

**WALSALL COLLEGE
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATION
HELD ON THURSDAY 8 JULY 2021 AT 1730 HRS
VIA ZOOM**

- PRESENT:** Allan Pinnegar - Chair
Alan Woods
Jaswinder Dhillon
Stuart Pedley-Smith
Graham Ward
Heather Lodge
- Jat Sharma – Principal
Mary Mahoney
Fiona Macmillan
Paul Averis (from 1820 hrs)
Jo Hughes
- TOGETHER WITH:** Deb Rajania
Andrea Packer (Items 79.21 and 80.21)
Matthew Brown
David Turner
Richard Brennan
Jayne Holt
- Director of Operations and Resources
Head of Student Services
- Director of Finance & MIS
Assistant Principal Quality and HE
Assistant Principal Curriculum
Assistant Principal Workforce
Development and Learning Services
Assistant Principal Commercial
Development
Clerk to the Corporation
- APOLOGIES:** Aisling McGowan, Dave Wheeler, Shelby Lintern

74.21 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and thanked them for attending.

Due to the ongoing restrictions because of Covid-19 the meeting was again being held virtually using Zoom. It was hoped that face to face meetings may resume from September 2021.

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.

75.21 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Aisling McGowan, Dave Wheeler, Shelby Lintern.

76.21 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Alan Woods and Jaswinder Dhillon made their usual declarations relating to employment and membership of commercial, educational and other organisations.

77.21 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2021, having been circulated, were taken as read and approved.

78.21 MATTERS ARISING

Governors reviewed the Action Points Record and noted the following:

Item 06.21

The Head of Student Services had met the Head of HR and had re-written parts of the safeguarding policies, including the flowcharts. These would be fully completed by September 2021.

Item 64.21

Information on college engagement with adult learners had been provided to Learning and Quality Committee as agreed.

Item 65.21

Information on Access to HE had been provided to Learning and Quality Committee as agreed.

Item 67.21

Information on the pay award had been emailed as agreed.

Item 09.20 (transferred from Audit Committee)

The Counter Fraud Strategy was work in progress and due to be reported back to Audit Committee in November 2021.

The ISO certification would be picked up in the Environmental Strategy Committee.

79.21 GOVERNORS' SAFEGUARDING TRAINING

The Designated Safeguarding Lead attended to present the Governors' annual Safeguarding training, and was welcomed by the Chair. The training focused on the recent Ofsted report into sexual harassment in schools and colleges. Areas covered included:

- That the Ofsted review had been requested by the Government and had taken place over two weeks at the end of May 2021;
- 32 schools and colleges had been visited. Walsall was not one of these;
- There had been many direct discussions with students, parents, staff, governors and local authorities;
- It had been a thorough review of this particular safeguarding concern and some very clear concerns had emerged;
- A key issue was that students felt that some issues were so common that they did not bother to report them;
- Recommendations had been made and the college was reflecting on how to ensure that they were implemented, and how the culture could be improved to encourage anyone with concerns to raise them;
- The key recommendation was that education providers and multi-agency partners act as though sexual harassment and online sexual abuse are happening, even when there are no specific reports;
- There were many 'victims voice' findings, and the slides provided a summary. The importance of listening to feedback was emphasised;
- The report highlighted that many schools and colleges had underestimated the scale of the problem, that is was under reported and not fully understood. Some Local Authorities were also unaware that it was a significant issue in their areas;

- Staff in college were looking at processes to ensure that they were clear and communicated, and that there were strong working partnerships with external agencies;
- Although safeguarding was already well covered in Ofsted inspections, there was a recommendation for further improvement. It was important for Governors to understand how Ofsted would be reviewing safeguarding in future;
- There were also recommendations for school and college leaders, focusing on setting a culture of non-tolerance and having appropriate interventions. The Head of Student Services would be working with the new Head of Personal Development to look at behaviours and sanctions;
- College data showed a reduction in reported incidents in 2020/21 compared to 2019/20;
- The latest update to Keeping Children Safe in Education included some changes relating to this area. The changes had recently been published, with the new version effective from September 2021;
- The actions taken to date by the college and planned for September were noted. More visible information on how to report concerns would be in classrooms.

