

**WALSALL COLLEGE  
MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATION  
HELD ON THURSDAY 7 JULY 2022 AT 1730 HRS  
HB201, HUB BUILDING**

- PRESENT:** Alan Woods – Chair  
Stuart Pedley-Smith (until 2005 hrs)  
Graham Ward  
Heather Lodge  
Charlotte Bosworth (on Teams)  
Nick Tomkys
- Jat Sharma – Principal  
Mary Mahoney  
Paul Averis  
Leah Brookes  
Rani Sahota  
Dave Wheeler  
Tony Sadla
- TOGETHER WITH:** Deb Rajania  
Kevin Grindley (Items 79 and 80.22)  
Kit Rennie (Items 79 and 80.22)  
Matthew Brown  
David Turner  
Richard Brennan  
James Norris
- Director of Operations and Resources  
Consultant- Student Services
- Welfare and Safeguarding Officer  
Director of Finance & MIS  
Assistant Principal Quality and HE  
Assistant Principal Curriculum  
Assistant Principal Commercial  
Development  
Head of Governance  
Advanced Practitioner (Sport)  
Advanced Practitioner (Construction)
- APOLOGIES:** Malissa Clarke, Jaswinder Dhillon, Julie Haywood, Ray Simmonds, Aisling McGowan

**72.22 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and thanked them for attending. Governors were introduced to Carl Hendrickson and Mozz Baker, Advanced Practitioners, who had been invited to talk to Governors about recent projects they had led with students.

Carl and Mozz each gave short presentations on their areas.

**73.22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Malissa Clarke, Jaswinder Dhillon, Julie Haywood, Ray Simmonds, Aisling McGowan.

**74.22 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no changes to previously made declarations.

**75.22 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.

## **76.22 APPOINTMENT OF A GOVERNOR**

The Chair outlined the proposal to appoint Nick Tomkys as an External Governor. Nick had joined the Audit Committee as an Associate in October 2021. Since then, he had put much time and effort into the role and he had also attended Corporation and Governor Training.

Governors **resolved** to **appoint** Nick Tomkys as an External Governor for a three-year term of office ending on 6 July 2025.

(Nick Tomkys had left the meeting for the duration of the discussion and re-joined afterwards).

## **77.22 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2022, having been circulated, were taken as read and approved.

## **78.22 MATTERS ARISING**

Governors reviewed the Action Points Record and noted the following:

### Item 81.21

Health and Safety training for Governors had been postponed and would be covered at the Training Day in October 2022.

### Item 82.21

The Curriculum Conference had taken place earlier in the week and an update would be given by the Assistant Principal Curriculum later in the meeting.

### Item 38.22

The Principal had discussed student voice.

### Item 66.22.1

RAG rating would be added to the Strategic Pledges and QIP when next presented in the Autumn term.

### Item 66.22.2

A report back on possible work with ex-offenders would be brought to a future meeting.

### Item 68.122

The Pathfinder Action Plan would be brought back to a future meeting.

## **79.22 GOVERNORS' SAFEGUARDING TRAINING**

The Consultant – Student Services and Welfare and Safeguarding Officer attended to present the Governors' annual Safeguarding training. The training focused on Peer on Peer and Sexual Abuse.

Areas covered included:

- Definitions of Peer on Peer and Sexual Abuse;
- Implications for staff and how to respond to allegations;
- The positive behaviour management systems in place at college;
- That the college had a zero-tolerance policy and worked closely with the Harmful Sexual Behaviour Specialist at the Local Authority where needed;

- That the pastoral team was now fully integrated with the safeguarding team. The staffing re-structure included a newly appointed Head of Student Experience and a Student Experience Coordinator.

Questions and comments were invited.

The embedding of the new structure was discussed.

The Safeguarding Link Governor commented on his work and the training that took place. He asked how the college assessed the effectiveness of the training. Staff responded that learner and staff surveys were used. It was also the case that the number of safeguarding referrals were considered, as a higher number could be an indicator of staff awareness being increased.

