

Approved Minutes of Corporation Meeting (Main Agenda)

Held on Thursday 12 December 2024
at 5.30pm in The Source, All Saints Building, Worcester

Present: David Ash (Chair of Corporation) Jane Britton (Governor) Gaynor Cheshire (Governor) (Via Teams) Phil Colledge (Governor) Helen Davies (Governor) Michelle Dowse (Principal) Adam Hall (Governor) Chris Hallam (Vice Chair of Corporation) Paul Hine (Staff Governor) – Up to item 69.38 Tony King (Governor) Steve Smith (Governor) Steve Stanier (Governor) Donna Gibson (Clerk to the Corporation)		In Attendance: Simon Kibble (Deputy Principal) – Up to item 69.18 Matt Gower (Vice Principal Quality) – Up to item 69.18 Peter Robinson (Vice Principal HE, Adults & Curriculum) – Up to item 69.20 Mo Horan (Vice Principal Apprenticeships, Partnerships & Skills) – Up to item 69.18 Cherie Clements (Vice Principal Finance and Corporate Operations) – Up to item 69.29 Julia Breakwell (Vice Principal Student Experience & Support) – Up to item 69.18
Item No	Item	Action
69.1	Welcome & Apologies The Chair repeated the original welcome to all, noting that this was now the main part of the meeting and that members of ELT had now joined the meeting. Apologies were received from Vicki Davies and Julie Hurlston-McKeown. The Clerk confirmed that the meeting was quorate. The Chair confirmed that all papers were being taken as having been read in advance.	
69.2	Declarations of Interest There were no interests to be declared in this part of the meeting.	
69.3	Approved minutes of the September Workshop The minutes of the Workshop were taken as read. There were no revisions, and the minutes were recorded as received .	
69.4	Matters Arising The Clerk advised that all the actions from the Workshop had been completed.	
69.5	Determination of Any Other Business There were no items of any other business.	
69.6	Corporation Appointments: To Chair advised that the changes to Committee Memberships for 24/25 would be circulated outside of the meeting. The Corporation noted that Vicki Woodfield had left the College and steps had already been taken to fill the Student Governor post for Bromsgrove & Redditch.	
69.7	Principal's Report including KPIs. Corporation received the report and noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report was longer than usual and included details about student achievement successes that were worthy of mentioning and celebrating. The Principal reported that the College is still a Grade 3 College, but a stronger College than at the time of the October 2023 inspection. Underperforming courses 	

	<p>from 2023/24 have been identified and Rapid Improvement Groups (RIG's) had been set up.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELT are working in programme blocks of six weeks, the workload is divided between the team and the work will continue at pace. A report of the six weeks breakdown had been included in the Reading Room. • With regards to the financial position for 2023/24, it was noted that the expected deficit had been turned around and was now a surplus of £348k. • Adult numbers are being reviewed regularly to see what other opportunities may be available to fully utilise the ASF and to maximise opportunities for local people. • HE numbers are below target by 16. • The National Star provision has commenced. • Government initiatives are being introduced and changed constantly and the challenge for the College is to remain agile enough to keep up with them and to respond accordingly whilst also focusing on quality improvements. • KPIs are broadly on track, however, English and maths attendance is below the year to date. Steps have been put in place to address this. • The business issues and challenges include staff shortages and difficulties in recruiting to certain areas and staff wellbeing in light of the pace of change The CPD day on 19 December will have a focus on wellbeing. <p>The Corporation thanked the Principal for the comprehensive update and for the updates that they receive regularly between meetings.</p> <p><i>A Governor questioned the figures around HE and the CIPP, and the challenges of replacing 358 learners, and if there were further opportunities? They were advised that there are some discussions taking place with a view to maintaining the relationship with the partner, however, it is not around HE s. The Principal advised that the DfE are keen that Colleges maintain Level 1 and Level 5 provision, and need to work out what it may look like in the future as part of the Curriculum Development Review</i></p> <p><i>A Governor questioned what the Cadet Scheme is that is detailed under Partnership? They were advised that this is a scheme in partnership with the Royal College of Nursing. It has been well received by the students taking part and is helping towards live placements within the NHS, as well as helping to identify career pathways. HoW College is a pilot for the scheme which is a bolt on to the Level 3 Health & Social Care course.</i></p> <p><i>A Governor asked if there was any development with the Energy Adviser courses? They were advised that Act on Energy had identified a need for these roles and a bid had been submitted to the WLEP. If the funding bid is accepted the initiative will progress.</i></p> <p><i>A Governor challenged the lack of progress on the sale of Osprey House.</i></p> <p><i>A Governor referred to the staff shortage issue and if there was any impact on the spend that the College is planning to improve the quality of teaching and learning? Management confirmed that the issue is a common one across the sector. Low wages are making recruitment a challenge in some areas and professionals will not consider giving up a trade to join the FE sector because of the low wages. To cover gaps, some managers are stepping back into teaching to maintain the teaching, but this is not the fix. The Government needs to address the national skills issue within the FE sector.</i></p>	
69.8	<p>Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP) Year 2</p> <p>The PIAP, which was included in the Main Papers for consideration by all Governors, had been reviewed and scrutinised thoroughly at Teaching & Learning Committee. The Corporation were assured that the format of the plan had been reviewed by the FEC Team as part of the work they are doing to support the College.</p> <p>Corporation approved the plan for year 2.</p>	

