

MINUTES OF CORPORATION MEETING

PART ONE

Venue: HB201

Date: Tuesday 11th June 2024**Members:**

Paul Averis
Heather Lodge
Mary Mahoney
Aysha Rahman Amani
Rani Sahota
Tony Sadla
Jat Sharma
Nick Tomkys
Graham Ward
Dave Wheeler

In Attendance:

Barbara Van Der Eecken, Edward Ng – Associate Governors
Richard Brennan, Assistant Principal Curriculum
Matthew Brown, Director of Finance & MIS
James Norris, Assistant Principal Commercial Development
Deb Rajania, Director of Operations & Resources
David Turner, Assistant Principal Quality & HE
Natalie Priest, Head of Human Resources
Lesley Venables, Head of Governance

	CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS	
277	The Chair congratulated the Principal who had served at the College for a total of 20 years this month.	
278	The Head of Governance advised that part of the Safeguarding Report would be discussed under Part 2 of the agenda, due to the sensitivities of its content.	
	APOLOGIES	
279	Apologies for absence were received from Charlotte Bosworth (Vice-Chair), Garry Welborn (Staff Governor), Stuart Pedley-Smith (External Governor), Nelson Tanyanyiwa (External Governor). The absence of Linda Enow was noted.	
	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
280	There were no declarations of interest in any specific agenda items.	
	CHAIR'S ACTION	
281		
	MINUTES	
282	Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 st March 2024 (Parts 1 and 2) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair	
	MATTERS ARISING	
283	The Board received a progress report on actions arising from previous meetings and noted that the majority of these were either completed or in train.	
284	In relation to minute 63.23 governors were reminded that the diversity profile had been presented to the previous meeting. The EDI Strategy and Annual Report for 2023/2024 would be presented to the October Corporation meeting.	DT
285	There had been insufficient time on the March Corporation agenda to facilitate a full discussion on HE and the College's EDI data (minute 110 refers). It was	DT

	agreed that this would form part of the agenda for the October 2024 Learning & Quality Committee meeting.	
	LINK GOVERNOR ACTIVITIES	
286	Governors reported on various visits they had made to the College since the January 2024 meeting. Edward Ng had visited the Hawbush, Pleck and Whitehall Campuses in his role as link governor for SEND, with a further visit planned for Green Lane in September.	
287	Tony Sadla had visited CCM and had seen the impact of expenditure on teaching, learning and assessment. Students were enjoying their programmes and staff were committed to providing an excellent experience. There had been a significant change in the management of the site compared to how it had operated under the auspices of the CITB. Some gaps in key posts in areas such as front of house had been noted.	
	SAFEGUARDING UPDATE	
288	The Head of Safeguarding presented a report on safeguarding issues since the March 2024 meeting. Improvements in data analysis enabled staff to be more proactive in their interventions.	
289	Mental health continued to be the most significant concern. It was noted that there had been an increased in the number of Child Financial Exploitation, which could have serious long-term consequences for the victims of this crime. The College was working with Action Fraud on this issue and students would receive information on the risks during Staying Safer Week and personal development sessions in 2024/2025. Training for the finance and student support teams would also be arranged.	
290	A governor asked what action was being taken to ensure that staff completed the registration process for the MyConcern system and was advised that a list of non-compliances had been submitted to the Senior Management Team and that progress would continue to be monitored on a regular basis.	
291	Safeguarding had recently been audited by the Quality Team and evidence showed that there was an improved understanding of safeguarding issues across the College.	
292	Induction processes for students were being reviewed to make safeguarding aspects more interactive. Despite it being communicated in a similar way to safeguarding, in common with many FE colleges, students' understanding of the Prevent agenda was more variable. This area would be a main focus of induction activity in 2024/2025, with additional training provided for tutors. The areas where understanding of Prevent was especially low had been identified and there would be a concerted effort to improve this in early 2024/2025.	
293	A governor commented that the bulk of activity on the Prevent agenda was targeted at the Wisemore Campus, as it was more difficult to address students' understanding on other sites due to the disparate nature of the curriculum and the student profile. The Assistant Principal Curriculum reported that further work would be carried out once additional audit testing had been completed, which would be by week 5 of the following academic year. It was agreed that a report on progress would be provided to the October Corporation meeting.	CW/ RB

