

**WALSALL COLLEGE**  
**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SEARCH AND GOVERNANCE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**  
**HELD ON TUESDAY 11 MAY 2021 AT 1000 HRS**  
**VENUE: VIA ZOOM**

**PRESENT:** Allan Pinnegar                      Chair  
                  Alan Woods  
                  Jat Sharma                                  Principal & Chief Executive  
                  David Wheeler  
                  Graham Ward

**TOGETHER WITH:** Alison Buick                      Clerk to the Corporation

**APOLOGIES:**                      None

**24.21 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS**

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

**25.21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

None.

**26.21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no reported changes to declarations of interest.

**27.21 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2021, having been circulated, were taken as read and approved.

**28.21 MATTERS ARISING**

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

Item 05.21.1

There was no progress to report on Governor testimonials.

Item 05.21.2

New Governors had been provided with details for access to and use of Convene.

Item 08.21.1

Governors had been unable to attend any college events due to the pandemic.

Item 08.21.2

Reviews of committee effectiveness would take place this term.

Item 09.21.1

Section on ethical governance to be added to Governance at Walsall College at update in summer 2021.

Item 09.21.2

ISO accreditation would be considered as part on ongoing development of environmental strategy.

There was a wider discussion about ISO accreditation. Governors felt that it may be useful to be able to demonstrate compliance with ISO standards when bidding for funding and contracts in future, as this may become a more frequent requirement. However, the financial costs were acknowledged.

The Principal confirmed that progress was being made in respect of the environmental strategy and that the newly formed committee would meet in June 2021.

Item 19.21.1

Governor terms of office had been circulated as requested.

Item 19.21.2

The skills audit would be covered at a later agenda item.

Item 19.21.3

The Principal would invite the new FE Commissioner to a future Governor Training event.

Item 21.21.1

Learning Walk information had been shared with Governors.

Item 21.21.2

Videos clips of teaching and learning had been shared as agreed.

Item 21.21.3

The public benefit statement would be refreshed for the next set of accounts in the autumn term.

Item 21.21.4

The Good Governance assessment had been updated as suggested.

**29.21 CORPORATION MEMBERSHIP**

The Clerk referred Governors to her written report and the following was discussed:

Terms of Office

Governors noted the Governor terms of office set out in the written report.

Charlotte Bosworth and Paul Averis both had terms of office expiring in July 2021 and were willing to be re-appointed. Committee members considered that both had made excellent contributions to the work of Corporation and it was **agreed** that both should be recommended to Corporation for appointment for a second three-year term of office.

An individual that had been due to be considered for appointment had withdrawn his application, so there remained two vacancies for External Governors.

Student Governors

Both Student Governors had been appointed until 8 July 2021. The elections for a new Student Union President had not received any applications so this had been deferred until the autumn term. It was suggested and **agreed** that the terms of office for both Student Governors

be extended into the autumn term, if they were willing and able to continue. This would depend on whether they intended to enrol as students again in September 2021. The Clerk would establish this.

Clerk

The Principal noted his intention to review the operation of Student Services as part of the ongoing staffing re-structure. Governors expressed a wish to have more interaction with different groups of students, for example through Learning and Quality Committee. The Principal would consider this.

Principal

*Post Meeting note – Shelby Lintern will be leaving at the end of this academic year and therefore is not eligible to continue. Louise Miller has confirmed that she does not intend to re-stand as Student Union President for 2021/22. The roles of Student Governor will be advertised in the autumn term.*

#### External Governor Vacancies and Skills Audit

There were currently two vacancies for an External Governor.

The general recruitment processes for new Governors were discussed.

The Chair, Vice Chair and Clerk had recently met a prospective Governor who had submitted an application form. The application details had been circulated to other members of the committee and were considered. It was agreed that the candidate had many skills and attributes to offer, including experience in education and understanding of the local Walsall area. He was involved in several other boards and educational institutions.

Following discussion, it was **agreed** to offer the candidate a position as an Associate Governor for Learning and Quality Committee for one year, and if they wished to accept this, to recommend this appointment for Corporation approval on 25 May 2021.

The possibility of using a recruitment specialist to identify prospective governors was considered. The Vice Chair had used this very successfully in his own organisation recently. The following were noted:

- Potential costs of this approach versus the benefits of accessing a wider pool of individuals;
- Whether current processes sold the college in the best possible light to attract high calibre candidates;
- That recent appointments had been good;
- That Corporation needed some further industrial/employer expertise;
- That with many Governors in their first term of office, Corporation may lack governance experience generally;
- That there was a need for more experienced Governors to be willing to act as ‘buddies’ for new appointments;
- That the recently published FE White Paper had a clear emphasis on the importance of governance and accountability;
- That the Principal did not have a strong view at this stage and felt that governance was a strength of the college. More industrial and employer input would be welcomed;
- That in engaging a recruitment specialist, Corporation needed to have a clearer view of the skills and attributes being sought in order to have a focus for any recruitment campaign.

The Clerk noted that some contact details of local individuals that could be contacted had been provided. These would be reviewed again with the Chair.