Questions and comments were invited.

Governors discussed the significant number of incidents reported on the Everyone's Invited website, and whether this may be indicative of a systemic failure in safeguarding practice in education. The Head of Student Services noted that there were regular serious case reviews published and that recognition of sexual harassment was increasing. However, there was definitely further focus needed on this. The Vice Chair suggested a wider network of agencies to bring into discussions and requested a meeting with the Head of Student Services to further discuss. This was agreed.

Head of
Student
Services

The Assistant Principal Workforce Development and Learning Services noted that the college worked closely with the police on criminal matters. However, the level of non-criminal activity identified in the Ofsted report was very alarming.

The Principal was pleased with the college response to this issue. Staff would raise the profile and take steps to facilitate the right culture to manage this.

A Governor commented that the problem may not be new, but that more information on it was now emerging due to recent media coverage. She suggested a review of the complaints process to see if this identified problems that could be emerging and dealt with at a lower level. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE was responsible for this and would consider.

Assistant
Principal
Quality and
HE

80.21 SAFEGUARDING ANNUAL REPORT

The Head of Student Services presented her report, which had been circulated with the meeting papers.

The Safeguarding team had continued to work hard during the year and had responded well to the challenges presented by the pandemic. An excellent service had been provided to students. Further developments were planned for next academic year.

There had been a reduction in the overall number of cases and some staff changes. The Deputy Designated Safeguarding Officer had left in April and been replaced by two Assistant Designated Safeguarding Officers.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Assistant Principal Workforce Development and Learning Services added that the team had undertaken much preventative work in this year, including on mental health first aid and in assisting students remotely. It was clear that this level of service and support had prevented many cases from escalating further.

In response to a question, the role of the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) was explained. He was a point of contact if the college had concerns about staff and wished to take advice.

It was **resolved** that Governors **approved** the Safeguarding Annual Report.

81.21 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY APPROVAL

The report was presented by the Director of Operations and Resources. The policy had previously been approved by Governors and there were no changes to report other than updates to job titles. It was a policy requiring annual approval by Governors in line with their statutory responsibilities.

A Governor asked whether there was a health and safety risk register. The Director of Operations and Resources confirmed that there was. It was reviewed termly but not taken to Health and Safety Committee. It would now be taken to Health and Safety Committee, and consideration would be given to how this may be presented to Governors.

**Director of
Operations
and
Resources**

A Governor asked whether the Corporation members should also receive Health and Safety training. The college would consider if this was necessary.

**Director of
Operations
and
Resources**

It was **resolved** that Governors **approved** the Health and Safety Policy.

82.21 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Principal presented his report, covering a wide range of activities and performance reporting for the current year. Some aspects, such as Finance, would be picked up in more detail during later agenda items. Particular attention was drawn to the following:

- The Skills and Post 16 Education Bill, which was currently going through the parliamentary stages. There were high expectations of good outcomes for FE and a number of key measures, including;
 - Putting employers at the heart of the system;
 - Simplifying funding by having a three-year funding settlement and easier access to student loan funding; and
 - New powers for Government to intervene in failing colleges.
- The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) had yet to be published by the Black Country Chamber of Commerce.

- Phase 1 of the staffing re-structure had now been completed. A new Director of Apprenticeships had been appointed to start in September and all Curriculum Delivery Manager positions had been filled. 18 Advanced Practitioners were also now confirmed. Phase 2 of the process would start very soon;
- Strategic Roadshows had been delivered this week to outline the new Corporate Plan to staff. The end of year Staff Conference and Barbeque would be held this week;
- September enrolment figures to date looked strong. These would continue to be monitored over the summer;
- Tuition funding was expected to continue to be available for a further two years. This would support the budget and was expected to be around £0.5m per year;
- The LEAF Centre had been opened, attended by the Chair and Vice Chair;
- A member of teaching staff had won a silver Pearson teaching award and was now shortlisted for a Teacher of the Year award. The outcome of this would be known in November. Another teacher had been put forward for a TES teaching award.

