

ITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Board of Governors held on
Monday 9 May 2022 at 5pm
Conducted via Microsoft Teams**

PRESENT

Mr Mark Taylor (Chair)	Mr Clarence Crosdale (Vice Chair)
Mr Mike Hastings (Vice Chair)	Mr Trevor Dutton
Mrs Amanda Tomlinson	Ms Dionne Barrett
Mr Mal Cowgill	Mr Sam Duru
Ms Sally Slater (Staff Governor)	Ms Ioana Axinte (from Item 5)
Mr Ian Gardner	Mr John Bradford
Mrs Hshaana Knight (from item 6.2)	Ms Nisha Rai
Ms Any Priya Luis (Student Governor from Item 6.2)	

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs Louise Fall	-	Deputy Principal
Mr Ian Browne	-	Vice Principal Student Success
Mr Peter Merry	-	Deputy Chief Executive
Mr Mike Dixon	-	Assistant Principal Curriculum
Ms Lynn Parker	-	Assistant Principal Curriculum
Mrs Elizabeth Ball	-	Head of Governance

29/22 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM 1)

Apologies were received from Scott Thompson and Lyndsey Flynn

Mark Taylor declared a conflict of loyalty as an employee of the City of Wolverhampton Council

30/22 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING (ITEM 2)

The non-confidential minutes of the meeting held on 7 March 2022 were approved as a correct record.

31/22 REPORT ON OUTSTANDING ITEMS (ITEM 3)

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

Format of meetings

It was agreed that as the College did not yet have the equipment to facilitate hybrid meetings, these would take place via Teams until the end of the academic year.

It was noted that a tour of the developments at Wellington Road would be arranged as soon as possible.

Maths and English update

The Vice Principal Student Success advised that in 2022/23 face to face teaching will be used for students except those that need to have additional stretch and challenge when the Century system will be used.

32/22 CORRESPONDENCE (ITEM 4)

The Head of Governance reported that correspondence relating to the College's financial health would be considered as part of the College report.

33/22 FE COMMISSIONER ACTION PLAN UPDATE (ITEM 5)

The Head of Governors reported that the FE Commissioners action plan had been updated to reflect the comments included in the latest report.

The update on the FE Commissioner's action plan was noted.

(Ioana Axinte joined the meeting)

34/33 WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (ITEM 6.1)

The Deputy Principal introduced the draft Workforce Development Strategy 2022-25 and advised that Governors were invited to comment on the document at the next Governors Development session on 16 May 2022.

It was resolved that the Workforce Development Strategy be given full consideration at the Governor Development Session on 16 May 2022.

35/22 PROPERTY (ITEM 6.2) CONFIDENTIAL

(Hshaana Knight and Anya Priya Luis joined the meeting)

36/22 COLLEGE UPDATE (ITEM 7)

(i) Student Engagement

Applications

The Deputy Principal presented the report which provided an update on 16- 19, Adult and HE applications for 2022/23.

It was highlighted that whilst 16-19 applications are significantly higher than at the same point last year, there is a view that students are making multiple applications and as a result the emphasis is on converting these applications into enrolments.

Governors noted that the position is being carefully monitored and that enrolment will commence from 1 June 2022.

The Deputy Principal advised that applications for adult learning are also at a higher level than at the same point last year but that applications for HE provision remain at a similar level.

Governors commented that Universities have been subject to criticism as they are continuing with on line learning and asked whether this was a selling point for the College's provision.

The Deputy Principal reported that the College is adopting a more blended approach and that this may mean that it is able to attract more students.

In relation to 16-19 provision, Governors asked if the College had sufficient staff to deliver the courses if all the growth materialises. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that currently the accounts show an underspend in relation to staffing and that the College is carrying approximately 100 vacancies. However, he reported that after the curriculum planning is complete, a review of staffing requirements will take place and appropriate staff will be recruited. He highlighted that some areas will take longer to recruit than others but that the process will commence very soon.

Governors asked what action the College was taking to ensure that it is able to recruit and retain HE Students. The Deputy Principal reported that a bespoke Access to HE event has taken place that was attended by 25 people who have been converted into enrolments. This highlights that when the College is able to show potential students what it can provide this has encouraged them to enrol. It was also reported that the College has updated its marketing campaign which has resulted in further interest.