Clerk/  
Chair

The majority of Governors had responded to the skills audit and a summary had been provided to the Chair. It had not highlighted any particular areas of weakness, although there were some potential areas for Governor training. The Clerk would circulate the summary document to all members of the committee for information.

Clerk

#### Associate Governors

There was currently one Associate Governor, and his one-year term of office was due to end on 20 May. Having considered his contribution to date, the committee **agreed** to recommend that he be re-appointed for a further one-year term as an Associate Governor for Audit Committee. This recommendation would be taken to Corporation on 25 May 2021.

There was a suggestion that the individual also be invited to join Student Voice Committee. The Chair would discuss this at his forthcoming one to one meeting.

Chair

#### Link Governors

The Clerk reported the need to refresh the Link Governors from 2021/22 and suggested that consideration be given to more roles linked to themes rather than college departments.

Governors discussed this and agreed with the suggestion, as it was felt that it would help to support the new senior staff structure that was being implemented.

Principal

It was agreed that the Principal would discuss this further with the Exec team and report back via the Chair on what would be helpful.

#### Succession Planning

The Clerk noted the contents of the section on this within the written paper and invited Governor views on succession planning.

The Chair proposed that the term of the current Vice Chair be extended until March 2022.

The need to establish the interest of other Governors in becoming Chair or Vice Chair was agreed. This would be discussed by the Chair in his forthcoming one to one meetings with Governors.

Chair

It was agreed to consider an update to Corporation in July 2021, following completion of the one to one meetings and consideration of feedback from discussions in these.

Chair/  
Clerk

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

### **30.21 ENGLISH COLLEGES' CODE OF GOOD GOVERNANCE**

The Clerk summarised her written paper, noting that the Code had been out to consultation but that the outcome was not yet known. Governors' attention was drawn to several areas that were new or expanded, notably:

- An expectation of multi-year financial planning;
- A new section on environmental sustainability;
- An expansion of the section on equality, diversity and inclusion; and
- A new requirement for boards to have an external review of governance every three years.

Governors discussed the current position with regard to risk management and Audit Committee. The Chairs of Finance & Resources Committee and Audit Committee had met the Director of Finance & MIS for a discussion about progress in implementing 4Risk. They were satisfied that there was a plan for this in place.

The Principal noted the additional requirements for external audit this year and the level of assurance provided by the annual funding audit that the college had been commissioning for several years. It was noted that the additional fee attached to this year's external audit as a result of the extra work required had been discussed at the last Audit Committee. The Principal had discussed concerns regarding external audit in the FE sector with the FE Commissioner's office. The future scope of audit work may need to be reviewed in light of costs.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the English Colleges' Code of Good Governance report.

### 31.21 MEASURES FOR REVIEWING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CORPORATION AND ITS COMMITTEES

The Clerk introduced the item and explained the supporting paper. The college had many ways of reviewing its effectiveness, all of which were valuable for identifying improvements and as evidence to feed into the annual Governance SAR and QIP.

No changes to practices that had operated well previously were planned.

Governor comments were invited.

A Governor suggested that the periodic meetings of the Chairs be included when the Governance SAR and QIP was drafted. It was agreed that the Clerk would add this.

Clerk

Governors **resolved** to accept the report and to endorse the continuation of established self-assessment activities during 2020/21.

### 32.21 GOVERNANCE UPDATES

The Clerk referred to her report which covered:

- New FE Commissioner;
- Post 16 Audit Code of Practice;
- AOC Equality, Diversity and Inclusion survey; and
- Governance implications of the FE White Paper.

As previously agreed, the Principal would invite the new FE Commissioner to visit the college and to meet Governors at a future Training Day.

Principal

**33.21 SELF-ASSESSMENT OF THE SEARCH AND GOVERNANCE STANDARDS COMMITTEE**

The paper was introduced by the Clerk and comments were invited. It was noted that this was now a regular report within the annual cycle of meetings for this and other committees. The report included specific comments on the ways in which the Committee had fulfilled each of its terms of reference in the year to date, which Governors agreed was helpful.

Governors considered the committee's remit, which was predominantly to ensure good governance practice and to enable Corporation to fulfil its responsibilities for its own membership.

Overall, Governors agreed that the self-assessment document was a helpful tool to confirm that the committee had met its terms of reference in 2020/21. It recognised that, thanks to the Principal and Executive team, the college was well run.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Self-Assessment report.

**34.21 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

It was **resolved** that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 7 October 2021 at 1000 hrs.

The meeting ended at 1145 hrs.

How Governors challenged management		Impact of meeting on College	
28.21	Whether the college needed to be able to demonstrate ISO compliance when bidding for future projects or funds.	29.21	Recommended re-appointment of two External Governors for further three-year terms of office.
29.21	Discussed whether current Governor recruitment activities sold the college in the best possible light to attract high calibre candidates.	29.21	Recommended appointment of a new Associate Governor for Learning and Quality Committee for a one-year term of office.
		29.21	Recommended re-appointment of an Associate Governor for Audit Committee for a further one-year term of office.
		33.21	Agreed that the self-assessment of the committee had been a helpful tool to review the activities in year.