

CORPORATION

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 24 May 2022 at 17:30 Via Microsoft Teams

Present

Governors:	Neill Bucktin (NB)	Chair
	David Ash (DA)	Vice Chair
	Zalina Bingham (ZB)	
	Stuart Laverick (SL)	Principal
	Steve Bolton (SB)	
	Helen Butler (HB)	
	Leon Evans-Lochlin (LEL)	
	Tony King (TK)	
	Denis Miles (DM)	
	Steph Simcox (SS)	
	Gary Woodman (GW)	

In Attendance:	Nicki Williams (NW)	Deputy Chief Executive Officer & Vice Principal Corporate
	Cherie Clements (CC)	Vice Principal Finance & Corporate Operations
	Peter Robinson (PR)	Vice Principal Curriculum & Standards
	Julia Breakwell (JB)	Vice Principal Student Experience & Stakeholder Engagement
	Claire Heywood (CH)	Deputy Principal
	Tony Green (TG)	Assistant Principal Funding Data & External Contracts
	Claire Beaman (CB)	Executive Director for Quality
	Kay Kavanagh (KK)	Clerk to the Corporation
	Donna Gibson (DG)	Deputy Clerk
	Moushumi Begum	Auditor (RSM)

Action

55.1 Apologies

The Chair welcomed governors to the meeting. Apologies were received from Kevin Gaffney, Sarah Owen and Evan Whakahau.

55.2 Declarations of Interest

Governors were asked to declare any Interests, financial or otherwise, which they may have in any agenda Item. No interests were declared.

55.3 a) Academic Board

Governors **received** the Minutes of the Academic Board meeting on 28 April 2022. PR provided an overview of the minutes highlighting:

- Graduation prizes are being introduced, which will enable students to gain further insights into local employers.
- Positive feedback has been received from students, including the positive impact that the new study centre in the Cathedral building is having.
- Results from the National Students Satisfaction Survey are due in July. Completion rates were 59% (6% higher than last year).
- Curriculum development includes Early Years, HE Computing Higher Technical Qualification and Enrichment programme (Starting Your Own Business)

- A meeting is taking place with Birmingham City University to strengthen the partnership
- Focus remains on the Access and Participation Plan (APP), with the College hoping to work with schools to reduce the attainment gap.

Governors noted the positive student feedback and the graduation prize opportunities for students.

Governors raised the following **questions**:

- Regarding the new Quality Regulation Framework, has provisional data been received? PR explained that early release data has been received, however there is no direct indications on the outcome. PR will provide an update in July. The submission of our TEF will be November.
- Do the College feel that schools will be supportive of higher engagement to reduce the attainment gap? PR explained that there are no guidelines or recommendations for engagement. Different approaches can be taken i.e., a masterclass or enrichment activity. PR emphasised that schools do not have to engage.

b) SWE Inspection Update

PR provided an update on the SWE Inspection, confirming that SWE's conclusion was a recommendation that we were approved with no conditions - the highest possible outcome. The full report will be circulated once received.

PR thanked DA for his involvement in the process.

Governors congratulated PR and all those involved.

c) Higher Education Self-Evaluation Document and Action Plan

PR explained that there are 6 improvements:

1. To develop, test and employ a HE tutorial system to be used across HE provision.
2. Create opportunities to share good practice and continue to improve LTA - High level completion of Peer Reviews and LW's to date across all areas with very positive improvements for Engineering in particular.
3. Successfully achieve positive outcome for Social Work England Approval – Achieved.
4. Improve student experience in areas under-performing with particular reference to NSS data/feedback – as detailed above.
5. Increase Internal Progression from L3 Learners
6. Curriculum Development – see above

There were no questions.

Governors **approved** the Higher Education Self-Evaluation Document 2022/23 (including the Higher Education Action Plan)

Peter Robinson and Moushumi Begum left the meeting (6pm)

55.4 Minutes of the Last Meeting

Governors approved the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2022, as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

55.5 Matters Arising

Governors **reviewed** the Matters Arising report and **noted** progress. All actions were complete.

55.6 Determination of any other urgent business

Governors **determined** that there was no other urgent business.

55.7 Principal's Report

Principal's Update for governors

Skills Development Fund (SDF):

The College will be leading the SDF bid for Worcestershire, supported by the local Chamber of Commerce, LEP and Worcester University.

The bid will focus on developing learning capacity/content and curriculum to support the Care/Health agenda.

If successful, the bid would result in using part of St Wulstan's building in Worcester to house sector specific learning spaces.

