

**WALSALL COLLEGE
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATION
HELD ON TUESDAY 19 OCTOBER 2021 AT 1730 HRS
VENUE: VIA TEAMS**

PRESENT:

Alan Woods, Vice Chair	Jat Sharma, Principal and Chief Executive
Fiona Macmillan	Jo Hughes
Jaswinder Dhillon	Graham Ward
Stuart Pedley-Smith	Mary Mahoney
Aisling McGowan	Dave Wheeler
Paul Averis	Charlotte Bosworth
Heather Lodge	

TOGETHER WITH:

James Norris	Assistant Principal Commercial Development
David Turner	Assistant Principal Quality and HE
Deb Rajania	Director of Operations and Resources
Matthew Brown	Director of Finance & MIS
John Adams	Director of Commercial Projects
Alison Buick	Clerk to the Corporation

APOLOGIES: Allan Pinnegar, Richard Brennan, Andrea Packer

01.22 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

It was agreed that Alan Woods would chair the meeting in the absence of Allan Pinnegar. The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and welcomed all to the meeting. Although originally planned as a face to face meeting, the agreement to the short notice switch to Teams was appreciated. This had been deemed desirable due to Public Health advice in light of rising Covid cases in the Borough.

It was noted that Allan Pinnegar was currently absent due to ill health, although he had been in contact with the Vice Chair, Principal and Clerk. He had indicated a wish to return from 1 November and sent his best wishes to all.

02.22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Allan Pinnegar, Richard Brennan, Andrea Packer.

03.22 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 an existing small contract with the college. In addition, VTCT had recently been confirmed as a subcontractor to NCFE for the development of the new T Level in Hair, Beauty and Aesthetics which would start to be delivered from September 2023. The content for the qualification was now being developed. As Governors were also aware, Alan Woods was Co-Chair of the Federation of Awarding Bodies, a trade association.

04.22 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2021 having been circulated, were taken as read and approved.

05.22 MATTERS ARISING

Governors reviewed the Action Points Record and noted the following:

Item 79.21.1

A meeting had been scheduled for the Vice Chair and Head of Student Services to discuss sexual harassment in schools and colleges.

Item 79.21.2

The review of lower level complaints had been considered at the recent Learning and Quality Committee.

Item 81.21.1

The Health and Safety Risk Register was now a standing item at the Health and Safety Committee.

Item 81.21.2

Online health and safety training for Governors was being considered.

Item 82.21.1

Local Skills Improvement Plans would be discussed at the next Learning and Quality Committee when more details had emerged.

Item 82.21.2

The Curriculum Conference was planned for 26 January 2022.

82.21.3

The Kickstart programme would be covered as part of the Principal's Report later in the agenda.

Item 84.21

The format of the management accounts would be changed for the first reporting period of 2021/22.

Item 09.20.1

The Counter Fraud Strategy would be presented at the Audit Committee in November 2021.

Item 09.20.2

ISO would be covered at the Environmental Strategy Committee in November 2021.

06.22 POLICY APPROVAL – SAFEGUARDING

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE presented the paper in the absence of the Head of Student Services.

Information was shared on screen. Governors were reminded that safeguarding was an important element of the overall governance of the college, and that Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) was statutory guidance. Governors were asked to note the following:

- The college policies had been updated in line with the latest version of KCSIE;

- There were two versions of the policy, one with a focus on children and the other on vulnerable adults;
- The key principles from each policy.

Questions and comments were invited.

Governors were satisfied that the policies were comprehensive, relevant and in line with current statutory guidance. A Governor commented that an overarching link between various linked policies would be useful, and this was discussed. There was also a feeling that the documents were long. It was explained that the policies were mandatory but that staff were looking at how best to make the information accessible for students.

A Governor asked what was done with safeguarding data collected, and this was explained. Data was retained in line with GDPR guidance.

There were 156 open safeguarding cases currently. The recording system allowed for data to be filtered and reported by type of concern, ethnicity of student and several other characteristics. Systems in place were robust and staff had been appropriately trained in safeguarding and ACES. (Adverse Childhood Experiences).

A Governor also commented on the college's processes for managing formal and informal complaints. Spotting issues at a lower level before they became formal complaints would be helpful in identifying trends or areas for staff focus. This could also help in identifying students who were vulnerable, which was important. It was confirmed that most safeguarding matters were reported rather than self-referred. The policies were a framework for the college and students were not expected to read them in detail. Safeguarding was covered in a variety of ways in tutorial activities.

