

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Board of Governors held on
Monday 18 October 2021 at 5pm
Conducted via Microsoft Teams**

PRESENT

Mr Mark Taylor (Chair)	Mr Clarence Crosdale
Mr Mike Hastings (Vice Chair)	Mrs Amanda Tomlinson
Ms Emma Bull	Ms Lindsey Flynn
Mr Mal Cowgill	Mr Sam Duru
Ms Sally Slater (Staff)	Ms Anya Priya Luis
Mr Ian Gardner	Ms Nisha Rai
Mrs Hshaana Knight	Mr John Bradford
Ms Ioana Axinte	

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

93/21 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Mr Mike Hastings was appointed as Chair of the meeting.

94/21 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM 1)

Apologies were received from Amardeep Singh, Trevor Dutton and Scott Thompson.

Mr Mark Taylor declared an interest as an employee of City of Wolverhampton Council.

95/21 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING (ITEM 2)

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

Matters arising

Governors noted that a report on parking at the Wellington Road site would be provided at item 5 on the agenda.

Governors also asked whether there was more information about the date for completion of HS2 and any effect on the College's provision.

The Principal reported that he did not consider that any delays in completion of the HS2 project would have any significant impact. He advised that the College continues to develop its provision in relation to rail and civil engineering in particular to tackle the high levels of youth unemployment in the area.

96/21 REPORT ON OUTSTANDING ITEMS (ITEM 4)

The Board of Governors received an update on actions that were outstanding from previous meetings.

06/21 Pay Award

The Principal reported that it remained an aspiration to make a pay award to all staff, but that it was too early in the year to make a final decision. It was agreed that this action could be removed from the report.

02/21 Disposal of Property

The Vice Principal Business Success reported that he had nothing further to report on the proposal to dispose of the property at Newhampton Road. It was agreed that this action could be removed from the report.

53/21 Student Destinations

The Vice Principal Student Success advised that a report would be provided to the November or December meeting.

54/21 16-19 provision

It was reported that in view of the level of growth the potential for payment of in-year growth funding is being pursued with the ESFA.

68/21 Student Success

The Vice Principal Student Success advised that a report on the holistic development of students would be provided in December 2021 or January 2022.

82/21 Report on Meetings

The Vice Principal Student Engagement reported that she had raise the issue of learning technologies to support hybrid meetings and that the College was working with a link at the City Council to identify how this can be developed.

83/21 Property Update

It was noted that the proposed lease for the property at Bentley Bridge had not yet been agreed.

16/21 Bank Waiver (conf)

It was reported that the Corporation Seal had been affixed to the Amendment and Waiver letter.

04/21 EMT Transition Planning (Conf)

It was noted that the action would be considered by the Remuneration Committee at their meeting on 29 November 2021.

97/21 CLQ AND COWTEHC, PAGET ROAD AND EV UNITS UPDATE (ITEM 5)

The Vice Principal Business Success presented an update in relation to the College's property developments.

City Learning Quarter

It was reported that a meeting had taken place with Kirsty Evans, the Director of Further Education at ESFA, and at very short notice the College had also been visited by the new Minister for Skills.

The Vice Principal Business Success advised that the Minister had visited the Paget Road site and had been able to see the poor state of the facilities. It was noted that the Minister had then visited Walsall College and as a result would have been able to compare and contrast the buildings and what this College was able to offer its students.

City of Wolverhampton College Technical Centre

The Vice Principal Business Success confirmed that having secured the necessary funding, the legal requirements are being finalised. He advised however that it was frustrating that the intended start date is Summer 2022 which would mean (as there is a 12 month build programme) that the College would not be in occupation until Summer/Autumn 2023.

It was reported that the City Council will be considering approval of the project at their next meeting and that there may be a change to the Project Managers.

Post 16 Capacity Funding

The Vice Principal Business Success reported that the College had not received the outcome of the bid to the Post 16 Capacity Fund.

Parking at Wellington Road

The Vice Principal Business Success reported that the intention was to submit a planning application to create some additional permanent parking at the front of the Wellington Road site.

St Peter's School – Confidential minute

EV Premises

It was reported that the lease for the premises at Bentley Bridge had not yet been signed, but that arrangements had been made for any necessary work to be carried out as soon as the lease was completed.

It was noted that a group of students had appeared in a report which had aired on the 'One Show' in relation to Green Technologies. The group were filmed at the College's new electric vehicle workshop at Wellington Road.

Rail Launch

It was reported that the launch of the College's rail provision had been very successful.

98/21 COLLEGE UPDATE (ITEM 6)

The Principal praised the work of staff particularly during the COVID pandemic in securing the College's position. He advised that the College's reputation is now high and that whilst there are issues with the bank and external agencies the things that are within the control of the College are being managed effectively.