TG added that the bid was for £847,000 capital and £947,000 revenue. The revenue funding has been queried. This will be re-examined and re-submit.

Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs):

First proposed in the FE white paper, the plans aim to make colleges and training providers better align the courses they offer to local employers' needs.

The College is supporting the local Chamber of Commerce in its bid to be the designated ERB for Worcestershire.

Peter Robinson re-joined the meeting (18:10)

Ofsted – 5-yr Strategy:

Ofsted have confirmed that they intend to assess all further education colleges on how well they are meeting the skills needs of the economy, within the next 4 years, along with a new area wide SEND inspection framework implemented during this period.

SL explained that he welcomes the focus on Early Years, as more support is needed for families for levelling up to be successful.

Qualification Review – Level 2, 1 and Entry qualifications

SL expressed his concerns with the focus being at level 3 and above, particularly level 4 and 5. There is still a need for focus at level 2 so concerns remain for the College.

Skills and Post-16 Education Bill:

SL highlighted the proposal for an increase in the number of "mandatory encounters" school students must have with technical education and training providers prior to making their post 16 study choices.

A governor **questioned** how the SDF revenue would be split. TG confirmed that its similar between HoW and Kidderminster, with a small remainder going to Pershore.

Curriculum and Quality Key Performance Indicators

PR provided an overview of the KPIs, highlighting:

- Attendance is at 87% (amber)
- English and Maths attendance is at 81%
- Retention rate for 16-18 is 90% (amber), against a target of 92%
- There is positive retention for 19+ at 94%
- Achievement rates will be known at the end of the academic year
- On Track Learners are at 72%, against a target of 90%. This continues to increase.
- Percentage of learners in positive destinations is 98% (green)
- College staff absence is at 4.5 days against a target of 5.46 days.

A governor **expressed concern** at the number of 'red' items on the report. PR explained that the data continues to be a focus and is not a reflection of expected outcomes, however, PR acknowledged the concerns. PR explained that a new tool to capture the data has been introduced this year, which is indicating that targets may need to be reduced in future years, as they were set too high based on previous data. PR confirmed that aspirations will not be lowered. Governors noted the response and agreed that the factors leading to each 'red' item should be known moving forward.

Financial KPIs

CC provided an overview of the Financial KPIs as at 30 April 2022, highlighting:

- A projected deficit of £579,000
- Pay costs are projected to be higher than budget at year end by £28k.
- Disposal of Osprey House is planned but in early stages of planning.
- The new project for Peakman study centre has had a contract awarded for £711k, this project will continue into 22/23.
- Financial health is maintained at good and bank covenants are met.
- Cashflow is projected at £8.3million at the end of July. CC asked governors to note a significant clawback in December of £1.7 million.

There were no questions.

Health & safety

NW provided an overview of the Health and Safety Report for the Spring Term, highlighting:

- 22 accidents (no RIDDOR)
- 1 near miss
- Online and in-person training continues
- The H&S committee meeting has taken place
- A thorough cleanse of all chemicals has taken place, with involvement of the Army, for safe disposal.

There were no questions.

55.8 Collaborative Projects update, including Bids

CH provided a verbal update on Collaborative Projects, including Bids.

Funds are being applied for a wraparound provision (Funding will be for 3 years).

CH has been liaising with National Star College, an independent specialist provider for extremely high needs, and complex medical needs. Working with the national Star College could give learners access to a dual provision at St Wulstans, with 10-15 start-up units.

Governors thanked CH for the collaborative work with national Star College.

55.9 Estates Discussion

KK explained that further governor discussion would be required concerning Estates. Governors agreed that a Task and Finish group would not be warranted, and a small working party could convene instead. All governors **agreed**.

55.10 College Improvement Plan

CB provided an overview of the College Improvement Plan, as at milestone 2 (February 2022).

Action point 1: Overall judgement is amber which is mainly attributed to the progress in apprenticeships around overstayers, and a lack of clarity across all areas about the progress that apprentices make and the impact of intervention. Learners are making good progress in year in English and mathematics and the vast majority are undertaking assessments to enable this reporting to happen.

Action point 2: Remains unchanged. This relates to curriculum development, looking at T-levels, and the introduction of the elements programme.

Action point 3: Not all curriculum areas have a sufficiently clear picture on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment through learning walks and other activities outlined in the quality calendar and there is not always clear evidence of where activities have been checked, as a result, evidence in some cases is anecdotal.

Improvements in apprenticeship provision in some areas is still too slow and there is more work needed to ensure employers are involved in their apprentices' programme and fully understand and fulfil their role.

