

**WALSALL COLLEGE MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATION
HELD ON THURSDAY 26 JANUARY 2023 AT 1730 HRS
VENUE: HB201, HUB BUILDING**

Attendance Present: **Attendees**
 David Wheeler, Chair (until 6.50pm)
 Charlotte Bosworth (Chair from 6.50pm)
 Nick Tomkys
 Tony Sadla
 Sam Jarvis
 Jat Sharma, Principal and Chief Executive
 Mary Mahoney
 Rani Sahota
 Konrad Klimczyk
 Heather Lodge
 Julie Haywood
 Ray Simmonds (until 2010 hrs)

Together with: **James Norris - Assistant Principal Commercial Development**
Richard Brennan - Assistant Principal Curriculum
Matthew Brown - Director of Finance & MIS
Deb Rajania - Director of Operations & Resources
Sarah Cattell (until 6pm) - Workforce Development Manager
Alison Buick - Head of Governance

Apologies: **Graham Ward, Stuart Pedley-Smith, Jaswinder Dhillon, Paul Averis**

Item	Subject	Who
25.23	<p>CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS</p> <p>The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance.</p> <p>The meeting was being joined by Sarah Cattell, Workforce Development Manager, who would present the EDI Annual Report in the absence of the Assistant Principal Quality and HE.</p> <p>Congratulations were offered to the Principal on his award of the CBE in the New Years' Honours and to the Nursery, which had achieved Outstanding in the recent Ofsted inspection.</p> <p>The annual HE Graduation ceremony was being held the next day. Charlotte Bosworth would represent Governors at this event.</p> <p>The Chair had met David Frost, Deputy Lieutenant, when he had visited the college to present the Queen's Canopy pot. He had also participated in learning walk throughs on 16 January at Green lane and Portland Street.</p>	
26.23	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Graham Ward, Stuart Pedley-Smith, Jaswinder Dhillon, Paul Averis.</p>	
27.23	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>There were no new declarations made.</p>	

Item	Subject	Who
28.23	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.	
29.23	MINUTES The minutes of the meetings held on 20 October 2022 and 24 November 2022, having been circulated, were taken as read and approved.	
30.23	<p data-bbox="316 562 550 589">MATTERS ARISING</p> <p data-bbox="316 595 1204 622">Governors considered the Action Points Record and noted the following:</p> <p data-bbox="316 663 454 689"><u>Item 85.22</u></p> <p data-bbox="316 696 1236 757">Work had started to refresh the HE Strategy and this would be reviewed in detail at a future Learning and Quality Committee.</p> <p data-bbox="316 797 454 824"><u>Item 08.23</u></p> <p data-bbox="316 831 1236 925">There had been limited success and take up of the online safeguarding training for Governors and it had been decided to revert back to providing face to face training at Corporation each July.</p> <p data-bbox="316 965 454 992"><u>Item 10.23</u></p> <p data-bbox="316 999 1181 1059">Campus tours were available to Governors on request. The Chair had recently visited Green Lane and Portland Street.</p> <p data-bbox="316 1099 454 1126"><u>Item 22.23</u></p> <p data-bbox="316 1133 1252 1193">Data requested would be added to Learning and Quality Committee reports and reviewed by Governors in the committee meetings.</p>	
31.23	<p data-bbox="316 1227 798 1254">HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT</p> <p data-bbox="316 1261 1252 1355">The Director of Operations and Resources presented the report, which was for information and approval. It had been reviewed previously at the Health and Safety Committee, attended by Heather Lodge, Link Governor.</p> <p data-bbox="316 1395 1252 1489">Governors were reminded that the college had received the ROSPA President’s award in year, and that this demonstrated continued excellence in health and safety management over many years.</p> <p data-bbox="316 1529 1268 1624">The report included an appendix that showed how Governors had discharged their health and safety responsibilities in year. This was based on the Institute of Directors requirements.</p> <p data-bbox="316 1664 1284 1888">A Governor commented that the number of recorded near misses seemed low for the size of the organisation, and asked if staff needed reminding of the reporting procedure. The Director of Operations and Resources responded that the Health and Safety Committee had considered this and that staff had been reminded. The Link Governor added that the Committee had been satisfied with the range of mitigating controls in place. Most of the issues that had arisen were due to human error.</p> <p data-bbox="316 1928 1165 1955">Governors resolved to approve the Health and Safety Annual Report.</p>	

Item
32.23

Subject
EDI ANNUAL REPORT

Who

The Workforce Development Manager presented the report.

