

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Board of Governors held on
Monday 22 June 2020 at 5pm
Conducted via Microsoft Teams**

PRESENT

Mr Mark Taylor (Chair)	Mr Mike Hastings (Vice Chair)
Mr Clarence Crosdale	Mr Ian Fegan
Ms Alison Shannon	Mr Trevor Dutton
Ms Emma Bull	Mr Mal Cowgill
Ms Sally Slater (Staff)	

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr Peter Merry	- Vice Principal Business Success
Mr Ian Browne	- Vice Principal Student Success
Ms Louise Fall	- Vice Principal Students Engagement
Mrs Elizabeth Ball	- Clerk to the Board of Governors

62/20 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM 1)

Mr Yankho Songwe sent apologies.

63/20 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 18 MAY 2020 (ITEM 2)

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2020 were approved as a correct record.

64/20 MATTERS ARISING (ITEM 2)

There were no matters arising which would not be considered as part of the meeting.

65/20 CORRESPONDENCE (ITEM 3)

Governors noted the letter which had been sent to the Chairs, CEO/Principals and Heads of Governance in Further Education and Sixth Form College Corporations dated 16 June 2020.

66/20 COLLEGE RE-OPENING PLAN (ITEM 4)

Governors noted that the updated College re-opening plan together with the associated risk assessment documentation had been circulated to them following the question and answer session which had taken place on Monday 16 June 2020.

All Governors had considered and approved the plan by email to the Clerk.

It was reported that an update on the College re-opening would be provided by the Principal as part of the College report.

It was resolved that the updated College re-opening plan be formally approved

67/20 UPDATES (ITEM 5)

1. CLQ AND CoWTechC

The Principal presented the CLQ Briefing Note which provided a short update in relation to the CLQ and CoWTechC projects.

It was reported that following the release of funding to continue the design process for CoWTechC, several options had been considered and it had been agreed that the base option would be pursued which included a large void space on the second floor.

It had also been agreed however that the void would be built in such a way that if additional funding became available it could be utilised without additional strengthening of the structure.

In relation to the CLQ project, the Principal reported that the College was investigating the potential to apply for funding from a variety of sources and if possible at a higher level.

2. IBR

The Principal provided an update on discussions with Barclays Bank, the Local Authority and the ESFA.

68/20 COLLEGE REPORT (ITEM 6)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Principal reported that the re-opening of the College has been as successful as it could be. He stated that the Unions had been involved in the discussions about re-opening and when they had seen the action that was being taken were very supportive.

The Vice Principal Student Engagement reported that students had been attending College to complete assessments and that in the current week preparations were being made for the return of the College's high needs students. Whilst the College has the capacity for 40 students to be on site, having spoken with individuals and their families and taking into account any underlying health conditions it was anticipated that only 20 students would be on site later in the week.

It was noted that the next phase involves planning for phase 3 and the provision at Metro One for hair & beauty and hospitality students from 6 July 2020.

The Principal reported that the College has not yet allowed students to return who are on the first year of a two-year course, which includes A levels and BTEC provision.

He confirmed that the Faculty Heads have reported that these students are engaging well with learning and as a result should not be exposed to any further risk.

The Staff Governor confirmed that in her area the number of online sessions for A level students had been doubled and that levels of attendance were at 80%. She also confirmed that all first year A level student and BTEC students had attended an online individual session with their personal tutor and that she is involved in quality checking sessions to ensure that they are appropriate.

The Principal confirmed that the decision not to bring in these students remains subject to review and that plans are being developed for September 2020 which will reflect a number of scenarios including if the College is fully open, partly open or closed.

The Vice Principal Student Success reported that a full timetable for September 2020 has been agreed but that the College must be prepared to be fully online in case there is a spike in cases of COVID-19.

Governors thanked the Principal for his update and noted the efforts of the staff and students in enabling the College to re-open so successfully.

2. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Applications

Full-Time provision

The Vice Principal Student Engagement reported that interviews continue to be conducted via telephone or online and that the conversion rate is higher than when these are conducted face-to-face.

The Vice Principal Student Engagement reported on the current level of applications and identified those areas where there was growth and those where applications were lower than the previous year.

Where applications have reduced, it was noted that these are being carefully monitored and courses are being marketed further if necessary.

The Vice Principal Student Engagement highlighted that applications from the Wolverhampton area are at 93% of those received last year, but were increasing. It was also reported that there are some differences between Wards and that this was also being monitored.

The Vice Principal Student Engagement reported that a travel survey is also being carried out to view the routes that will be travelled by potential students, particularly where these pass another College, as it may be that students are making multiple applications.

It was also reported that the College is working to re-engage with local schools and that virtual open events are taking place.

Governors noted that the College was using Zoom and asked whether this was a safe platform in view of concerns that had been raised about unauthorised access. They were advised that some enhancements had been made to the system and that there was confidence that the College was using the system for the right reasons and in the right way.

Part-Time Provision

The Vice Principal Student Engagement reported that applications were higher in most areas than last year and are likely to increase further when the part time prospectus is published later in June 2020.

