

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporation of West Thames College  
Held on Wednesday 23 March 2022**

**Members Present**    Mr S Wilcox (Chair)    Ms T Aust    Mr B Armstrong  
                                  Mr A Luke                    Mr J Bryant (Via Teams)  
                                  Mr A Barke                   Ms C Ajit Singh  
                                  Mr Z Haulkhory            Ms L Gnomes

**Also present**            Mr J Allen (Via Teams)            Ms K Frost  
                                  Mr M Cooper                        Mr M Michaelides  
                                  Ms Gajewska-Kopczyk            Mr J Bolt (Associate Governor)

The meeting commenced at 18.00

**1. APOLOGIES, QUORACY & WELCOME**

An apology was received from Ms C Callinan, Ms B Sandhu, and Mr A Smith. The absence of Ms L Weatherill was noted. It was confirmed the meeting was quorate.

Karen Frost, the newly appointed Head of Governance, was welcomed to the meeting and introductions were made.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declared interests against any agenda item.

**3. MINUTES**

The minutes of the Corporation meeting held 14 December 2021 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting (Paper 1).

**4. SUMMARY ACTION LIST & MATTERS ARISING**

The 'Summary Action List' was received (Paper 2). The following updates were made available against each outstanding action point from previous meetings:

Ref & Date	Action	Review Update
6(ii) – 13/10/21	S & BD Committee to oversee a review of the Corporation's approach to risk and risk management and outcomes of the review will be reported to the Corporation.	Discussed at the Strategy meeting held 23/2/22 with agreed outcomes to be taken forward in conjunction with the new Strategic Plan- it was agreed to keep this action open
6(ii) - 13/10/21	Strategic Plan ➤ Governors' Strategy meeting in May to review ➤ Final draft to July 2022 Corporation meeting	Subject to review at the May Strategy Meeting with final draft on schedule to be an agenda item at the July Corporation meeting.
9 – 13/10/21	Governors were reminded to conduct their visits during the spring term and that visits will be organised by the Principal's PA. Governors were asked to complete a	Agenda item

	brief report following their visit and to make this available to the Clerk. The Clerk will then make available a summary report on visits conducted for the March Corporation meeting.	
8 – 14/12/21	To receive a progress update on the succession arrangements for a new Chair to be in place from the start of the next academic year	To be an agenda item at the Governance & Search Committee meeting scheduled to be held 04 May 2022, with recommendations from the meeting to be considered at the July Corporation meeting.  The Chair asked for any governor who wished to put themselves forward for consideration for the role of Chair or Vice Chair to inform the Chair/and or Head of Governance.
18 – 14/12/21 (confidential)	Barclays Bank Loan - new resolutions and Officers' Certificate to be made available for the Corporation to review, agree, and authorise.	Confidential agenda item

Before the commencement of the formal agenda items, the Chair outlined the transitional arrangements that are in place between the Clerk and the Head of Governance, with the aim of ensuring a phased handover and support for the Head of Governance.

On behalf of all governors, the Chair placed on record sincere appreciation and thanks for the service provided by Jon Allen during his 13 years of service as Clerk to the Corporation. Although this is to be his last meeting in a formal capacity, Jon has agreed to be available to offer any support, if required, over the summer term. The Chair confirmed the plans to hold either a lunch or dinner at the May strategy meeting and this would be the opportunity to formally say goodbye and thanks to Jon.

The Chair confirmed work is in progress for succession planning to recruit 4-6 new governors, to recruit a new Chair and the Vice Chairs. The priority is to retain stability during a period of change. Succession planning to be subject to further discussion at the Governance & Search Committee scheduled to meet on 04 May 2022 with any recommendations from the Committee to be put to the July Corporation meeting.

## **MONITORING COLLEGE PERFORMANCE**

### **5. MONITORING COLLEGE PERFORMANCE**

#### **(i) Data Dashboard Review**

The following key points were noted from the review of the Data Dashboard:

**Attendance:**

- Currently, YTD attendance for all learners is 84.3% (84.3% for 16-19 Programmes of Study and 85.3 for Adult Learning Programmes), compared with this year's target of 87% and last year's outturn of 86%. Between November and up until February, attendance has been increasingly impacted by the raise in the number of positive Covid cases in the local area.