69.9	<p>Teaching & Learning Committee - Chairs Update (Verbal)</p> <p>The Chair reported that the Committee had undertaken robust and challenging debates about several items presented to the Committee at its meeting on 5 November 2024. The Committee recognised that significant work and progress had been undertaken, however, having come from such a low starting point at the October 2023 inspection the College is still a Grade 3.</p> <p>Several items have yet to come to the Committee and will be picked up at future meetings. The Principal had confirmed that the frequency of progress reviews and grade predictions would be increased to five times a year.</p> <p>Steps are in hand to increase the Governor membership of the Teaching & Learning Committee and bring in additional teaching and learning expertise, by recruitment of additional Governors and potentially Co-Opted Committee Members.</p> <p>The Committee had recommended the approval of several items by Corporation.</p> <p>The meeting had been attended by the Chair and Vice Chair of Corporation, who were present as observers. The meeting had taken place shortly after the Ofsted Monitoring Visit and it had been important to respond to the feedback from the visit. As observers, both wished to be reassured of the approach that would be taken to focus in depth on improving the quality of teaching and learning and obtaining a Grade 2 at the next inspection.</p> <p>Corporation received the verbal update.</p>	
69.10	<p>Apprenticeships Update</p> <p>Teaching & Learning Committee had expressed concerns about apprenticeships and had requested more information. The paper presented in the pack addressed some of the key points and provided assurance such as being 20% up on 23/24 – 58.8% (now close to moving to the Apprenticeship Accountability Framework being on track - 60%). Similarly, the Retention rate is up to 59.1% and close to moving to on track – 62% required).</p> <p><i>A Governor asked if the figures stated for the starting point for 24/25, with retention at the start being 83.6% and best case being 83.2%, were the wrong way around? They were advised that the figures should be the other way around.</i></p> <p><i>A Governor asked how the 90+ days past planned end date and the 50 apprentices overdue for a review compared to the previous year? They were advised that the past reporting would have to be looked at, as currently the new postholder would not have access to that information.</i></p> <p>The Principal assured the Corporation that the oversight and level of monitoring for apprenticeships had built upon the good work started in the previous year and ELT regularly review the apprenticeships item.</p> <p><i>A Governor expressed their thanks to the ELT members of staff who had met with them to discuss apprenticeships and hosted a learning walk in Engineering.</i></p> <p>Corporation received the apprenticeships update.</p>	
69.11	<p>KPIs Curriculum & Quality</p> <p>The KPIs had been presented to the Teaching & Learning Committee in November. A robust discussion had taken place and the Committee had agreed to recommend the revised KPIs to Corporation for approval.</p>	

