

**WALSALL COLLEGE
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATION
HELD ON THURSDAY 27 JANUARY 2022 AT 1730 HRS
VENUE: VIA TEAMS**

PRESENT:	Alan Woods, Chair Aisling McGowan Stuart Pedley-Smith Jaswinder Dhillon Allan Pinnegar Leah Brookes	Jat Sharma, Principal and Chief Executive Mary Mahoney Dave Wheeler Charlotte Bosworth Paul Averis Rani Sahota
TOGETHER WITH	Nick Tomkys James Norris David Turner Richard Brennan Matthew Brown Deb Rajania John Adams Andrea Packer (Item 37.22) Alison Buick	Associate Governor Assistant Principal Commercial Development Assistant Principal Quality and HE Assistant Principal Curriculum Director of Finance & MIS Director of Operations & Resources Director of Commercial Projects Director of Student Services Clerk to the Corporation
APOLOGIES:	Graham Ward, Fiona Macmillan, Heather Lodge, Malissa Clarke	

29.22 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. He hoped that it would be possible to resume face to face meetings from February 2022, Covid restrictions permitting.

A particular welcome was extended to Leah Brookes and Rani Sahota, attending their first meetings as Student and Staff Governors.

Governors were introduced to Melissa Tisdale, who had recently won the Pearson FE Lecturer of the year award. Melissa was congratulated on her achievement and thanked for her work at the college on behalf of the Governors. Melissa commented on her role as a Media lecturer and on her experience of attending the awards ceremony, which had included meeting Nadhim Zahawi MP, Secretary of State for Education.

30.22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Graham Ward, Fiona Macmillan, Heather Lodge, Malissa Clarke.

31.22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no new declarations made.

32.22 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 19 October 2021 and 25 November 2021, having been circulated, were taken as read and approved.

33.22 MATTERS ARISING

Governors considered the Action Points Record and noted the following:

Item 81.21

There was no update on Health and Safety training for Governors.

Item 82.21.1

An update on LSIPs would be included in the papers for the next Learning and Quality Committee in February 2022.

Item 82.21.2

The Curriculum Conference date had been moved to March 2022.

Item 06.22

The EDI policy had been updated as agreed.

Item 09.22.1

Staff leavers data had been included in the Principal's Report and would be covered later in the agenda.

Item 09.22.2

The Staff Wellbeing Strategy had been circulated as agreed.

Item 24.22

Management had reviewed the self-assessment grade for Adult provision and no change had been deemed necessary.

Item 25.22

The Click Associates report had been circulated as agreed.

Item 09.20.1 from Audit Committee

The Counter Fraud Strategy had been presented to Audit Committee in November 2021.

Item 09.20.1 from Audit Committee

ISO was to be covered through the remit of the Environmental Strategy Committee.

34.22 HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT

The Director of Operations and Resources presented the report, which was for information and approval.

The observations received from the Associate Governor ahead of the meeting were acknowledged and addressed. In summary, all required risk assessments were in place and there was regular review of incidents to ensure that any trends were identified.

The college continued to retain its ROSPA Gold award for management of health and safety. The Health and Safety Committee, which included the Link Governor, was very effective. It was important to demonstrate the

involvement of Governors in the oversight of Health and Safety matters, as this was part of the ROSPA Gold criteria.

It was confirmed that all Health and Safety compliance matters had been addressed and that there were no concerns. The actual spend for the area was similar to previous years.

The Chair thanked Allan Pinnegar, current Link Governor, for his input to this key area. He also asked whether the addition of CCM and the LEAF Centre had changed the college risk profile. The Director of Operations and Resources confirmed that they had – CCM was a separate site whereas LEAF was part of the motor vehicle provision. An internal health and safety inspection was planned at CCM later in this term. The external inspection at CCM had been completed and had not identified any issues of concern. At the time of acquiring CCM a full due diligence exercise, including health and safety, had been completed. No matters had been identified at that time either.

Governors **resolved to approve** the Health and Safety Annual Report.