SL added that challenges remain with staff turnover and also the ability to complete in a tough labour market.

Action point 4: Whilst retention to date remains strong (above KPI except for 1 course). Progress and high grades are currently sitting below the KPI and too many learners are behind where they should be in business and HSC, with not enough securing higher grades. There is however evidence of ongoing support and intervention in these areas.

Action point 5: The overall judgement is amber, however there is some good evidence to show that learners benefit from a range of activities and initiatives to support the development of skills, knowledge, and behaviours beyond their academic and vocational curriculum. Thrive is developing learners' awareness of wider curriculum topics including sexual harassment and sexual violence however there is not sufficient evidence across all areas that learners confidently can recall or demonstrate understanding about topics such as British values and prevent. Work experience is being reintroduced successfully in some areas as well as trips and visits, guest speaker,

competition and community projects and initiatives however this is not consistently the case across all areas.

Action point 6: Remains green. The Build programme continues to be positive with learners and staff.

Governors thanked CB and CH. There were no questions.

55.11 Qualification Achievement Report 2020/21

Governors **received** the Qualification Achievement Report 2020/21.

PR explained that there were no published achievement datasets for the 2019/20 year. The Government has produced a new table for 2020/21, but only compiles confirmed datasets for each provider not as a national collation. Specifically, for 2020/21 academic year, some courses have been removed during the confirmation of data process; these include courses where TAG processes were used.

The overall achievement record for the College is 83% against a national level of 89%

There were no questions.

55.12 Learner Destinations and Progression Report 2020/21

PR advised that HE progression data has been delayed by HESA and so will not be available until the end of the academic year.

PR provided the following overview:

- The College captured 1664 destinations, 56% (54%) of all students included in the sample.
- 16 - 18 Destinations, 97%, (97%), were in a positive destination. 83%, (82%) were in education, (incl. Internships and Apprenticeships). 14%, (16%), were in employment. 32%, (41%) of Level 3 Learners, (excl. Yr. 1 of a 2-year programme), were studying in higher education.
- Adult Destinations, 98% (98%) were in a positive destination. 94%, (94%), were in education.
- The College educated 252, (234) learners with an EHCP in 2020/21. 92%, (96%), were in positive destinations. 65%, (91%), were in education.

There were no questions.

55.13 College HE Fees Policy

CC explained that this is a 2-yr rolling policy. Significant amendments have been made to the Fees Chargeable for HE Students, the amend is in line with other HEI institutions, includes a 2-week window which effectively is a 14-day cooling off window which is required through the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) and noted by the OFS. The charging amendment is clear and unambiguous for students which is in the spirit of the guidance. The banding on instalments has been amended to a two-tier approach.

There were no questions.

Governors **approved** the HE Fees Policy.

55.14 Revenue Budget

CC presented the updated revenue budget.

The 16-19 funding has increased to £16,607,099 with a reduction in Full time and T-Level student numbers to 2,478. The allocation is fixed and will see no variance during 2022/23. Current planning numbers are slightly under the allocation at 2449. Applications are down overall around 5%, however application trends have been impacted by Covid.

T-Levels are again planned within Health and Social Care (HSC) and IT/Digital. Unlike 2021/22, alternative curriculum offer options have been removed and for 2022/23 application and acceptance numbers look strong and this new provision will run.

The ESFA also announced an expectation that students in the full-time band and T-Levels would receive an additional 40 hours, which will be monitored. Additional time will be included within curriculum plans for English and Maths, an enhanced induction week, increased focus on recording enrichment hours and potential options for areas where additional hours need evidencing and finally a small amount of blended delivery for digital skills.

The Tuition Fund will continue through until 2023/24, as the College received this fund in 2021/22 it will be automatically opted into this scheme; funding allocation has not formally been received but is likely to be in the region of £278,000 based on information provided by the ESFA within their Allocation Toolkit. This will fund approximately 10 Learning mentors across the College; these will be on temporary contracts.

The ESFA AEB allocation is £2.8million. There is an increase on the National Skills Fund moving from £105,850 to £207,467. For the West Midlands Combined Authority there is a reduction on the AEB allocation. In year ESFA is performing at 68% for ESFA funding and 62% on WMCA funding; this is based on actual recognised/projected income within April 2022 management accounts. The resulting clawback is reflected in the initial Cashflow Budget and within the KPI's.

Pre Covid budget levels for apprenticeships were expected at around £2.5m, the budget for 2021/22 was set at £1.4m reflecting lower levels post covid and the longer lasting impact it has had on apprenticeship learners "in learning". 2021/22 actuals are close to budget.