Paul Averis, Safeguarding Link Governor, gave an update on his recent visit to college:

- He had met both the Assistant Principal Quality and HE and the Head of Student Services in September.;
- The policies in place were lengthy but an important consideration was how they translated to staff dealing with students. He had tested this by speaking to students during a learning walk and was confident they would know what to do if they were worried or had a concern. He had also seen evidence of safeguarding information posters around college;
- Safeguarding records needed to be retained for six years and colleges and schools could be contacted by external authorities to request them in this period;
- Safeguarding data and recording systems had been discussed with the Head of Student Services, and a number of case studies noted. Trends had also been examined.

A Governor asked about the enhanced responsibilities for employers in respect of safeguarding, including how the college made its partners aware. The Assistant Principal Commercial Development confirmed that this was covered in discussions and contracts with partners. Safeguarding was part of the onboarding process for new partners.

A Governor asked whether some student complaints may have safeguarding elements. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE felt able to give absolute assurance that there were links between the processes for dealing with complaints and safeguarding, and that staff were trained to spot any safeguarding elements in the complaints received.

The Principal commented that safeguarding had been thoroughly reviewed by Ofsted in March 2020, and remained a top priority. The number of reported concerns had increased this term as students returned to college. Staff were dealing with a wide variety of issues and SMT regularly looked at high level data. The Director of Operations and Resources added that there was a cross college safeguarding and wellbeing group that reviewed issues and identified preventative measures.

The Chair thanked all for their contributions to this important discussion, and also Paul Averis for taking over the Link Governor role.

It was **resolved** that Governors **approved** the:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedure; and
- The Adults at Risk of Harm Safeguarding Policy and Procedure.

07.22 POLICY APPROVAL – EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI)

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE presented the policy for approval. There were no significant changes as statutory guidance was unchanged. The content had been reviewed and there were some minor changes to wording.

The staffing responsibilities for EDI were split between the Head of Student Services (students) and the Head of HR (staff).

The EDI Committee, a management committee which included the Link Governor for EDI, had met in June and discussed the next steps in developing EDI, which included the '4 Cs' approach. These were:

- Culture;
- CPD;
- Curriculum; and
- Connected.

There were ongoing activities with students to ensure that EDI remained a live topic.

The EDI Link Governor commented on the discussion at EDI Committee in June, and noted her suggestion of a further 'C', for 'Challenge'. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE intended to add this to the range of areas in the policy.

The Principal noted that there was more work to do with curriculum teams to further embed EDI. He was satisfied that EDI was moving forwards positively. Governors commented that it was an important topic to keep focus on. The implementation of the policy was critical.

Governors **resolved** to **approve** the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

**Assistant
Principal
Quality
and HE**

08.22 POLICY APPROVAL – WHISTLEBLOWING

The Director of Operations and Resources presented the policy for approval. It had not been materially updated but had been due for review and refresh to reflect the current college structure.

Whistleblowing matters were fortunately very rare, with only one being noted in the previous ten years.

Governors were satisfied that the policy was comprehensive.

Governors **resolved** to **approve** the Whistleblowing Policy.

09.22 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

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

- It had been a vibrant and energetic start to the year. Students were well engaged. Gaps in learning due to the pandemic were noticeable with some behaviour issues and safeguarding concerns;
- There was a particular focus on teaching and learning. Support was available for staff;
- 4000 16-18 students had been enrolled, which was over contract. There had also been a strong start to adult enrolment and in some areas, such as Construction and ESOL. The enrolment picture nationally appeared to be mixed. The curriculum teams were holding regular meetings to look at students at risk of withdrawing and to find other options such as transfer to different courses;
- There was a new Secretary of State and ministerial team at DfE following the recent Government re-shuffle. The minister for Skills had visited Walsall in the previous week. He had shown particular interest in work at Level 2. Early indications were that the new team was keen to simplify funding and regulation;
- There continued to be many and varied pressures on college finances. However, the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review was an opportunity for the sector to gain some additional funding. In reality £1bn was needed to just fund the growth in 16-18 students across the sector. Sector expectations of additional funding were low.

A Governor commented on the Government focus on destinations. The Principal confirmed work on this was ongoing, particularly looking at actual versus intended destinations. WMCA expected destinations to be tracked at various points, which was complex and time consuming to do. However, it was recognised that the social and economic impacts of training needed to be evaluated, to show return on the WMCA investment in skills training. Positive outcomes could be seen in a number of ways, not just as jobs, although these were not always easy to measure.

A Governor noted that it was important to understand that skills and destinations were progressive, and that adults in particular would have different outcomes. Technical and social skills were important.