35.22 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Principal presented his report and highlighted the following:

- The Christmas Staff Conference had gone well;
- Staff had each received a one-off payment of £25 in December;
- Around 10% of students had been absent due to Covid since the start of term. 11% of staff had also been off, although only 5% of this was due to Covid. Some with Covid had worked at home if well enough to do so. Pockets of provision had been affected by staff absence but staff were working through this.

The Director of Operations and Resources added that staff and student absences were reducing, so seemed to have peaked. The requirement to wear face masks in the buildings had been removed but was still encouraged in line with the advice of the local Director of Public Health.

- There had been significant recent investment in the buildings and Governors were encouraged to visit;
- T Level phase 3 funding had been received and being invested in Engineering;
- The Town Centre investment plans were progressing and an update would be taken to the next Finance and Resources Committee;
- Staff wellbeing surveys had been issued and the results would be analysed. Staff turnover remained below the sector average;
- Student behaviour in college was generally good but there had been a recent incident outside of college involving students. It appeared to be gang-related activity;

There was a discussion about behaviour in the town centre and the involvement of college students.

- Staff training activities were noted;
- The net financial position of the college was good.

The Principal concluded his report with an update on his recent meetings and appointments.

The Chair congratulated the Principal on his re-appointment for a third term as part of the Principals Reference Group.

Questions and comments were invited.

A Governor asked whether there were any staff wellbeing issues arising from the need to manage student behaviour. The Principal confirmed that the Staff Wellbeing Strategy was now in place. There continued to be a focus on managing behaviour. There was a particular challenge in engaging parents in this. Some of the reasons for this were outlined, many of which related to Covid. Expectations were being re-enforced.

A Governor suggested that some innovation in behaviour management may be needed, to help students develop resilience and strategies for coping in difficult situations. The Principal would consider this with the use of catch up funding.

The Assistant Principal Commercial Development gave an update on his areas of responsibility:

- Apprenticeship performance overall was good;
- There were many employer vacancies but difficulties in recruiting young apprentices;
- Retention was slightly below target but not felt to be a cause for concern currently;
- Caseload data and out of funding learners were explained. Delays in completion were largely due to Covid;
- The college had activities planned for National Apprenticeships Week from 7 February.

A Governor commented on Kickstart initiatives recently launched by the Government, and it was confirmed that the college was involved in this.

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

36.22 QUALITY AND HE UPDATE REPORT

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE referred to his detailed written report and highlighted a number of areas. Governors noted the following:

- Attendance by Faculty and by term;
- There were 287 students RAG rated as red in terms of level of concern.

A Governor commented that the number of missing register marks seemed high and the impact of this on the accuracy of attendance data was discussed. The figures related to individual marks rather than individual registers. It was confirmed that 99% of registers were marked and that reminders were sent out to staff where needed.

- 26% of planned Learning Walks had been completed for the year to date. There were 227 recorded actions from these walks, although 11% of the priority actions had yet to be finalised;
- Retention figures overall were good, and particularly so for HE and High Needs students;
- There were 13 key areas for improvement on the Executive level Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). They had been identified from the

self-assessment work for 2020-21 and also the review in November 2021 by Click Associates.

A Governor commented on the learning walks process and asked if Staff Governors felt that it was effective. Due to technical difficulties the Academic Staff Governor was unable to respond. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE stated that feedback he received indicated that staff found the process to be supportive.

The Chair suggested that future reports include definitions of abbreviations and this was agreed.

37.22 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ANNUAL REPORT

The Director of Student Services presented her report, which included much information on performance, staff and student data with clear analysis to identify the gaps. Where gaps were apparent, actions had been agreed to address them.

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE confirmed that the report related to 2020/21 and commented on the following:

- BME students had increased by 2.2% on the previous year;
- 61% of students were from the most deprived Walsall postcode areas;
- EDI was a live and ongoing discussion and there was ambition to embed this across college activities. Actions and activities were regularly discussed at the EDI Committee, which included attendance of the Link Governor;
- The EDI policy focused around the agreed 'Five Cs' – these being Culture, Continuous Professional Development, Curriculum, Connected and Challenged;
- There were no significant EDI gaps in age or gender and it was pleasing to see that previous gaps were closing;
- Curriculum staff were able to access data to drill down into a greater level of detail if they wished.

