

05.23 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.

06.23 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2022, having been circulated, were taken as read and approved.

07.23 MATTERS ARISING

Governors reviewed the Action Points Record and noted the following:

Item 81.21

Governors had received health and safety training on 10 October 2022.

Item 66.22.1

The Strategic Pledges had been RAG rated as agreed.

Item 66.22.2

The potential to work with ex-offenders had been considered but there was no intention to increase this. It was specialist provision for which other colleges held contracts. The college did work with ex-offenders where there was scope and capacity to do so.

Item 66.22.3

The SAR would be presented for approval at the next meeting, on 24 November 2022.

Item 68.22

The Pathfinder Action Plan would be brought back to the meeting in January 2023.

Item 82.22

The update on the Electric Vehicle Sustainability Centre would be covered at a later agenda item.

Item 84.22

Additional information had been added to the Finance Report as agreed.

Item 85.22.1

The latest update on the ONS re-classification review had been included in the Executive Team report.

Item 85.22.2

The HE Strategy review was in progress and would be taken back to Learning and Quality Committee.

Item 85.22.3

A detailed paper on A Levels had been taken to Learning and Quality Committee with a roadmap.

Item 88.22

The student report on T Levels had not been received but the Principal was confident that the offer was strong, the results for last year had been excellent, the student feedback was good and recruitment this year had gone well.

08.23 POLICY APPROVAL – SAFEGUARDING

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

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 policy had been updated in line with the latest version of KCSIE;
- It had been decided to create a single policy document, drawing together the separate ones that had previously existed;
- Staff had all been required to complete Level 1 safeguarding training;
- The policy had been covered in the student inductions;
- It was emphasised that all concerns should be reported to the safeguarding team;
- The policy now included a flowchart to show the stages to be followed when considering a concern;
- The policy set out details of the types of safeguarding concern or abuse that may arise;
- There were several associated policies, which were referenced in the document.

Questions and comments were invited.

A Governor asked if it was clear where staff could find necessary information on safeguarding and raising concerns. It was confirmed that all staff had been asked to complete the Level 1 training by 30 September 2022. This was an annual requirement and was provided online.

The Principal commented on recent safeguarding issues and the fact that safeguarding was now discussed at every SMT meeting. The number of reported concerns had significantly increased. There was a new Health and Wellbeing Committee that would review issues. The first meeting was scheduled for 1 November.

The many reasons for the growth in reported concerns were discussed.

Governors felt that the policy was comprehensive and clear.

The Safeguarding Link Governor noted the planned roll out of CPOMs as a reporting tool. This was widely used in schools and was able to confidentially record any concerns. Managers would be able to generate reports for review.

The ways in which students were informed of how to raise concerns were explained. The student home page had a clear link to anyone wishing to raise a concern or make a disclosure. External concerns could be raised by

contacting the college safeguarding team of the Local Authority and MASH teams.

The Head of Governance reminded Governors that Keeping Children Safe in Education had specific responsibilities for Governing Bodies and that they had been requested to read this. It was hoped that the online training would be able to be rolled out for Governors soon.

Head of
Governance

There was a discussion about the extent of involvement the college did and should have in individual cases. The college was able to provide support to a certain point, but external agencies often needed to take over. Cases were often complex. There were examples of college staff being asked to check up on students where other organisations did not have the capacity to do so.

It was **resolved** that Governors **approved** the Safeguarding – Children & Adults at Risk of Harm Policy.

09.23 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 Experience (students) and the Head of HR (staff).

The policy set out the college's values, vision and principles for this area.

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

10.23 CAPITAL PROJECT UPDATE

The Director of Operations and Resources gave an update on capital projects.

CCM

The project was on track and the contract had been awarded within the approved sum.

Construction Skills Academy

The college was out to tender for the main contractor, with a return date of 4 November. An update would be given to Finance and Resources Committee on 22 November with the intention of the contract being awarded on 23 November. Planning approval had been received.

Electric Vehicle Sustainability Centre

Following discussion at the Finance and Resources Committee earlier in the month, an agreement had been reached for the acquisition of the necessary land.

The Chair of the Committee noted the discussions held, including the options for the purchase. It was the recommendation of the Committee that Corporation approve the land purchase for the sum agreed.

Governors asked about the funding for the project. The Director of Finance & MIS confirmed that there was some external funding available and also that the college would be using some reserves. All funding avenues continued to be considered.

A Governor asked about the social value clauses in the contract. The Director of Operations and Resources confirmed that this had been included within the tender specification, but that the awarding of the contract would be weighted mostly towards the cost.

A Governor asked about access and security to the site, and the Director of Operations and Resources explained the plans for this.

It was suggested that a campus tour be offered to Governors so that they could be more familiar with the sites and locations being discussed.

Governors **resolved** to **approve** the acquisition of land for the Electric Vehicle Sustainability Centre in line with the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee.

Head of
Governance
/Director of
Operations
and
Resources

11.23 QUALITY UPDATE

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE gave an update, much of which had been shared at Learning and Quality Committee in September.

