

**WALSALL COLLEGE MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATION
HELD ON TUESDAY 28 MARCH 2023 AT 1730 HRS
VENUE: HB201, HUB BUILDING**

Attendance Present: **Attendees**
David Wheeler, Chair
Charlotte Bosworth – on Teams
Tony Sadla
Graham Ward
Stuart Pedley-Smith
Jat Sharma, Principal and Chief Executive
Rani Sahota
Paul Averis
Jaswinder Dhillon
Garry Welborn

Together with: David Turner - Assistant Principal Quality and HE
John Adams - Director of Commercial Projects
James Norris - Assistant Principal Commercial Development
Richard Brennan - Assistant Principal Curriculum
Jacky Leek - Head of Finance
Deb Rajania - Director of Operations & Resources
Alison Buick - Head of Governance
Kevin Grindley (Item 47.23) - Student Services Consultant
Kirsty Hayter (Item 47.23) - Student Engagement Officer

Apologies: Mary Mahoney, Ray Simmonds, Nick Tomkys, Sam Jarvis, Konrad Klimczyk,
Heather Lodge, Julie Haywood

Item	Subject	Who
41.23	<p>CHAIR’S OPENING REMARKS</p> <p>The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance.</p> <p>Governors were introduced to Garry Welborn, attending his first meeting as the newly appointed Support Staff Governor.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed Jacky Leek, Head of Finance, to the meeting. She was attending in place of Matthew Brown who was absent due to illness.</p> <p>Kevin Grindley, Student Services Consultant, and Kirsty Hayter, Student Engagement Officer, were also welcomed. They would present the item on the Student Union Constitution.</p> <p>Also in attendance to meet Governors were Lee Bate, Head of Operational Services, Abby Selibas, Nursery Manager, and Amelia Townsend, Deputy Nursery Manager. The Principal explained that they had been invited to comment on their recent Ofsted visit which had been graded as Outstanding. The Principal was very proud of this achievement, which had been as a result of much hard work to turn the area around in a short space of time.</p> <p>The Director of Operations and Resources added that the Nursery had also received a Centre of Excellence award.</p>	

Item	Subject	Who
	<p>Staff were invited to comment. The Nursery Manager explained the work that had been completed since she and the Deputy Manager had been appointed in summer 2022. Much work had been needed in a arrange of areas, but staff had worked extremely hard. The Ofsted visit had happened earlier than had been hoped for but the outcome was very pleasing.</p> <p>The Head of Operational Services added that the two managers were both ex college students, so it was especially pleasing to see their progression into their current roles. The staff had been very calm and professional throughout the whole Ofsted process, and had not been at all daunted by the timing.</p> <p>The Chair and Governors thanked the staff for the work that they had undertaken to ensure the success of the inspection and congratulated them on the outcome.</p> <p>The Nursery staff and Head of Operational Services left at 1740 hrs.</p> <p>The Chair concluded his opening remarks by noting the new requirement for a SEND Link Governor, which Mary Mahoney had agreed to take on for the short term, and by confirming that he had completed a Chair's Action by signing the new energy contract.</p> <p>Governors resolved to approve the Chair's Action.</p>	
42.23	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Mary Mahoney, Ray Simmonds, Nick Tomkys, Heather Lodge, Julie Haywood, Sam Jarvis, Konrad Klimczyk.</p>	
43.23	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST There were no new declarations made.</p>	
44.23	<p>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.</p>	
45.23	<p>MINUTES The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2023, having been circulated, were taken as read and approved.</p>	
46.23	<p>MATTERS ARISING Governors considered the Action Points Record and noted the following:</p> <p><u>Item 33.23</u> The Principal would comment on staffing matters as part of the Executive Team report later in the meeting.</p> <p><u>Item 35.23</u> The dates of Quality Summits had been emailed to Governors.</p>	
47.23	<p>STUDENT UNION CONSTITUTION The Student Services Consultant presented the report and document that had been circulated with the papers. This had formed part of the ongoing</p>	

