

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Board of Governors held on
Monday 28 June 2021 at 5pm
Conducted via Microsoft Teams**

PRESENT

Mr Mark Taylor (Chair)	Mr Clarence Crosdale (Vice Chair)
Mr Mike Hastings (Vice Chair)	Mr Sam Duru
Ms Emma Bull	Ms Ioana Axinte
Mr Mal Cowgill	Mr Trevor Dutton
Ms Sally Slater (Staff)	Ms Nisha Rai
Mr Ian Gardner	Ms Lindsey Flynn

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs Louise Fall	-Vice Principal Student Engagement
Mr Ian Browne	- Vice Principal Student Success
Mr Peter Merry	- Vice Principal Business Success
Mrs Elizabeth Ball	- Head of Governance

47/21 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM 1)

Apologies were received from John Bradford, Amanda Tomlinson and Amardeep Singh.

There were no declarations of interest.

48/21 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING (ITEM 2)

The non-confidential and confidential minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2021 were approved as a correct record.

The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2021 will be circulated for approval at the next meeting.

49/21 REPORT ON OUTSTANDING ITEMS (ITEM 3)

The Board of Governors noted the report on outstanding actions.

50/21 FE COMMISSIONER VISIT FEEDBACK (ITEM 4)

The Chair reported that meetings had taken place with the FE Commissioner's Team on Friday 25 June 2021 as part of their stocktake of the College's position. Feedback had been given by the team at the end of the day.

It was highlighted that the Team had agreed that the two recommendations made following their previous visit in September 2020 in relation to Governance had been fully implemented.

Whilst the remaining two recommendations arising from the September visit were ongoing, three new recommendations had been made.

It was reported that the first recommendation related to the embedding of the new MIS system. The Principal commented that putting in a new system during the COVID pandemic had been challenging, but emphasised that Governors do receive monthly KPI reports in the College report and in the Management Accounts.

He advised that the Team had particularly focussed on class size and the staff pay to income ratio which is currently above the benchmark of 65%.

Governors were informed that the second recommendation was that the Vice Principal Business Success should progress the financial plan and the strategy to move the College out of financial intervention; with the third recommendation being that the College should align the funding streams relating to the CLQ development.

It was emphasised that the financial plan was shared with the FE Commissioner's Team and that the factors that can significantly positively impact the situation are currently outside the College's control.

The Chair thanked everyone that was involved with the visit.

Governors noted that the FE Commissioner's Team would make a further visit to the College in November 2021 and asked whether this was due to their level of concern.

The Principal advised that the most recent visit had been delayed as the FE Commissioner had hoped that by now we would have some certainty in relation to the funding for CLQ. As that had not happened a further visit was to be arranged in November when it is hoped that there will be more clarity.

It was resolved that the report be noted.

51/21 ACTION PLANS (ITEM 5)

The Board of Governors noted the updates in relation to the FE Commissioner action plan and the action plan arising from the Independent Board review.

Governors were advised that the outstanding actions form part of the new Governance Development plan which will continue to be monitored by the Board.

It was also noted that the new recommendations that had been identified by the FE Commissioner following the most recent visit would be monitored as part of the College report.

The Principal confirmed that the College was trying to get a waiver letter and formal re-set of covenants from the bank before the end of July 2021 and that the end of year cash position was likely to meet the level of the proposed new covenant.

It was resolved that the action plans be noted.

52/21 CLQ AND COWTEHC UPDATE (ITEM 6)

The Board of Governors received the minutes of the meeting of the Campus Transformation Oversight Group held on 14 June 2021.

The Vice Principal Business Success reported that the Post 16 Capacity Fund bid had been submitted and included the feedback which had been given by Governors at their meeting on 21 June 2021.

He advised, however, that there had been no further information about the outcome of the bid to the Further Education Campus Transformation Fund but that the Investment Board of the West Midlands Combined Authority would be considering the bid in relation to Wellington Road at their meeting on 29 June 2021.

The Board of Governors noted the report.