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The Vice Principal Student Engagement reported that applications remain higher than at the same point last year but that there was a need to ensure that the College did not exceed the cap that has been implemented as this could result in funding being clawed back next year.

As a result, the position is being monitored and discussions are taking place with students to ensure that they intend to take up a place.

College Collaboration Fund

The Principal reported that a new College Collaboration Fund had been announced in June 2020, but that the level of funding available had been significantly reduced.

He stated that the intention had been to submit a bid as outlined in the report but having given further consideration to the criteria it was now proposed to submit a bid for £240k to develop blended learning, including some technical support, on behalf of City of Wolverhampton College, Telford College and Hereford, Ludlow and North Staffordshire College.

City of Wolverhampton will be the lead College and the bid will be to develop blended learning for sectors including Engineering, Motor Vehicle and Construction.

It was noted that in submitting the bid it was necessary for the Principal and the Chair to sign the declaration attached to the report at appendix 4.

3. STUDENT SUCCESS

Curriculum Planning update

The Vice Principal Student Success reported that the College is on track to complete the 2020/21 Curriculum Plan by 26 June 2020.

16-19 provision

Governors noted the position in relation to approved courses and the number of student enrolments which is significantly higher than the 2019/20 target. These numbers are therefore being checked by the Heads of Faculty and Curriculum Managers.

Governors asked whether there was an expectation that there will be an increase in 16-19 demographics in 2021.

The Vice Principal Student Success confirmed that there would be an increase in 16-19 year olds in 2021, but that it is difficult to assess the impact of COVID-19. He indicated that schools were keen to retain their students but that the College was confident in reaching its target for funding.

It was reported that if applications start to increase against the plan, the College will need to discuss in-year growth with the ESFA.

Adult Provision

The Vice Principal Student Success reported that the position in relation to adult provision is more difficult due to the complexity of the funding mechanism and the different mix of provision.

It was noted that adult numbers continue to increase and that there is a need to review the mix of the Adult Education Budget and prepare for the potential in-year growth.

Apprentices

The Vice Principal Student Success reported that apprenticeships are currently the largest area of uncertainty and that the target will be much more difficult to achieve in view of the impact of COVID-19.

The Principal reported that discussions are taking place locally and regionally about the response to COVID-19 and the need to identify where jobs are and how to move people into them quickly.

There was also a need to review how students are supported in College and the potential to access additional funding.

Governors thanked the Vice Principal Student Success for the update and emphasised that the College will play an important part in the economic recovery.

Learner Engagement Update

The Vice Principal Student Success reported that the level of student engagement remains high although there has been some reduction following the half term break as a result of the cancellation of exams and the implementation of grading.

In addition, this is usually the time of year when A level and GCSE classes cease.

Although there is reduction in levels of engagement in some areas, it was noted that overall these remain very high particularly at 1:1's meeting. It was also noted that all students are being contacted to check up on their well-being.

Grading of Assessments

Governors noted that the grading of assessments is causing national concern and that there is a high level of frustration with awarding bodies about the lack of clear guidance.

In particular however the Vice Principal Student Success highlighted the efforts of staff in relation to GCSE's and A levels and the work needed to grade and rank students.

Impact on Apprenticeships Update

The Vice Principal Student Success provided a short update on the report that had been considered at the last meeting of the Board of Governors.

It was noted that the College is making efforts to keep in contact with all the apprentices, but particularly those who will be completing in this academic year.

Governors considered the data relating to the status of current apprentices and asked whether the number of apprentices with a break in learning had increased due to COVID-19 and whether apprentices that were furloughed could continue with their studies.

They were advised that the number of apprentices with a break in learning is higher due to the outbreak and that furloughed apprentices can continue and complete assessments.

Governors suggested that the table in the report should be updated to provide more information about what is happening to the apprentices and what is next for them.

4. PEOPLE ENGAGEMENT

The Principal reported that staff have adapted well to remote working and are working hard to maintain the momentum of online and remote working whilst some students are being allowed onto site to complete assessments.

It was noted that levels of staff absence are being monitored carefully and are currently below 4%. It was reported that elsewhere there is evidence that remote working has resulted in improvements for some staff and lower levels of sickness absence.

Governors asked whether there were any plans to carry out a survey of employees to obtain their views of 'life in lockdown'.

They were advised that this is something that the College would like to do and, as a result, an offer was made that the College could use the process that had been adopted by the City Council.

Governors also asked whether staff had any concerns about the consequences if they have to self-isolate and whether there were any fears that their jobs might be at risk.

The Principal responded that there was no evidence of this at a recent staff briefing and that he believed staff are clear about the position and how to describe whether they are shielding or self-isolating. If they are not clear, staff have taken advice from the Unions or HR.

Governors commented that there was a need to ensure that staff do not feel at risk but they considered that the College has been fair and sensible and continued to communicate with staff. In addition, relatively few staff have been furloughed and where this has happened the College has continued to make payment of 100% of salary.