Item	Subject	Who
	<p>work to improve student voice with the staff and Student Union. Work had considered some of the key themes that students focused on, including EDI, mental health, wellbeing and sustainability, and the changes proposed for the constitution had focused on these.</p> <p>Student feedback had been collected in a various of activities including the student conference.</p> <p>The constitution had not been updated for some time, so work had also looked at ideas from other colleges to take account of best practice and more up to date details. There were also changes that had been made to the Student Union Officers, which now included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three Campus Officers; • HE Officer; • Disability and ALS Officer; • Women’s Officer; • LGBTQ+ Officer; • Sustainability Officer; • Health and Wellbeing Officer; and • Marketing and Communications Officer. <p>There had also been updates to the elections process. Future elections would be online and have a stronger campaign focus.</p> <p>A proposal was made to pay an honorarium each term to members of the Exec team that met their objectives.</p>	
	<p>The Chair of Student Voice Committee commented on recent discussions at her Committee where it had been agreed that capturing student voice was key. The Assistant Principal Quality and HE added that the proposals aligned to themes within student surveys. It was felt that new Campus Officer roles would address some of the concerns about the need for equality of opportunity for those at different locations.</p> <p>The Principal commented on the honorarium proposal and stated that this needed to be covered within the budget before it could be agreed.</p>	Principal
	<p>The Chair had added some comments on the document and requested that these be reviewed.</p> <p>Governors resolved to approve the Student Union Constitution, subject to final confirmation that the comments made by the Chair were addressed and the proposed honorarium was confirmed as affordable within the budget set.</p>	Assistant Principal Quality and HE
48.23	<p>CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE</p> <p>The Director of Operations and Resources gave an update and the following areas were discussed:</p> <p><u>Green Lane Extension</u></p> <p>The build contract had been awarded. It was hoped that the work would complete in line with the timescale but there had been some delays due to additional flooring work that had been required.</p>	

Item**Subject****Who**

Funding allocations, including grants confirmed, were all in place. The agreement with Walsall Council had been signed.

Electric Vehicle Sustainability Centre

The current status and funding was noted. The project had been fully approved and the land purchased. Approval was sought for expenditure in relation to enabling and design works. A full business case and design would be brought back, after review at Finance and Resources Committee, when the affordability analysis had been completed.

Governors discussed the project. It was confirmed that at this stage the college was not legally committed to it, but there were other moral and political considerations. To be operational in September 2025, a tender process would be needed fairly soon. Greater detail was expected to be discussed at the next Finance and Resources Committee meeting.

A Governor commented that the enabling costs were a significant investment if the project did not ultimately go ahead. The Chair felt that the project was likely to go ahead but that the scale may change, especially with current inflationary pressures. Some of the expenditure would be needed to support the area even if the full project did not go ahead.

The Chair had asked the Director of Finance & MIS to prepare an updated schedule of capital project funding available for the Finance and Resources Committee. This was a useful analysis to show the impact on cashflow and the affordability of projects.

Governors **resolved to approve** a spend of up to £250k as enabling spend for design work to continue on the Electric Vehicle Sustainability Centre project.

CCM Scaffolding Training Provision

The project had been completed and handed over for use with immediate effect. It had been completed to time and budget.

Hawbush Re-Site

Governors were reminded that this project was within the college property strategy but was on hold due to funding issues. Funding had become available via Walsall Council and the college had been asked to re-consider the project, with a view to re-locating adult provision to the former Marks and Spencer building in the town centre. It was felt that the opportunity to do this made the business case strong and viable.

Approval was sought for expenditure to employ property consultants to evaluate options and prepare a full business case. The property would be fully funded without match funding by the college.

It was acknowledged that further details needed to be shared with Governors and suggested that this be a focus of the next Training Day in June.