53/21 STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT IMPLEMENTATION PLAN AND KPI'S (ITEM 7)

Strategic Development Implementation Plan

The Principal updated the Board of Governors on the development of the plan which will be presented at the meeting in July 2021 for approval.

He advised that market analysis and the outcome of the step change discussions with the Senior Management Team had been included in the updated plan and that these will be developed into action plans for each of the areas.

It was noted that the next step was to include the full curriculum plan, financial forecast, capital plan and financial health information.

Governors asked if the intention was to bring quarterly updates to the Board about progress on the implementation of the actions. The Principal confirmed that these will be reported as part of the Key Performance Indicators and in the College report where there could also be a 'deep dive' into particular areas.

Governors asked how much the plan would reflect the bids that have been submitted, particularly where dates have been pushed back. The Principal reported that there is still some uncertainty about some of the income lines but that the financial plan must be finalised by 31 July 2021.

KPI report

The Principal presented the report which identified performance against target and tentative targets for 2021/22.

Governors noted that changes will be made to the KPI's relating to People Engagement for the coming year and that the intention is to reflect on the impact of the pandemic e.g. on retention and levels of attendance.

As a result, the Principal advised that the KPI's will probably not be finalised until September 2021.

Governors were invited to reflect on the KPI's and forward any comments to the Principal.

It was resolved that the reports be noted.

54/21 COLLEGE REPORT (ITEM 8)

The Vice Principal Student Engagement provided an update in relation to the College opening and reported that the number of cases at the College remains low, but that there has been an increase in staff and students being contacted and asked to self-isolate.

It was noted that the College is still operating the lateral flow centre although use has reduced as testing kits are being sent home.

1. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Applications update

The Vice Principal Student Engagement presented the report which detailed information relating to applications for full time, part time and HE provision.

It was noted that overall levels of applications are significantly higher than last year for full time courses, with the main increase being from 16-18 year olds within Wolverhampton and surrounding areas.

Part time applications are also at a higher level than the same point last year with substantial increases in some areas, including the construction trades with ESOL enquiries also increasing.

Whilst applications for HE provision are currently lower than previous years, these applications tend to increase nearer to the time of study. It was noted however that the College has started enrolments earlier than usual and on provisional grades as there may be more students who wish to stay local.

The Vice Principal Student Engagement advised that the College's 'Discovery Event' was also moved forward this year so that students could be encouraged to visit in smaller groups. Taster events took place and 90% of the students who attended were converted into enrolments.

Governors questioned the areas where applications were below the same point last year and were informed that gaps are now closing and that the data is still being tested.

The Vice Principal Student Engagement also reported that it appeared that students were not putting in multiple applications and that the College's offer is more appealing. Social media is now more effective and there is a belief that the reputation of the College is strong based on student satisfaction levels. In addition, the growth in achievement levels and how the College has responded to the pandemic has been recognised in the community.

Whilst Governors welcomed the increase in applications, they asked whether some of this was due to higher unemployment as a result of the pandemic. If so, it would be important to ensure that students are retained once the economy opens up again.

The Principal reported that this could be a factor, but that the message is that the College is safe and students may not be looking for apprenticeships in view of the employment situation.

Governors asked whether the College was working with employers to support the provision of apprenticeships, particularly in view of the demand that exists for the workforce. If opportunities could be identified this could generate employment to meet local needs.

The Vice Principal Student Engagement reported that the College has done work with employers on how to access the incentives and that this had been well received.

The Board of Governors noted the increased levels of full time applicants and that part time applications are higher in comparison to the same point last year.

Quality Improvement Plan

The Vice Principal Student Engagement presented the report and highlighted that the Quality Improvement Plan is monitored on a termly basis and is RAG rated to indicate levels of progress.

Whilst it was noted that some actions have been identified as red and will not be achieved, the Vice Principal Student Engagement reported that there is a need to recognise that due to the pandemic there will be restrictions on how impact can be measured.

Governors were advised that those actions that are identified as 'red' or 'amber' will be rolled forward into the Quality Improvement Plan for 2021/22.

