms of Office

Alastair Scales' term of office would end on 1 February 2021.

This would take the total number of external Governor vacancies to three.

Student Governors

Student Governors for 2020/21 needed to be appointed. Processes had been delayed due to the closure of the College in the summer term to most students due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The Student Union had started a process to elect a new President and the result would be known after half term. The appointment of a second Student Governor would follow on from this.

It was proposed and **agreed** that Khuram Mahmood's term of office be extended until 3 November to ensure continuity of student representation on Corporation.

External Governor Vacancies and Recruitment

There was a wide-ranging discussion about the need to recruit new External Governors and how to advertise the positions. It was felt that the skills gap created by the departure of Alastair Scales needed to be considered further. Dave Wheeler expressed interest in becoming Link Governor for Foundation and Community Learning after February 2021. This would be reviewed.

It was noted that the AOC was setting up an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group. A close eye would be kept on the progress of this, as it was agreed that further diversity in Corporation would be beneficial, although this would be considered alongside the need to recruit the skills required. The Chair asked whether enough was being done to attract diverse applicants and what else could be done.

A Governor suggested that a Governor recruitment strategy was needed. This would be considered.

The Principal had some contacts at the Chamber of Commerce, and had also been in touch with a former Governor. He noted that the FE White Paper was likely to comment on governance, and possibly payment of Chairs, which would be in line with Housing, NHS and other sectors.

It was agreed that there was a more robust process for recruitment in place now, as this enabled discussions with candidates about expectations and time commitment.

The Clerk had received one application via the website and the Chair wished to arrange a meeting with them.

Committee Membership

The Committee Membership for 2020/21 was discussed and **agreed**.

Link Governors and Policy

The proposed Link Governors for 2020/21 were discussed and **agreed**. The Link Governor Policy had been refreshed and was also **agreed**.

Chair

Clerk/
Chair

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Corporation Membership report.

07.21 GOVERNOR TRAINING: PLANS AND PROGRESS

The Clerk introduced the paper, noting the training that had taken place in 2019/20 and outlining the plans for 2020/21. There had been limited opportunities for external training and only a very small amount of take up by Governors. Training had been offered internally via the Exec and SMT staff, and included safeguarding, equality & diversity and Ofsted preparation. There had also been sessions at Governor Planning. It was also the case that Governor knowledge of the college and curriculum was being improved through participation in learning walks, which had greatly increased in the last 12 months.

Governors noted that the AOC had provided a range of online training and webinars since March that had been helpful during the pandemic.

A Governor suggested that some training on environmental issues, to help shape the discussions on the college strategy, and on value for money as a general topic, would be beneficial. These would be considered for future Governor Training sessions.

Principal

Governors **resolved** to receive the Governor Training report.

08.21 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR THE WORK OF THE CORPORATION, INCLUDING ATTENDANCE

The Clerk highlighted the performance indicators for the Corporation that had been agreed at the start of 2019/20. Actual performance against these in year was set out in the detailed report. Average attendance at Corporation meetings had continued at the target level of 80%. Sector information currently available, based on returns from 82 colleges, showed average attendance of 84%. Walsall therefore rated below the national average on this measure.

A Governor suggested a new indicator for 2020/21 relating to celebrating student success. Governors would report their attendance at events to the Clerk and this would be collated.

**All
Governors
Clerk**

It was also suggested that the effectiveness of chairing could be included more explicitly in the committee self-assessments every summer. This could be against the role descriptions agreed earlier in the meeting.

Clerk

The BME data presented was noted.

It was **resolved** that Governors received the Performance Indicators report.

09.21 SUSTAINABLE AND ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

The Clerk noted that the report had been produced in response to a Governor request. It was a very broad area, so this report provided some key information to start a discussion with the committee.

Ethical governance was not a new topic. Governors were well informed about the Nolan Principles relating to conduct in public life. These had been published many years ago, and were referred to in new Governor inductions and Governance at Walsall College.