Governors discussed the importance of resilience training for students. The Welfare and Safeguarding Officer confirmed that student tutorials covered a range of skills that would be useful outside of college. Since Covid, it was apparent that there were many external challenges facing students that affected their college life and learning.

The Chair thanked staff for their very informative presentation.

## **80.22 SAFEGUARDING ANNUAL REPORT**

The report had been circulated with the meeting papers.

Staff were considering bringing annual reporting on safeguarding in line with that for EDI.

The following aspects of the Annual Report were highlighted for Governors:

- The staffing re-structure;
- The need for better early warning information for students joining college and the anticipated benefits of introducing the CPOMs system;
- That safeguarding in college was effective, although some improvements to processes and deployment of staff had been identified.

A Governor questioned wording in a section that stated safeguarding teams were making significant changes. It was felt unclear whether this meant that there were concerns about young people or changes to systems/processes were needed. Staff confirmed that this did relate to systems and processes.

The Safeguarding Link Governor reported that he had visited twice in year since taking on the Link role. He had asked all the key questions that he felt Ofsted would be interested in and was happy to see the developments in staffing and use of CPOMs.

A Governor asked about the level of resource in the counselling team. There were two staff and a three-week waiting list. Pastoral Support Officers operated a triage type system. Other ways of increasing capacity were being considered. The Principal confirmed that the staffing model and capacity was being kept under review.

It was **resolved** that Governors **approved** the Safeguarding Annual Report.

#### **81.22 HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY APPROVAL**

The report was presented by the Director of Operations and Resources. The policy had previously been approved by Governors and there were no changes to report other than minor updates. It was a policy requiring annual approval by Governors in line with their statutory responsibilities.

It was **resolved** that Governors **approved** the Health and Safety Policy.

#### **82.22 CAPITAL PROJECT UPDATE**

The Director of Operations and Resources gave an update on capital projects. Governors were shown photographs of the sites and the proposed designs.

##### Construction Skills Academy

The design team had been appointed and the TIP funding had been secured. There was some inflation risk but the project remained on target to complete by September 2023.

##### Electric Vehicle Sustainability Centre

This would replace the current LEAF centre and be a link between Portland Street and the motor vehicle workshop. It would have a commercial garage, three classrooms and areas for electric and green skills delivery.

Financial calculations confirmed a payback period of 15 years.

An agreement in principle had been reached for the required land exchange. A commercial negotiation was needed. Governors were asked to

- approve up to £300k to secure this;
- approve the project at a total cost of £3m;
- delegate responsibility for project approvals to let contracts and purchase land to the Finance and Resources Committee; and
- agree to receive future updates via the Executive Team report.

A Governor asked how flexible the space would be as needs and technology changed in the future. Staff felt that the space was adaptable for future changes.

The Chair of Finance and Resources Committee was invited to comment on discussions at his committee. The following points were made:

- it was important for Governors to understand the strategy and the project boundaries;
- the possibility of a metro line through the site was noted;
- there were many details to be finalised;
- costs were subject to inflationary pressures.

The Director of Finance & MIS commented on options for value engineering as the project progressed. Inflation was a risk.

A Governor asked about the re-siting of the current student garden. The Director of Operations and Resources confirmed that there was an alternative site available.

The Chair requested an update to the next Corporation meeting in October. This was agreed.

Governors **resolved to approve** the Electric Vehicle Sustainability Centre project subject to securing TIP funding.

### 83.22 FINANCE REPORT – MAY 2022

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

Overall, the position reported was steady and the college was on track to achieve the bottom line budget. The full plan had not been achieved but had been offset by savings made. This had been a key consideration in the budget setting for the new year.

Cash balances remained healthy and EBITDA was within the set range.

The triennial pension review was due, with any resulting changes to be implemented from April 2023. The results of the review were not expected until December 2022.

Inflationary pressures continued but were manageable within the current budget. Effects were expected to be greater in 2022/23.

The Chair of Finance and Resources Committee commented that the college had received the Lennartz VAT refund, which was welcomed.