It was explained that 'Equality' had been replaced by 'Equity', to make clear the college's commitment to being fair in allowing all students and staff opportunities to be successful.

It was assumed that Governors had read the report, so the discussion focused on the CPD elements. There had been much consultation with stakeholders and there had been training on 'Equally Yours' arranged via Walsall Council for the college staff. The roles of Charlotte Bosworth and Ray Simmonds in supporting the EDI Committee were noted.

The college was holding a wellbeing event this week and was also working with the Education and Training Foundation (ETF) on other staff training.

Governors discussed the use of the work 'equity' and felt that this was a positive change.

The importance of focus on staff as well as student EDI was agreed.

Staff outlined some of the work being planned with the Black FE Leadership Group.

A Governor noted that the college student recruitment was from an area wider than just Walsall, and asked where the challenges in EDI were. It was felt that adding some statistics to the report to differentiate between Walsall and non-Walsall students may be helpful. The Principal commented that student achievement was a focus for all students regardless of where they lived.

A Governor commented that it would be a positive step to see more female college staff at higher levels of management. The Principal noted that the SMT was fairly evenly gender balanced but acknowledged that the Exec level staff was not. There was a discussion about the need to offer equity in access to development courses for all staff, to allow female staff opportunities to be able to be appointed for available roles.

The Assistant Principal Curriculum commented on the availability of recent data from the 2021 census, which allowed more up to date benchmarking to be done.

A Governor noted that all gender data in the report referred to male or female, but that not everyone identified in these categories. It was confirmed that the college held data on all gender preferences and these would be used for future reports.

Governors commended staff on the report, noted progress made and that there were further improvement plans in place.

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

(The Workforce Development Manager left at 1800 hrs)

Item
33.23

Subject
PAY AWARD

Who

The Director of Finance & MIS referred to his written paper, the details of which had been discussed at a recent Finance and Resources Committee meeting.

Governors noted the following key points:

- The college annual pay review date was February;
- A harmonised pay scale was in place;
- In October 2022, Governors had approved payment of the Real Living Wage (RLW) to eligible staff and for all staff to have a one-off cost of living payment of £250 (pro rata) in December 2022;
- When assessing the pay award, staff had taken into account inflation and cost of living factors, as well as affordability;
- The written report showed key information, such as staff headcount, staff on RLW, median salaries, the Office for Budget Responsibility projections of inflation, and pay awards made by the college from 2018 to date;
- Some staff were eligible for increments, which were paid as due. Many staff were at the top of their pay scale;
- Comparisons to the Cost Price Index including Housing (CPIH) costs had been included. These showed that generally, the pay awards had been above inflation until 2022;
- The pay award proposal was 5%, which management felt was affordable and equitable;
- Staff turnover and absence rates were increasing. There were difficulties in filling some vacancies;
- There had been some uplifts to funding rates for 16-18 students and in AEB from West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA);
- The income and expenditure analysis included an extrapolation for 2023/24 based on known changes (but was not a full budgeting exercise, as this would follow later in the year). Some potential for growth was expected. Utility costs continued to be uncertain;
- The impact on EBITDA, which would reduce to 4.8% in 2022/23 and 3.6% in 2023/24. There were no immediate risks to financial health. The trading position of the college remained unchanged.

Questions and comments were invited.

Governors noted higher than average staff turnover and asked what the reasons for this were. The Director of Finance & MIS reported a mixed picture with no overall emerging trend. The Principal added that this appeared to be the case across the sector, not just in Walsall.

A Governor asked whether the unions had accepted 5%. It was explained that the proposal needed Corporation approval before being announced. There were regular meetings with unions. It was hoped that 5% would not result in industrial action, but this was a potential risk. Union views would not change the affordability position.

The Staff Governor outlined some concerns from the staff perspective, including stress, workload and additional administration for teaching staff. She was concerned to ensure that Governors understood how staff were feeling and the reasons why people were leaving.

