

WALSALL COLLEGE
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATION
HELD ON TUESDAY 22 MARCH 2022 AT 1730 HRS
VENUE: HB201, HUB BUILDING

PRESENT:	Alan Woods, Chair Stuart Pedley-Smith Leah Brookes Graham Ward Julie Haywood Ray Simmonds (until 1815 hrs)	Jat Sharma, Principal and Chief Executive Dave Wheeler Paul Averis Rani Sahota Tony Sadla
TOGETHER WITH	Nick Tomkys David Turner Richard Brennan Matthew Brown Deb Rajania John Adams Alison Buick	Associate Governor Assistant Principal Quality and HE Assistant Principal Curriculum Director of Finance & MIS Director of Operations & Resources Director of Commercial Projects Head of Governance
APOLOGIES:	Charlotte Bosworth, Fiona Macmillan, Heather Lodge, Malissa Clarke, Allan Pinnegar, Jaswinder Dhillon, Mary Mahoney, Aisling McGowan, James Norris	

44.22 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. This was the first face to face meeting since the start of the pandemic two years ago.

It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

A new style agenda had been provided and it was proposed to spend the majority of the time on the items for approval.

Governors were thanked for their attendance at Allan Pinnegar's farewell event in the previous week, which had been a great success. The best wishes of all Governors were conveyed to Allan and his family.

Chairs were thanked for attending their meeting in the previous week. It was felt to have been a useful and productive meeting.

Governors were reminded of their invitation to the forthcoming Student Conference on 31 March. It was hoped that Governors would support this, as it was an important event in the year and one which supported the agreed aim to enhance student voice further.

45.22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Charlotte Bosworth, Fiona Macmillan, Heather Lodge, Malissa Clarke, Allan Pinnegar, Jaswinder Dhillon, Mary Mahoney, Aisling McGowan.

46.22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair noted that his organisation had recently acquired a new business based in Birmingham. This business had around £5k of contracted work

with Walsall College, which brought the total of VTCT contracts with the college to around £10k. This would be added to his declaration form.

Head of
Governance

47.22 APPOINTMENT OF NEW GOVERNORS

The Chair reported recent activities to fill the three External Governor vacancies. Three applications had been received. Following individual meetings with the Chair, Vice Chair, Principal and Head of Governance, the Search and Governance Standards Committee wished to recommend that each be appointed. All Governors had been sent copies of their application forms for information ahead of the meeting.

Governors **resolved to appoint** Julie Haywood, Ray Simmonds and Tony Sadla as External Governors for three-year terms of office ending on 21 March 2025.

New Governors joined the meeting.

48.22 CONFIDENTIALITY

Governors were reminded that all discussions that take place at this meeting should remain confidential to the meeting. Minutes will not become a public document until approved at the next meeting and confidential items will not be open for public display.

49.22 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2022, having been circulated, were taken as read and approved.

50.22 MATTERS ARISING

Governors considered the Action Points Record and noted the following:

Item 81.21

Health and Safety training for Governors would take place at the next Governor Training Day on 13 June 2022.

Item 82.21.2

The Curriculum Conference date had been moved to June 2022 and Governor invitations would be issued as soon as the date was confirmed.

Item 37.22.1

Management discussions were ongoing in relation to neuro diverse student achievements.

Item 37.22.2

It was confirmed that future EDI reports would include definitions of positive and negative destinations. Essentially, positive destinations were further study or employment and negative destinations were anything else.

Item 37.22.3

EDI data by provision type would be reviewed at the next EDI Committee in April. The EDI Link Governor would be invited to this meeting.

Item 38.22

Meetings were being arranged between the Principal and Student Governors.

Item 39.22

The Real Living Wage adjustments had been implemented.

51.22 CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE

The Director of Operations and Resources presented the report, which was for information and approval. A powerpoint presentation to highlight the key areas was shown on screen.

Governors were given a re-cap of the planned projects and how they linked to both the college Property Strategy and the Walsall Town Centre Investment Plan (TIP). It was confirmed that the three projects had been discussed in detail at the recent Finance and Resources Committee meeting.

Expansion of CCM Scaffolding Training Capacity

- There was a growing demand for scaffolding courses and there was a seven-month waiting list at present;
- The total estimated cost of the work was £900k and a bid for one third of this had been submitted to Birmingham LEP;
- The Finance and Resources Committee had looked in detail at the plans and wished to recommend that the project went ahead even if the funding was not received. The expansion would allow commercial and apprenticeship scaffolding provision to double, which would generate more income. It was also the case that the current temporary facility needed to be replaced with a permanent and weather tight structure;
- A planning application had been submitted;
- If approved, work would start in June 2022 with expected completion in February 2023.

