

**WALSALL COLLEGE
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATION
HELD ON TUESDAY 23 MARCH 2021 AT 1730 HRS
VENUE: VIA ZOOM**

PRESENT:

Allan Pinnegar, Chair	Jat Sharma, Principal and Chief Executive
Alan Woods (until 1910 hrs)	Heather Lodge (from 1750 hrs)
Fiona Macmillan (until 7pm)	Charlotte Bosworth
Jaswinder Dhillon	Graham Ward
Stuart Pedley-Smith	Mary Mahoney
Aisling McGowan	Dave Wheeler (from 1755 hrs)
Louise Miller	Shelby Lintern
Paul Averis (from 1820 hrs)	

TOGETHER WITH:

Paul Dale	Associate Governor
James Norris	Assistant Principal Commercial Development
David Turner	Assistant Principal Quality and HE
Richard Brennan	Assistant Principal Curriculum
John Adams	Director of Commercial Projects
Deb Rajania (until 1835 hrs)	Director of Operations and Resources
Alison Buick	Clerk to the Corporation

APOLOGIES: Jo Hughes, Matthew Brown

42.21 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. Governors were reminded of the usual protocol to raise their hand if they wished to speak. Given the size of the agenda, all were asked to be concise in presentations and strategically focused in questions.

43.21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Jo Hughes, Matthew Brown.

44.21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no additional declarations of interest.

Jaswinder Dhillon had a standing declaration relating to membership of local community and educational organisations.

Alan Woods also had a standing declaration due to his employment as Chief Executive of an awarding body. As previously noted, his organisation had a small contract with the college. Alan was also the Co-Chair of the Federation of Awarding Bodies.

45.21 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2021 having been circulated, were taken as read and approved.

46.21 MATTERS ARISING

Governors reviewed the Action Points Record and noted the following:

Item 06.21

There was no update on the revision to the safeguarding policy.

Item 33.21

EDI objectives had been added to the agenda for the Equality and Diversity Committee meeting on 30 March 2021.

Item 34.21

Governors had been provided with the latest version of the corporate plan and this would be discussed later in the meeting.

Item 36.21

There was no Student Services report for this meeting so this item would be carried forward.

47.21 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Principal presented his report and drew attention to the following specific aspects:

- The college had provided a lateral flow testing facility for students for the first two weeks of re-opening, in line with government guidance. 2800 tests had been completed in the previous week, with only three positive cases identified. The system had been extremely well organised. Sufficient testing kits had been received to allow students to home test until at least Easter;
- Work was continuing on the staffing re-structure and consultations had started in the last week. The overriding driver was to move back towards an outstanding judgement by Ofsted, hence the rationale was quality rather than financially focused. A priority was to give all students access to employers in the classroom;

For reasons of confidentiality, other details relating to the re-structure have been minuted separately.

- Work was continuing on the college elements of the Walsall Town Centre plan. A funding bid had been submitted for the extension at Green Lane. Discussions on this had taken place with Exec, the Chair and the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee. At this stage, there was no firm financial commitment on the part of the college. More detail would be brought back to a future meeting.

Questions and comments were invited.

Governors discussed the Town Centre bids. The funding for Walsall had not yet been confirmed. The college was currently at stage one of the process. There had been Government announcements on other town centre funding across the country, but not yet for Walsall. In the event that Walsall did secure £25m, part of this was ring fenced for the Green Lane development.

The second part of the Principal's report was the Curriculum Update, and this was presented by the Assistant Principal Curriculum. This covered the following:

- Face to face teaching had re-started from 8 March. Guidance on this had been received on 22 February so there had been a short window for preparation. Curriculum Managers had re-configured timetables so that approximately 51% of delivery was face to face teaching and 49% was via remote learning per week. There were variations dependant on the type of course;
- There was a balance to be struck between DfE guidance to bring students back and PHE guidance on social distancing;
- On 8 March, 500 students out of all 16-18 and adult students were RAG rated as red due to being at risk of not achieving. Curriculum teams were regularly reviewing students and this number had dropped by around 20% to date;
- The level of engagement to date was pleasing;
- Mask wearing guidance was mandatory but there were 160 students that had been agreed as exempt, compared to 240 in the previous term;
- Curriculum planning for next year had started. Adult and community plans would be discussed with WMCA. There would be a new T Level offer, which was expected to take the number of students across years 1 and 2 to 174 from September.