There was a discussion about inflationary pressures, the difficulties in responding to these and the importance of controlling the budget. It was noted that the college only included known income in its budget, so additional income in year was a positive variance. It had not been necessary to have a major cost saving exercise in year as savings had been made naturally through the reduced activity levels and staffing in some areas.

The Principal outlined the in-year challenges to delivering tutor funded activity and apprenticeships. Some changes to use of staff resources in future were being considered. This required a cultural shift. It was noted that the tutor fund was underspend nationally so this was not just a college issue.

The Chair observed that the college had saved around £1.5m in year and had made a pay award of 2%. Some challenge on this may be expected from unions.

The Chair of Finance and Resources Committee commented on the budget setting process. Governors had previously received a helpful presentation on the links between the curriculum and budget planning. His committee wished to drive further ambition through CCM, apprenticeships and other areas. There was confidence that the structure was in place with the ability to respond.

A Governor compared to financial position to the same time last year and noted the increase of £1.5m, which demonstrated growth even if the full

budget had not been met. Overall, the college seemed to be in a strong position compared to others.

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

#### 84.22 PROPOSED BUDGET 2022/23

The Director of Finance & MIS presented the highlights of his report, which showed the draft budget for 2022/23 and had been discussed in detail at the Finance and Resources Committee in June. The Committee had recommended the budget for Corporation approval.

Governors had previously been advised of the budget objectives, which were:

- EBITDA 5.5% Including additional utility costs
- Staff Cost as % Income 68.7%
- Average Class Size >16 As per Curriculum Plan
- Invest Capital of £1m Excluding matched external funding elements

The Corporation was asked to note specifically that the projections for 2023/24 & 2024/25 involved more assumptions than normal given inflations levels, utility costs, pay expectations and uncertainty of forward funding policies. The assumptions did demonstrate financial stability for the College even if they were currently not in line with the financial strategy of EBITDA in the 8-10% range.

The majority of the income lines were now confirmed. The budget had been prepared following a detailed curriculum planning process across all areas of provision. However, there was considerably more uncertainty compared to last year due to pay and non-pay inflation, as well as the scale of safeguarding and other student support needs following the pandemic.

Governors were asked to note the following:

- Most resources were in place to deliver the budget. There were some staff posts to be filled;
- There would be capital investment to reduce future revenue costs;
- The budget included an indicative pay award of 2.5% but the budget would need to be over delivered to fund this and further consideration would be given in year before a pay award approval was sought;
- The lower EBITDA would reduce the financial health scoring but this was expected to return to outstanding by the end of the year;
- The Finance and Resources Committee had supported an increase in the capital budget to £1.5m, and to bring forward some of the expenditure into this year.

Questions and comments were invited.

There was a discussion about the lowered EBITDA and the alignment of the budget to the Corporate Plan. It was agreed that the current position put some strain on the agreed financial strategy, and that it was planned to review this in year. Corporation needed to be aware of this.

The Chair of Learning and Quality Committee noted that his committee had discussed the Curriculum Strategy at the recent meeting. It was to be refreshed and brought back next year.

There was a suggestion that the cash balances and financial health scoring be added to the KPI tables in future Finance Reports.

Financial health scoring was discussed. The minimum score to achieve an outstanding rating was 230.

The Chairs of Audit and Finance and Resources Committees had recently attended a Chairs event hosted by AOC, and this had discussed the importance of three-year financial forecasting. The Director of Finance & MIS confirmed that the management accounts did include a rolling 12-month cashflow forecast.

It was agreed as important that Governors understood the key priorities in the Corporate Plan and what needed to be done to achieve this.

The Director of Finance & MIS summarised the approvals required.

Governors **resolved** to:

- To **approve** the 2022/23 budget;
- To **approve** the 2023/4 & 2024/5 projections for inclusion in the July 2022 ESFA return; and
- To **approve** a capital budget of £1.5m for 2022/23.

**There was a ten-minute comfort break**

## **85.22 EXECUTIVE TEAM REPORT**

The Principal commented on the report, which gave updates on progress on T Levels within the curriculum and proposals for a road map around A Levels, which was a significant piece of work. There was also an update on Apprenticeships and marketing.