The OFS allocation for 2021/22 totalled £557k, the 2022/23 is yet to be received. Due to volume reduction experienced over the past few years the draft budget has been set at 95% of 2021/22 levels.

Premises costs are planned to increase significantly. There is a planned increase in the M&E contract, following retender, in 2022/23 and increases in Gas/Electric rates following revised rates as of October 2021. No further significant increases have been included for Gas/Electric increases which the College could experience during the autumn.

The draft budget prepared in early May 2022 indicates a deficit position of £1.6m without further action. As previously highlighted, this would reduce the Financial health rating to "requires improvement".

Initial cashflow forecast through to July 2023 based upon this level of deficit and including the AEB clawback of £1.8m, indicates closing cash balances at July 23 of £5.1m and the lowest cash balance in March 23 at £5.0m.

Governors asked the following questions:

- What is the cost of the mothballed sites? CC confirmed that St Wulstans is costing around £43,000 and Osprey House is costing around £56,000. The costs exclude the M&E contract.
- Have energy savings been seen from the mothballing and the reduced Friday usage? CC explained that expected reductions have not been evidenced. However, the PEEP process will provide further insight.
- Given the forecasted rise in energy costs in October, should these be included? CC explained that savings could be made elsewhere, or the costs could be added to the budget and suffer a decline in financial health.
- What are the consequences of the College dropping from 'good' to 'requires improvement' on financial health? CC explained that the ESFA and informal intervention/support would be likely.
- With the £5million in reserves, are we being too prudent? Do we have long-term sustainability of the budget? CC provided assurance that the Strategy is being developed to ensure sustainability of the budget. It needs to be realistic however and both apprenticeship and adult numbers need to increase. The sale of Osprey House will also provide more income.

55.15 Procurement Policy & Strategy

CC advised that the key amendments to the policy are:

- Removal of EU procurement directives and legislation, now UK only
- Removal of paper tender submissions and electronic methods are preferred option
- Update of UK Procurement threshold values
- Strategic Objective 4&5 noting the College "Green ambitions and carbon reduction targets"

Governors **approved** the Procurement Policy & Strategy

55.16 Sustainability Update

PR explained that 2 HoW College buildings were initially approved for a PEEP (Public Sector Energy Efficiency Programme) review, and the funding of that review, however following these reviews (undertaken by Pro-Enviro) it is hoped that now all main College buildings can be assessed, allowing us to put forward more energy saving projects.

PR explained that the Bespoke Decarbonisation Support (BDS) programme allows the College to receive regular reports to see energy usage across the College. 2 agencies have received the reports and several recommendations are being made.

Staff are involved in the global sustainable development goals Initiative, where staff signed up to say that they would teach sustainability in a set week, with sustainability being integrated into the curriculum for a week. The number of staff that signed up (over 90), meant that we were on the Top 10 of organisations that participated, we were the only FE College in the Top Ten Table.

PR also gave an update on the progress being made by the internal Eco group, highlighting:

- Tiny Forest – 600 trees planted at Bromsgrove site – Many partners and staff involved as well as over 40 students.
- Queens Canopy and Virtual Orchard. – More trees planted at each campus.
- Bat Boxes
- Veg Seeds – Donated to St Peter's Hostel to encourage others to live sustainably, (when circumstances allow).
- Wet Wipe "Ban" – Work has begun to identify if and where wet wipes are used, to remove these from our waste cycle.
- Laminated Posters – work has begun to stop using laminated posters.
- Hedgehogs/Bees

55.17 Governance

a) Governor Insight Scheme

DG provided an update on the Governor Insight Scheme. Governors were reminded of several upcoming events/opportunities – governors are to advise DG if they are able to attend.

b) Governance Improvement Plan

KK provided an overview of the red and amber items within the plan, highlighting:

- Attendance is at 76% against a target of 85%
- Attendance of the Governor Insight Scheme continues to be monitored
- Ofsted remains a focus
- An external review of governance will take place during the next academic year, although providers and costs are still to be confirmed
- Governors were reminded of the training available to them via the EFT

c) Governor One-2-Ones

NB and DA will be arranging governor 1-2-1's shortly, via KK.

55.18 Any Other Urgent Business

55.19 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 5th July, 17:30

Members of SLT, and Staff and Student governors left the meeting

55.20- CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

55.22 These matters are recorded as Confidential Minutes

The meeting closed at 20:30

Signed:

Date: