

WALSALL COLLEGE
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATION
HELD ON THURSDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2021 AT 1730 HRS
VENUE: VIA TEAMS

PRESENT:	Allan Pinnegar, Chair, Item 20.22	Jat Sharma, Principal and Chief Executive
	Alan Woods, Chair, from Item 22.22	Jo Hughes
	Fiona Macmillan	Mary Mahoney
	Aisling McGowan	Dave Wheeler
	Stuart Pedley-Smith – until 2000 hrs	Charlotte Bosworth
	Jaswinder Dhillon	Malissa Clarke
	Paul Dale – from 1755 hrs	Nick Tomkys
		Paul Averis – until 1950 hrs
		Heather Lodge
	Alison Buick	Clerk to the Corporation
TOGETHER WITH (from 1740 hrs):	James Norris	Assistant Principal Commercial Development
	David Turner	Assistant Principal Quality and HE
	Richard Brennan	Assistant Principal Curriculum
	Matthew Brown	Director of Finance & MIS
	Neil Sambrook (part)	Director of Faculty, STEAM
	Rachel Davies (part)	Director of Faculty, Adults, Foundation and Community
	Rachael Smith (part)	Director of Faculty, Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning
	Mark Dawson (part)	Reporting Accountant, KPMG
APOLOGIES:	Graham Ward	

20.22 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance, as well as their support during his recent period of absence. He explained that he intended to continue as a Governor until the end of his term of office in March 2022 but to resign as Chair with immediate effect.

21.22 GOVERNANCE MATTERS

Election of a Chair and Vice Chair

The Clerk noted that the process and timing of the election had been discussed several times with Governors prior to this meeting, and that opportunities had been given for nominations to be put forward. The only nominations received had been for Alan Woods as Chair and Charlotte Bosworth as Vice Chair.

Alan and Charlotte left the meeting for the election.

The Clerk stated that Governors were required to formally consider the nominations and to vote on the appointments.

As Governors were aware, Alan Woods had declared a specific interest in a recently awarded DfE contract for future T Level provision which may affect

Walsall College. This declaration had been made in writing as part of the annual process as well as verbally reported at recent meetings, including the last Corporation in October 2021. At that time, Alan had asked any Governors with comments or queries to contact him or the Clerk. The Clerk was not aware of any such comments to Alan. It was a Governor's responsibility to ensure that their declarations of interest were kept up to date and Corporation's responsibility to operate in an open, transparent and accountable manner.

Governors discussed the declaration made and agreed that a watching brief needed to be retained as the T Level decisions were made by management. There were specific requirements for colleges to report Related Party Transactions, which management and Governors were aware of. At this time, Governors did not have any specific concerns about the conflict, but agreed that it was important to keep it under review.

Governors **unanimously agreed to approve** the appointment of Alan Woods as Chair and Charlotte Bosworth as Vice Chair with immediate effect. In accordance with previously agreed protocols, Alan's term as Chair would run until the end of his term as a Governor, which was extended to 18 May 2025. Charlotte's term as Vice Chair would be for two years until 24 November 2023.

Alan and Charlotte returned to the meeting at 1740 hrs and were advised of their appointments.

The new Chair thanked Governors for their support and looked forward to working with them all. Thanks were expressed to the outgoing Chair for his tremendous leadership of Corporation over recent years and in some difficult circumstances, as well as for his personal support, guidance and friendship.

It was noted that Malissa Clarke, new Student Union President, and Nick Tomkys, Associate Governor, were attending their first Corporation meeting since appointment. Thanks were also expressed to Jo Hughes, as this would be her last meeting as Staff Governor. A process to appoint her successor was in progress.

Committee Terms of Reference

The Clerk reported that all Committee terms of reference had been reviewed and were being recommended for approval by Corporation.

Governors **resolved to approve** the Terms of Reference as presented.

22.22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Graham Ward.

23.22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Alan Woods made his usual declaration as the Chief Executive of an awarding body and noted the awarding body's appointment as a subcontractor for new T Level provision.

24.22 SAR VALIDATION – CLUSTER AND DEPARTMENTAL PRESENTATIONS

The Assistant Principal Curriculum provided some opening comments and introduced the staff that would be making presentations on their areas.

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE shared his screen to show each presentation.

Provision for Young People – STEAM

Neil Sambrook, Faculty Director

Governors were informed that the STEAM provision overall for Young People was good when judged against the EIF. The following points were noted:

- Quality of education was good;
- Intent was strong and the wide-ranging curriculum covered all WMCA priority areas;
- Full time pathways were designed for progression and were clearly linked to employment or further study;
- The impacts of Covid were clear. However, teachers had worked hard during the pandemic and there had been many challenges;
- There was a need for improvement in ensuring consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. Remote delivery was not always good in all areas;
- Attendance and achievement in Maths and English was not consistently good so remained areas for development;
- Sequencing of curriculum was generally strong and well planned;
- Progression into industry was good and destination data was strong;
- Students engaged well with the vocational elements of their courses and less well with the classroom elements;
- Behaviour was generally good and was challenged where needed by staff;
- Attendance and punctuality were below college targets;
- Students were respectful;
- Personal Development was graded as Requires Improvement. There were some issues related to Covid-19. Some enrichment was very good but not all was effective;
- Health and wellbeing needed a greater focus in enrichment and more provision at Green Lane. Many students had mental health and other wellbeing needs;
- There were no substantial E&D gaps in achievement;
- Leadership and management were good but more innovation was needed;
- Tutors maintained their vocational knowledge well. More support was needed to develop teaching practice;
- Focus remained on ensuring sufficient staff in classrooms with students, although there had been difficulties in covering during Covid;
- Student voice needed to be stronger;
- Safeguarding was proactive and effective. Case numbers had increased and were becoming more complex and therefore time consuming.

Questions and comments were invited.

Governors commented that the presentation had been comprehensive and reflective.

A question was raised about the approach to blended learning. The Faculty Director responded that there were some concerns about attendance at synchronous learning and that there was more blended learning this year. For last year it had been a priority to have students in for practical skills sessions when restrictions had permitted. Occupational competency was a required skill for many of the Faculty areas.

The need to improve student voice was agreed.

A Governor asked about the pedagogy in place and whether this was too didactic. The effective use of teaching and learning champions was also questioned. The Faculty Director felt that it was too early to assess the impact of teaching and learning champions but that the development of more innovative teaching was needed.

A Governor suggested that consideration be given to recruiting teachers with technical skills from non-traditional backgrounds, particularly areas where Covid-19 had displaced people from other sectors such as retail. It was confirmed that college wide staff recruitment strategies were being reviewed.

There was a discussion about the impact of Covid and how Ofsted may view this as a context and not an excuse. It was important to reflect on this in the SAR.

It was confirmed that although safeguarding cases were increasing, they were being dealt with appropriately, with onward referral where needed.

A Governor noted the Digital Innovation Hub and asked if it was being used to best effect. The Principal confirmed that digital initiatives were work in progress and that further detail would be brought to a future meeting.

Provision for Young People – Vocational Sixth Form Richard Brennan, Assistant Principal Curriculum

The Assistant Principal Curriculum presented this item in the absence of the Faculty Director.

- V6 provision overall was good;
- Intent was strong and delivery was well planned. There was a need for more innovation in delivery although there were good examples of innovation in assessment;
- Achievement of vocational qualifications was good. There were not enough students achieving grade 4 in Maths and English. Progress could be seen as many students had a low starting point. Maths and English specialists were now being embedded in each curriculum area;
- Students were well behaved, although Covid had disrupted resilience, mental health and social skills;
- Behaviour was generally good in classrooms but less so in social areas and off site;
- Personal Development required improvement. There were examples of excellent tutorials and other activities but there was inconsistency. The quality of the tutorial experience was variable;

- Leadership and management was good. Curriculum areas worked well with external partners.

Questions and comments were invited.

Governors asked about the impact of innovative teaching. Staff defined this as ways to stimulate learning and engagement, which would result in development of deeper knowledge, practical skills and improved memory. It was confirmed that staff were reviewing teaching plans to reflect on and improve pedagogy.

A Governor commented that the quality of teaching and learning was good, but that students were affected in many ways by their personal circumstances. The Assistant Principal Curriculum agreed, and noted that the college worked with a variety of external agencies to provide support.

There was a discussion about the extent to which Covid-19 had affected teaching practice. There was an element of needing to catch up, which affected delivery styles, plus differences between curriculum areas as well as teachers own preferences pre and post Covid. More work to look at both consistency and innovation would be taking place.

Provision for Adults including High Needs

Rachel Davies, Faculty Director

It was noted that the provision in the area included some young people in supported learning, but that the majority was for adults, including pre-entry for higher levels.

- Overall, the provision was rated as good;
- Intent was very strong. Planning, rationale and progression were all clear;
- There were many non-vocational areas within the Faculty, so there were fewer employer links. However, there were good partnerships with the NHS, Local Authority and other stakeholders;
- There was a new community learning offer, but it had been too soon to assess the impact for this SAR;
- There was a balanced blend of accredited and non-accredited provision;
- There had been an increased number of venues and multiple starting points for students in the year. Delivery modes varied;
- Teachers knew their students well;
- Achievement was high for courses with no exams and most adults made good progress with positive destinations;
- Staff were highly skilled industry experts;
- Adults were eager to learn and were motivated;
- Courses had good links to current and future jobs;
- Attendance on some courses was too low, which was a general theme across the college;
- Strategies to recover missed learning needed more work;
- Enrichment for adults was more difficult as most wished to focus on gaining a qualification;
- Fundamental British Values were well embedded.
- Careers guidance for vocational courses was good but more was needed for non-vocational courses;

- Leadership and management was strong. The vision was clear. There were high aspirations for learners, especially in supported learning;
- The link governance process was supportive;
- Safeguarding practice was good.

A Governor asked whether the grading of good reflected the level of leadership and management well enough. The impact of the work in the Faculty had been very positive. The Faculty Director responded that if the quality of education grade was not outstanding, then the overall grade could not be outstanding.

There was a discussion about the grades awarded for the area and whether management had been too cautious. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE agreed to review this.

Attendance was considered. This was a key driver for the Behaviour grade. The recent external review carried out had highlighted attendance as an area in which the college needed to have higher expectations. It was agreed that there was more work to do to analyse attendance in respect of demographic factors and in how it linked to the quality of teaching and learning. This was a college-wide issue, not specific to this Faculty.

Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning

James Norris, Assistant Principal Commercial Development

Rachael Smith, Faculty Director

Governors were introduced to Rachael Smith, Faculty Director for Apprenticeships and Work Based Learning, who presented the SAR for this area:

- Overall, provision was graded as Good;
- Curriculum intent reflected the requirements of local and some national employers;
- CCM had allowed new provision to be developed. Demand was strong in this area so there was further development potential;
- Provision had been flexible during Covid-19 as there had been a rapid move to online delivery;
- Staff subject knowledge was good;
- Overall achievement for apprenticeships was 63%, which was below the target of 74%. Some of the drop was due to delays in End Point Assessments;
- Timely completion was an area for improvement;
- The quality of progress reviews was also an issue to be addressed, as inconsistencies in practice were apparent;
- Behaviour and attitudes were good. Attendance and punctuality were high. Relationships with employers were instrumental in developing positive attitudes;
- Personal development was good. However, apprenticeship access to wider college enrichment was weak with many apprentices not knowing what the college offer was. British Values were discussed within reviews however quality was inconsistent and not well planned. Initial careers interviews were not always robust in capturing sufficient detail about apprentices prior knowledge or experience;
- There were no significant E&D gaps;

**Assistant
Principal
Quality and
HE**

- Results of surveys in the area were good;
- Leadership and management were good, with staff having high expectations for apprentices. Managers had a good oversight of the areas of strength and areas for development. Some staff development was required.

Questions and comments were invited.

The achievement rate of 63% was discussed. It was hoped that this would be comparable to national figures when released. A Governor suggested that a review of first time pass rates would be interesting.

The Chair commented that the inclusion of statistics in this presentation had been helpful.

25.22 DRAFT SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2020/21 AND DRAFT QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2021/22

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE presented the report, which related to the draft Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2020/21. The overall judgements were that the college was graded as good in three four of the key Ofsted Common Inspection Framework areas, these being:

1. Quality of Education;
2. Behaviour and Attitudes;
3. Leadership and Management.

The judgement for the fourth area, Personal Development, was requires improvement.

The evidence used to form these judgements derived from the individual self- assessments of the college departments and the recent work of a team of four external consultants brought in to provide an independent view. All of the consultants were practising Ofsted Inspectors with current experience of inspecting colleges. A report had now been received to outline the results of their work. Helpfully, this included a draft action plan, which would form the basis of the QIP. A copy of the report would be circulated to Governors.

**Assistant
Principal
Quality and
HE**

Provision for High Needs was still graded as outstanding.

Evidence would be presented to Governors to validate the judgements and at the end of the meeting, Governors would be invited to confirm whether they agreed with the judgements and were happy to approve the SAR and QIP. Governors were reminded of Ofsted's expectations of their role in respect of the quality of teaching, learning and the student experience. The completed SAR would be uploaded for Ofsted to review. This was not mandatory but college staff felt that it was best practice.

The SAR was a live document that showed areas of strength and for development. Governors were asked to note the following:

- Updated tables with learner details, the size of provision and achievement data;
- Vocational achievement was 87.6%, the same as the previous year but down compared to 2018/19 which was 91.1%;
- There had been improvements in adult achievements and GCSE high grades;

- Click Associates had been engaged to carry out a detailed Ofsted style review across the college. A thorough and robust process had been completed and a draft report had been received. This would be circulated to Governors for information. The recommendations and suggested actions would be used to form the basis of the 2021/22 QIP, which was currently work in progress.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Chair commended the Directors and staff for the work done to prepare the SAR. The reports and presentations had been excellent.

The Principal commented that the work, including the inputs from Click Associates, had been very reflective and had identified some areas to be worked on. Not all would be resolved within a year but a positive direction of travel was expected.

The Chair concluded the discussions by thanking the staff for their presentations and reiterating that the Corporation was required to approve the SAR and QIP.

It was **resolved** that Governors **agreed** to approve the SAR and QIP.

There was a ten-minute comfort break.

Paul Averis left at 1940 hrs.

26.22 COLLEGE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Governors were introduced to Mark Dawson, Reporting Accountant from KPMG. Updated ESFA guidance for this year required the external auditors to present their findings to Boards. KPMG had previously attended Audit Committee on 16 November.

The Director of Finance & MIS presented his report, noting that the details had been considered at the Finance & Resources and Audit Committees as appropriate.

Finance and Resources Committee had scrutinised the detail of the accounts at a meeting earlier in the week. Following this there had been two small changes, being a revision to the presentation of the KPIs and an updated version of KPMG's Letter of Representation.

Governors were reminded of their responsibilities in signing the accounts, including being comfortable with the assurances provided in the various documents, taking account of the views of the Finance and Resources Committee and Audit Committee, and being satisfied that the college was a going concern at the point of signing the accounts.

Governors' attention was drawn to the following highlights:

Draft Financial Statements

The financial outturn for 2020/21 was a statutory accounts loss of £2.6m and the audit opinion was unqualified. This was after a range of accounting adjustments, including for pensions, goodwill on the acquisition of CCM and capital grants released.

The report cover sheet set out the reconciliation from the July management accounts to the year-end statutory accounts. The accounting adjustments were explained. The underlying trading performance had been good. Financial health at year-end was good, the ESFA had no concerns and KPMG had not raised any recommendations in their management letter. The internal audit annual report had a clean opinion.

Attention was drawn to the narrative of the accounts, which included commentary and key metrics on staffing, performance and governance. Governors were assured that the college framework of internal control was well managed and was subject to scrutiny through a variety of methods, including work that was presented to Audit Committee.

Governors were reminded of their responsibility to conclude on the going concern of the college before approving the accounts. This needed to be a Governor decision based on all information presented and wider knowledge of the college. The Director of Finance & MIS had provided an extract of the report relating to going concern as part of the information pack.

Mark Dawson was invited to comment on the work of KPMG and Governors noted the following:

- Reports had previously been presented at Audit Committee;
- The audit was complete and clean opinions had been given in all respects. No substantive issues had arisen from the audit;
- A final check of the areas that had been updated since the Audit Committee was needed, but no additional testing was required;
- KPMG had completed work on going concern and had no issues to report;
- Extra work had been required this year on funding assurance due to changes in the ESFA guidance on this area;
- The LGPS liability calculations had been reviewed;
- The significant audit risks identified at the planning stage were explained. There were no concerns from these;
- No control recommendations had been made this year. The two low priority recommendations from the previous year had been followed up. One was complete and the other was in progress.

The Chair asked if the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee wished to comment. It was confirmed that the committee had reviewed the documentation presented in detail and had no concerns. The college was financially strong. Thanks were expressed to KPMG and the college Finance staff for their work in preparing the accounts and completing the audit.

Governors discussed the going concern status of the college and did not have any issues to raise on the appropriateness of agreeing this.

Letter of Representation

This was the standard letter required under auditing standards. The contents were generic, with no college specific representations required.

Governors **resolved to approve** the statutory accounts and the Letter of Representation, and agreed that the Chair should sign both on behalf of the Corporation.

Regularity Audit Self-Assessment

This had been considered at both the Finance and Resources Committee and the Audit Committee. It was being presented to Corporation as the Chair was required to sign, in addition to the Principal. KPMG had used this when undertaking work to inform their Regularity opinion.

Broadway Training Limited and Student Union Accounts

These were provided for completeness and information.

Internal Audit Annual Report

The paper was included for information as the detail had been considered at the November Audit Committee. A clean audit opinion, based on the work undertaken in the year, had been provided.

Audit Committee Annual Report to Corporation

The report had been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Post 16 Audit Code of Practice in place for the year, with the overall conclusion on page 9. This stated that the Audit Committee was satisfied as to the adequacy and effectiveness of the Corporation's assurance arrangements, framework of governance, risk management and control processes for the effective and efficient use of resources, solvency of the institution and the safeguarding of its assets. This would be submitted with the signed accounts.

Remuneration Committee Annual Report

The report had been prepared to comply with the requirements of the AOC's Senior Post Holder Remuneration Code, adopted by the college in March 2019.

Governors **resolved to receive** the Broadway Training Limited and Student Union accounts, as well as the Internal Audit Annual Report, the Audit Committee's Annual Report and the Remuneration Committee's Annual Report.

Stuart Pedley-Smith left at 2000 hrs.

27.22 MATTERS OF REPORT

Heather Lodge thanked the Director of Finance & MIS for her recent very helpful induction session.

The Chair noted his thanks to Governors for electing him and the new Vice Chair. He intended to arrange one to one meetings with Governors early in the new year and looked forward to working with them all.

28.22 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 27 January 2022 at 1730 hrs.

The meeting ended at 2005 hrs

How Governors challenged management		Impact of meeting on College	
24.22	Asked whether the pedagogy in place was too didactic.	21.22	Approved appointment of new Chair and Vice Chair.
24.22	Suggested that teachers be recruited from wider and more non-traditional backgrounds.	21.22	Approved Committee Terms of Reference.
24.22	Questioned whether the grading of provision for Adults was high enough to reflect the work done.	25.22	Approved SAR and QIP.
		26.22	Approved the statutory accounts and the Letter of Representation for signature by the Chair once KPMG had finalised their audit work.