Questions and comments were invited.

A Governor commented on the progress of the Skills and Post 16 Education Bill. It appeared that there had been over 100 amendments submitted to date. The Secretary of State had invited the Federation of Awarding Bodies to submit a paper with suggestions for improvement. It was disappointing that the LSIP had not yet been published. This would need to be considered at Learning and Quality Committee when available. Governors would welcome early sight of this important document.

**Assistant
Principals**

Governors discussed the Corporate Plan and the staffing re-structure. It was suggested that the Principal bring back a review of how the college was performing against the new plan next term. The Principal intended to report via the existing KPI framework and an executive summary within his Corporation report twice per year. Reflecting the LSIP and the needs of students would be important, as would delivering positive outcomes and destinations.

The Assistant Principal Curriculum commented on his section of the report:

- 16-19 enrolment to date was strong, with particularly large numbers in Construction;
- Work was being done with curriculum teams to increase group sizes to drive efficiency;
- Commercial provision was growing. There was AEB growth in some of the priority areas. The community learning allocation was large, so some AEB provision could be moved there if necessary. There were some strategic decisions needed on where to focus community provision.

A Governor asked whether growth was due to increased demographics or attracting more students from other colleges. The Assistant Principal Curriculum responded that it was difficult to be certain. Demographic growth was smaller than the college growth. However, marketing activities had started earlier in this year, which had impacted positively on recruitment.

Feedback from WMCA indicated that there were no concerns about the provision or quality at Walsall, and this also positively impacted on enrolments with employers.

There was a discussion about T Levels. The fact that the college had partnerships with key employers from an early stage had been very helpful in developing T Levels.

The Chair of Learning and Quality Committee noted a discussion at the committee about a curriculum conference that was planned. This would be an interesting development in terms of future curriculum and ensuring viability. A report on this would be provided back to Corporation.

**Assistant
Principal
Quality and
HE**

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE commented on his section of the report, which was a summary of the more detailed papers shared with Learning and Quality Committee on 23 June 2021.

- Staff continued to monitor the 24 actions in the Executive QIP;
- Five EIF trained consultants had been engaged to visit in November to review progress. This would be reported back to Governors in due course;
- The QIP actions would be reviewed by the new Faculty Directors and re-aligned for the new structure from September. Opportunity would be taken to streamline the QIP;
- 70% of provision had been face to face by the end of this year;
- There were 368 students RAG rated as red due to concerns about attendance and progress at the end of the year, which had reduced from almost 800 earlier in the year. There had been a reduction following return of students to college in March;
- Attendance, behaviour and KPI data was included in the written report. Full year KPIs would be reported to the next Learning and Quality Committee;
- Student satisfaction remained high;
- There had been a decline in destination data, which was felt to be due to the effects of Covid;
- 85% of learning walks had been completed for the 500 staff in scope. Useful feedback had been generated from this process;
- The TAGs deadline had been met. Results would be issued on 10 and 12 August;
- The expanded remit of the Assistant Principal Quality and HE was noted, and would include student services, workforce development and quality assurance;
- There were some changes to the L6 provision in partnership with local HEIs.

The Assistant Principal Commercial Development presented his section of the report:

- Staff were optimistic that the apprenticeships achievement would outturn at 74%;
- Some apprentices had had breaks in learning but most were back now;
- Apprenticeships income had tracked in line with budget throughout the year;
- Further growth in apprenticeships was anticipated in 2021/22;

- The Finance and Resources Committee had approved the sub contracts for 2021/22. This year's contracts were expected to outturn strongly;
- Ongoing opportunities to bid for various funding available were noted. There were discussions with Walsall Council about the Towns Fund that had been allocated and the projects within that that the college was planning;
- There had been strong apprenticeships growth at CCM. There was a long waiting list for scaffolding courses.

A Governor asked about numbers enrolled in the Kickstart programme. The Assistant Principal Commercial Development would provide these. The programme was explained. The college was not very involved in this and the Principal was asked to re-consider this.

