

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Board of Governors held on
Monday 7 March 2022 at 5pm
Conducted via Microsoft Teams**

PRESENT

Mr Clarence Crosdale (Vice Chair)	Ms Ioana Axinte (from item 7)
Mr Mike Hastings (Vice Chair)	Mr Trevor Dutton
Ms Emma Bull	Ms Lindsey Flynn
Mr Mal Cowgill	Mr Sam Duru
Ms Sally Slater (Staff Governor)	Ms Anya Priya Luis (Student Governor)
Mr Ian Gardner	Mr John Bradford
Mrs Hshaana Knight	Ms Nisha Rai

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs Louise Fall	-	Deputy Principal
Mr Ian Browne	-	Vice Principal Student Success
Mr Peter Merry	-	Deputy Chief Executive
Mrs Elizabeth Ball	-	Head of Governance

17/22 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Mr Clarence Crosdale was appointed as Chair of the meeting.

18/22 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM 1)

Apologies were received from Amanda Tomlinson, Scott Thompson and Mark Taylor.

There were no declarations of interest.

19/22 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING (ITEM 2)

The non-confidential minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2022 were approved as a correct record.

20/22 REPORT ON OUTSTANDING ITEMS (ITEM 3)

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

Governors noted that there are currently significant challenges in relation to staffing and that future reports would be provided for consideration by the Board of Governors.

In relation to the Equality and Diversity report which had been considered at the last meeting, it was noted that there had been a reduction in achievement rates for apprentices from minority ethnic groups and that further analysis was to be undertaken to identify the sectors most affected.

The Deputy Principal confirmed that a further report would be provided once the analysis was complete.

21/22 CORRESPONDENCE (ITEM 4)

The Head of Governance referred members of the Board to a briefing she had circulated in relation to the changes taking place at the DfE and ESFA.

22/22 FEEDBACK FROM THE FE COMMISSIONER'S VISIT (ITEM 5)

The Head of Governance provided feedback from the visit by the FE Commissioner which took place on 14 February 2022.

It was noted that no new recommendations had been made and that any future visits would only focus on the College's financial position.

It was agreed that a copy of the notes from the feedback meeting should be circulated to Governors.

(Action Head of Governance)

23/22 PROPERTY (ITEM 6) CONFIDENTIAL

Governors noted the minutes of the meeting of the Campus Transformation Group which took place on 14 February 2022 together with the presentation update.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that as reported previously a change was to be made to the Pre-Contract Services Agreement to reflect the solution to the mezzanine floor installation.

This would require the College seal to be affixed to the document.

It was resolved that the College seal be affixed to the amended Pre-Contract Services Agreement and authenticated by the Chair and one other member of the Board of Governors.

24/22 COLLEGE UPDATE (ITEM 7)

(i) Student Engagement

College Quality Improvement Plan

The Deputy Principal presented the report and highlighted key areas of focus for improvements to drive performance.

It was emphasised that the plan is aligned to the Education Inspection Framework and that the QIP for each curriculum area is monitored at Quality of Education Boards. The plan for Apprenticeships is also monitored by the Apprenticeship Task and Finish Group.

Governors discussed areas of concern and where there were inconsistencies and noted the action that was being taken to address these. It was noted that personal development was now graded as good.

It was reported that a deep dive had recently taken place in relation to apprenticeship provision and that the Apprenticeship Task and Finish Group would be considering this and the apprenticeship quality improvement plan at their next meeting.

The Deputy Principal confirmed that progress was being made which would be tested on a larger scale.

In relation to behaviour and attendance it was noted that there has been a higher level of disciplinaries than in previous years, but that there was a similar picture at other Colleges.

Ioana Axinte joined the meeting

Governors noted that currently all actions in the plan were RAG rated as amber and asked whether there was a specific reason for this.

The Deputy Principal advised that this represents the position as at Term 1 when it is difficult to assess if areas are at significant risk. During Term 2 the Quality of Education Boards take place and as a result there will be some changes to the RAG rating.

Governors highlighted that the importance of maths and English was being emphasised in all Ofsted reports, not only in relation to functional skills but also about how it was embedded. They asked whether a report could be provided at the next meeting.

The Deputy Principal confirmed that further information about the deep dive that had taken place could be provided. It was noted, however, that at the last meeting the Vice Principal Student Success had reported that for 16-18 year-olds there had been a move away from the Century system and a return to face-to-face teaching. The Vice Principal Student Success confirmed that he would be able to provide an update at the next meeting in May 2022.

Action Vice Principal Student Success.

Governors noted the actions identified in relation to student destinations and that there had been quite a few withdrawals for reasons related to COVID 19. They commented that they would welcome further information about all student destinations and the impact of the work with employers.

The Deputy Principal reported that as part of the Curriculum Planning meetings, Heads of Faculty are challenged to evidence how they are working with employers and how they are shaping the curriculum.

In response to a question from Governors, the Deputy Principal also advised that the Account Managers do support curriculum development and that Heads of Faculty are challenged about how employers influence delivery.

Governors also asked how the lack of attention by some students in lectures is being addressed and noted that this often relates to sessions being too tutor led. As a result support is being provided to address this.