He drew the attention of Governors to the positives and risks that were highlighted in the introduction to the College report and in particular the contribution that the College can make in tackling local Youth Unemployment.

(a) Student Engagement

2021/22 Enrolment update

The Vice Principal Student Engagement provided an update in relation to enrolments for 16-19, Adults and HE.

Governors noted those areas where enrolments were particularly high and where these were lower than expected. They were advised that where enrolments were lower than anticipated action was being taken to review and remodel the curriculum where necessary.

The Board of Governors noted the positive start to the 2021/22 enrolments against targets.

2020/21 Annual Complaints Record

Governors considered the report and noted that the level of complaints remained low, particularly considering the number of students attending at the College.

They were advised that there were no trends to report in relation to the complaints that had been received. Each student cohort is different and complaints mostly relate to an individual's circumstances.

Governors noted that several complaints had been made in relation to a particular member of staff and asked what action was being taken by the College.

They were informed that appropriate action is being taken via the College's relevant Human Resources processes and procedures.

The Board of Governors noted the handling of and low level of complaints across the student/apprentice body.

2020/21 Safeguarding Report

The Vice Principal Student Engagement presented the report and highlighted key points including the number of referrals that had been made during the year.

It was noted that mental health continues to be one of the main reasons for referral, but that there had been a large increase in referrals relating to IT Online monitoring.

It was also noted that there had been an increase in social care referrals.

Governors asked how the College is focussing on the issues involved in peer-to-peer safeguarding issues. The Vice Principal Student Engagement replied that all staff are required to read the guidance in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education ' and staff training is being provided to ensure that they have the appropriate knowledge. In addition, action is being taken to highlight issues to students, an example of which is a quiz that had been introduced.

Governors questioned how the College deals with any confidential referrals and were advised that in relation to safeguarding issues confidentiality cannot be guaranteed as the College has a duty to act on the matter. Some referrals are made anonymously however and where this is the case an internal investigation is carried out to ensure that no students are at risk.

The Vice Principal Student Engagement reported that the Safeguarding team consists of four members of staff who have a very good relationship with students and are able to identify issues that arise.

In addition, the College has Counsellors who work very closely with the safeguarding team and are able to make referrals when necessary.

It was reported that the College has also introduced a reporting email as a result of the guidance in relation to sexual harassment and that a number of staff are now dealing with mental health issues before a formal referral is made to the Safeguarding Team.

The Safeguarding Link Governor reported that one of the consistent messages is that the College has excellent relationships with other professional and deals appropriately with referrals.

It was noted that the breakdown in relation to ethnicity detailed in the report reflected the ethnicity of the College population. Governors asked however whether there was a reason for the increase in referrals from the Youth Offending Team and students with criminal convictions.

The Vice Principal Student Engagement replied that she did not think that there was a specific reason for this and that all declarations involving criminal convictions are individually reviewed by the Safeguarding Team. Risk assessments are then carried out to ensure that there is a safe environment for the student and for the College.

In relation to mental health issues, Governors noted that CAHMS was severely under resourced and that a student may have left the College before they received the necessary support.

Governors asked whether there was anything more that the College could do to support these students and the Vice Principal Student Engagement reported that students are encouraged to discuss issues in tutorial sessions. She also advised that the Safeguarding Team would intervene if a student was not getting the right support.

It was noted that the College now had 16 Mental Health First Aiders and Governors asked whether it was intended to recruit more.

The Vice Principal Student Engagement reported that more staff were coming forward and that the number this year may grow to 20. However, she advised that there was a need to gather feedback to ensure that these staff are comfortable in dealing with the type of issues that are raised by students.

It was emphasised that safeguarding was the responsibility of everyone at the College and that the intention was to deliver safeguarding training specific to the College at the Governor's away day on 11 November 2021.

Governors asked whether the College was involved in activity to highlight the topic of sexual harassment of women, particularly as this was something that was a focus within educational settings.

The Vice Principal Student Engagement confirmed that key themes are addressed during the academic year and that the College actively supports activities in the City and other awareness raising projects.

The Board of Governors endorsed the Annual Safeguarding Report.

(b) Student Success

2020/21 Overall College Achievement Rates

The Vice Principal Student Success provided an update on College achievement rates for 2020/21. It was noted that a detailed report would be provided at the next meeting.

Governors noted the current overall levels of achievement and retention and the Vice Principal Student Success advised that the number of unknown outcomes had now reduced significantly. He confirmed that validation checks are being completed to ensure that all data has been uploaded correctly.

The Board of Governors noted the report.

2020/21 Apprenticeship Achievement Rates

The Vice Principal Student Success provided an update in relation to apprenticeship achievement rates.

Governors noted the current position in relation to achievement and timely achievement and the comparison with 2019/20 and 2018/19.