294	The Board felt that the sample taken was not representative of the whole student body and the differences between campuses, which could mean that learning needs on Prevent were missed. Additionally, information by age would be useful as students were more likely to be aware of safeguarding issues if they were parents themselves. Governors felt that a standard dashboard would be helpful to present the data by site and age group.	CW/DT
295	The APQ&SE reported that there had been 2.5K survey responses across the College. Testing or triangulation had taken place on existing datasets and information was provided to students both at induction and throughout the academic year.	
296	Teams were also asked to ensure that safeguarding and Prevent messages were communicated to the community. A review would be undertaken to determine whether the data could be made more representative.	
297	The Head of Safeguarding presented a revised interim Safeguarding Policy, which took account of the current regulations set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education. The DfE would be reviewing this guidance over the summer and a new policy would be drafted for approval by the Corporation at its October meeting.	
298	Resolved – That the revised Safeguarding Policy be approved Charlotte Wood left the meeting.	
STUDENT ISSUES		
299	The outgoing SU President presented a report on student union activities since the May 2024 meeting.	
300	Elections for the new SU Executive had taken place, with a total of 600 votes cast compared to 393 in 2023. The new SU President, Alexandru Marina would take up his post in July and, under the SU Constitution, was automatically nominated to be one of the 2 student governors.	
301	Following changes to the College's 14-16 provision the Student Lounge was currently closed, which had caused a large number of complaints and comments from students.	
302	The recent Hope & Harmony event had been highly successful.	
303	On behalf of the Corporation the Chair thanked Aysha Rahman Amani for her contribution as student governor in 2023/2024.	
304	Resolved – That Alexandru Marina be appointed as student governor for a 1 year term of office with effect from 1 st July 2024.	
FREEDOM OF SPEECH CODE OF PRACTICE		
305	The Assistant Principal Q&SE presented a draft Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech, which was a requirement of the Office for Students for any institutions with HE provision. Promotion of freedom of speech formed part of the induction process for all students in terms of improving their understanding of tolerance and was part of the personal development tutorial provision.	
306	The Code applied to all visiting speakers and governors asked about the checks that were conducted before speakers were engaged by the College.	

307	The APQ&SE reported that a risk assessment was undertaken and any materials to be used were reviewed in advance.	
308	It was acknowledged that there was often a fine balance between freedom of speech and safeguarding, particularly for the more vulnerable learners. Staff who had to make difficult decisions on freedom of speech were encouraged to consult with colleagues, as they should not feel exposed as a result.	
309	Governors questioned whether the College had the appropriate mechanisms to capture information on freedom of speech and were advised that this was being considered at the moment.	
310	It was noted that the Investors in Diversity accreditation included elements such as forgiveness, dealing with errors of judgement and having respectful discussions with others.	
311	A consultation process on a revised version of the Code had been instituted by the OfS, the outcomes of which would be published in the early Autumn. The College's Code would be revised if necessary to take account of any changes.	
311	Resolved – That the Freedom of Speech Code of Practice be approved	
STUDENT VOICE COMMITTEE		
312	The Head of Governance presented revised terms of reference for the Student Voice Committee and now aligned to the student journey through the academic year.	
313	It is proposed that each termly meeting would focus on one aspect, as follows: Term 1 – Induction Term 2 – Personal Development and Work Experience Term 3 - Assessment preparation, careers and destinations	
314	The membership had also been revised to provide a more even balance between Student Union Executive Members and Student Course Representatives, together with a defined number from each group.	
315	Resolved – That the revised Terms of Reference be approved	
ACCOUNTABILITY AGREEMENT/LOCAL NEEDS DUTY 2024/2025		
316	Governors received for approval the updated draft of the Accountability Agreement (Local Needs Duty) for 2024/2025 which had to be uploaded to the ESFA's portal by 30 th June 2024. This had been circulated well in advance and governors had been invited to comment/suggest any changes.	
317	A number of amendments were suggested, as follows: • “education, skills and training” • Personal development, resilience and mental health to be added • World Skills and the access to competitions to be included • Amendment of RAG-rating for destination data	
318	Resolved – 1 That, with the amendments above included in the final version, the Accountability Statement/Local Needs Duty be approved	

	2 That the document be signed by the Chair of the Corporation and the Principal/CEO and uploaded to the ESFA portal by 30 th June 2024	
	CURRICULUM STRATEGY	
319	The APCD presented the revised draft of the Curriculum Strategy for 2024-2027 on which governor comments were invited by 25 th June 2024. The content addressed the current skills priorities of the Combined Authority. It was agreed that a final draft would be submitted to the Learning & Quality Committee meeting in July for recommendation to the Corporation.	JN/ LV
320	As the timing of the preparation of this document did not completely align with the development of the Corporate Plan (final version due for approval by the Corporation in October 2024), it may be necessary to review further in the new academic year.	
321	All directors of faculty had set out the provision of each of their areas within the Strategy. A separate HE Strategy was being prepared with consultation with the link governor for HE.	
	EXECUTIVE REPORT	
322	Governors received for information the regular Executive Report.	
323	It was likely that there would be a change of Government following the General Election in July. The Labour Party's manifesto included items such as a 'growth and skills levy', support for in-work training and the reinstatement of traineeships. Financial constraints on the public sector would probably continue and this would be addressed at the College through a transformation project which centred around improving efficiency and productivity with existing or fewer resources.	
324	A new mayor has recently been elected and would be visiting the College shortly. His agenda included development of the infrastructure, up-skilling the workforce, reducing the proportion of those Not in Education, Employment or Training and improving apprenticeship opportunities.	
325	Projections for activity levels in 2024/2025 were highly positive. A new Government scheme under the Levelling Up Fund offered £6k 'golden hellos' for teaching staff.	
326	There would be a number of capital projects that would require approval by the Corporation, such as the Electric Vehicle & Sustainability Centre and the Adult Learning Centre. The July 2024 Corporation agenda would feature a presentation on the current position for each of these. The most complex of the ongoing projects would be the Broadway Campus, due to the sensitivities around this provision. A feasibility study was underway for Walsall Council on the possible relocation of the Leather Museum.	DR/ LV
327	Changes to the requirements for English & Maths for all 16 year olds without a grade 4 GCSE had recently been announced by the Department for Education. This involved an increase in Maths teaching hours from 3 hours to a minimum of four hours per week (irrespective of whether they are studying GCSE, Functional Skills or an alternative). The additional tuition represented a significant challenge to the College in relation to staff recruitment and retention in this area. Planning for this amendment was at an advanced stage and would deliver a 2 hour qualification session, one hour facilitated resource-	

	based tuition and a further hour of contextualised Maths. This model had been used in other colleges with a large degree of success.	
328	A governor asked how the College would monitor the progress of the Maths & English programmes and was advised that the relevant data would be included in the regular management reports and would evidence performance against expectations and the impact of homework on grades. The Board felt that the importance of Maths and English in the workplace needed to be constantly emphasised to students and was assured that sessions were based on a collaboration between the vocational staff and specialist Maths & English tutors.	
329	In response to questions over resourcing the APCurr reported that a review of IT requirements was being undertaken to ensure that staff had all the relevant tools available. Obtaining additional staffing resources had proven difficult due to national shortages in these areas and a high level of competition with other institutions, including schools where levels of pay were much higher.	
330	In the GCSE English or Maths examinations for 2023/24 the current best attendance for Maths was 93% compared with 91% last year). For English the equivalent figure was 91%, which was in line with 2022/2023. Both examinations involved a much larger cohort than the previous academic year.	
331	The Corporation was reminded of previous discussions on proposals for the expansion of the College's A Level offer to a full suite of programmes within a dedicated sixth form centre. These had been based on current enrolments and future growth opportunities and, together with T Levels provision would represent 10 to 15% of the 16-18 cohort in 2024/2025. A Levels were currently offered in study programme groups but the plan was for this to widen to a free choice model over the next few years. Further reports on this development would be made to the Learning & Quality Committee with final proposals submitted to the Corporation for approval.	RB
332	In the R09 accounting period there were 171 apprentices out of a total of 1170 who were classified as 'Out of Funding' as they had continued beyond the expected end date of their qualification. A further 50 apprentices had completed their courses but had not yet been processed. This represented is 14.6%, which reduced to 10.3% when the cohort of 50 were included, against an internal target of 12% by the end of this academic year. The APCD reported that under the DfE's Accountability Framework measures the overall percentage was 2.7% for apprentices who were 180 to 365 days over their end dates and 4.1% over 365 days, which was considered to be low risk for the College.	
333	Applications for 16-18 programmes had increased by 442 compared to 2023/2024. There were currently 2,098 students who had accepted their offer and 383 pending. Students were given three opportunities to accept their offer before being withdrawn from the system, which should provide a more accurate picture.	
334	Referrals through The Link continued to increase and were currently 1045. The College was working with the Department for Work & Pensions to ensure that the appropriate individuals were invited in to discuss relevant opportunities. Management felt that the community learning model should be used in future. Funding for a further year's costs had been received from the	