Sustainable governance was an area that was being established at Walsall alongside the development of the Environmental Strategy and the newly formed committee in this area. It had been a topic of discussion with Governors for some time, and some specific management actions were being developed as a result.

A Governor commented on the importance of this area and the need to always present the college in the best possible light. Demonstrating high standards was one way of doing this. The college membership of EAUC was queried. The Clerk would check this with the Director of Operations and Resources.

Clerk

The need for an ethical leadership policy was considered. Governors felt that areas such as employee wellbeing, community support, the value and purpose of the college, social justice and responsibilities to the local community were all key elements for inclusion. The Principal agreed with the sentiments and noted that the areas were part of wider consideration in the update of the corporate strategy. It was noted that ethical governance principles were included within Governance at Walsall College, albeit not explicitly referred to in this way. Some additional aspects of the committee paper could be incorporated into Governance at Walsall College.

Clerk

A Governor suggested that gaining ISO 2600 accreditation could be beneficial to the college. The Principal would look in to this.

Principal

It was **resolved** that Governors received the Sustainable and Ethical Leadership Report.

10.21 GOVERNOR EXPENSES BUDGET

The Clerk explained the budget for 2020/21 that had been agreed with the Director of Finance & MIS and noted the performance against the 2019/20 budget.

It was **resolved** that Governors **noted** the budget for 2020/21.

11.21 GOVERNANCE SAR AND QIP

The Clerk gave an update on the current position for the Governance SAR and QIP, which was due to be validated by the Assistant Principal Quality and HE in the following week. The document had been drafted and passed to the committee members for comment. Some initial comments had been received from the Assistant Principal Quality and HE, and these had been taken into account in the version presented.

Governors discussed areas that could be considered for future training events, including Maths and English, and also work experience. It was also felt that further information on student voice may be required at Corporation. The Clerk noted that a Student Services report was included on the Corporation agenda for 20 October. The Principal added that there had been a noticeable gap in this area since the former Director of Student Services had retired. This would be addressed in the planned re-structure.

It was **resolved** that Governors received the Governance Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan update.

12.21 GOVERNANCE UPDATES

The Clerk referred to her report which covered:

- FE White Paper; and
- Spending Review.

The White Paper had not been published yet although it was expected this term. It was unclear if the Spending Review would go ahead or not.

The Principal commented on possible areas of coverage in the White Paper, including measures to give the Secretary of State more powers to intervene where governance was perceived to be weak, a focus on higher level qualifications, development of employer relationships, investment in the FE workforce and equality, diversity and inclusion. At Walsall there was a continued focus on day to day issues in managing the pandemic. However, there was a recognition that fostering excellent employer relationships was key, and also that there was a tension between providing high level courses to meet funding requirements and meeting the community needs for lower level qualifications.

A Governor noted that DfE had emphasised its interest in a German-style model of FE and asked what this meant in reality. It was explained that the German model had stronger coordination of technical education between school and college

A Governor asked whether Walsall expected to benefit from additional funding for Level 3 qualifications as announced by the Government in the previous week. The Principal responded that it was too early to say. The guidance on this so far was limited, and it seemed that the Government would determine the qualifications to which this would be applied.

It was agreed as positive that the skills agenda seemed to be a higher Government priority now. The funding balance may move more in favour of colleges and away from universities.

There was a discussion about the history of Walsall College and whether this could be documented to add some context to the corporate strategy. This would be considered.

Governors **resolved** to receive the Governance Updates report and to note the contents.

13.21 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was **resolved** that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday 26 January 2021 at 1000 hrs.

The meeting ended at 1150 hrs.

How Governors challenged management		Impact of meeting on College	
04.21	Asked about the timeline for completing the corporate plan update.	04.21	Agreed that approved minutes would be added to the website at the end of each year.
05.21	Expressed concern about the need to update the Board Assurance Framework and the Risk Register.	06.21	Agreed to extend the term of office of the Student Union President until half term to secure continued student input to Corporation whilst the election process was concluded.
		06.21	Agreed Committee Memberships AND Link Governors for 2020/21.