A Governor asked for further explanation of the use of Broadway, as mentioned in the written report. The Director of Resources and Operations confirmed that the SLDD provision currently at Hawbush could not be moved to the town centre due to the need for outdoor space. The proposal therefore

Principal

Item	Subject	Who
	<p>was to move SLDD to Broadway and adults to the town centre. The funding to review options would also include this element of the plan.</p>	
	<p>It was further explained that the project would be delivered by Walsall Council but designed by the college. The levelling up funds received by the Council would return to the Treasury if unspent, so the Council was keen to secure a viable project. It also linked well to the Walsall 2040 vision, a presentation on which had been received at the February Governor Training Day.</p>	
	<p>Governors asked how the Hawbush site would be disposed of and this was explained. There were more discussions to be had on this with the Council. Details would go back to Finance and Resources Committee in due course.</p>	Principal
	<p>It was suggested and agreed that a Task and Finish Group of Governors should be set up to monitor the project.</p>	
	<p>Governors noted that the project was a one-off opportunity but that there were risks involved. The employment of property consultants for support was essential to add capacity to respond quickly. The Assistant Principal Curriculum added that the WMCA wished to see 20% of AEB being spent for provision at Level 3 and above. This was challenging but a move to the town centre could be an opportunity to strengthen this.</p>	
	<p>Governors resolved to</p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree the approach outlined for the Hawbush re-site project. • Approve £60k spend for evaluation and property consultants to assist in putting together a full business case for the re-site of Hawbush Campus into the town centre. 	
	<p>Governors resolved to receive the Capital Projects Update</p>	
49.23	<p>FINANCE REPORT</p> <p>The Head of Finance presented the report, which gave an update on the management accounts to January 2023. Governors noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overall picture for the year to date had improved since December 2022 and performance was in line with the revised deficit as approved at Corporation in January; • The key areas of income that required continual monitoring were apprenticeships and AEB. Management continued to take a prudent view when allocating apprenticeship income; • The AEB in the management accounts was understated by 10% as it did not yet reflect the agreed uplift. A prudent approach was also being taken to this; • The college's financial health grade was good and this was expected to continue until the year-end; • Energy costs remained a concern. A new contract had been signed so costs would be stabilised for 12 months; • Pay and non-pay costs were being well controlled; • The funding audit had been completed by the management letter had yet to be received. The findings had been discussed in outline at the recent Audit Committee 	

Item**Subject****Who**

The Assistant Principal Commercial Development noted the background and outline findings for the audit. There were some issues identified with recording of evidence for off the job training for apprentices and this was likely to result in clawback of some funds. When the formal report was received it would be discussed with ESFA and brought back to Corporation. In the meantime, Governors were assured that enhanced controls had been put into place to manage the identified risks.

The Head of Finance noted that the Chair had asked some questions ahead of the meeting and provided the following comments:

- The staff cost to turnover ratio was currently 69%;
- The projected cashflow at year-end remained healthy, although did not include the costs of the Electric Vehicle project or the potential audit clawback;
- The debt cover calculation indicated a technical breach of bank covenant. It was being discussed with the bank but was not a concern at this time. Finance and Resources Committee would be kept informed.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Chair asked whether there was a provision for the potential audit clawback. It was confirmed that there was a provision, although it was not yet known whether it matched the clawback amount.

A Governor asked how the clawback would be taken. The Head of Finance confirmed that the ESFA was likely to take it in one amount from the scheduled month payment made to college. The date would be known in advance.

Governors discussed the audit and hoped that discussions would take account of Covid circumstances such that the clawback was reasonable.

There was a discussion about AEB. Other funds available to college were displacing this in some areas. Staff were working hard to reduce the AEB gap.

The Assistant Principal Commercial Development noted that the college had been approached for a potential additional contract with an existing subcontractor. It was agreed that this would be considered under Chair's Action if necessary.

Governors **resolved** to **receive** the Finance Report to January 2023.