Item	Subject	Who
	<p>The Principal acknowledged that teaching had changed since the pandemic and that staff were dealing with more pastoral, wellbeing, mental health and safeguarding issues.</p> <p>Governors agreed that ways of working had changed since Covid, that pressures had increased and expressed support for the pay award proposal. Some of the administration was due to the need to meet requirements imposed by funding and regulatory bodies. Ways to do this more effectively needed to be considered.</p> <p>The Chair asked that the Principal and management team review the operational aspects of managing the college to address staff concerns raised, and asked the Governors to decide on the pay award proposal.</p> <p>Governors voted on the proposal and the majority were in favour.</p> <p>It was therefore resolved that Governors approved a 5% pay award for all college staff except senior postholders with effect from 1 February 2023.</p> <p>It was suggested that Governors monitor the impact of the pay award, to see if it improved recruitment and retention. The Principal was asked to add this to his next report.</p> <p>(David Wheeler left at 1850 hrs and Charlotte Bosworth chaired the remainder of the meeting)</p> <p>There was a ten-minute comfort break.</p>	Principal
34.23	<p>EXECUTIVE TEAM REPORT</p> <p>The Principal referred to his written report and highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much excellent work by staff had resulted in an Outstanding Ofsted result for the Nursery in the previous week; • Funding rates for AEB had been uplifted by 10%, the first increase since 2010. There was also an increase in 16-18 funding for next year; • The ONS had reclassified colleges as public sector with effect from 29 November 2022; • Resources continued to be put into safeguarding support, as the number and complexity of cases was still growing. There were increased concerns about the use of offensive weapons so consideration was being given to changes to access to college buildings. <p>Governors discussed the increasing risks of violent crime being seen across the region. There were gang related issues from the wider area coming into Walsall.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student voice feedback continued to be good. An excellent student conference had been held in the autumn term. Students had confirmed they felt safe in college, although less so outside; • HR had provided some statistics and general updates; • The contract for the extension at Green Lane had been signed; • It was hoped that feasibility work for the Electric Vehicle Centre would start soon. This was partly funded from the Town Centre Investment Project (TIP) but there was also a need to bid for ESFA funding of £2.35m to support this. Governors approval to submit this bid was required. 	

Item**Subject****Who**

The Director of Operations and Resources confirmed that the project had been discussed at the previous Corporation meeting, where funding of £1.5m had been noted. Usually such a decision would be discussed first at Finance and Resources Committee, but timescales were such that it was necessary to bring this directly to the Corporation. The request was that Governors approve the ESFA bid so that management could continue to pursue opportunities for the project.

It was **resolved** that Corporation **approved** a T Level funding bid for the total sum of £2.35m to improve the college's affordability to carry out the Electric Vehicle Sustainability Centre project.

- There were ongoing discussions with Walsall Council about the possibility of relocating Hawbush to the town centre, but no definite plans to report currently. An alternative location would be sought for SLDD students, to meet accessibility and other needs. A town centre location would predominantly be for adults;

A Governor commented on the impact of moving adult learning away from community settings, and it was agreed that all implications of a possible move would need to be considered.

The Assistant Principal Curriculum commented on his section of the report:

- Attendance remained strong although there had been a slight fall since Christmas. Attendance of SEND students was strong;
- Low level disruptive behaviour had improved in this year compared to last. Staff confidence to deal with behaviour had improved. There had been a small number of more concerning behaviour issues;
- November GCSE results were noted. 40% of English entrants had achieved high grades. The rationale for entering students in the November exams was explained. Most students would sit the exams in May/June. More detail would be considered at the Learning and Quality Committee in February;
- The National Tutor Fund allocation was being used in a better and more focused way this year;
- Work continued to expand the offer for T Levels, A Levels and
- Higher Technical Qualifications.

The Assistant Principal Commercial Development commented on his section of the report:

- The final outturn for 2021/22 was noted, with 66% at Gateway by R14. Actual achievement for Employment Gateway was 91% which was below the best case of 97% that was predicted in January 2022 and slightly below the national average achievement rate of 97%;
- There were some recruitment challenges in the Directorate, for example in Plumbing;
- Commercial activity at CCM had grown, especially in January. The new scaffolding training building was on course to be completed and in use in April;
- Figures showing apprenticeship recruitment and marketing activity were explained;
- Several bidding activities were in progress.