Governors asked whether there was any other local scaffolding provision, and were advised that there was some in Coventry. Learners travelled nationally to attend specialist provision at CCM. The Principal outlined the rationale for the purchase of CCM for the benefit of new Governors.

A Governor asked about recent remedial work to repair the storm damage to the roof of the existing building. It was confirmed that this had been completed.

It was confirmed that the project payback period was four years.

Governors **resolved to approve** the project to expand scaffolding provision at CCM at the budgeted cost.

Construction Skills Academy

This was the first of the TIP projects and had also been discussed at Finance and Resources Committee in February 2022.

The Director of Operations and Resources showed photographs of the existing site and plans for the changes. There would be expanded workshop spaces for plumbing, carpentry and electrical as well as a social space for students.

Approval was being requested for a total project cost of £4.314m, of which £1.355m had been secured from the TIP funding. The college element would be funded from reserves.

A Governor asked how the project would be managed to minimise disruption to the learning of current students and to ensure that behaviour was not affected. The Director of Operations and Resources outlined plans and noted that works had been carried out previously in term time. Some noise was inevitable at certain times. However, students would be made aware of plans and that the work was to improve the facilities available for them.

The Chair asked who would project manage the work, noting that it would be running alongside the CCM work. This was to be decided with the college and the architects. There would be a combination of internal capacity and external support. Governors wished to be sure that with such significant spent, management had capacity to deliver.

A Governor noted the contingency sum in the budget and asked what assumptions were included for this. The Director of Finance & MIS commented on usual processes for value engineering of projects. Inflation was clearly a much bigger factor now than when the project had first been considered. The building was an expansion on an existing site, which lowered the risks. Overall, he was comfortable that the project was affordable.

Governors agreed that the rising inflation rates were a concern and a risk to the project costs.

The Chair asked whether the Local Authority was willing to invest in improving the roads between Wisemore and Green Lane. He felt that the quality of the environment was poor, which was of course outside of the control of the college. Management agreed that this was a valid point and something to raise with the Local Authority in future. The Principal confirmed that he had raised student safety at a recent Borough management team meeting.

Governors asked if there was more available TIP funding. There was not. £1.335m had been agreed subject to the ratification of the TIP Board.

Governors **resolved to approve** the Construction Skills Academy project at the budgeted cost.

Electric Vehicle Sustainability Centre

This was the second of the TIP projects and had also been discussed at the Finance and Resources Committee. Photographs and plans were shown on screen. It was explained that part of the preferred site was currently owned by a third party, and that the progress of the project was contingent on purchase of the land. Enquiries were being made, as outlined in the written paper.

Governor approval was being sought to progress the land acquisition, should it become available. The expected total project cost was £3m, of which £1m would be funded by the Local Authority's TIP allocation.

Governors discussed the project, its location, funding and the necessary land.

It was noted the current student garden would need to be re-located and that this had been agreed. The Student Governor noted the importance of outdoor learning spaces.

Governors **resolved to agree** that management should continue negotiations to acquire the land and that future updates be provided via the Finance and Resources Committee.

52.22 FINANCE REPORT

The Director of Finance & MIS presented his report, which had four parts:

Management Accounts

The management accounts for the period to 31 January showed a year to date surplus of £76k compared to a budgeted position of £63k. This balanced position was due to underspends in both pay and non-pay costs offsetting under achievement in income. AEB, Apprenticeships, National Tuition Fund and Tuition fees were all behind budget. The National Tuition Fund remained a significant challenge and current plans did not expect to fully deliver the planned activity.

Apprenticeships were expected to continue to grow, although not to the budgeted level, which had been ambitious.

Rising costs continued to have an impact and to be monitored.

The College's Financial Health Rating at 31 January was assessed as "Good", with an adjusted EBITDA of 7.38%, cash balances of £15.7m and net assets of £57.3m (excluding the pension liability of £42.9m).

A Governor asked about the level of HE income. It was confirmed that there had been a clawback by OfS. The details would be discussed at the next Finance and Resources Committee.

The Chair commented on apprenticeships delivery and questioned if sufficient resource was available to focus on development and delivery. The Principal responded that the focus had been to reduce subcontracting and move to more in-house delivery. Success rates were well above sector averages and quality was good. However, growth in some areas was restricted by the availability of staff, which was an ongoing issue. The current curriculum planning cycle was looking at growth of apprenticeships whilst maintaining quality.

There was a discussion about the difficulties in recruiting specialist teaching staff in some areas, despite the college's plans to expand facilities to meet demand for courses. Pay for teachers in schools was due to increase and this would add further pressures for recruitment. Terms and conditions for staff may need to be reviewed. It was suggested and agreed that further work be completed by management on this, with a report back to Corporation with proposals.