50.23**EXECUTIVE TEAM REPORT**

The Principal referred to his written report and highlighted the following:

- There had been some recent changes to T Levels;
- The pay award had been well received and funded via uplifts to 16-18 and AEB funding;
- The budget position for next year was emerging but not all income details were confirmed;
- A cyber security expert had been appointed. Multi Factor Authentication was to be added to student accounts so the new appointment would add capacity for this project;

Item**Subject****Who**

- Staff absence remained high, with mental health being a factor in many cases;
- The HR caseload, staff turnover and vacancy rates were all noted. This data was regularly reviewed at Finance and Resources Committee;
- A new staff engagement strategy was to be launched after Easter. It would cover communications and wellbeing;
- The Black Country LEP was being wound up with much of its responsibilities being transferred to the WMCA;
- The Principal had attended a number of external events. Staff pay was a common concern being raised in several forums.

Governors discussed the staffing challenges. There was impact on support available to students as a result. It appeared a common theme in many colleges.

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

- Changes to Level 3 qualifications were set out in in table at paragraph 2.1 of the written report. The Government continued to push T Levels and Level 3 qualifications;
- The college had had a T Level inspection, as previously notified to Governors. Feedback was very positive with a small number of development areas;
- T levels were in scope for full Ofsted review from September 2023;
- An update had been provided on Higher Technical Qualifications from September 2023.

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

- Apprenticeships success for the year to date had improved compared to last year;
- The college had held its first apprenticeships conference recently and it had been very well attended. Feedback included that there was more work to do on parity of experience for apprentices compared to other college students;
- New staff had been appointed to the team;
- Recruitment of apprentices was ongoing. As usual, there were challenges in some areas;
- The He Graduation had gone very well. The Vice Chair was thanked for attending to represent the Governors;
- Work was ongoing to prepare for the sign off of the new duty to review skills needs as discussed at the Governor Training Day in February. Further details would be brought back to Corporation in May.

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

There was a five-minute comfort break

51.23**QUALITY UPDATE**

The Assistant Principal Quality and HE presented his report:

The following key points were made:

- The College-wide SAR presented in November had graded the college as Good overall;

Item	Subject	Who
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality Summits were in progress, with 12 completed to date and 20 to do. Of those completed, three areas had improved their grade. Four areas were outstanding and it was hoped that this would increase by year-end. Governors that had attended Quality Summits to date were thanked for their inputs.; • The Learning and Quality Committee had met in February and reviewed a wide range of areas; • Attendance was currently 82% and retention was 94.3%. These remained high priority areas; • Students RAG rated as red in terms of risk or issues were noted. There were still high numbers compared to pre Covid. Disciplinary numbers were also high and the processes for this were being reviewed; • Click Associates had provided a report following their SAR validation work in November and January. This aligned with the management view. <p>The Vice Chair commented on her attendance a Quality Summits, which had clearly demonstrated the work and focus of staff. Impacts of staff vacancies and absence had been seen. Other Governors were encouraged to attend if possible.</p> <p>The Chair of Learning and Quality Committee gave an overview of his Committee’s activities at the last meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It had been a meeting that had provided both support and challenge to the management team; • The college was congratulated on the outcome of Ofsted’s T Level review; • It was felt that a wider review of HE would be helpful in future; • A further short meeting was to be held on 3 April for an update on Maths and English; • The Committee had previously discussed the role of curriculum middle leaders and it was positive to hear that their engagement with Quality Summits had been good. <p>Governors discussed the continuing high number of students in disciplinary meetings and noted the working group in place to trial a new approach. Governors on Student Voice Committee gave feedback on their discussions with students about the impact of disruptive students on the learning of others. The Exec team had been made aware of the strength of feeling of students about this. There was a plan to improve parental engagement, to do more keep warm activities with new students in the summer and to continue to re-enforce the ‘Respect’ agreement.</p> <p>Governors requested that the Quality Summit dates be re-circulated for information.</p> <p>Governors resolved to receive the Quality Update Report.</p>	
52.23	<p>GOVERNANCE MATTERS <u>Chair’s Report</u> The Chair had covered several areas in his opening remarks and had nothing further to add.</p>	Head of Governance