The Board of Governors noted the increased levels of applications for both full time and part time provision in comparison to the same point last year but recognised that HE continues to be low and in line with last year.

Student Survey Outcomes

The Deputy Principal presented the findings from the one programme student survey which took place in February/March 2022 and involved students studying on full-time or substantial programmes and those studying Higher Education provision.

The Board of Governors noted the findings, the key strengths and areas of concern particularly the reduction in satisfaction in relation to work experience opportunities and on-line sessions.

Governors commented that the outcome of the survey was positive but that levels had fallen against previous years. Whilst there appear to be isolated pockets of dissatisfaction or performance and a significant fall in relation to online sessions, Governors asked whether the College had a real understanding of the root issues and a plan to address them.

The Deputy Principal reported that the survey is broken down so that each curriculum team can see the concerns that relate to their area. As a result, areas where student absence is a concern can be identified as can areas where there has been dissatisfaction with online sessions.

Where issues are identified relevant actions are included as part of the Curriculum Area action plan for the current or next year.

Governors asked whether there would be any more student surveys before the end of the academic year and were advised that there will not be any additional surveys, but students will have an opportunity to discuss the outcome of the on-programme survey at the Learner Conference.

The Deputy Principal highlighted that it was important to track the cause and effect of the outcomes from the survey but that as there is a different cohort of students each year it is difficult to establish benchmarks.

Governors asked whether exit interviews are undertaken with students as their perception about some issues may change over time particularly where they are relatively trivial.

The Deputy Principal reported that exit interviews involve discussions about a student destination and confirmed that many issues raised by students do relate to things like queues for food etc. which have arisen as a result of an increase in student numbers.

Governors commented that it was important not to underestimate the effect on students of the environmental experience and asked whether this was reflected in the reduction in the response relating to recommending the College, particularly as other local colleges have newer campuses.

The Deputy Principal replied that no specific comments had been made by students about the college environment but whilst students get a good experience in the classroom there are problems with the facilities at Paget Road.

Governors asked about the difficulties being faced by students due to the cost of living crisis and whether the College was able to provide any support particularly in view of the level of deprivation in the City.

The Deputy Principal reported that the College supports students by providing free breakfasts and that claimants for free meals had increased. She emphasised that all students are given information about the financial support that is available.

The Board of Governors noted the positive student feedback obtained through in-year survey activity, despite challenging times operating in an academic year affected by the pandemic.

(ii) **Student Success**

Apprenticeship Accountability Measures

The Vice Principal Student Success presented the report which detailed the new Apprenticeship Accountability measures established by the ESFA as a replacement for measuring the quality of apprenticeship provision.

Governors noted how the measures will be applied together with the quality indicators and requested that they be provided with regular updates on performance.

The Board of Governors noted the new accountability measures for evaluating apprenticeship provision.

(iii) **Business Success**

2020/21 Finance Record

The Deputy CEO presented the correspondence from the ESFA confirming the College's financial health assessment for 2020/21 and the ESFA's financial dashboard.

It was noted that the graphs included in the dashboard demonstrated the trends that had been discussed by the Board and the challenges that the College continues to face particularly in relation to the bank covenants.

Governors were advised to contact the Head of Governance if they wished to arrange direct access to the ESFA dashboard.

The Board of Governors noted the correspondence from the ESFA with regards to the 2020/21 Financial Statements.

Management Accounts

The Deputy CEO presented the management accounts to February 2022 and provided an update in relation to March 2022.

Key points were highlighted including the overall operating surplus and variances in relation to income and expenditure.

Governors noted that non pay expenditure changes to an overspend at the end of the year and asked what this related to. The Deputy CEO reported that these costs relate to payments for partners which are linked to the contract values. He also responded to a question about the increase in short term loans which related to the current repayment profile of the restructuring fund debt.

Governors questioned by the valuation of land and buildings changed over the next few months and whilst the Deputy CEO advised that he considered this was as a result of the timing of the valuation of land and buildings he would review the position.

The Board of Governors noted the report.