	With the assurance of the Teaching & Learning Committee and the recommendation noted Corporation approved the Curriculum & Quality KPIs.'	
69.12	<p>College Self-Assessment Report (SAR) The College SAR had been circulated as a follow on paper for information following a validation exercise a few days before the Corporation meeting. The exercise had been attended by a colleague from a peer college of a similar size, and members of the Corporation.</p> <p>Feedback from the Governors who had been present was that the exercise was useful and having the peer college member present as a critical friend was hugely beneficial; the process was much improved compared to previous years and Governors had confidence that the process was rigorous and the gradings accurate.</p> <p>Corporation noted the feedback, and that Governors were encouraged to take part in the 24/25 process.</p>	
69.13	<p>Safeguarding Annual Report 23/24 The report had been through Teaching & Learning Committee where it had been accompanied by a comprehensive cover paper. The Committee had reviewed the report and recommended it be approved by Corporation.</p> <p>The Lead Governor for Safeguarding had been present at Teaching & Learning Committee and had met with the DSL and Deputy DSL in person for a termly catch up. They assured Corporation that they were more than satisfied that the College duties and obligations are being met, and that the teams do all that can be done for the learners.</p> <p>Corporation approved the annual report.</p>	
69.14	<p>Prevent Strategy, Risk Assessment & Action Plan 24/25 Teaching & Learning Committee had received the strategy, which had been presented with a comprehensive cover paper detailing improvement action for 24/25, as well as the revisions made. The Committee noted that the risk assessment is an external (DfE) template and cannot be revised. The recommendation of the Committee was that the strategy and action plan be approved.</p> <p>Corporation approved the strategy, risk assessment and action plan.</p>	
	Corporation noted that several additional items had been reviewed and scrutinised at Teaching & Learning Committee and had been placed in the Reading Room for Corporation to receive them. Governors had been given the opportunity to submit any questions ahead of the meeting and the Clerk confirmed that none had been received.	
69.15	<p>Approved Committee Minutes – 5 November 2024 The minutes of the Teaching & Learning Committee were received.</p>	
69.16	<p>Accolades & Complaints Report 23/24 The 23/24 report was received.</p>	
69.17	<p>EDI Annual Report 23/24 The annual report was received.</p>	
69.18	<p>HE Academic Board Minutes The minutes of HE Academic Board were received.</p>	
	The Corporation were assured that all the items had received the appropriate level of scrutiny and consideration by the Committee. The Chair of Corporation acknowledged that the papers had been well prepared and had made review by Governors an easy task as information had been clearly presented and progress was easy to follow.	

	With the exception of the Vice Principal for HE, Adult and Curriculum and the Vice Principal for Finance and Corporate Operations, members of ELT left the meeting.	
69.19	<p>a) HE Self Evaluation Document (SED) <i>A Governor challenged whether, as an FE College, and with losing CIPP students, and having a university in proximity, was there an argument to move away from any HE provision? In response they were advise that our HE offer is designed to differ from that university and focuses on adults. The challenge was noted as timely as the Government is looking at Level 4 and Level 5 provision. The challenge for the College is to see how it can expand to meet any future requirements that the Government may introduce.</i></p> <p><i>The Lead Governor for HE supported this, confirming that the learners are very different, in that they are being given an alternative opportunity as opposed to attending university. The difficulty is defining a curriculum and finding funding opportunities that would help to develop longer term provision.</i></p> <p>The Corporation noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that Micro Credentials is where a lot of opportunities will lie in the future, but without any HE provision it would be difficult to pursue these. • the outcome of the Government's Curriculum Review is awaited, hopefully this will lead to greater collaboration between institutions. <p><i>A Governor observed that it is widely known that many companies are recruiting outside of Worcestershire, and funding that is available is usually quite specific to particular sectors.</i></p> <p>It was acknowledged that the College reputation for its engineering provision is not strong. Steps are being looked at to fix the quality of the provision so that there can be growth. Gaps in the markets also need to be utilised. The Corporation appreciated that the onus is on the College to persuade employers that it is in their interests to contribute to the curriculum and to be engaging with the College. The Chair of Corporation observed that in recent reports to Corporation there is a lot more reference to engagement with employers, which suggests that there is a shift in culture, and this should be taken as a positive step.</p> <p><i>The Chair of Corporation had noticed the recurring reference to library resources in the reference to ISSS and NSS results over a period of time. They were advised that the HE Academic Board had considered this and had agreed that the focus should be maintained on all other areas of learning resources that are in place and continue to be effective in their support of the students, which more than compensates for the relative shortcomings of library resources.</i></p> <p>The Chair acknowledged the work that had gone into closing the BA Social Work programme, while ensuring that all learners on the programme had been relocated to other study destinations.</p> <p>Corporation approved the HE SED</p> <p>The Chair of Teaching & Learning Committee suggested a new committee be considered to look at new ventures and opportunities. The committee could look at growth opportunities in Worcestershire, Post 16 opportunities and any links to the estates proposals. The Triumvirate would consider this at the next Triumvirate meeting.</p> <p>b) HE Strategy The HE Strategy had been considered at Teaching & Learning Committee and the cover paper had noted the broad targets within. Corporation were assured that the HE Academic Board and the HE Lead Governor have oversight of the strategy. HE is not one of the</p>	Triumvirate