Item	Subject	Who
	<p data-bbox="316 226 820 255"><u>Draft Calendar of Meetings for 2023/24</u></p> <p data-bbox="316 259 1278 356">The Head of Governance reported that the draft calendar was included within the papers for information, having previously been shared with the Chairs for comment. Governors were asked to agree the dates.</p> <p data-bbox="316 394 1114 423">Governors resolved to agree the calendar of dates for 2023/24.</p> <p data-bbox="316 461 564 490"><u>Committee Minutes</u></p> <p data-bbox="316 495 1222 555">It was resolved that the following minutes and reports were received and accepted:</p> <ul data-bbox="316 593 1174 801" style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning and Quality Committee 28 September 2022; • Search and Governance Standards Committee 10 October 2022; • Audit Committee 15 November 2022; • Finance and Resources Committee 22 November 2022; • Student Voice Committee 5 December 2022 and • Learning and Quality Committee 12 December 2022. <p data-bbox="316 840 703 869">Governors were reminded that:</p> <ul data-bbox="316 873 1268 1048" style="list-style-type: none"> • Search and Governance Standards Committee met on 24 January 2023; • Learning and Quality Committee met on 15 February 2023; • Finance and Resources Committee met on 21 February 2023; • Audit Committee met on 14 March 2023; • Student Voice Committee met on 16 March 2023. <p data-bbox="316 1086 1177 1146">No approved minutes of these meetings were yet available, although Governors noted the items discussed, as set out in the written paper.</p> <p data-bbox="316 1184 1268 1245">Governors were advised that there were no specific recommendations of the committees to be considered at this meeting.</p> <p data-bbox="316 1283 1286 1312">Governors resolved to accept the Corporation Committee Minutes and Report.</p> <p data-bbox="316 1350 596 1379"><u>Link Governor Reports</u></p> <p data-bbox="316 1384 970 1413">There were no Link Governor Reports to be received.</p>	
53.23	<p data-bbox="316 1451 628 1480">STUDENT VOICE REPORT</p> <p data-bbox="316 1485 1278 1680">The Assistant Principal Quality and HE had provided a written report for information. Of particular note were the results of surveys taken during student conferences this term. These indicated that students wished to have more tutorial activities, educational trips, mental health support, more challenging work in some areas and for poor behaviour to be consistently tackled. Students felt safe in college but less so outside.</p> <p data-bbox="316 1718 1278 1814">Governors also noted the high level of positive engagement of students at the Student Voice Committee. This gave rich feedback in a number of areas for management to consider.</p> <p data-bbox="316 1852 1007 1881">Governors resolved to accept the Student Voice Report.</p>	
54.23	<p data-bbox="316 1912 628 1942">GOVERNOR DISCUSSION</p> <p data-bbox="316 1946 1278 2040">The Chair thanked Governors for their contributions to robust discussions during the meeting. He commented on the need for a strong partnership between the college and parents to ensure that expectations for students</p>	

Item	Subject	Who
	were clear and supported. This seemed to be a theme running through issues discussed in this meeting.	
	The Chair also particularly noted the work of the Audit Committee in developing risk reporting in college. The Audit Committee Chair outlined his plans to work with other Committee members and the Director of Finance & MIS on this.	
	A Governor commented that it had been very good to see a range of staff presenting to the meeting and asked that this continue where possible and relevant.	
	Another Governor commented on her recent attendance at a trip with students. It had been excellent to see the quality of the work that students had produced and it was suggested that showcasing student talent to Governors would be very worthwhile. The Principal noted changes to award ceremonies that would allow more of this. Covid had prevented some of this but it would be considered now.	
55.23	DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING Tuesday 23 May 2023 at 1730 hrs.	
	The meeting ended at 2005 hrs.	

Item	How governors challenged management
48.29	Asked about funding and risks of potential Hawbush re-site.
49.23	Asked about potential audit clawback.
51.23	Discussed Student Voice Committee feedback on student behaviour concerns.

Item	Impact of meeting on college
41.23	Approved Chair's Actions
47.23	Approved Student Union Constitution.
48.23	Approved expenditure for enabling works for Electric Vehicle Sustainability Centre.
48.23	Agreed approach for Hawbush re-site project and to expenditure necessary to evaluate and prepare a business case.
52.23	Agreed calendar of meetings for 2023/24.