2022/23 Budget update

The Deputy CEO presented the report which provided an update in relation to the budget planning process including the critical need to resolve the position relating to the bank loan and the Restructuring Fund Loan.

It was noted however that the key influencing factor for the College is the curriculum plan which is now being finalised and which influences operating efficiencies and the quantum of staffing resources required for delivery.

Governors noted the funding allocations for 2022/23 which showed growth in 16-19 provision due to an increase in funding. It was reported however that this was based on an expectation of an increase to 40 hours teaching for full time students.

The Board of Governors noted the progress in relation to the 2022/23 budget.

(iv) People Engagement

Staff Performance – Term Two

The Board of Governors noted the report on staff performance which included the management of recruitment, sickness absence, and performance management.

It was noted that three grievances had been raised by individual members of staff and Governors asked if these were connected.

The Deputy Principal advised that they were unrelated to each other and were not from a particular area.

The Board of Governors noted the report.

Pay Award Update

The Principal reported that EMT have been discussing the position with the Unions recently and they have been informed that any pay award will be backdated to 1 February 2022.

He advised however that it was difficult to make a final decision whilst the position relating to CLQ and the restructuring fund loan have not been resolved and whilst the College continues to be subject to pressure from the ESFA and FE Commissioner.

It was noted that in view of the economic reality and difficulties in recruiting staff, the desire is to maximise the amount of any pay award, but there needs to be assurance that this is affordable for future years.

Governors commented that it was challenging as the gap between affordability and inflation is likely to increase and they asked about the effect on recruitment and staff turnover as pay will be a factor in this. It was agreed that this should be discussed further when the Workforce Development Strategy is considered.

The Principal advised that he believed staff understood that a pay award is based on affordability but there will be comparisons with other public sector organisations, and the pressures of inflation.

The Board of Governors noted the report and agreed that there should be further discussion about recruitment and staff turnover when the Workforce Development Strategy is discussed.

37/22 REPORT FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE (ITEM 8(a))

The Chair of the Audit Committee presented the report. The minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2022 were received.

Internal Audit reports

The Board of Governors noted the outcome of four Internal Audit reports, the level of assurance and recommendations that had been made. It was highlighted in particular that in relation to the Internal Audit report relating to payroll that the review had resulted in an overall assessment of Substantial Assurance with no recommendations being made.

Risk Management update

The Board of Governors considered the report on high risks and changes since the last report.

Tender for External Audit

The Board of Governors noted the tender process for the appointment of External Auditors.

38/22 REPORT FROM THE SEARCH AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE (ITEM 8 (b))

The Chair presented the report from the meeting of the Search and Governance Committee held on 28 March 2022. The minutes of the meeting were received.

It was resolved that:

- **That Amanda Tomlinson be appointed as the Chair of the Remuneration Committee**
- **The term of office of Mr Clarence Crosdale be extended for a period of 12 months from 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2023.**
- **That Mr Mike Hastings be re-appointed as a member of the Board of Governors for a period of four years from 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2026.**

39/22 NON CONFIDENTIAL REPORT FROM THE REMUENRATION COMMITTEE (ITEM 8 (c))

The Chair presented the report from the meeting of the Remuneration Committee held on 28 March 2022.

It was resolved that:

- **the updated Senior Postholder Appraisal Policy be approved.**

40/22 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 MARCH 2022 AND 4 APRIL 2022 (ITEM 10)

41/22 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE APPRENTICESHIP TASK AND FINISH GROUP – 10 MARCH 2022 (ITEM 11)

42/33 CONFIDENTIAL PART 2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE REMUNERATION COMMITTEE – 28 MARCH 2022 (ITEM 15)

43/22 CONFIDENTIALITY (ITEM 13)

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

- **Item 6.2 – Confidential minutes from the Campus Transformation Oversight Group held on 14 February 2022 and update presentation.**
- **Item 10– Confidential minutes of the meeting of the Board of Governors held on 7 March 2022**
- **Item 11- Confidential minutes of the Apprenticeship Task and Finish Group held on 10 March 2022**
- **Item 15 – Minutes of the Remuneration Committee held on 28 March 2022.**

45/22 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING (ITEM 14)

13 June 2022 at 5pm – Via Teams