The Staff Governor commented that some new staff joining college after working in their vocational areas did not fully understand the extent of the

Principal

administration that was necessary in teaching. This was potentially off putting for some. However, it was agreed that teaching staff with vocational experience were essential and therefore attractive recruitment packages needed to be offered.

The Chair of Finance and Resources Committee would monitor staffing issues through the work of his committee.

Funding Announcements

There had been a series of funding announcements in January as reported to the last Corporation.

The College had now received its initial funding allocation for study programmes for next year. Total funding of £26.2m was £1.6m greater than this year (£24.6m). Allowing for an additional 12 teachers to cover the required 40 hours of teaching at top of scale this was comfortably in the £0.8m to £1.0m net benefit range in the pay review paper approved at the last meeting.

Budget 2022/23

Work was ongoing to draft a budget for 2022/23. The Finance and Resources Committee had discussed and agreed the following as high-level objectives at this stage:

- EBITDA > 7.5%
- Staff Cost as a percentage of Income < 69.5%
- Average Class Size of at least 16
- Investment of £1m in resources (excluding matched funding contributions). Particular investment was needed in IT.

An update would be taken to the next Finance and Resources Committee in May.

Governors discussed inflation and rising energy costs. Both were significant concerns for next year's budget. The fixed price contract for electricity would end on 31 March and management were looking to secure a new contract. A very large percentage increase in cost was expected. It was a volatile and rapidly changing market. Capital investments to generate longer term revenue savings were being considered.

Lennartz

A rebate on the Lennartz VAT scheme had been secured and was expected to be received shortly.

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

There was a five-minute comfort break.

53.22 EXECUTIVE TEAM REPORT

The Principal commented on the new style report, which was in three parts.

Principal's Update

- Government continued to focus on the 'Levelling Up' agenda, although there was still a lack of detail on this. It was expected that there would be further devolution to WMCA;

- There had been a re-structure at ESFA, which had moved some of the functions relating to FE into the DfE. The local arrangements, and any changes to these, were still to be confirmed;
- Sector reforms continued at a pace, with changes to qualifications, finance, accountability and governance all in scope;
- The college had some involvement in the preparations for the Birmingham Commonwealth Games in August and was hosting promotional events;
- Curriculum planning for 2022/23 was continuing. There was a stronger focus on intent and the likely priorities of LSIPs;
- A Maths and English review had taken place and actions were being progressed. Two thirds of the 16-18 cohort studied Maths and/or English;
- Covid cases amongst students and staff were noted. It was clear that numbers were starting to increase again.

Questions and comments were invited.

Governors discussed the opportunities for the college in relation to the Commonwealth Games and the legacy activities. The Principal confirmed that the college was developing direct relationships and opportunities with the organisers.

It was noted that although there was much talk about 'Levelling Up', it was unclear what this meant in practice for colleges.

A Governor asked how the new Maths and English leadership structure was embedding. The Principal confirmed that there was still work to do and that a new Maths Lead was planned. Student attendance to lessons was improving. The Staff Governor added that the re-structure had worked well but that there had been some concerns about communications within the team now that they were spread across the college.

Curriculum Report

The Assistant Principal Curriculum presented his report and the following were highlighted:

- The college had been selected to participate in an Ofsted thematic review of T Levels next week. This was not an inspection and there would be no individual feedback to Walsall;
- Recruitment for the A Level offer from September 2022 was strong, particularly in Law and Psychology;
- The DfE had launched a consultation exercise to prepare to reduce the number of qualifications available at Level 2 and below. For young people studying at Walsall College, this put much of the current Level 2 curriculum in scope for review. A more comprehensive risk and impact assessment would be undertaken in due course and reported back to the Corporation. College staff intended to submit a response to the consultation, which would run until the end of April;

The Chair noted that any changes being implemented to Level 2 after the consultation would not be until 2026, so after the next General Election

- Curriculum Deep Dives were ongoing and had been discussed in detail at the latest Learning and Quality Committee. Committee

members had provided some helpful feedback on actions. The activities on this since the committee were explained.

Governors discussed the Deep Dives process. The approach was developmental and was being refined. It provided an in-year view of a curriculum area's SAR and QIP. Curriculum Leads were confirmed as being involved in agreeing the actions, along with a lead from the Quality team. The process was viewed as being supportive.

There was a discussion about the T Level and A Level strategy and how this linked to the Government's intentions to review qualifications at both Level 3 and Level 2.

Apprenticeships and Commercial Report

The Principal presented the report in the absence of the Assistant Principal Commercial Development.