Governors discussed the Towns Fund. It was reported that the funding allocated to date was for Walsall Town Centre and a decision about the bid for Bloxwich had not yet been received. The involvement of the college in three possible projects was outlined. More detail had been considered at recent Finance and Resources Committee meetings and final business cases would be brought to Corporation for approval. At the present time the possible re-location of Hawbush was in abeyance and the LEAF workshop extension was likely to be reviewed.

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

83.21 STUDENT UNION PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Student Union President was not in attendance so the Clerk gave a summary of her written report. This largely related to Union activities since Easter. It was clear that efforts to engage students had continued.

Governors **resolved to receive** the Student Union President's Report.

84.21 FINANCE REPORT TO MAY 2021

The Director of Finance & MIS presented his report, which covered the Management Accounts position to May 2021. The position had been considered in detail at the Finance and Resources Committee in June.

The college was expected to outturn comfortably within the revised budget approved earlier in the year.

A Governor commented on the operational surplus and the extent to which this was clear in both the figures and the narrative. It was suggested that this be reviewed for 2021/22. The Director of Finance & MIS had already planned some changes, so this would be picked up.

Governors **resolved to receive** the Finance Report to May 2021.

85.21 PROPOSED BUDGET 2021/22

The Director of Finance & MIS presented the highlights of his report, which showed the draft budget for 2021/22 and had been discussed in detail at the Finance and Resources Committee in June. The Committee had recommended the budget for Corporation approval.

Assistant
Principal
Commercial
Development

Principal

Director of
Finance &
MIS

The objective of the proposed budget was to deliver Good/Outstanding financial health (subject to revised financial health measures), generate between £1m and £1.5m of cash inflow and support the majority of the investment to return the College to Ofsted Outstanding.

The Corporation was asked to note specifically the in-year benefits of T-Level forward funding and subsequent year pressures from the removal of the Tuition Fund, Capacity Delivery Fund and inflationary pressures. These were material despite the growth in apprenticeship income to £6.5m by 2024 as per the Strategic Plan.

The budget would produce EBITDA in the agreed college range.

The majority of the income lines were now confirmed. The WMCA indicative AEB allocation was £100k higher than the current year. Provision at LCCA had now effectively wound up. HE numbers at Walsall remained stable at 220 students. Some provision previously funded through loans had now moved into AEB, although the loans income had not all been replaced.

The apprenticeships income for 2020/21 was on budget and growth was expected in future years. There would be a strong carry in position to 2021/22, with budgeted income of £5.1m in total. This accounted for the majority of the top line income growth.

The following had been considered when preparing the budget:

- The very detailed curriculum planning exercise completed;
- The financial impact of the re-organisation of the senior staff team and appointment of 18 new Advanced Practitioners;
- T Level funding;
- Group sizes;
- Pay and non-pay inflationary pressures, which meant that there was a need to grow income and continue to find efficiencies year on year. Opportunities for non-pay efficiencies were starting to be exhausted;
- The usual capital expenditure envelope of £750k.

There was a discussion about T Level funding and how this would work was explained. Public knowledge and confidence in T levels would grow over time and therefore enrolments were expected to increase.

A Governor asked where the 10% increase in both income and expenditure had come from as this was not felt to be clear from the report. The Director of Finance & MIS cited the increase in apprenticeships income, a full year of operation at CCM, additional High Needs Funding and the resuming of commercial activities, which had been affected during Covid. Costs were broadly aligned to the income generating activity. There were also £400k of reorganisation costs and increased costs at CCM. Staff costs remained the highest element of the overall expenditure, and were budgeted at 67%.

Governors noted the improvement and turnaround in CCM and asked if management were confident in this. The Director of Finance & MIS confirmed his confidence and that there had been detailed discussions with the committee on this. The risk appetite of the college was noted. The overall financial picture was complex and had been significantly affected by Covid. The sensitivities of this on the budget were important to recognise.

The Principal commented on the robustness of the budget setting process. Every line had been scrutinised in detail. There was greater confidence now in both CCM and apprenticeships due to strong performance in 2020/21. There would also be opportunities to drive further efficiencies through the revised curriculum structure.