The Board of Governors noted the progress made against areas identified as part of the College Quality Improvement Plan.

2. STUDENT SUCCESS

Curriculum Planning Update

The Vice Principal Student Success reported that the 2021/22 curriculum plan has been completed for all education and training programmes and that the apprenticeship plan is being subjected to a final review to confirm targets for the year.

It was noted that whilst the curriculum plan is usually fixed to ensure that funding targets are met, for the current year in view of the effect of COVID on the economy, whilst the plan is set, it is as flexible as possible.

16-19 provision

The Vice Principal Student Success provided an update on the approved courses, and the increase in Learner Headcount for youth.

It was emphasised that this supports the target and that the curriculum plan is realistic.

The Board of Governors noted that:

- **the 16-19 year old forecast numbers continue to increase and that the applications support this.**
- **the College should negotiate additional funding to prepare for the potential in-year growth.**

Adult provision

The Vice Principal Student Success reported that the planned activity for adults is higher than the WMCA allocation, but having considered the SWAP's activity and Gateway activity he advised that this is realistic and providing the allocation is increased there is confidence that the plan will be met.

The Principal confirmed that the College will be growing its Plant, Rail and Infrastructure and Electric Vehicle provision significantly this year and that whilst no funding agreement is in place, there has been verbal agreement from the Combined Authority that this will be funded. For next year however, the amount of funding is still being agreed.

The Principal also advised that he had met with the WMCA about the plan and that the Executive Management Team would be considering what provision could be put on hold if the allocation is not increased.

Governors were reassured that discussions were taking place about the plan if the allocation is not increased, but emphasised the importance of ensuring that the College has the resources to provide an ambitious programme particularly in view of the needs of the City.

The Board of Governors noted that:

- **adult forecast numbers continue to increase and the applications support this.**
- **the College needs to review its mix of Adult Education Budget and negotiate additional funding to prepare for the potential in year growth.**

Apprentices

It was noted that the apprenticeship plan is being subject to a final review.

The Vice Principal Student Success agreed to follow up an enquiry that had been made in relation to NHS apprenticeship programmes.

Action: VP Student Success

Apprenticeship Progress Report

Governors considered the detailed report on the impact of COVID 19 on apprenticeship provision, apprenticeship demand & delivery and quality & performance.

The Vice Principal Student Success reported that the pandemic is still impacting on apprenticeship provision, but that the effect is reducing in some areas as non-essential businesses are re-opening.

Governors noted the reduction in the number of apprentices on breaks in learning and that enquiries had increased by 50% from last year which was partly due to the incentives that had been introduced.

It was highlighted that as a result of the pandemic it was difficult to measure the overall performance of the apprenticeship provision and that the DfE will not be publishing any data for the second year running. The College will however be reviewing performance over the past two years to identify where improvements can be made.

Governors asked how the College is tracking the support and impact on those learners that have moved on or are not able to complete and whether this could be reported to the Board.

The Vice Principal Student Success advised that destinations of learners are recorded but that he would look further at whether the College is supporting these students appropriately and provide a report for the Board as soon as possible.

Action: Vice Principal Student Success

Governors also wanted to understand what the College is doing to monitor the situation and where there are withdrawals what the rationale is. They also noticed the reference to inclusive apprenticeships and asked for further information about this.

The Vice Principal Student Success reported that the College is working with the City Council to support individuals with a disability find an apprenticeship.

It was noted that the College does collect destination data although there has been a change to what counts as a 'positive destination'.

The Vice Principal Student Success reported that when a student leaves there is a conversation with the tutor, but that this may not be recorded and used as effectively as it should.

Governors noted the position but asked whether, in view of the time limited employer incentives, the College was pushing apprenticeship provision whilst this opportunity exists.

The Vice Principal Student Success confirmed that the apprenticeship team maintain momentum during the summer period and take advantage of the opportunities that are available.

The Board of Governors noted the impact of COVID 19 on apprenticeships and the difficulties in measuring the progress.