It was confirmed that the college was on track for the expected year-end achievement outturn of 70%. The new apprenticeship performance dashboard was now operational and available for all staff to monitor. KPIs had been set and agreed with the Apprenticeship Sector Managers.

Smart Assessor training was ongoing.

Recruitment for courses at CCM continued to be strong and the offer was expanding. Work was also planned to offer some provision for local schools.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Executive Team Report.

54.22 QUALITY UPDATE

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE referred to his detailed written report and highlighted a number of areas. Most had been discussed at the recent Learning and Quality Committee.

- The programme of developmental learning walks was continuing and 55% were now complete. Outstanding actions were being followed up;
- The Assistant Principal and Workforce Development Manager were meeting all teaching staff to discuss teaching and learning;
- The destinations data report commissioned had now been received. All areas – young people, adults and apprentices – showed improvement and were back to pre-pandemic levels;
- There was still a large number of students (360) that were RAG rated as red in terms of concerns about their attendance and progress. Attendance data was still being recorded on the hardest measure and showed that 74% of students were physically in college;
- A teaching and learning survey for students had been launched. This would complete in April with the results to be presented at Learning and Quality Committee in June;
- Much staff CPD was being completed;
- Retention was being closely monitored. For vocational courses this was 94%.

Questions and comments were invited.

A Governor commented on missing register marks and it was confirmed that the figures related to marks and not complete registers that were missing.

A Governor asked about the review of the student disciplinary policy. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE explained the need to streamline the policy in light of increasing numbers and the amount of senior staff time taken in administration. It was suggested that this could involve Governors but although this approach was taken in school, it was not deemed appropriate for the college.

The current student disciplinary process was outlined. It went through different tiers of management from pastoral managers to the Assistant Principal Curriculum. The changes included a weekly disciplinary panel, which would be more efficient.

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

55.22 GOVERNANCE MATTERS

Chair's Report

The Chair gave a verbal report of the activities he had been involved in since the last Corporation meeting. These included:

- A meeting with the Further Education Commissioner and the Principal;
- Regular meetings with the Principal and Head of Governance;
- One to one meetings with other Governors;
- Attendance at the AOC Midlands Chairs monthly virtual meetings;
- A meeting with the Committee Chairs. Amongst other things, this had briefly discussed plans for the required external governance review;

Draft Calendar of Meetings for 2022/23

The Head of Governance reported that the calendar was at the final review stage and expected to be issued to all Governors very soon.

Committee Minutes

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

- Learning and Quality Committee 29 September 2021;
- Audit Committee 16 November 2021;
- Finance and Resources Committee 23 November 2021; and
- Student Voice Committee 26 November 2021.

It was also reported that:

- Finance and Resources Committee met on 15 February 2022;
- Learning and Quality Committee met on 16 February 2022;
- Student Voice Committee met on 10 March 2022; and
- Audit Committee met on 15 March 2022.

No approved minutes of these meetings were yet available, although Governors noted the items discussed, as set out in the written paper.

Governors were advised that the recommendations of the various committee minutes included in their packs had been considered by Corporation in previous meetings.

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

Link Governor Reports

The Chair of Learning and Quality Committee commented on the recent meeting. He had subsequently been into college to meet the Assistant Principal Commercial Development to discuss work-based learning as part of his own self-development.

The Academic Staff Governor commented on her recent attendance at an induction event, which had been very useful.

56.22 STUDENT VOICE REPORT

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE presented his report, which included:

- Feedback on the Student Voice Committee held on 10 March 2022. A large number of students had attended and engagement in the discussions had been excellent. It had been possible to have wider ranging and higher-level discussions about improving student voice rather than resolving operational matters;
- An interim Designated Safeguarding Lead was in place and was helping with the review of student voice. The Student Services team was reporting directly to the Assistant Principal until a new Head of Student Services was appointed.

Governors that had attended the Student Voice Committee commented that it had been a very inspirational meeting.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Student Voice Report.

57.22 REFLECTIONS ON EFFECTIVENESS OF THE MEETING AND MATTERS OF REPORT

All staff other than the Principal left for this item.

The Chair commented that the papers had been shorter and there was less duplication. More detailed discussions on some items had taken place at committees. Governors agreed that the revised format agenda had worked well and thanked the Principal and staff for their work in preparing and presenting the papers. The meeting format would continue in future.

58.22 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 24 May 2022 at 1730 hrs.

The meeting ended at 2010 hrs.

How Governors challenged management	Impact of meeting on College
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51.22	Asked how capital projects would be managed to minimise disruption for current students.	51.22	Approved two capital projects and approved further discussions by management for a third.
51.22	Asked how project management would be organised to ensure that projects completed to time and with sufficient management capacity.		
52.22	Questioned whether there was sufficient resource to focus on apprenticeship delivery and development.		