(ii) **Student Success**

Curriculum Planning Update

The Vice Principal Student Success outlined the curriculum planning process that had been adopted for the 2022/23 academic year and highlighted that the process had started in November 2021 and will conclude by the end of March 2022.

It was noted that Governors have been invited to attend the Curriculum Purchasing meetings and two Governors who had attended a session on the day of the meeting reported how useful they had been in improving their understanding of the curriculum planning process and its intent.

Governors asked whether employers were included on the panels for the purchasing meetings. They were advised that employers were not part of the panels, but as part of the meetings engagement with employers needs to be evidenced. Whilst it was important to ensure there was appropriate employer input, it was reported that this would be outside the purchasing meetings.

(iii) **Business Success**

Finance Update

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the report.

2020/21 Financial Statements

It was reported that the signed financial statements had been submitted in accordance with the agreed timetable.

2021/22 Management Accounts

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the Management Accounts for the period to December 2021 and provided an update in relation to period 6, including variances in relation to income, savings in relation to pay and the cash position.

It was highlighted that the cash position is being monitored carefully, but that there is confidence the College will be able to operate within its financial limits even at the lowest cash point in April.

Governors asked what certainty there was about the income generation for 2022/23 and were advised that the College has a robust set of curriculum plans for the next academic year. The Deputy Chief Executive reported that the Curriculum Purchasing meetings were currently taking place and assumptions tested, particularly where there were higher levels of applications than enrolments in 2021/22.

He advised that budgets are set as realistically and accurately as possible and are based on the curriculum plan and tested during the purchasing meetings. To support this there is a review of student numbers over the past three years and where numbers drop below the plan Curriculum Managers are challenged to ensure that projections are realistic.

Governors commented that it would be useful to understand the strategy in relation to areas where student numbers are below plan, particularly in view of the level of deprivation in the local area.

The Deputy Chief Executive highlighted that each area is affected by the nuances of the funding streams and that the College continues to review its marketing strategy and admission processes. Full consideration is given to local needs and each course is considered individually to ensure that appropriate areas can be targeted and recruitment maximised. As a result each area produces a strategy document which includes all influencing factors.

Value for Money Report

The Deputy Chief Executive presented a detailed report on the arrangements to secure and promote value for money at the College.

It was emphasised that the College has robust procedures in place to ensure compliance with relevant legislation and that from an operational perspective value for money is assured.

The Deputy Chief Executive reported that in relation to energy costs, the College has been working within the Energy Procurement framework and that this had delivered significant savings as the College entered into long term contracts. It was anticipated that whilst these contracts would last for a further 12 months, the position would continue to be monitored as part of business planning.

Governors commented that organisations such as the NHS had been requested to consider whether they had any Russian Contracts and asked whether the DfE would be sending out a similar request.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the College had not received a request, but did not have any Russian contracts, although the turbulence that is currently being caused would affect the whole sector.

Governors asked whether the increases in energy prices would significantly affect the budget once the current contracts had ended.

The Deputy Chief Executive reported that price increases were already significant but that to date it was not clear what framework options may be available in the future. He advised that the commercial sector does not have the benefit of the price cap, but that there may be other mechanisms which may help to reduce the impact and this would form part of the business planning process for the next financial year.

(iv) People Engagement

Pay Award Update

The Principal reported that in view of the current uncertainties it was recommended that a decision on the pay award should be delayed. He advised that based on the

current forecasts a pay award of 2.5% backdated to 1 April was affordable but that this could be significantly affected by external factors.

Governors commented that it was critical to ensure that there is a focus on the workforce strategy, particularly in view of the challenges facing the sector in relation to recruitment. They asked whether this could be an item for consideration at the Governors' Strategy Session on 4 April 2022 together with a review of the Gender Pay Gap.

Action: Principal and Chief Executive

The Principal reported that the AoC had recently published a report highlighting the staffing crisis that is affecting Colleges and that the relevant link would be provided for Governors.

Action: Head of Governance

25/22 PART 2 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES (ITEM 8)

The Part 2 Confidential minutes from the meeting held on 31 January 2022 were approved as a correct record.

26/22 ANY OTHER BUSINESS (ITEM 9)

The Head of Governance advised that a Special Meeting of the Search and Governance Committee had taken place on 1 March 2022 to consider the appointment of a new Governor.

The Committee had considered the relevant skills and expertise of Dionne Barrett and the recommendation was that she be appointed as a member of the Board of Governors.

It was resolved that Dionne Barrett be appointed as a member of the Board of Governors for a period of 4 years to 28 February 2026.

The Committee had also considered the appointment of new members of the Apprenticeship Task and Finish Group.

It was resolved that Scott Thompson and Sam Duru be appointed as members of the Apprenticeship Task and Finish Group.

27/22 CONFIDENTIALITY (ITEM 10)

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

- **Item 6 – Confidential minutes from the Campus Transformation Oversight Group held on 14 February 2022 and update presentation.**
- **Item 8 – Part 2 Confidential minutes of the meeting of the Board of Governors held on 31 January 2022**

28/22 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING (ITEM 11)

Governors' Development Session 4 April 2022 2pm – 5pm

Board of Governors' meeting 9 May 2022 5pm