Governors **resolved** to **approve** the budget as presented.

86.21 RISK MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT TO CORPORATION INCLUDING BOARD ASSURANCE UPDATE

The Director of Finance & MIS presented his report, noting that risk management and Board Assurance continued to be a standing item for every Audit Committee meeting.

RSM had been engaged to support the work for the next stage of implementation of the 4Risk system. The risk management process was in place and operating, but was being refreshed for next term. A full update would be given to Audit Committee in November, with a progress meeting to be held with the Committee Chair during the summer.

A particular risk area for the sector at present was cyber security. The college had insurance in place but the recent experience of another local college that had been targeted was that it had caused wide ranging and lengthy disruption. The Head of IT and Business Services was taking further measures to improve security. Audits were also being undertaken by JISC and RSM.

It was **resolved** that Governors **approved** the Risk Management Annual Report.

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

The Clerk noted that the Governors' had recently had training on Prevent from the Local Authority Officer, and that his slides would be circulated on receipt.

There was a discussion about the Prevent work of the college and how this linked into external agencies that provided support. It was confirmed that there was multi agency working to share information with partners, including the police.

88.21 CORPORATION COMMITTEE MINUTES AND REPORTS

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

- Student Voice Committee 11 March 2021;
- Audit Committee 16 March 2021;
- Finance and Resources Committee 29 April 2021; and
- Learning and Quality Committee 24 February 2021.

It was also reported that:

- Student Voice Committee met on 27 May 2021;
- Audit Committee met on 28 June 2021 (postponed from 15 June due to quoracy issues);
- Finance and Resources Committee met on 22 June 2021; and
- Learning and Quality Committee met on 23 June 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 committees had been considered by Corporation earlier in the meeting or at previous meetings, with the exception of audit planning documents considered at Audit Committee. The audit documents were available for Governors to review in the document library on Convene, but the recommendation from the Committee was for all to be approved.

Governors **resolved** to **approve** the following:

- Internal Audit Strategy 2021/22 to 2023/24; and
- External Audit Plan and Strategy.

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

89.21 CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair reported that he had completed the majority of the one to one meetings with Governors and that this had been very helpful in a number of ways. It had identified some clear ways forward on succession planning. A paper on this would be brought to the next meeting in October, and this was likely to propose Alan Woods as Chair and Charlotte Bosworth as Vice Chair. With this in mind, it was proposed that Governors should now consider extending Alan Woods' appointment as Vice Chair for a further period until 24 March 2022, the date on the current Chair's term of office would end.

Governors **resolved** to **approve** an extension to Alan Woods' term as Vice Chair until 24 March 2022.

It was noted that there were still two vacancies for External Governors. There were no recommendations for appointment at this time. The completion of the one to one meetings and review of the latest skills audit had confirmed that skills to be sought were in relation to business and commercial experience, ideally within engineering, construction or manufacturing in the local area.

90.21 MATTERS OF REPORT

The Clerk noted several meetings that she was aware of Governors having held recently with members of Exec and SMT.

The Director of Finance & MIS confirmed his discussions on risk management with the Chairs of both Audit and Finance and Resources Committee.

91.21 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 19 October 2021 at 1730 hrs.

Staff and the Staff Governor left the meeting at 2025 hrs to allow for a private discussion amongst Governors. For reasons of confidentiality, this has been minuted separately

How Governors challenged management		Impact of meeting on College	
79.21	Suggested a review of the complaints process	80.21	Approved Annual Safeguarding Report
83.21	Asked about college involvement in Kickstart programme.	81.21	Approved Health and Safety Policy
85.21	Asked for clarification of 10% increase in income and expenditure within the proposed budget.	85.21	Approved the budget for 2021/22.
85.21	Questioned management confidence in the improved performance at CCM.	86.21	Approved the Risk Management annual report.
		88.21	Approved the internal and external audit plans.
		89.21	Approved extension to Alan Woods' term as Vice Chair until 24 March 2022.