- Sickness absence data had been considered at the recent Finance and Resources Committee. There were concerns about rising

Covid levels in Walsall and the relatively low take up of the vaccine in the Borough;

- The re-structuring of SMT had been completed and phase two had started;
- Recruitment to T Levels had generally gone well, although numbers were low in Digital. There had been a lot of interest from parents at the recent Open Day.

The Assistant Principal Commercial Development noted the key aspects of the report relating to his areas:

- Apprenticeship success for 2020/21 was currently at 68.8% compared to the target of 74%;
- The new Director of Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning was now in post and was continuing to work on the themes previously identified by the Interim Director;
- The college would need to re-submit an application to be on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers by the end of October. This was a periodic requirement to enable the college to be able to deliver apprenticeships;
- Apprenticeships recruitment for the first quarter was good so far;
- The Sales team had been strengthened to support the 'employer in every classroom' initiative;
- Attendance at the Open Day in the previous week had been high;
- The Pleck Library opening had gone well;
- The report included updates on current bidding activity;
- There had been investment in the site at CCM, with a number of maintenance projects having been completed in the summer. Some new courses were now being offered and developed at CCM;
- Kickstart data was in the report.

Questions and comments were invited.

A Governor asked about the health and safety data and the number of staff leavers. The Principal explained the data further and the ways in which leavers were categorised. Some were due to the re-structure and to the ending of fixed term contracts. It was agreed that the breakdown of staff leavers from the Finance and Resources Committee would be provided for all Governors.

Director of Operations and Resources

A Governor asked who was leading on staff wellbeing, and it was confirmed that this was the Head of HR. A copy of the Staff Wellbeing Strategy, also discussed at the recent Finance and Resources Committee, would be sent to all Governors.

Principal

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

There was a five-minute comfort break.

10.22 QUALITY AND HE UPDATE, INCLUDING EMERGING SAR REPORT

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE presented his report and highlighted the key aspects. Much of the content had been reviewed in detail at the Learning and Quality Committee on 29 September.

Specific comments were made on the following areas:

- 99% of current activity was being delivered face to face although it was planned to move some elements online;
- Attendance was 87%, below the target of 90%. SMT were reviewing this at curriculum and course level;
- Maths and English attendance, at 82%, continued to be lower than vocational attendance;
- There were 140 students RAG rated at level 3 and causing concern. Staff were dealing with behaviour issues and disciplinaries;
- Overall student satisfaction, from 2,500 responses, was high at 96.8%. The figure at CCM was higher, at 98.4%;
- The employer survey had been extended. Results would be shared with Governors at a later date;
- Training was continuing for the Observation team;
- Learning Walks had started. Some Governor had attended and an invitation was extended to others to join;
- The HE Strategy had been updated and discussed at the recent Learning and Quality Committee following its review at Corporation last term.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Chair commented that the report had been easier to read with more summarised data this time.

Governors discussed student voice, which had been challenging due to the pandemic. Assurances were sought that management were seeking ways to re-energise this in year. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE confirmed that this was a management priority at present.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Quality and HE Update.

11.22 FINANCE REPORT JULY 2021

The Director of Finance & MIS presented his report. A detailed discussion had taken place at the Finance and Resources Committee earlier in the month. This had covered the closing down of 2020/21 and an early view of the new year. The highlights for Governors to note included:

- The budget for 2020/21 had been achieved despite the impact of Covid 19. Governors were reminded of the revised budget that had been approved in January 2021;
- The ESFA financial health score was Good, as the level of debt was low and the level of cash was fairly high. The contribution level was weaker but still satisfactory;
- EBITDA was just over 6%. Ideally this would be closer to 10%;
- Staff costs as a percentage of turnover were 69.2%;
- Management were pleased with the year-end outturn, particularly as the costs of acquiring CCM in year had been included;
- The start of the new year was going well. The second part of the staffing re-structure had started. A key objective of this was to align resources where they would make most impact in returning quality back to Outstanding;

- Student recruitment was generally strong. HE was slightly down but overall there were no major concerns;
- Inflationary pressures were emerging in the wider economy and this was a concern for non-pay costs;
- Staff turnover was currently low but pay pressures were expected this year.

Questions and comments were invited.

Governors asked about the impact of known changes such as the increase to National Insurance and utility costs. The Director of Finance & MIS stated that these were difficult to predict with any certainty at present as there were many variables. It was certainly the case that pressures due to Covid 19 were different this year compared to last year. The Director of Operations and Resources added that the gas contract was currently fixed but the electricity contract was due for renewal in March 2022. A price increase was expected.