3. Business Success

Management Accounts and Finance Update

The Vice Principal Business Success presented the detailed report which related to the April 2021 Management Accounts. He advised that the May Management Accounts had now been circulated and that as a result he would reconcile the position.

Key points were highlighted including:

- Overall, there is an improving position with trends not changing significantly.
- Negative variance in income has increased staff pay as a percentage of income above FE Commissioner benchmarks. The position is being managed by reducing non pay costs.
- Overall profitability is likely to be in line with forecast.
- The cash position has improved and is forecast to be above the level to meet the proposed amended covenant with the bank.
- Key to meeting the revised covenants is revisiting the College's restructuring loan with DfE.
- The current asset ratio is affected by the fact that the College will not meet the existing loan covenants, however if this is changed the ratio will improve. The FEC benchmark of 1:4 which would require the College to generate additional reserves.
- Challenges relate to supporting students through disruption from the pandemic and catch-up funding and ensuring there is no clawback in relation to adult funding.

It was noted that no apprenticeship pipeline payments had been included and Governors asked what the value of this would typically be.

The Vice Principal Business Success reported that apprenticeship funding is received throughout the year and will have more of an impact next year than during the current year.

It was also reported that a big factor in terms of the overall outturn relates to the catch-up fund which will be delivered predominantly with additional staff resources. As a result, provision for additional costs has been included but that income has not yet been recognised in order that the position can be managed if income is not received.

Governors noted however that there has been a commitment to provide this funding for a further two years and if undersubscribed Colleges will be able to carry the funding forward to enable them to provide the necessary support.

Budget

The Vice Principal Business Success provided an update on the detailed report that was provided at the meeting in May 2021.

The Board of Governors noted that the curriculum planning process has now been completed as had the process of completing the non-pay budget as detailed in the report.

Whilst this indicated an overall increase in non-pay costs, the Vice Principal Business Success advised that this can be matched to increased income. It was noted that there may be some savings following the withdrawal from Metro One.

The Vice Principal Business Success also reported that there was some movement in relation to the curriculum plan and the potential for additional staffing as a result of the increase in applications.

It was noted that income streams are being finalised and that in relation to apprenticeship provision whilst there had been lower levels of recruitment in 2020/21, students who should have completed in year, will complete in 2021/22 which will help to balance the reduction in income.

Procurement Authorisation

The Vice Principal Business Success reported that since the last meeting two items of procurement had been referred to the Chair for approval.

College Website – Dev Clever:

The Board of Governors endorsed the extension of the contract with Dev Clever for a period of 24 months.

Marketing Campaigns – Forward & Thinking

The Board of Governors endorsed the award of the contract to Forward & Thinking for a period of 12 months with the possibility to extend for a further 12 months subject to review.

Procurement Proposal for Foodservice Supplies

The Vice Principal Business Success reported that the recommendation to the Board of Governors was to appoint Allmanhall (a food and catering related product procurement organisation) on an initial two-year contract with the option of a one-year extension.

Governors noted the process for the selection of the provider and that the break clause linked with the potential move to CLQ when the catering solution would be different.

Governors asked whether there were any TUPE issues involved with the move and the Vice Principal Business Success reported that the staff would move to the College's subsidiary company in accordance with the TUPE regulations.

It was noted that this would maintain some continuity of food provision and will align with the College's own training needs.

It was resolved that the contract be awarded to Allmanhall on an initial two-year term with the option of a one-year extension.

Electric Vehicle Accommodation Business Case

The Vice Principal Business Success updated the Board of Governors on the proposal to rent additional space for the Electric Vehicle provision which is currently delivered at Wellington Road.

The College has received verbal confirmation that the West Midlands Combined Authority will fund this provision and it was noted that the build at CoWTechC is unlikely to be completed until September 2022 at the earliest. In addition, the current location will be needed from September 2021 to accommodate the significant growth in Construction numbers.