Governors were asked to note the following:

- The data set;
- That there had been a drop in Level 2 vocational achievements, which was linked to lower attendance and retention;
- GCSE Maths and English results;
- Results for High Needs students;
- The draft KPIs for 2022/23;
- Current attendance, which was high and needed to be maintained;
- The new Ofsted judgement to be made on how colleges contributed to meeting the local skills needs. The college was confident of meeting this measure and needed a strong evidence base to support this. The Assistant Principal Commercial Development would be the lead manager for this area;
- The update to the 2021-24 Corporate Strategy, which had a column to show progress as at September 2022. This would be linked to the SAR validation process when brought back to the November Corporation meeting. There was strong evidence of the college moving back towards Outstanding.

Comments and questions were invited.

The Assistant Principal Commercial Development commented on the new Ofsted judgement relating to meeting skills needs. A Link Governor for this would be needed, so he would discuss this with Charlotte Bosworth, as she was the new Link Governor for his area.

The Chair of Learning and Quality Committee asked that further information be shared on what the college was doing differently this year compared to last. There had been a useful discussion on this at the committee meeting.

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE noted the challenges last year relating to attendance, lockdown, wellbeing, skills and knowledge gaps. There had been a focus on catch up in learning and less capacity for enrichment and tutorial activities. This was being addressed this year, as well as there being a specific and consistent focus on attendance.

There was a discussion about attendance.

The Chair of Learning and Quality Committee commented on the discussions around ensuring support and consistent expectations from senior management through to teaching staff.

There was a lengthy discussion about GCSE results and high grades. The Assistant Principal Curriculum outlined the factors that had contributed to the results and the changes that had been agreed for 2022/23. These had been considered in detail at the committee meeting.

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE concluded his paper with comments on the HE Access and Participation Plan, which he was pleased to report had now been approved by OfS. Governors noted the approval, which had been delayed, and agreed that the plan should now be published on the college website.

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

There was a ten-minute comfort break

12.23 EXECUTIVE TEAM REPORT

The Principal commented on the report, which gave updates on Government changes, ONS reclassification of colleges, LSIPs, curriculum, apprenticeships and work-based learning.

The new academic year had started well, with excellent student attendance and engagement. Staff had completed much preparatory work in the summer. The contract for 16-18 recruitment was on target.

SMT had a sharp focus on Maths and English, safeguarding and attendance as the current priority areas at every meeting. However, as reflected by David Hughes, AOC Chief Executive, at the recent Governor training, there were continuing challenges in the wider economy and the FE sector, so the risk profile for the college was high.

Work was continuing on the LSIP for the West Midlands, being led by Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce.

The ONS reclassification of colleges was expected to go ahead towards the end of November. This would have financial and governance implications to be considered in due course, although the details were not yet clear.

Government had announced new investment zones, including for Wolverhampton and Walsall.

Questions and comments were invited.

A Governor noted that the Principal had reported that students were engaged and asked about staff. The Principal responded that staff were clear on expectations for the year, including the need to address the performance issues from last year. Student behaviour appeared better so far, which was enabling more focus on teaching. It was apparent that there were pay pressures. However, staff had welcomed the support being given.

There were around 20 colleges currently facing strike action over pay, but Walsall was not one. Inflation was currently at 10.1%, so pressures were expected to continue. The college would be mindful of this when a pay award was considered in February 2023. Recruitment of staff to specialist teaching roles continued to be challenging.

The Assistant Principal Curriculum gave an update on his area. Recruitment to T Levels and A Levels had gone well, but cohorts were smaller than expected. Some of this was due to suppressed grades for GCSEs, which meant some students did not meet the entry criteria. Another factor was the national issue with grading for the T Level in Health, which may have done some reputational damage in this area.

Much work had been done to refresh and realign the adult programme offer. This had included discussions with WMCA and other stakeholders.

A Governor asked how courses were promoted in the local community. The Assistant Principal Commercial Development commented that there were a range of digital strategies but also more traditional door drops and newspaper wraps. The college also employed community engagement offers as well as a full sales team working with employers. There were different marketing and promotional approaches for different prospective student cohorts.

The Assistant Principal Commercial Development gave an update on apprenticeships and work-based learning:

- The curriculum review of the apprenticeships and work-based learning offer was in progress, as discussed at recent committee meetings. Some structural changes had been made to the staff team to help future delivery;
- Apprenticeships achievement to date was 52%, which was disappointingly low. However, there were some reasons for this, including that whilst many apprentices had completed their practical training, there remained a waiting time for independent end point assessment in many areas. There were also delays due to Covid and staff shortages;
- Apprenticeships recruitment was going well so far;
- The CCM update was noted;
- The college continued to bid for funding to support projects as appropriate. DfE approval had been received for the Strategic Development Fund Round 2. Halesowen College would again lead this;
- The Pathfinder Project had been launched in the previous week.