The Principal noted the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Reclassification Review and emerging thoughts on local skills plans. The ONS work would potentially re-classify colleges back into the public sector, but the outcome of the review would not be known until September. If agreed, it had potentially significant implications for colleges. Some of these were outlined and discussed. If the change was agreed, the Principal would bring further details back to the next meeting in October.

Meetings had been held to help shape the new LSIP, but this would be a Midlands wide plan and not a Walsall focused one. A Governor commented on new lifelong learning entitlements and the impact of these on demand. Employability skills would be a sharp focus. An HE/FE model for provision at Levels 3, 4 and 5 needed to be considered.

It was agreed that the HE Strategy needed to be refreshed and brought back.

The Assistant Principal Curriculum commented on his section of the report and also gave a verbal update on A Levels and the recent Curriculum Conference. The following were noted:

**Director of  
Finance &  
MIS**

**Principal**

**Principal**

- The Curriculum Conference had been held on 4 July with all senior and middle managers, advanced practitioners and senior lecturers. There had been three areas of focus:
  - Celebrating exemplary teaching and learning projects;
  - Challenging managers about current planned curriculum; and
  - Collating longer term plans to inform the refresh of the Curriculum Strategy.

The Chair suggested that a written paper be brought back on this as it was difficult to ask questions based on the verbal update. This was agreed, but would be via Learning and Quality Committee first, as already discussed there.

- T level provision at Walsall was the highest in the Midlands and expected to grow. Provision of placements had been good to date but there were some concerns about future availability, especially as other colleges expanded their T Level offers and were competing to secure placements
- The recent Governor Training event had discussed A Levels in detail. A five-year roadmap had been included with the Corporation papers as a quick update to demonstrate the direction of travel.

The Chair reported the discussions on this at the Chairs' meeting in June. Further information was needed with a business and financial plan. This needed to include staffing, leadership, marketing and facilities to show a differentiated A Level offer. The Chair of Learning and Quality Committee added that the success was dependent on high quality teaching and learning to draw in prospective parents. Investment and time would be needed to train staff to teach to A Level standard.

There followed a detailed discussion about the A Level offer, how it was being rolled out and how it would be quality assured. Recruitment was already taking place for the Law and Science pathways being rolled out this September.

It was agreed that a detailed paper would be brought back to a future meeting.

Governors asked about T Level grading for 2022. This would be available in August and analysis would be done then. Many of the Walsall cohort were going into employment with their placement provider or to HE.

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

Currently the best-case achievement for apprentices was 70.3% compared to the College KPI retention target of 76% for term 3. It had been decided not to offer plumbing and gas apprenticeships next year, although it was hoped to re-introduce them at a later date.

Recent college open evenings and awards evenings were noted, as were external awards worn by the team.

**Principal/  
Assistant  
Principal  
Curriculum**



There was an update on bidding activity including funding received for four Boot Camps that were about to go live.

A Governor noted the staffing shortages that meant that new gas and plumbing apprenticeships starts would not be offered in 2022/23. The options for partnership or reciprocal arrangements were questioned. These were not considered best practice in line with the funding regulations.

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

## 86.22 QUALITY UPDATE

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE gave an update, much of which had been shared at Learning and Quality Committee in the previous week. The update had a particular focus on:

- Learning Walks – 84% of eligible staff had been covered, which was the highest for several years. Results were being reviewed;
- KPIs - not all of which were where the college would like. Staff had needed to deal with high levels of student anxiety, behaviour and mental health concerns;
- Student satisfaction and positive destinations were high;
- The Quality team were using new EIF SAR grade pie charts to track progress, and these were explained.

Comments and questions were invited.

A Governor commented on the discussions at Learning and Quality Committee. It was felt that there needed to be more feedback on what was being done to tackle issues.

The Chair noted some concerns about meeting basic standards such as marking student work. Staff confirmed that this was not tolerated and action was being taken. The Principal stated that staff had been prioritising pandemic issues but that middle management accountability would have a sharper focus next year. Demands on staff time were considered. There was also a question about whether the ambition to regain Outstanding was realistic in the face of all the challenges. This needed further consideration to ensure that the balance of demands on staff was reasonable. It was also the case that staff needed to reflect on their practice as the pandemic had changed ways of working, some of which needed to be retained.

