

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Governors held on
Monday 13 November 2017 at 5.00pm in the Conference Centre, Paget Rd**

PRESENT

Mr B Picken (Chair)	Dr C Davison
Ms C Boliver	Mr T Johnson
Mrs T Campbell	Mr S McKenna
Mr J Crockett	Ms S Rhodes
Mr C Crosdale	Mr J Whale
Mr J Dalhouse	Mr J White

Ms S Meddings (Clerk)

IN ATTENDANCE

Ms L Fall (for the Briefing)
Mr J Grindell
Mr P Merry
Ms K O'Reilly (for item 11)

In welcoming everyone to the meeting the Chair extended a particular welcome to Mr Peter Merry, the newly appointed Vice Principal Finance and Resources.

The Chair reported that, as the College had been notified the previous Friday of a full Ofsted Inspection to commence the following day, i.e. 14 November, some of the College Management Team were currently occupied with preparation for Ofsted and would not be attending the Board meeting to present their reports. However, the Principal was at the meeting and would be able to answer the majority of questions raised.

The Chair further reported that Ms L Fall would be joining the meeting at the beginning to provide a Briefing to Governors ahead of the Ofsted Inspection and the Governors meeting with the Leadership and Management Inspector.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Dr I Gillis.

There were no declarations of interest.

OFSTED BRIEFING

Governors received a Briefing on the Ofsted Inspection of the College from Ms L Fall, Assistant Principal Quality Improvement. The Briefing covered the following:

- The College's previous Inspection report, specifically "what the Provider needs to do to improve" and progress made since the last inspection.
- Headlines: Achievement for 2016/17 had increased by 5%. English and maths had improved on last year. The challenges for the College were

value added, high grades and the progress made by learners.
Apprenticeship outcomes needed to improve.

- Areas of focus: English and maths – how the College was working to improve outcomes. Apprenticeships – above the national average but had declined. What the College was doing to stem the decline.
- It was agreed that Governors would be provided with the top level position statements on “Effectiveness of Leadership and Management”, “Teaching, Learning & Assessment and “Outcomes for learners”. Governors would also be provided with the Principal’s presentation to Ofsted.

Ms L Fall left the meeting.

105/17 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING – 16 OCTOBER 2017

Resolved:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 October 2017 be approved as a correct record.

106/17 MATTERS ARISING – GOVERNOR LINKS

Arising on Minute No 96/17 it was reported that Mr C Crosdale would be continuing as the Link Governor for HR for 2017/18.

107/17 MATTERS ARISING – PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Arising on Minute No 104/17 the Chair reminded the Board that it had been agreed at the previous meeting that the HR Strategy be brought back to the Board with a stronger focus on performance management. The revised HR Strategy was presented at item 11 on the agenda.

The Chair suggested that this should be taken as the next item.

108/17 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Ms O’Reilly presented the HR Strategy 2017-2020 for approval and reported that, as requested by the Board at the previous meeting, the Performance Management element of the Strategy had been amended to emphasise its importance. In addition, the Training & Development Policy and the Probation Policy had also been amended to ensure alignment with the stronger focus on performance management.

Resolved:

That the HR Strategy 2017-2020, the Training & Development policy and the Probation policy be approved.

Ms O’Reilly left the meeting.

109/17

CORRESPONDENCE – FE COMMISSIONER’S LETTER – OCTOBER 2017

The Board received and noted the contents of the FE Commissioner’s letter to Chairs and Principals of FE Corporations dated October 2017.

Of note was the expansion of the FE Commissioner’s role with an increased focus on supporting colleges in addressing and resolving quality and financial challenges at a much earlier stage. The FE Commissioner would also be working more closely with some of the best leaders in the sector to support a wider range of colleges in raising standards.

110/17

PRINCIPAL’S REPORT

Governors received the Principal’s report which provided an update on key actions following the Board of Governors meeting on 16 October 2017. The report highlighted the key developments with reference to each of the College’s strategic objectives and the strategic priority regarding capital build and estates disposals.