Governors noted the excellent outturn for 2020/21.

The Chair of Finance and Resources Committee summarised discussions at the recent committee meeting and noted that Governors had asked for more emphasis on efficiency as well as income and margin growth. Future years would be challenging, especially with lagged funding. Efficiencies such as group size would need to be found.

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

13.22 GOVERNANCE MATTERS

The Clerk presented her paper, which covered the following areas:

Re-appointment of an External Governor

Stuart Pedley-Smith's term of office was due to expire and the Search and Governance Standards Committee wished to recommend that he be re-appointed.

It was **resolved** that Governors **approved** the re-appointment of Stuart Pedley-Smith for a further three-year term of office from 22 October 2021.

Appointment of an Associate Governor

Search and Governance Standards Committee had considered the need to strengthen Audit Committee and wished to recommend the appointment of Nick Tomkys. Nick's Application Form had been circulated prior to the meeting.

It was **resolved** that Governors **approved** the appointment of Nick Tomkys as an Associate Governor for Audit Committee for a one-year term of office from 19 October 2021.

Appointment of a Chair Designate and Vice Chair Designate

It was reported that Allan Pinnegar hoped to resume his role as a Governor from 1 November 2021 but that he wished to relinquish the Chair from this time. This effectively brought forward the planned actions to appoint a new Chair and Vice Chair.

It was confirmed that Alan Woods and Charlotte Bosworth were willing to be appointed as Chair and Vice Chair respectively, subject to a vote by Corporation. It was suggested that this be included as a formal agenda item for the next meeting on 25 November 2021.

Alan Woods noted his earlier declaration of interest with respect to his organisation having been confirmed as a subcontractor to NCFE for the development of the new T Level in Hair, Beauty and Aesthetics which would start to be delivered from September 2023. Should the college decide to offer this T Level, the relationship would be with NCFE as the principal contractor. Any Governors that wished to discuss this further were invited to make contact with him directly or via the Clerk prior to the next meeting.

Governors **agreed** to undertake the process to appoint a new Chair and Vice Chair at the next Corporation meeting.

Governance SAR and QIP

The Governance SAR and QIP for 2020/21 had been prepared by the Clerk and reviewed at the Search and Governance Standards Committee. A copy was available on the Convene document library.

Corporation Attendance and Performance Indicators

Data was presented for information. There were no specific concerns to report.

Governance at Walsall College Updates

The summer review had been completed, with an objective to further streamline the document. The Vice Chair had been provided with a copy for review.

It was **resolved** that Governors **approved** the 2021 version of Governance at Walsall College, subject to any further comments that the Vice Chair may have.

Annual Review of Confidential Minutes

Governors **agreed** that the Clerk should complete the review with the Vice Chair.

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

None.

15.22 CORPORATION COMMITTEE MINUTES AND REPORTS

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

Search and Governance Standards Committee 11 May 2021;
Finance and Resources Committee 22 June 2021; and
Learning and Quality Committee 23 June 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);
 Learning and Quality Committee met on 29 September 2021;
 Search and Governance Standards Committee met on 7 October 2021; and
 Finance and Resources Committee met on 12 October 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 the previous meeting or earlier in the agenda.

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

16.22 CHAIR'S REPORT

The Vice Chair commented on his recent activities, including the recent Governor Training afternoon, which had been an excellent opportunity for a face to face event. The discussions had been extremely positive, particularly in relation to A Levels. A working party would be set up for Governors to explore this further. Interested Governors should contact the Clerk. There had also been a useful update on the Property Strategy projects.

It was expected that Governors' meetings would return to being online for the foreseeable future in light of Public Health advice in Walsall. The impact of this on the planned HE Awards ceremony was to be confirmed by the Principal.

18.21 MATTERS OF REPORT

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE reminded Governors that Quality Summits were being arranged in November and that Link Governors were welcome to attend if available.

19.21 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was **resolved** that the next meeting would be held on Thursday 25 November 2021 at 1730 hrs via Teams.

The meeting ended at 2005 hrs.

How Governors challenged management		Impact of meeting on College	
06.22	How safeguarding data was used.	06.22	Approved two Safeguarding Policy and Procedure documents.
06.22	Whether some student complaints may have safeguarding elements.	07.22	Approved the Equality, Diversity and Impact Policy.
07.22	Whether 'challenge' should be added to the EDI policy as a key element.	08.22	Approved the Whistleblowing Policy.

		13.22	Re-appointed an External Governor and appointed a new Associate Governor.
		13.22	Approved the 2021 version of Governance at Walsall College.