Governors discussed apprenticeship recruitment. The staff teams were closing down the previous year as well as onboarding for the new year. However, the college had made a deliberate decision not to add

apprentices onto the ILR system until their funding was secured, which meant that numbers did look low at this time of year. There was also a discussion about the problems with End Point Assessment, which was an issue with capacity in the sector and not unique to Walsall.

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

13.23 FINANCE REPORT – JULY 2022

The Director of Finance & MIS presented his report. This gave an update on the management accounts to July 2022, as discussed at the recent Finance and Resources Committee. Governors noted that:

- the budget for 2021/22 had been achieved;
- the year-end audit was in progress;
- it had been a challenging year – not all learner outcomes had been delivered but associated savings had been made. The impact of non-pay inflation had been managed so far, but pressures were increasing in the current year;
- the electricity contract had been fixed from March 2022;
- financial health at year-end was good, based on the assessment of the management accounts.

The Chair of Finance and Resources Committee confirmed that there had been a detailed discussion at the committee's recent meeting. The outcome was pleasing in light of the challenges faced.

The Director of Finance & MIS explained that the college had been selected for a funding audit carried out by PWC on behalf of the ESFA, and that this was due to start on 1 November. It would take 3-4 weeks, so there was a possible impact on the timescale for signing off the statutory accounts. However, the college had until 31 December to submit audited and approved accounts. Governors would be advised of any changes as soon as possible.

In respect of 2022/23 to date, Governors noted that:

- T Level recruitment was down on target;
- The 16-18 contract was on target;
- There were opportunities for growth in other areas;
- Inflationary pressures continued;
- It was hoped that there would be an uplift to AEB unit rates, which had been unchanged since 2010;
- There were continuing demands for resources to support Maths and English, safeguarding and pastoral activities;
- The harmonised pay scale was due to review in February, in line with the usual established cycle;
- The lowest paid staff in college were paid in line with the Real Living Wage, which had been increased. It was proposed to implement this increase with effect from 1 November. The cost of this was £240k per year, however this would be partially offset by the Government decision to reduce National Insurance, also in November;
- There was also a proposal to make a one-off cost of living payment (pro rata) of £250 to all staff in December 2022.

Governors discussed the pay proposals, agreeing that it was important to support lower paid and front-line staff, and also that how this was communicated to staff was important.

(Julie Haywood left at 2010 hrs)

Governors asked about discussions with unions about pay pressures and Real Living Wage. The Director of Operations and Resources stated that there were pay award expectations and that dialogue was ongoing. However, staff also had benefits in terms of generous pensions, annual leave and other aspects, so viewing the whole package offered was important. Turnover of lower paid staff did appear to be increasing.

The Director of Finance & MIS confirmed plans for an additional Finance and Resources Committee in January to discuss pay award recommendations for Corporation on 26 January.

Governors **resolved** to **approve** both the uplift to the Real Living Wage from 1 November 2022 and the one-off cost of living payment of £250 (pro rata) to all staff in December 2022.

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

14.23 GOVERNANCE MATTERS

Chair's Report

There was no Chair's Report for this meeting.

Committee Minutes

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

- Student Voice Committee 10 March 2022;
- Search and Governance Standards Committee 10 May 2022;
- Finance and Resources Committee 21 June 2022; and
- Learning and Quality Committee 29 June 2022.

Governors were reminded that:

- Student Voice Committee met on 26 May 2022;
- Audit Committee met on 14 June 2022;
- Remuneration Committee met on 5 August 2022;
- Learning and Quality Committee met on 28 September 2022;
- Finance and Resources Committee met on 4 October 2022; and
- Search and Governance Standards Committee met on 10 October 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 there were no specific recommendations of the committees to be considered at this meeting, other than the approval of the committee memberships and Link Governors, which would be covered shortly.

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

Link Governor Reports

There were no Link Governor Reports to be received.

Governance SAR and QIP

The SAR and QIP had been prepared and had been discussed at the recent Search and Governance Standards Committee.

Corporation Performance Indicators

The Corporation performance indicators for 2021/22 were noted as set out in the written report.

Committee Membership 2022/23

The proposed Committee Membership was reviewed.

Governors **resolved** to **approve** the Committee Membership for 2022/23.

Link Governors 2022/23

The proposed Link Governors were reviewed.

Governors **resolved** to **approve** the Link Governors for 2022/23.

15.23 GOVERNANCE MATTERS – CONFIDENTIAL

All staff, Staff Governors and Student Governors left for the discussion of this item.

For reasons of confidentiality, this item has been minuted separately.

16.23 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 24 November 2022 at 1730 hrs

How Governors challenged management		Impact of meeting on College	
08.23	Asked whether it was clear where staff could find information on raising safeguarding concerns.	01.23	Appointed a new Chair.
12.23	Asked how courses were promoted in local communities.	08.23	Approved safeguarding policy.
		09.23	Approved EDI policy.
		10.23	Approved land acquisition for Electric Vehicle Sustainability Centre
		14.23	Approved committee memberships and link governors for 2022/23.