	Combined Authority and it was reported that the CA was interested in expanding this delivery model to other parts of the region. Information on the performance of The Link would be circulated to governors to enable them to publicise the facility.	JN
335	Work continued on the review of the Corporate Strategy, which involved a high level of consultation with various groups within the College. Governors were thanked for their input to the initial stage of the process. A progress report would be made to the July Corporation meeting, with a final draft of the Strategy to be submitted for approval in October.	
FINANCE REPORT		
336	The Director of Finance & MIS presented a verbal report on the Finance & Resources Committee meeting held on 17 th May 2024. Detailed discussion had taken place on the management accounts for March 2024, particularly in relation to apprenticeships/work-based learning and strategic projects.	
337	The accounts indicated a slight under-performance against the budget for 2023/2024. This was due to additional costs related to teaching the increase cohort of 16-18 year olds for which the College would not receive funding until 2024/2025, the level of wrap-around services required for students, particularly those with high needs and performance against apprenticeship targets (although this was improving).	
338	Adult enrolments were on track but had a slightly different profile to the skills priorities of the Combined Authority. Income and enrolment levels for HE provision were fairly static and this area was under review.	
339	SLT had recently reviewed and prioritised a series of capital bids, some of which had been included in the draft budget for 2024/2025.	
340	The College's financial health continued to be graded as 'Good'. However, the EBITDA was currently 'amber' due to performance on apprenticeship programmes. The staff costs to income ratio was relatively high and the Corporation was reminded of previous concerns raised about this. Management felt that there were some efficiency opportunities such as increased staff utilisation or larger class sizes.	
341	The proposed budget for 2024/2025 was cash positive, unlike the previous 2 to 3 years when there had been a deficit. It was likely that any increase in the funding rate for 16-18 provision would be below the rate of inflation, but this would be partly offset by additional income from the Combined Authority adult contracts.	
342	Governors asked about the projected outturn at the year end of £400k below the approved budget. The Director of Finance & MIS reported that additional depreciation for the expenditure at the Green Lane Campus needed to be factored in, so the overall figure was likely to be £500K and it was noted that this was due to a previous decision about the accounting treatment for capital grants.	

343	Following the publication of the DfE's new Financial Handbook for FE Colleges (which reflected the contents of HM Treasury's "Managing Public Money"), the College's Financial Regulations were currently under review to ensure that all requirements had been met. Proposals for any amendments would be submitted for approval at the October Corporation meeting on the recommendation of the Finance & Resources Committee.	MB/ JL
SEARCH & GOVERNANCE STANDARDS COMMITTEE – 17TH MAY 2024		
344	In the absence of the Committee Chair the Head of Governance presented a verbal update on the Search & Governance Standards Committee meeting held on 17 th May 2024.	
	Re-Appointment of External Governors	
345	Governors were advised that the terms of office of Paul Averis, Charlotte Bosworth and Nick Tomkys were due to expire in July 2024. The Committee had considered their performance against a number of criteria and had recommended that each should be appointed for a further 3 year term of office.	
346	The Committee had also discussed Stuart Pedley-Smith's reappointment. He was currently in his third term of office which would expire in October 2024 by which time he would have served as a governor for a total of 9 years. Usually this would mean that he would be ineligible to be reappointed, however, the Corporation can extend this in extenuating circumstances or to provide continuity.	
347	The Chair and the Head of Governance had discussed with Stuart and agreed in principle a possible extension of 12 months, subject to recommendation by the Committee, which was confirmed on 17 th May.	
348	A recruitment process would be commencing shortly to identify possible governors with financial expertise, as this was a significant gap in the current skills profile and was identified during the external governance review. It had been agreed by the Committee that Peridot & Partners would be engaged to support the recruitment process, to widen the pool of candidates and further improve diversity.	
	Performance Review Process 2023/2024	
349	Governors received proposals for conducting the Performance Review process for 2023/2024. This would encompass 4 elements – individual governors, the Corporation, the Chair and committees.	
350	Once these had been approved by the Corporation the proformas would be circulated for completion. The Chair and the Head of Governance would then meet with each governor individually to discuss the content. A report on the outputs of the process would be submitted to the Search & Governance Standards Committee's September meeting, including areas for improvement, any issues and common themes.	

351	Compliance against AoC Code of Good Governance Governors were reminded that the Corporation had adopted the AoC Code and in line with good practice an assessment had been made of performance against each of the areas. An action plan had been drafted and progress would be monitored by the Committee.	
352	Resolved – 1 That Paul Averis, Charlotte Bosworth and Nick Tomkys be reappointed as external governors for a 3 year term of office with effect from 1st July 2024 2 That Stuart Pedley-Smith’s current term of office be extended By 12 months to 31st October 2025 3 That the proposals for the performance review process be approved 4 That the action plan for the AoC Code of Good Governance be approved	
DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS		
	18th June Audit Committee 25th June Finance & Resources Committee 3rd July Learning & Quality Committee 11th July Corporation (note that this is also the date of the College’s Curriculum Conference) The Executive would provide a list of events to which governors would be invited, which would be circulated for information. A meeting of the chairs of committees was planned prior to the next Corporation meeting.	Exec/ LV LV