Whilst suitable premises had been identified at a rental of £57k per annum for a period of 5 years other parties are interested and as a result the College has been monitoring what other opportunities are available. It may mean that the College has to act quickly to secure appropriate accommodation and that this could be outside the City Centre.

Governors asked what was meant by outside of the City Centre and the Principal reported that any location would be geographically close to the College campus but may strictly be outside the City parameters.

Governors considered that this would be acceptable provided that the accommodation was accessible to students via public transport links.

The Board of Governors agreed that they supported the proposal to find off campus accommodation for the Electric Vehicle provision within the parameters that had been identified with final approval being delegated to the Chair.

If outside the City Centre, this was subject to information being provided to all Governors about the proposed location and accessibility.

4. People Engagement

The Principal provided an update on changes to the Senior Management Team and Curriculum Management Team which involved small changes to deal with individual circumstances.

The Board of Governors noted the changes that would be made from 1 August 2021 and that any additional changes will be reported to the Board as part of the wider succession planning process.

The Chair advised that in the new Academic year a report would be provided in relation to the position of the Principal and Chief Executive and the importance of retaining Senior Managers.

The Board of Governors noted the current proposals for changes to support management.

Pay award

The Principal reported that whilst there is an ambition to reward staff for their ongoing efforts it was important to be clear about the College's financial position before the pay award is given further consideration.

Governors asked if there was anything else that the College could do to reward staff e.g. wellbeing days and the Principal advised that there is a staff celebration at the end of July and that staff are given a wellbeing day. In addition, last year staff were given more holidays.

He reported that the types of rewards are reviewed regularly and that there are a number of staff benefits in place.

Governors asked whether the College tests that the benefits are the ones that are valued by staff. They were advised that questions about the benefits are included in the staff survey and that when there was a review of the voucher scheme many staff did not want this to be removed.

However, as lockdown may have changed people's perceptions it was agreed that this could be reviewed.

The Board of Governors noted the update on the potential for a cost of living award for all staff.

55/21 CAREERS, EDUCATION, INFORMATION, ADVICE AND GUIDANCE POLICY (ITEM 9)

The Vice Principal Student Engagement reported that the policy reflects the College's approach to careers education, information, advice and guidance and links to the Gatsby Benchmarks for Good Career Guidance.

It was noted that Ioana Axinte had been appointed as the link governor for careers and learner engagement and that a link meeting had taken place to review the policy.

It was resolved that the Careers, Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Policy be approved.

56/21 REPORT FROM THE SEARCH AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE (ITEM 10 (A))

The Chair presented the report from the meeting of the Search and Governance Committee which took place on 16 June 2021.

The minutes of the meeting were received.

The Board of Governors noted the report on the Skills and Expertise Audit, membership of Committees, Governor links, appointment of the Chair and Vice Chairs and the self evaluation and governance development plan.

The Head of Governance reported that a further update in relation to Governor links would be made to the meeting of the Board of Governors in July 2021.

It was resolved that:

- **the updated skills and expertise audit be noted.**
- **the updated equality and diversity data for the Board of Governors be noted.**
- **the membership of the Committees and the Task and Finish Groups for 2021/22 be approved.**
- **Governor links be approved with a further update being provided at the meeting in July 2021. (Action: Head of Governance)**
- **the term of appointment of the Chair and Vice Chairs be amended to a period of 2 years and that the Standing Orders be amended. (Action: Head of Governance)**
- **the Governance Development plan be noted.**

57/21 AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES (ITEM 10(B))

The Board of Governors received the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 17 May 2021.

58/21 ANY OTHER BUSINESS (ITEM 11)

There were no items of any other business.

59/21 CONFIDENTIALITY (ITEM 12)

It was resolved that the confidential minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2021 and the minutes of the meeting of the Campus Transformation Oversight Group held on 14 June 2021 remain confidential.

60/21 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING (ITEM 13)

26 July 2021 at 5pm

Addendum to the minutes: 26 July 2021.

At their meeting on 26 July 2021, the Board of Governors resolved that the report relating to the procurement of the provision of foodstuffs should remain confidential.