The Principal intended to deliver some clear messages on expectations at the Staff Conference on 8 July.

There was a discussion about the work needed to improve the SAR grade for personal development and to identify the gaps.

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

## 87.22 GOVERNANCE MATTERS

### Chair's Report

The Chair did not have anything specific to report.

### Committee Minutes

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

- Learning and Quality Committee 16 February 2022;
- Student Voice Committee 10 March 2022;
- Audit Committee 15 March 2022; and
- Finance and Resources Committee 3 May 2022.

Governors were reminded that:

- Search and Governance Standards Committee met on 10 May 2022
- Student Voice Committee met on 26 May 2022;
- Audit Committee met on 14 June 2022;
- Finance and Resources Committee met on 21 June 2022; and
- Learning and Quality Committee met on 29 June 2022.

Remuneration Committee was due to meet on 24 May 2022 but had been re-scheduled for 5 August 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 budget, which had already been considered, and the approval of the audit plans.

Governors **resolved** to **approve** the following:

- Internal Audit Strategy 2022/23 to 2024/25; and
- External Audit Plan and Strategy.

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

### Link Governor Reports

The Chair reported his meeting as Link Governor with the Assistant Principal Commercial Development and Director of Apprenticeships and Workbased Learning.

## 88.22 STUDENT UNION PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Student Union President was not in attendance so the Clerk gave a summary of her written report. This largely related to Union activities since Easter. It was clear that efforts to engage students had continued.

The Student Governor noted that she had completed a report on T Levels that could be circulated to Governors.

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

Student  
Governor/  
Head of  
Governance

## **89.22 RISK MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT TO CORPORATION INCLUDING BOARD ASSURANCE UPDATE**

The Director of Finance & MIS presented his report, noting that risk management and Board Assurance continued to be a standing item for every Audit Committee meeting.

RSM had been engaged to support the work for the implementation of the 4Risk system, which was now at its final stages. The strategic risk register was linked to the corporate plan and the operational risk register was linked to the annual plan. The new system would be fully ready for the start of 2022/23. A meeting was scheduled with the Chair of Audit Committee to give an update in September.

Governors were pleased with the progress made in this area in year.

It was **resolved** that Governors **approved** the Risk Management Annual Report.

## **90.22 GOVERNOR DISCUSSION**

The Chair announced his decision to resign as chair and governor, due to changed circumstances and additional demands on his time. It was not a decision he had taken lightly and he wished the college well for the future. Governors were thanked for the support they had given since his appointment as Chair.

Governors were asked to consider future chairing arrangements, which would be discussed in due course.

Staff left the meeting at 2000 hrs.

Governors thanked the Chair for his leadership of the Board in the last 12 months and for his many contributions as a Governor since 2016.

There was a reflection on the meeting and the following aspects were noted:

- The need for clarity about the Governors' remit in relation to A Levels;
- That the breadth and depth of Governor questioning had been excellent;
- That the presentations by Advanced Practitioners was welcomed and similar input to future meetings should continue;
- That the messaging to Staff Conference needed to emphasise staff wellbeing and that the college was one team.

## **91.22 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 20 October 2022 at 1730 hrs

How Governors challenged management		Impact of meeting on College	
80.22	Questioned wording in a section of the Safeguarding Annual Report.	76.22	Appointed a new Governor
80.22	Questioned level of resource in the counselling team.	80.22	Approved Annual Safeguarding Report
83.22	Challenged level of pay award in relation to the savings made in year.	81.22	Approved Health and Safety Policy
85.22	Asked for an A Level business plan.	82.22	Approved Electric Vehicle Sustainability project
86.22	Requested more feedback on actions taken on areas of concern highlighted in Quality report.	84.22	Approved the budget for 2022/23.
		87.22	Approved the internal and external audit plans.
		89.22	Approved the Risk Management annual report.