Points of discussion included:

- Mr Crosdale queried the College’s income target for apprenticeships, which was double the previous year’s target in the context of the national trend for apprenticeships being down. The Principal responded that the College was doing well although it was very challenging. A change in the way that levy contracts were administered through the implementation of a “Trusted Provider” process was expected to reduce lead-in times.
- The Vice Principal Finance and Resources commented that there were a number of conflicting issues in relation to bureaucracy, demand and delivery and that time was needed for the market to mature.
- The Principal drew members’ attention to the College being shortlisted for the AoC Beacon Award for Careers, Advice and Guidance, the results being announced at the AoC Conference later in the week.
- Mr Crosdale asked about the DBS changes in respect of the College not being allowed to undertake enhanced checks on College staff who were not in teaching positions. The Principal responded that the College had raised this as a concern with Ofsted, AoC and local MPs. In response to a question about the reason for the changes it was suggested that it was because of cost and bureaucracy busting. Dr Davison commented that there had been some publicity around crimes being committed after the checks had been undertaken.

111/17

BOARD OF GOVERNORS – KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

The Board received and noted the final outturn of the KPI monitoring sheet for 2016/17 and the KPI monitoring sheet for 2017/18 BRAGd to show progress as at 7 November 2017.

112/17

ACHIEVEMENT RATE OUTCOMES 2016/17

Governors received a report on the College's achievement rate outcomes for 2016/17 and noted the following key points:

Headline outcomes for 'Education and Training' including maths and English provision for 2016/17 were 84.6% and had improved by 4.6% from 80% in 2016/16 and were above the National Average at headline level (82% NA).

Headline outcomes for the same provision "excluding maths and English" were 89% for 2016/17 and had improved by 1.3% from 87.7% in 2015/16 and were above the National Average at headline level (NA 86.8%).

Of the 30 Tier 2 Sector Subject Areas (SSAs) that the College operated in, 17 (57%) had improved. Of these, 11 improved by 5% or more. Only 4 Tier 2 SSAs had declined by over 5%. In respect of performance by "programme type":

- The performance of 16-18 year old students "including maths and English" had improved 8% from 76.1% to 84.1% and was now above the national average of 81.2%.
- The performance of 19+ year old students had also improved by 2.4% from 81.9% to 84.3% and was above the national average of 83.4%.
- The performance of High Needs students had remained high at 89.5% (89.9% in 2015/16).

'Overall success' outcomes for Apprenticeships had declined slightly on the previous year from 72% to 70%. 'Timely success' outcomes for apprenticeships had remained at 62% whereas the national average had increased from 58% to 62%.

The Principal commented that the headline issues were that the College's achievement rate had improved by 5% and that going forward, apprenticeship achievement would be the main focus to work on improving.

113/17

POST INSPECTION ACTION PLAN 2016/17

The Board received the College's Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) BRAGd to record progress for 2016/17 as at November 2017.

It was noted that of the 37 areas for improvement BRAG rated within the Plan, there were 2 (5%) BRAGd red as "not achieved" 12 (33%) BRAGd amber as "partially achieved" and 23 (62%) BRAGd green as "achieved".

The two areas rated red related to performance not meeting the required standard regarding progress and value added scores.

The areas rated amber related to performance not fully met and covered examples around attendance, apprenticeship starts and achievement rates, maths and English achievement rates (especially on GCSEs) and staff DNA completion.

It was reported that the overall outcomes for 2016/17 were improved from the previous year which had been a main focus for the College. Teaching, learning and assessment had maintained high levels and student and employer satisfaction continued to remain high to the point that the College was top in the midlands (East and West midlands) for both student and employer satisfaction.

Areas of further focus that would be carried forward to the 2017/18 PIAP included improvements to value added, high grades (maths and English), attendance, apprenticeship overall and timely achievement together with areas for improvement identified in the 2016/17 Self-Assessment Report.

114/17

STUDENT INDUCTION SURVEY – SEPTEMBER 2017

Governors received a report on the findings from the Student Induction Survey September 2017 and noted the following key points:

- The Student Induction Survey took place from 18 September to 4 October 2017 for full time and substantial part time students. (Separate induction surveys were completed for HE students and Apprentices.)
- 2,131 students participated in the Survey (from a targeted number of 2,724), giving a 78% response rate. This was a 6% increase on the 2016/17 return rate of 72%.
- The results were compiled using statistical analysis prepared by QDP and were recorded in the form of the percentage of students who agree with statements. External Benchmarks were judged against respondents from other College providers.
- There were sustained high levels of student satisfaction with 94% agreeing “they would recommend the College to a friend”. This outcome met the College KPI of 94% and was +11 against external benchmark and an increase of 6 points on 2016/17 outcomes.
- 100% (12 out of 12 questions) were in the upper quartile.

