CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE

Minutes of the meeting of the Search and Governance Committee held on

Tuesday 18 March 2025 at 10am via Microsoft Teams

PRESENT

Mr Mike Hastings (Chair)
Mrs Amanda Tomlinson
Mr John Bradford

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs Alison Buick, Head of Governance

17/25   APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM 1)
Apologies were received from Mr Mark Taylor and Ms Louise Fall.

There were no declarations of interest.

18/25   MINUTES (ITEM 2)
The minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2024 were approved.

19/25   MATTERS ARISING (ITEM 2)
Governors considered the previously agreed actions and noted the following:
   o   Membership matters would be considered later in the agenda.
   o   The Peridot recruitment costs had been finalised.
   o   Darren Shaw had been appointed to the Audit Committee

20/25   GOVERNANCE REPORT (ITEM 3)
The Head of Governance referred to her written report and the contents were discussed.

Board Membership, Vacancies and Terms of Office
There were currently two vacancies for independent Governors.

Members were reminded that the term of office for Scott Thompson was due to end on 31 March 2025. It was agreed that this would not be recommended for renewal by the Board. The Chair would contact Scott to confirm this and the Head of Governance would draft a letter on behalf of the Chair, to thank Scott for his contributions to the work of the Board. Action: Chair and Head of Governance.

This took the number of vacancies to three.

There was a discussion about recruitment to fill vacancies and it was agreed that a social media advert be placed to encourage general interest and applications. Any received could be reviewed but with no commitment to progress if not felt to be suitable. Action: Head of Governance.

No funding was currently available via DfE for Governor recruitment.

Previously there had been some discussions about reducing the size of the Board from 18 but no firm decision on this had been made. It was suggested and agreed that this be considered at the Governor Strategy Day in May. This would be a wider discussion to also look at meeting arrangements, committee structure, link governors

and fit of the governance arrangements with the college strategy and risk management arrangements.

The results of the skills audit would be used to inform a more detailed consideration of areas to target for Governor recruitment.

Skills Audit
The proposal to refresh the Governors skills audit was considered as it had been 12 months since the last one and there had been changes to the Board membership.

Information was provided on the survey format used in the previous year and also the ETF Competency Framework for Governors, published in 2024. Consideration was given to both and it was agreed to keep the existing format. The ETF document was felt to have limitations, as it only gave options for Governors to self-assess as 'proficient' or 'excelling'. New Governors could feel that they were 'developing'. A Governor also commented that the ETF framework may be better suited to a more mature Board. Given recent changes, the current Board membership needed time to become established.

It was **agreed** that the skills audit would be re-issued for all Governors to complete. Action: Head of Governance.

Link Governors
This had been discussed at the Strategy Day in October with an update to the Board in November 2024. The areas that had been suggested by the Principal had been agreed but there had been a deliberate decision not to fill all until new Governors had been appointed.

It was agreed that Mike Hastings would be the Link Governor for Sustainability and that Abi Smith and Shavante Clarke would be invited to take Education Programmes for Young People and EDI.

There would be a reflection on a role for Communications, depending on the results of the skills audit, future recruitment and a planned discussion at the Governor Strategy Day.

The Principal had indicated a wish to re-launch the Links programme by having a short briefing session for those Governors involved, so this would be planned. Action: Principal and Head of Governance.

EDI
It was agreed to issue the previously completed EDI survey to all new Governors. Action: Head of Governance.

Governor Training
The current training offered was noted. Feedback on recent Governor Development sessions had been very good and there was agreement to the suggestion that Quality be the next topic. Inclusion of some information on the key quality metrics as part of this was felt to be helpful.

The next Governor Strategy Day would be on 8 May 2025 and suggestions for areas to be covered were invited. As discussed earlier, the Board structure, including frequency of meetings and skills audit results was felt to be a priority. Other suggestions were:
• Elements of curriculum and quality – to be discussed with the Principal

- Developing the college culture.

There was also a discussion about mandatory training for Governors. Key topics such as Prevent, safeguarding and health & safety were covered at formal meetings or strategy events, but there was a need to have a more formalised training plan. Options for Governors to access the college's staff mandatory training needed to be considered. It was confirmed that the college would accept evidence of Governor training completed elsewhere, eg on GDPR, to avoid the need for individuals to repeat training they had already done in their own professional environments.

The Committee noted the report.

21/25 EXTERNAL GOVERNANCE REVIEW – ACTION PLAN (ITEM 4)

The final version of the action plan had been approved by the Board on 14 November 2024.

The wording of the website statement had been agreed with Rob Lawson, the reviewer, and agreed at the Board in December 2024.

An update on the action plan was presented for information and discussion. The comments made by a Governor at the Board to RAG rate each section had been actioned.

There was a focused discussion on the section relating to streamlining Board reporting and the following were suggested:
- Consideration of a cover sheet for each report, to include a summary of the item, links to college risks and identification of key recommendations. There were mixed views on this so a wider view was needed from all Governors.
- The need for more succinct reporting and less detail in some reports.
- Whether the current college report format, covering the four 'scorecard' areas continued to be appropriate or if it needed a refresh. One Governor felt that disaggregating the areas and having separate reports for finance, curriculum, quality and other areas may be clearer.
- The need for timings on the agenda, which all Governors favoured to allow the Chair to better managed individual items and the overall meeting time.
- Some reflection on how the presentations were given, so that there was a simpler and clearer approach.

22/25 BOARD PORTALS (ITEM 5)

An update was given on the work to date to establish a need for a Board portal and how this might be achieved.

The preference of the management team was to develop an in house system using Sharepoint as a basis. The Head of Governance had been involved in some meetings to progress this and the Business and Learning Technologies Manager has been leading the developments. A test site had been created and discussions on its functionality, security, accessibility and contents were ongoing. The Principal had set a deadline for completion by July 2025. The Head of Governance had also requested some benchmarking against other systems available on the market and known to be used in other colleges. The background research she had completed in 2024 had been provided so was available.

The Chair commented that use of Sharepoint would give the college control of the system but would require time to be adequately maintained.

A Governor suggested that the Business and Learning Technologies Manager be asked to visit another college to see a system in practice to ensure that there was a clear view on what was available. A comment was also made about the need to consider cyber security and data protection aspects to any system that may be used. The fact that cost may be an issue was appreciated, but the college's governance costs were a relatively small proportion of corporate overheads. Governors were not remunerated, so the modest costs of a system that was modern did not seem unreasonable.

There was a discussion about the ways in which Governors would access a system on their own devices and how easy this may be. A suggestion was made about whether the college would or should consider buying devices for Governors.

The Head of Governance would take the points raised back for discussion. <u>Action</u>: Head of Governance.

23/25 <u>CONFIDENTIALITY</u>
No items discussed were agreed as confidential.

24/25 <u>DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING</u>
Monday 16 June 2025 at 5pm on Teams.

The meeting ended at 11.10am