Questions and comments were invited.

A Governor commented on the inclusion of case studies, which were felt to be helpful and interesting.

Another Governor asked whether the achievement of neuro-diverse students had yet been considered. This was a new area, so had not been picked up. It was agreed that the Governor would discuss this in his scheduled meeting with the Director of Student Services the following week.

The Chair suggested that definitions of positive and negative destinations would be helpful and it was agreed that this would be added.

The Chair asked whether EDI data was externally audited. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE confirmed that it would be reviewed in some detail by Ofsted. The Director of Finance & MIS added that EDI would be included in discussions as a possible area for internal audit review, depending on its relative risk profile.

**Director of
Student
Services**

**Assistant
Principal
Quality and
HE**

There was a discussion about the breakdown of EDI data by provision type, and whether this was significant. The Principal suggested a 'deep dive' to look at this. It was agreed to bring a report on this back to a future meeting.

Governors noted that EDI data was used to target under represented groups in marketing materials.

The Chair commented that EDI was a possible topic for the forthcoming external governance review.

A Governor noted the Government Levelling Up agenda and the potential role of the college in moving this forwards from the education perspective. EDI would be a key factor in this as it was very relevant to the social and economic transformation of Walsall. The Assistant Principal Commercial Development added that the Borough-wide skills summit would be looking at this area as the Local Authority was keen to see the impact of place-based interventions.

There was a discussion about the Levelling Up agenda and recent Government announcements on this. More details were expected to be announced, including for the Shared Prosperity Funding.

Governors **resolved** to **approve** the EDI Annual Report.

There was a five-minute comfort break.

38.22 SU PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Clerk summarised the paper in the absence of the Student Union President. The SU Executive was working hard on a list of identified improvements. The report summarised the activities held and planned.

The Chair of the Student Voice Committee commented that this year's SU Executive team continued to be well engaged but that there were some barriers to be considered. She felt it important for Governors to encourage the SU Executive in their plans, as this would help with the college objective to strengthen student voice.

The Student Governor outlined her plans for a student survey to be issued shortly and her drop-in sessions that were being held for HE students. She was also working with One Walsall and other local colleges on knife and gang crime. Walsall students would be involved in this project.

The Chair asked the Principal about progress in student voice activities. The Principal was aware of several initiatives and would ensure that the two Student Governors were involved by inviting them to meet him.

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

39.22 FINANCE REPORT TO NOVEMBER 2021

The Director of Finance & MIS presented his report, which had two parts – management accounts and pay review.

Management Accounts

- The college was behind on income at this stage of the year but tracking in line with budget as costs were being managed;
- AEB was behind, but this was largely a timing issue so not a concern at this time;
- Apprenticeships income was also down, but this was due to taking a prudent approach and not recognising income until all compliance checks had been completed;
- Options were being considered to ensure that the support available through the National Tuition Fund could be maximised;
- Commercial services had continued to have a difficult trading period as a result of Covid restrictions before Christmas;
- Utility costs were rising and were less easy to control as non-pay inflation was rising generally;
- CCM income was in line with expectations. Opportunities in this area needed to be maximised;
- Management were confident that the bottom line to year-end was manageable as the trading position was close to expectations. More activities needed to be delivered to maximise income. There was ongoing recruitment for tuition and coaching staff.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Chair asked how confident management were of turning around the apprenticeships variance. The Director of Finance & MIS responded that the carry in from last year was strong and that the in-year position was fine so far, when known activity not yet on the ILR was taken into account. Capacity in staffing caseloads was being monitored, so that recruitment was focused in areas where there was capacity. There were however some areas where the demand could not be met due to staffing shortages.

A Governor asked whether staffing issues were due to shortage of skills or low salaries. The Assistant Principal Commercial Development confirmed that it was largely due to lack of interest from appropriately skilled individuals. It was a particular concern in several curriculum areas.

The Director of Finance & MIS confirmed that the catering service was trading well after having been brought in house.

Pay Review

The Director of Finance & MIS referred to his written report, which set out the proposal and had some graphical information to show head count by pay point as at October payroll.