Strengths were identified from the questions as:

- ‘Told about the choice of courses (92%), an increase of 2% on 2016/17 outcomes.
- ‘I feel I am on the right course’ (97%) - the same as 2016/17 outcomes.

Results to be explored further were identified from the questions as:

- ‘College made it easy for me to start my course’ (91%) a slight decline by 1%.
- ‘Induction has helped me settle into College’ (90%), decline by 2%.
- ‘Expected standards of behavior are made clear to me’ (95%), decline by 2%.

- 'I feel safe at the College' (96%), a slight decline by 1%.
- 'Told about work placements to do with the course' (85%) maintained result.

Governors noted that areas for improvement across College were based around the following themes:

- Canteen prices
- Computers/problems with log on and networks
- Condition of the toilets
- Use of directed study
- Communication at start of course in some areas.

Points of discussion included:

- Governors acknowledged that areas for improvement such as the condition of the toilets and canteen prices were recurring themes. In respect of the condition of the toilets, the Principal commented that some were in need of refurbishing.
The student governors reported that the condition of the toilets near room 267 were not good. This would be flagged up to Estates.
- In respect of canteen prices, it was confirmed that there were meal deals on offer and free food for some students.
Mr Whale commented that there was competition from the local Sainsbury where the meal deals were cheaper than those in the canteen and better quality.
- Mr Crockett asked what the issue was about directed study. The Principal responded that students regarded directed study time as free time and did not want to spend it on site. However, students needed to be on site for the College to claim.
Mr White commented that for directed study time on his course, students used to be allowed to use the classrooms but now were not.
The Principal clarified that these were media courses and that classrooms would be locked because of the value of the equipment but if this negatively impacted on the student experience it would be looked at and changed.
The Principal asked Mr White to escalate the issue so that it would be dealt with as a complaint.
- Mr Crosdale asked if it was a concern that there was a 1% decline in the percentage of students "feeling safe at the College"
The Principal responded that this was only a 1% decline but that this could be drilled down, analysed and addressed via focus groups.

115/17

SUMMARY OF COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS 2016/17

Governors received a report summarising College complaints (and compliments) received during the 2016/17 academic year and noted the following:

- The total amount of complaints received was 73, indicating a slight increase compared to 2015/16 (67) but was broadly in line with previous years.
- Whilst the average complaint was closed within 10 working days, there had been an increase in the amount of days taken to close a complaint compared to the previous year.
- 37% (28) of the complaints directly related to teaching and learning, which was slightly higher than the previous year (34%).
- The majority of complainants were from a White British background 47% (34). This trend followed on from the previous year and was in line with the College demographics.
- The total amount of compliments from internal and external sources in 2016/17 amounted to 42. This had decreased from the total amount of compliments received in 2015/16 (56).

Points of discussion included:

- Mr Crosdale queried the increase in the amount of days taken to close complaints and asked why this was.
The Principal responded that this was due to the nature of some complaints which were more complex and required more investigation which took longer.
- Ms Rhodes asked whether there was a good representation of the Student Voice, not just with regard to complaints, but in other areas. The Principal responded that she would find out and report back.
- Mr Crockett commented that a longitudinal analysis would have been useful by area of College to identify any trends.
- Mr Dalhouse queried whether the Equality and Diversity Committee should have student representation for all the protected characteristics groups. In response to a question from the Chair as to how the student reps were appointed, Mr Dalhouse confirmed appointment was via the Student Union. It was suggested that the Equality and Diversity Committee could look at this.
- Mr Whale asked what would be done in respect of complaints involving “personal clashes with tutors”. The Principal responded that this would be picked up via CPD.

116/17

DRAFT FINANCIAL OUT-TURN 2016-17

Governors received an update on the financial outturn for 2016/17 together with a summary of the latest position with regard to completing the 2016/17 statutory accounts.