The final part of the Principal's Report was presented by the Assistant Principal Commercial Development. Governors noted that:

- Apprenticeships and traineeships were on track to meet target outturns;
- Retention was high, at 83%;
- There were pressures in some sectors, such as the NHS, due to breaks in learning as a result of Covid factors;
- End Point Assessments were being continued, as flexibly as possible. Of those completed, high levels of success were being seen;
- Apprenticeship incentives were being promoted with employers and starts remained relatively high. There were some concerns about recruitment in some sectors;
- The apprenticeships team had continued to complete CPD which was aligned to the agreed QIP and to the overall college ambition to achieve an outstanding Ofsted rating;
- A Quality Summit had been held in the previous week, attended by the Chair as Link Governor;
- A number of bidding activities were noted;
- Planning was ongoing for the Lifetime Skills offer from April, when new Government funding would be available;
- Trading at CCM was healthy after the first three months since acquisition. There was a three month waiting list for scaffolding courses, so it was clear that demand remained high;
- Two students had recently won AOC student of the year awards;
- The launch event for the Digital Innovation Hub had recently been held.

Governors commented on the general difficulties in the apprenticeships market at present, and recognised the efforts and successes of the Walsall team in maintaining a good level of recruitment.

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

48.21 CORPORATE STRATEGY

The Principal noted that the final proposed version of the Strategy had been provided to Governors, and that this took account of all comments previously received. Approval was now needed so that it could be issued for consultation after Easter.

Governors **resolved to approve** the Corporate Strategy.

49.21 QUALITY UPDATE REPORT

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE presented his report and highlighted the key aspects. Quality matters had been discussed in detail at the Learning and Quality Committee meeting on 24 February. The committee had also received presentations on T Levels and Work Experience.

- Most Quality Summits planned this term had been postponed to allow staff time to plan for the full re-opening from 8 March. However, the Quality Summit for ER had taken place in the previous week;
- Awarding bodies had started to communicate their expectations for the summer exam series, although formal government guidance on awarding of grades had not yet been published. Moderation and appeals processes were expected to be very different this year. A strong range of evidence would be needed where teachers were assessing grades, in case they were selected for moderation or an appeal was received;
- 409 students were now RAG rated as being at risk, which was half of the number in the first lockdown. Of these:
 - 60% were male;
 - around 100 were in Construction and Engineering;
 - Attendance was lowest in Creative Industries but this area had the lowest number of at risk students;
 - 44% were BAME, which was an improvement as there had been 68% BAME at risk in the first lockdown;
 - Most of the 409 were 16-18 with 103 being adults.
- Overall attendance was 85.3%, well below the pre Covid target of 90%. The best performing cluster on attendance was Health and Public Services, at almost 90%. Overall attendance at live sessions was 79.5%
- The results of surveys issued in the year to date were noted. The apprenticeships survey had been particularly positive, with over 90% recommending the college. An employer survey would be issued in April. All survey questions that had 3% or higher levels of dissatisfaction were being reviewed in detail. Levels of dissatisfaction in some areas, such as remote learning, were much higher than in previous years. This was felt to reflect the Covid-19 circumstances and that students were keen to return to college;

- 55% of learning walks had been completed (230 staff) to date with the rest scheduled. 350 actions/opportunities for improvement had been recorded.

Comments and questions were invited.

A Governor asked about the recorded feedback from learning walks, where things that had not gone well were listed. There were 52 in the 'other' category, which seemed high. The Assistant Principal commented on the variety of issues that had been noted and fed back. Some were very nuanced to the remote sessions that had been viewed, but would be further investigated. Comparisons to the previous year were difficult as there was no established baseline. However, there was more data available than last year.

Governors asked about preparations for potential future lockdowns and what lessons had been learned from the use of technology and blended learning. It was confirmed that individual curriculum teams were using previous experience to inform their planning. The results of the teaching and learning survey on remote learning were also being reviewed and shared with Curriculum Managers. It was agreed that the future resilience of learners for remote activities was key. Virtual work experience weeks had been very successful and it was hoped that this would continue as a positive way to engage students with employers. Curriculum planning was including elements of remote learning from September, so this would become part of the normal mode of delivery for most courses. It would also enable a flexible approach to switching to remote delivery if there was a future lockdown or a winter crisis next year. A Governor suggested that student voice feedback was also essential to the design of future curriculum and delivery.

A Governor commented on the important distinction between online teaching and online learning, as discussed at the recent Governor Training event.

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE confirmed that information for Governors to access recorded learning walks had been emailed out earlier in the day.

It was noted that apprentices had adapted well to remote learning, although there was a clear desire to return to face to face activities. Remote learning gave an option to broaden the apprenticeship offer to a wider geographical area. The feeling that students wished to have more face to face learning had been discussed at the recent Student Voice Committee. Engagement online seemed to be declining due to 'zoom fatigue'. It was a complex area to balance, given all of the government guidance and individual's personal circumstances.

The new Digital Innovation Hub had recently been opened. This would provide project based learning for students. Staff were working collaboratively to develop digital content.

The Student Union President commented on the enhancements made to the online learning resources and acknowledged that there was a lot of material available. She agreed with the comments made about online

learning, feeling that feedback from students now was that it was hard to stay motivated after such a long period of online working and being isolated from peers.

Staff agreed that motivation was hard to sustain in the circumstances. Catch up funding had been allocated by the government and this would be used to support students in a variety of ways.

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

There was a ten minute comfort break.

50.21 FINANCE REPORT TO FEBRUARY 2021

The Principal presented the report in the absence of the Director of Finance & MIS.

The pandemic continued to have an adverse impact on the College's financial position with the year to date deficit being (£481k) compared to the budgeted position of (£369k). This was an improvement of £154k on the position reported in January due to non-pay costs continuing to be below budget due to lockdown and remote learning. Income was around £600k behind budget. Some of this was due to the withdrawal from LCCA.

AEB was affected by adult enrolments. Final government guidance on tolerance levels for the year were awaited but expected to be around 90%. Adult enrolments were expected to increase now that the college was fully open. The current position was 89%.

The year-end forecast was a deficit due to reduced income. However there was still T Level funding to be released and some ongoing costs due to Covid-19. Some of the Covid costs, such as for the lateral flow testing, may be funded in due course. There was too much uncertainty still in the forecast figures and for this reason decisions on a pay award would be deferred. It was also noted that pay costs as a percentage of turnover were high so the impact of a pay award on this would need to be considered.

A Governor commented that the AOC recommended pay award was 1% and suggested that this needed consideration by the Corporation. The Principal would bring back further analysis in May.

Financial health remained Good and cash balances were healthy.

The deadline for spend of allocated capital funds had been extended to September 2021.

There was a discussion about the risks of AEB clawback. Devolution meant that WMCA was managing the adult and community funding. At present, it was difficult to quantify the likelihood and extent of any clawback.

A Governor noted that there had been a 50% drop in adult and community learning nationally, and that the picture at Walsall was very encouraging in comparison. The Principal agreed, and confirmed that compared to last year, adult income was 5-7% higher.

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

Principal

51.21 CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair commented on his recent activities, which included:

- Attendance at the ER Quality Summit;
- Ongoing Governor recruitment;
- Attendance at the AOC Chairs' Network;
- Chairs' meeting, which had been extremely productive.

Governors were encouraged to attend Quality Summits if possible where invited, as it had been a worthwhile experience to gain further knowledge of the area.

Committee Chairs agreed that their recent meeting had been a useful catch up and that it would continue termly.

52.21 GOVERNANCE MATTERS

The Clerk's paper gave an update on the planning of the meeting schedule for 2021/22. This was being considered by the committee chairs and the final version would be brought to the next meeting for approval.

53.21 OBSERVATIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY, SAFEGUARDING, PREVENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY

None.

54.21 CORPORATION COMMITTEE MINUTES AND REPORTS

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

Learning and Quality Committee 30 September 2020;
Search and Governance Standards Committee 8 October 2020;
Audit Committee 17 November 2020;
Finance and Resources Committee 24 November 2020; and
Student Voice Committee 27 November 2020.

It was also reported that:

Search and Governance Standards Committee met on 26 January 2021;
Finance and Resources Committee met on 23 February 2021;
Remuneration Committee met on 24 February 2021;
Learning and Quality Committee met on 24 February 2021;
Student Voice Committee met 11 March 2021; and
Audit Committee met on 16 March 2021.

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 committee minutes included in their packs had been considered by Corporation in previous meetings and there were no further matters needing discussion at this time.

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

55.21 MATTERS OF REPORT

None.

56.21 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was **resolved** that the next meeting would be held Tuesday 25 May 2021 at 1730 hrs via Zoom.

The meeting ended at 1940 hrs.

How Governors challenged management		Impact of meeting on College	
47.21	How confident the Principal was that the staffing re-structure would achieve the aims of improving curriculum quality.	48.21	Approved Corporate Strategy.
49.21	How the college was preparing for a potential future lockdown and how lessons had been learned from use of technology and blended learning,		
50.21	That the AOC recommendation of a 1% pay award should be considered by Corporation		