	<p>Ofsted judgments and is presented on agendas as a separate item. The strategy was received by Corporation.</p> <p>The Vice Principal HE, Adult and Curriculum left the meeting at this point.</p>	
69.20	<p>Financial KPIs</p> <p>Corporation received the October KPIs, noting that Finance & Resources Committee had reviewed an earlier set at the meeting in November.</p>	
69.21	<p>Learner Numbers Update</p> <p>Corporation noted that the format of the reporting had been revised and had been seen at the Finance & Resources Committee. It is now clear to see budget levels and sub-contracting delivery. ELT review the information regularly and the document is used to inform the College's finances.</p> <p><i>A Governor queried the low -62 against T Levels. They were advised this is a national problem and mainly niche colleges or those with Sixth Form / A Level provision tend to do well whilst many General Further Education Colleges were struggling.</i></p> <p><i>A Governor acknowledged that from their knowledge of T Levels, the process is dependent on the College, employer and the student being engaged, but that many employers will be deterred by some things that have to be put in place, such as safeguarding and Prevent, when the student is of a younger age.</i></p> <p>The Principal noted that the T Level in electrical installation is predominantly academic with very little practical work.</p> <p><i>A Governor wondered whether the local MPs had made any challenges to the College about its provision and were advised that the College actively challenges them as to why they (on behalf of the Government) continue to push T Levels.</i></p>	
69.22	<p>Tender Committee Update</p> <p>Finance & Resources Committee had reviewed the report and had found it to be straightforward. National Star College are now a sub-contractor/partner.</p> <p>Tender Committee meetings are scheduled for the week commencing 16 December.</p> <p>Corporation received the update.</p>	
69.23	<p>Audit Committee - Chairs Update (Verbal)</p> <p>The Chair summarised what had been covered at the meeting on 26 November 2024. Corporation took note of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bishop Fleming had provided a clean external audit and the financial statements had been completed in a timely manner. • Improvements had been seen around the Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Audit • That a desktop exercise had taken place earlier in the day to walk through the College response to a major incident; this would influence any revision to the Business Continuity Plan (it was noted that the exercise was not linked to the Cyber Security Audit). • The revised risk register had been received and the Committee had been pleased with the revised format and that once items were no longer a risk they would be removed. • The funding audit had completed with just a small amount of errors, an improvement on the year before. <p>The Chair was satisfied that the Committee had fulfilled all of its statutory obligations.</p>	



	The Chair shared the Audit Committee's response to the GDPR/Data Protection Internal Audit Report and Corporation noted that the area will be re-audited as part of the Follow Up audit.	
69.24	Corporation noted that a number of items had been reviewed and scrutinised at Audit Committee and were recommended for approval; based upon those recommendations and the high quality of the papers provided, the Corporation approved the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Financial Statements for year ended 31 July 2024 b) Engagement Letter c) External Audit Report d) Internal Audit Annual Report 23/24 e) Audit Committee Annual Report f) Risk Management Annual Report 23/24 g) Strategic Risk Register h) Annual Procurement Report (Value for Money) 	
69.25	Audit Committee Reading Room Items Corporation noted that the approved Audit Committee Minutes of 26 November 2024 and the NEWCEL and Molinna Ltd Financial Statements had been placed in the Reading Room. No questions or concerns had been raised about either item.	
69.26	Finance & Resources Committee - Chairs Update (Verbal) The Chair provided a summary of what had been covered at the meeting on 14 November 2024 and the Corporation noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There had been no RIDDOR incidents reported in term 3 of 23/24. • The completion rate of 95% for mandatory training had been challenged and the Committee had accepted the response from Management. • 2 months of Financial KPIs had been received and considered. • The Sustainability Report was comprehensive and indicated the College is on the right track. • The Committee has also challenged the T Levels numbers when reviewing the overall Learner Numbers. • The GDPR Annual Report had included some very low level detail regarding requests. • There were some staff policies that required Corporation approval. 	
69.27	Staff Policies On the recommendation of the Finance & Resources Committee the following policies were approved : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Disciplinary Policy & Procedure b) Grievance Procedure c) Health & Safety Policy d) Financial Regulations 	
69.28	Finance & Resources Committee – Items In Reading Room Corporation noted that several items had been scrutinised and reviewed by the Committee and along with the approved Committee Minutes of 14 November 2024 had been added to the Reading Room. The Clerk confirmed that no questions or concerns had been raised about any of them and so Corporation took them as received . <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Annual Health & Safety Report 23/24 b) Health & Safety Report Term 3 c) Annual Sustainability Report 	