The changes to National Living Wage from April 2022 would affect 70 staff.

There were 113 directly employed staff currently paid below the Real Living Wage and it was proposed that this would be rectified with effect from April 2022.

Governors **resolved to approve** the changes to ensure that all staff were paid at least Real Living Wage from April 2022.

The Director of Finance & MIS also commented on the impact of the new Health & Social Care Levy and the DfE funding changes announced in December 2021. This had been carefully considered in deciding a pay award proposal. This was in line with discussions with Finance and Resources Committee in November, which had agreed that any pay award should be based on affordability. However, due to timing, the detail of this proposal had not been discussed with the committee.

The pay award proposal was 2% for all staff excluding senior postholders with effect from 1 February 2022. The financial impact of this was outlined.

Questions and comments were invited.

A Governor asked if the increase in DfE funding was an acknowledgement of pressures in colleges. The Director of Finance & MIS confirmed that there were a number of reasons for the increase, including the expectation of an increased number of teaching hours in year.

A Governor asked if 2% was sufficient to retain staff in the current climate. Management responded that it was felt to be a balanced offer, taking into account all relevant factors.

There was a discussion about possible efficiencies to be considered.

A Governor asked whether the Real Living Wage adjustment could be brought forward to February so that all pay changes were effected at the same time. The Director of Finance & MIS would consider this outside of the meeting with the Principal.

A Governor asked what the impact of the increase would be on the staff costs to turnover ratio. For the remainder of this financial year the effect was relatively small. The effect for 2022/23 would be considered when the budget was being set.

The Principal noted pay awards for other local colleges and public sector organisations. The AOC recommendation had been 1%.

Governors **resolved to approve** the recommended pay award of 2% for all staff excluding senior postholders with effect from 1 February 2022.

40.22 COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

Student Voice Committee 27 May 2021;
Audit Committee 28 June 2021; and
Finance and Resources Committee 12 October 2021; and
Search and Governance Standards Committee 7 October 2021.

It was also reported that:

Learning and Quality Committee met on 29 September 2021;
Finance and Resources Committee met on 23 November 2021;

Director of
Finance &
MIS/
Principal

Audit Committee met on 16 November 2021;
Student Voice Committee met on 26 November 2021; and
Search and Governance Standards Committee met on 25 January 2022.

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 previous meetings. There were two matters discussed at
Search and Governance Standards Committee that need Corporation
approval, one of which would be reported confidentially by the Chair under
matters of report. The other was the recommendation to re-appoint Dave
Wheeler for a further three-year term of office as an External Governor with
effect from 21 March 2022.

Governors **resolved** to accept the Corporation Committee Minutes and
Report and **approve** the re-appointment of Dave Wheeler for a further three-
year term of office.

41.22 CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair gave a verbal update, including:

- The appraisals for senior postholders had been completed in January;
- There had been three applications to fill External Governor vacancies and these were being reviewed;
- There was a new requirement for colleges to complete an external governance review every three years, with the first being due by 31 July 2024. Consideration would start to be given to the possible scope of this;
- Corporation meetings would return to being face to face from 22 March 2022, with committees being virtual or hybrid.

Governors were reminded that it was Holocaust Memorial Day, an
important date for reflection.

42.22 MATTERS OF REPORT

All staff other than the Principal left for this item. Student and Staff
Governors remained. The item was deemed confidential.

43.22 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 22 March 2022 at 1730 hrs.

How Governors challenged management		Impact of meeting on College	
34.22	Whether the addition of CCM and the LEAF Centre had changed the Health & Safety risk profile	34.22	Approved Health & Safety Annual Report.
35.22	Whether there were any staff wellbeing issues arising from the need to manage student behaviour.	37.22	Approved EDI Annual Report.
37.22	Whether achievements of neuro-diverse students were being recognised in EDI data.	39.22	Approved payment of Real Living Wage from April 2022.
39.22	Asked how confident management were of turning around the apprenticeships variance by year end.	39.22	Approved 2% pay award.
39.22	Asked if 2% proposed pay award was sufficient.		