The following summary of key points were noted.

- The management accounts for the year to 31 July 2017 demonstrated an operating surplus of **£703k** which was below budget (£834k) but significantly ahead of the in-year forecast.
- This was a result of a shortfall in income (£423k against budget) being mitigated by savings in pay (£74k against budget) and non-pay expenditure (£200k against budget)

- The ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) 16-18 contract numbers were 75 behind contract but the funding impact was reduced to £43k on account of a healthier balance of full to part-time learners.
- The Adult Education Budget (AEB) contract out-turned at 97.1% of contract.
- Apprenticeship income was below budget by £250k for 16-18 year olds and £41k for adults with a range of actions being taken to increase apprenticeship income moving forward.
- Pay costs out-turned at 99.5% of budget.
- Non-pay savings of £200k in comparison to budget (£438k in comparison to forecast) were achieved which was largely due to very close budgetary control.
- The year-end cash balance was £527k reflecting strong net positive cash inflow. The draft numbers indicated compliance with bank covenants.
- The College's accounts were currently being audited by RSM. Discussion was ongoing with regards to the treatment of pension accounting for statutory purposes.
- Automated financial health was expected to be **satisfactory** but consideration should be given to whether the College should continue to self-assess as inadequate.
- The statutory accounts were due for signing at the Board meeting on 11 December. However their signing might be contingent upon the signing of the agreement with the Transaction Unit to assure the going concern presumption. The proposed deadline for signing the financing agreement with the TU was 31 December. Discussions were taking place with the external auditors, the ESFA and the TU to identify the most appropriate way forward. Should the TU agreement not be signed by 11 December, delegated authority may be sought at the Board meeting for sign off of the accounts by the Chair and Principal when the TU agreement was signed.

Discussion arose around the College's financial health assessment. It was recognised that if the College's financial health was assessed as inadequate, the College would continue to be subject to intervention. In order to move out of intervention and with the imminent signing of the TU agreement, should consideration be given to a self-assessment of satisfactory?

The Chair concluded the discussion by suggesting that this should be left until the December Board on the basis that if the College self assessed as satisfactory there needed to be certainty.

117/17

COLLEGE BUDGET – IN YEAR MONITORING REPORT

In receiving the Budget in year monitoring report as at 30 September, Governors noted the following summary of key points:

- The operating result for the period to September was a deficit of £(915)k in comparison to a budgeted deficit of £(912)k. An element of budget phasing did however affect the variance.

- 16-18 learner numbers were very close to contract with further recruitment of part-time learners expected onto Prince's Trust programmes. The Adult Education Budget was currently forecast to out-turn 91% of allocation. The College had been awarded an extra £41k of allocation to address perceived ESOL needs locally which created an opportunity to revisit the curriculum offer.
- Loan income was presently £15k behind budget with opportunity to increase this income through additional recruitment.
- The management accounts to the end of September indicated that the College was behind budget on both 16-18 and adult apprenticeships by £(334)k and £(127)k respectively. A working group had been convened to review the activity in this area and differentiate between any shortfall in demand and the increased lead time caused by the additional administration following the implementation of apprenticeship reform.
- HE income was on budget to date which combined a shortfall of recruitment to date with increased direct funding from HEFCE.
- There was a £43k variance on other contract arising from there being no activity in respect of ESF funding contracts and 14-16 income to date.
- Staff costs were £286k below budget to September which was largely attributable to unfulfilled vacancies particularly around apprenticeships.
- The full year forecast had not been updated at this time but would be reviewed in the context of forthcoming Star Chambers
- Cashflow remained within the agreed facility at September but in order to remain so, the cashflow forecast suggested that either the Transaction Unit agreement would require signing (due by 31 December) and / or forward funding of ESFA income might be required to bridge the gap in the meantime, factoring in early payroll costs in December. Dialogue was ongoing with the ESFA to test this assumption.

118/17

ASSURANCE STATEMENT FOR HIGHER EDUCATION (HE)#

The Board were requested to support the signing of the annual assurance statement for HE which reflected that Governors had had the requisite oversight of academic governance arrangements during the 2016/17 academic year.

Resolved:

That the signing of the Annual Quality Assessment Assurance Statement for HE by the accountable officer be supported.