69.37 & 69.38	<i>The meeting switched to the remaining confidential items (separate agenda) so they could be addressed whilst the Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Operations was present. the Vice Principal, Finance and Corporate Operations left the meeting before Corporation moved on to Item 69.29.</i>	
69.29	<p>Governance & Search Committee - Chairs Update (Verbal)</p> <p>The Chair provided a summary of the meeting of 15 October 2024 and the Corporation noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor training had been discussed. • Lead Governor Roles had been discussed – noting that vacancies remain for EDI and Sustainability. • Governor attendance and the Register of Interests for 23/24 had been reviewed. • The draft Governance Calendar for 25/26 had been considered. <p>The Committee had an in depth discussion about bolstering the skills of the Governors on the Teaching & Learning Committee. The importance of doing this quickly had not been underestimated and the feedback from the monitoring visit had been responded to and interviews are planned for early January, with a number of candidates having the relevant skills required. The Committee were also exploring the co-opting of Committee Members where there was a skill gap that could be addressed by doing so, currently accountancy and teaching and learning.</p> <p>The Committee had considered the composition of the Board, recognising that only two Governors have served for significant periods of time, i.e. 6 years or more, one being the current Chair of Corporation whose 8 year term as a Governor will end in July 2025. Three other Governors have served for 2 years and the remainder for shorter periods. In addition, the current Vice-Chair has indicated that due to other commitments they do not envisage that they will be capable of stepping up to the Chair's role in 2025. The Committee had considered the potential loss of corporate knowledge and skills, which would have a detrimental impact on effective governance and agreed that steps need to be taken to avoid this. The Corporation has the provision to be able to extend a term of office beyond 8 years due to exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>The Corporation were reminded of the procedure for the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair of Corporation. All non-executive Governors are eligible to fill either role and anyone who would be interested was encouraged to speak to the Chair, Vice Chair, Principal or Clerk.</p>	
69.30	<p>Approved Committee Minutes – 15 October 2024</p> <p>The minutes of the Committee meeting will be circulated separately.</p>	
69.31	<p>Remuneration Committee - Chairs Update (Verbal)</p> <p>The Chair provided an update on behalf of the Chair of Remuneration Committee of the meeting on 1 October 2024. The Corporation noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee meets three times a year now to ensure there is sufficient time to review and align the objectives and responsibilities of the Senior Postholders. • The Committee had reviewed the Principal's objectives and how they are cascaded to ELT and the wider staff. • The probation periods for both the Deputy Principal and the Clerk had been completed successfully. • The Senior Postholder policies had been reviewed and recommended for Corporation approval. 	
69.32	<p>Senior Postholder Policies</p> <p>On the recommendation of the Remuneration Committee Corporation approved the following policies:</p>	

	a) Disciplinary Policy for Senior Postholders b) Grievance Policy for Senior Postholders c) Probation Period Policy for Senior Postholders	
69.33	Committee Effectiveness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The improvement of the quality and consistency of papers is reviewed continuously. • Governors felt that the introduction of the new format for the pack had meant that they had been able to give more time to issues that required discussion and to spend less time on straightforward processes. • Papers coming through from Committees are improved. • The Clerk will continue with the coloured cover sheets, which were welcomed by Governors. • The Clerk will continue to highlight evidence of challenge and discussion in the minutes and will identify the text in italics. • The level of discussions taking place at committee level is being reported to Corporation and is providing assurance and confidence. • A number of different topics had been covered effectively. • The meeting time had been reduced significantly, without loss of effective deliberation and decision-making. 	Clerk Clerk
69.34	Any Other Business The Principal had three items of business. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For noting. At the desktop exercise earlier in the day consideration had been given as to when would Governors be informed about a major incident. It was likely that if a message could be safely communicated to Governors, then a message would be sent, but it would depend on the nature of the incident. Governors were advised they should not respond to any messages received as it may not be possible, or safe, for staff to enter into a dialogue with them whilst the incident is ongoing. 2. A crib sheet is being prepared to aid Governors when they are undertaking learning walks. 3. Whilst Corporation had been in progress the Government had announced that the defunding of 157 Qualifications will be delayed and now will not occur at any time before 2027. 	Clerk
	Date of next meeting: Tuesday 1 April 2025 at 5.30pm, Bromsgrove Campus	