As previously highlighted Covid has had a significant impact for the second consecutive year and as a result the Vice Principal Student Success confirmed that national comparisons will be sought if possible.

The Board of Governors noted the report.

SAR Process 2020/21

The Vice Principal Student Engagement updated Governors on the SAR process for 2020/21.

It was noted that Governors are attending and contributing to the annual validation of curriculum self-assessments and that the self-assessment report will be based on the Education Inspection Framework and will be subject to external validation.

The Chair highlighted the benefit of Governors attending the validation sessions and the opportunity this provides for Managers to share the work they do with Governors and to see the rigour in the process.

The Chair of the Apprenticeship Task and Finish Group also commented that she valued the honesty and transparency that was evident in the session which meant that there was clarity about where there were problems and what actions were being put into place.

The Board of Governors noted the process for the Self-Assessment activity and validation.

(c) People Engagement

2021 Gender Pay Report

The Vice Principal Student Engagement presented the report and outlined the factors which contribute to the College's gender pay gap.

Whilst Governors were surprised at the level of the gap, they did note that this was broadly in line with the sector norm and that actions were being taken to try and reduce the gaps in the future.

Governors commented that addressing the gender pay gap is a challenge and as the fact that the majority of Senior Managers were male, they asked what level of 'churn' existed and how often these posts became available. They also asked whether the College had a targeted talent programme which would enable the College to 'grow its own' Managers.

The Vice Principal Student Engagement reported that there was more action that could be taken and that although the College does have leadership programmes, there is a need to review the relevant targets and review turnover and outcomes.

Governors emphasised that whilst the College was broadly in line with the sector in relation to its pay gap, there was a need to be proactive and to provide targeted support.

The Board of Governors approved the Gender Pay report for submission and publication.

(d) Business Success

Finance update

The Vice Principal Business Success provided an update on the preparation of the year end accounts and key points relating to the management accounts that were currently being prepared which consolidate the position for September and October.

He highlighted the importance of maintaining a positive cash position and that whilst enrolments continue to be positive, apprenticeships remain a concern with the key focus being to convert apprenticeship vacancies into enrolments.

It was also highlighted that, unlike schools, Colleges will not receive funding in relation to the increase in National Insurance contributions.

Governors also noted the position in relation to catch-up funding and increased staffing costs, the position in relation to funding from the West Midlands Combined authority and the ESFA Adult funding allocation.

The Board of Governors noted the report.

Financial Regulations Update

The Board of Governors considered the report which detailed the changes to the College Financial Regulations for 2021/22.

The Vice Principal Business success identified one additional change which related to the figure which was included for the light touch threshold. It was noted that this figure was £663,540.

The Board of Governors noted the report that had been provided in relation to the banking arrangements, EMT expenses and Treasury Management.

It was resolved that the updated Financial Regulations be approved.

Subsidiary Company update

The Vice Principal Business Success presented the update in relation to the Subsidiary Company.

It was noted that the transfer of catering services to the Company has been very successful and enabled the College to provide a good service to students and a fully aligned curriculum at both Paget Road and Wellington Road.

The Board of Governors noted the report.

ESFA Feedback meeting

Governors noted the feedback from the meeting with the ESFA Director of Further Education which had taken place on 4 October 2021. It was reported that the Director had agreed to visit the College in the near future and discuss the College's position, particularly in relation to the intervention regime.

Subsequently, Governors noted that the new Minister for Skills had also visited the College on Friday 15 October 2021.

The Board of Governors noted the report.

Annual Health and Safety Report 2020/21 and Annual Review of the Health and Safety Policy

The Vice Principal Business Success presented the report and highlighted key points from the Annual Health and Safety Report 2020/21.

Governors noted that there had been no RIDDOR incidents during the year and that the level of accidents remained low (although it was noted that in 2020/21 there had been fewer people on site).

The Vice Principal Business success advised that one area of risk for the College was that the long-standing Health and Safety Manager had recently retired, following which interim arrangements had been put in place, which included him providing some additional support.

It was noted that interviews for a replacement had taken place.

It was resolved that the Health and Safety Annual report and Policy statement be endorsed.

99/21 ANY OTHER BUSINESS (ITEM 10)

Governors asked whether there had been any progress in establishing a vaccine centre at the College.

They were advised that this is still being pursued.

100/21 CONFIDENTIALITY (ITEM 11)

It was resolved that the following reports and minutes remain confidential and not be made available for public access:

- Slides relating to the meeting with the Director of Further Education ESFA
- Report on St Peter's School
- Confidential minutes of the meeting of the Board of Governors held on 24 September 2021.
- Confidential minutes of the meeting of the Campus Transformation Oversight Group and the Apprenticeship Task and Finish Group.

101/21 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING (ITEM 12)

Meeting of the Board of Governors 15 November 2021 at 5pm