5. BUSINESS SUCCESS

May Management Accounts

The Vice Principal Business Success presented the report and confirmed that the May accounts are now complete and will be circulated to Governors over the next few days.

Action: Vice Principal Business Success

The Vice Principal Business Success highlighted the following key points:

- The loss to the College on a monthly basis is currently approximately £100k but the impact is mitigated by the fact that there are only two months to the end of the financial year.
- The College was successful in an application to the Post 16 Provider Relief Fund resulting in additional payments in April, May and June.
- Overall the deficit position has improved.
- The effect of the current situation on apprenticeship provision is a negative variance in May with the possibility that funding will be deferred to next year where there is a break in learning. In addition, if apprentices are unable to achieve there will be a loss of achievement funding.
- There are a number of other operating challenges including smaller group sizes and blended learning and there is a need for these challenges to be recognised as part of the funding formula.

Governors noted that the Government are considering extending the academic year and having A level exams later in the year. They asked whether this would affect the College's cash flow. They were advised that this would not typically affect the cash flow position as the College is paid to profile for 16-19 students. There could however be an affect on staffing costs.

Cashflow Update

The Vice Principal Business Success reported that cashflow continues to be monitored carefully and that the revised forecast when COVID-19 broke has been improving as a result of actions that have been taken including cost saving measures and the timing of payments.

Governors noted the improving picture and the latest cashflow forecast and asked whether the forecast position is after the release of outstanding payments. The Vice Principal Business Success confirmed that it was.

2020/21 Budget Update

The Vice Principal Business Success reported that work is already underway to prepare the budget and financial plan for consideration by the Board of Governors at their meeting on 20 July 2020.

Governors considered the detailed report on the College's key funding streams and the position relating to expenditure including pay and non pay costs.

It was reported that apprenticeship funding remains uncertain and that it will be necessary to make assumptions and undertake a full appraisal of what the position is likely to be.

The Vice Principal Business Success reported that taking all the factors into account, the cashflow for 2020/21 is being modelled in detail and it is anticipated that there will be significant challenges in the spring of 2021.

Governors stated that it was reassuring to see that work was already underway to prepare the budget and financial plan for the meeting in July 2020.

The Board of Governors noted:

- **The continuing work being undertaken by staff and students in response to the COVID 19 circumstances.**
- **The efforts to deliver the phased re-opening from 15 June 2020**
- **The continuing analysis of the applications for next year.**
- **The progress made with next year's Curriculum Plan.**
- **The impact of COVID19 on this academic year.**
- **The College's May financial results and revised full year projection, the year-end cashflow reforecast and the budget update for 2020/21**

It was resolved that the Board of Governors approve the submission of the bid for funding from the College Collaboration Fund and that City of Wolverhampton College act as the lead College.

69/20 GOVERNANCE (ITEM 7)

1. Governance Development Plan

The Clerk to the Board of Governors presented the report which provided an update on actions that were included in the Governance Development Plan.

Governors noted the update as at June 2020 and that several of the actions would be addressed by reports being considered by the Search and Governance Committee at their meeting on 29 June 2020 and as part of the Board of Governors Self-Assessment Process for 2019/20.

It was resolved that the report be noted.

2. Membership of Committees

The Clerk reported that Dr Isabel Gillis had recently stepped down as a Governor for personal reasons and that this had caused a vacancy on the Remuneration Committee. It was noted that Dr Gillis had also been the Chair of the Committee.

It was resolved that Emma Bull should be appointed as a member of and Chair of the Remuneration Committee.

Governors asked if there would be a formal recognition of the contribution of Dr Gillis and were advised that she would be invited to the Governors meal in January 2021 and that the Chair would be writing formally to her.

3. Calendar of meetings

The Clerk to the Board of Governors presented the draft calendar of meetings for 2020/21 which identified the proposed dates of meetings of the Board and Committees.

It was noted that meetings of the Search and Governance Committee and Remuneration Committee would move to meet on Wednesdays and that three strategy sessions had been included. It was also noted that a meeting of the Audit Committee will be included in September 2020.

The first strategy session would take place on Thursday 10 September 2020 to enable Governors to review the position relating to COVID-19 and College opening early in the new academic year.

It was resolved that the Calendar of meetings for 2020/21 be approved.

70/20 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Clerk reported that currently there were several webinars that may be of interest to Governors and that she would continue to provide details via email.

Governors were informed that one area of concern that had been highlighted in particular was the stress which Senior Staff at the College will currently be

experiencing and that this was likely to be exacerbated with the gradual re-opening of the College and the health and safety considerations.

The Board of Governors stated that they were cognisant of this and that Senior Leaders should be aware that Governors are available to provide help and support. Senior Leaders could also access the employee assistance scheme.

Governors asked for an update on the Assistant Principal People Engagement role which was currently vacant, particularly as this role was being covered by the Principal.

The Principal reported that his intention was to report to Governors at their meeting on 20 July 2020.

Action: Principal

71/20 CONFIDENTIALITY

It was resolved that there were no items that should not be made available for public inspection.

72/20 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

20 July 2020 at 5pm.