Item	Subject	Who
	<p>Questions were invited.</p> <p>A Governor asked about RAG ratings for students. As behaviour and attendance had improved, they had expected the number of students with higher ratings to reduce. The Assistant Principal Curriculum explained the ways in which staff were monitoring students. Further details would be provided for the Learning and Quality Committee.</p> <p>Governors were pleased note various additional funds being received by the college.</p> <p>A Governor asked whether more marketing for T Levels was needed. It was explained that applications had been high but some potential students had not met the entry criteria so were not accepted. However, DfE had recently relaxed the criteria for work placements.</p> <p>Governors resolved to receive the Executive Team report.</p>	
35.23	<p>QUALITY UPDATE</p> <p>The Principal presented the report on behalf of the Assistant Principal Quality and HE.</p> <p>The following key points were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance had improved and retention was high; • RAG ratings for students had been improved; • More work was needed to increase the amount of self-reflections students were recording; • Developmental observations for teaching staff were in progress and had started in November. Some emerging themes were being noted. More information would be provided at Learning and Quality Committee; • A student conference had been held in December and a separate one for apprenticeships was planned; • Induction survey feedback had been analysed and was very positive; • Link Governors were reminded of opportunities to visit their areas, including to attend Quality Summits, details of which had recently been circulated; • HE numbers were down against target. More work was required to review the strategy, offer and delivery; • The Nursery had received the Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM). <p>It was agreed that the details of planned Quality Summits would be circulated to all Governors.</p> <p>Governors resolved to receive the Quality Report.</p>	Head of Governance
36.23	<p>SU PRESIDENT'S REPORT</p> <p>The Student Union President presented his report.</p> <p>The Student Eats garden still needed some resources for improvement and it was hoped that funding and staffing could be allocated.</p>	

Item	Subject	Who
	<p>The Union had obtained some funding for student trips and several trips were now planned. Funding was also being sought for an animal handling experience.</p> <p>Events run between November and January were noted.</p> <p>The LGBT group had been particularly active this year. The response rate to an online survey for students had been high.</p> <p>The Big Rig had been purchased and delivery was awaited. The Tutorial Coordinator was thanked for her support with this project. Training was to be arranged.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the President for his report. It was important for Governors to know what students were doing outside of the curriculum.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the Student Eats garden and a suggestion was made that an approach to television programmes that undertook restoration projects could be considered. The estimated costs of the work required were not thought by the Student Governors to be high, but staff support was needed.</p> <p>Governors resolved to receive the Student Union President's Report.</p> <p>(Ray Simmonds left at 2010 hrs)</p>	
37.23	<p>FINANCE REPORT TO NOVEMBER 2022</p> <p>The Director of Finance & MIS presented his report, which gave an update on the management accounts to 30 November 2022. Governors noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overall deficit for the year to date compared to budget; • Financial health was Good and cash balances were healthy; • Significant capital spend was currently being planned, with details as set out in the written report; • The announced 10% uplift to AEB was not yet included; • Most income lines were stable at this point in the year; • There were no major financial concerns, although utility costs continued to be uncertain. <p>Questions and comments were invited.</p> <p>A Governor asked about actions to reduce energy costs, such as closing buildings when not in use. The Director of Finance & MIS responded that building utilisation had been reviewed. Changes would be implemented if required but this had not yet been deemed necessary. The Director of Operations and Resources added that systems had been reviewed and were turned off when not in use, to save energy. There were mechanisms now operating in the background, such as timing systems, to reduce energy usage.</p> <p>A Governor asked whether management were confident that gaps in recruitment would pick up in year. The Director of Finance & MIS responded that the finance reports always took a prudent view of enrolments and only showed income once all necessary checks and paperwork were in place. There was pipeline activity in relation to apprenticeships, which were more</p>	

Item	Subject	Who
	<p>difficult to forecast, and therefore future reports were expected to show an improving picture.</p> <p>There was a discussion about the Littleton restaurant. Further information would be presented to the next Finance and Resources Committee. The Chair asked for Governors' views on the reduced EBITDA. It was agreed that the reduction was necessary to ensure resources were invested for the efficient operation of the college.</p> <p>Governors resolved to receive the Finance Report to 30 November 2022.</p>	
38.23	<p>GOVERNANCE MATTERS</p> <p>A written report had been provided for information but was not discussed. There were no specific actions required of Governors.</p> <p>There was no Chair's Report and no Link Governor reports.</p>	
39.23	<p>GOVERNOR DISCUSSION</p> <p>The Chair thanked Governors for their contributions to robust discussions during the meeting.</p> <p>Governors noted that the Head of Governance had resigned and would leave at Easter.</p>	
40.23	<p>DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>Tuesday 28 March 2023 at 1730 hrs.</p> <p>The meeting ended at 2020 hrs.</p>	

Item	How governors challenged management
32.23	Asked where challenges in EDI were, given some students came from outside of Walsall.
32.23	Noted that all EDI report gender information related to male or female but that there were other categories that were in use and should be reflected.
33.23	Asked about reasons for higher staff turnover.
34.23	Questioned whether more T Level marketing was needed.
37.23	Asked whether management were confident of student recruitment gaps being filled.

Item	Impact of meeting on college
31.23	Approved Health & Safety Annual Report.
32.23	Approved EDI Annual Report.
33.23	Approved 5% pay award.
34.23	Approved bid for T Level funding.