Governors asked how the impact of Covid on the attendance data for the College compares with other colleges and what are the current Covid absence rates? In response it was reported the attendance data for the College mirrors national trends with AoC reporting declining attendance in post-16 education nationally. Current Covid numbers have peaked, and the current position is one of recovery.

Governors asked if any arrangements are being put in place for any student absence during the examination period? Similarly, are any arrangements being put in place to support BTEC students in the event they are unable to submit assessments as and when required due to Covid absence. In response, it was noted there are currently no alternative arrangements being put in place by Examination Boards, so this is an area to keep under review.

**Learning Walks & Deep Dives:**

- There have been 109 learning walks completed up until 11 March 2022. This included developmental observations and probation observations. All observations this year are developmental observations.
- So far 92 (84%) of the learning walks that have taken place have been graded as green, 13 (12%) have been rated as amber with 4 (4%) rated as red. When compared to a similar point in time last year, there has been a significant improvement in the proportion of lessons rated green (+16%), a decrease of 14% in amber rated lessons and a 2% decrease in red rated lessons. There were 26 more lesson observations done at this point last year.
- Deep dives are currently in progress with outcomes to be reported at the next meeting of the Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee.

**Achievement**

- Year-end Achievement data are reported on in detail in the minutes of the Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee and in the Executive Report – later agenda items.
- The next round of Predicted Achievement is planned for April, following the end of assessment period 2. A full analysis of Predicted Achievement will be made available in the Data Dashboard for review at the July meeting.

**Financial:**

As reported to the Finance, Resources & Capital Projects Committee:

- Financial Health - Based on an overall score of 220/300, the forecast year-end ESFA financial health grade for the College on 31 July 2022

is 'Good'. This score, albeit lower than the 2020-21 outturn, is towards the top end of 'Good' and is in line with the budgeted score of 220/300.

- Year to date performance for the six months to 31 January 2022 recorded an operating deficit of £451k compared with the budgeted surplus of £46k.
- The year-end operating surplus is forecast at £20k, £80k lower than budget.
- Cash flow is forecast to average around £6.2m over the next 18 months with the projected low of £4.9m falling in March/April 2022 due to phasing of ESFA receipts. Cash days in hand on 31 July 2022 is forecast to be 123 days.

## **(ii) Development Plan**

The Corporation received for review the '*Development Plan 2021/22*' (Paper 3). It was noted there were three 'Amber' assessments in the Development Plan. The first related to attendance as reported on during the review of the Data Dashboard.

The second 'Amber' related to the need to increase the College's Adult offer with new flexible delivery models and growth in Adult provision at levels 3, 4 and 5 that support the Government's economic recovery agenda.

The third 'Amber' related to extend contribution analysis, in line with sector best practice, through setting of cross-college targets for financial contribution by provision type and department, embedding the regular reporting and monitoring of these. It was confirmed this is development work in progress.

There were no issues of concern arising from the review of the Development Plan with good progress being made against target dates set.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the Development Plan.

## **6. STRATEGIC MATTERS INCLUDING THE REVIEW OF THE EXECUTIVE REPORT**

### **(i) Executive Report**

The Executive Report (Paper 4) provided updates on:

- Strategic Matters
- Financial
- Leadership & Management
- Achievement Rates 2020/21
- Partnerships
- Student news

The following key points were drawn to the attention of Governors:

#### **Higher Education:**

The Department for Education has finally published its response to the higher education parts of the Post-18 review (Auger Review) carried out in 2019. The response includes some announcements alongside two consultations.

The announcements were:

- Higher education fee caps will be fixed for two more years (2023-4 and 2024-5) with the headline full-time rate fixed at £9,250. (significantly higher than FE colleges charge).
- There are changes to the repayment arrangements for students who start in the 2023-4 academic year which will mean they take on a bigger share of the costs.
- HE student finance (including maintenance for part-time students) will be extended to those taking higher technical qualifications (HTQs).

The two consultations are:

- The Lifelong Learning Entitlement Consultation -with lots of open questions which suggests it may be hard to implement major change by 2025.
- The HE Policy Statement Consultation including options for reintroducing student number controls on a selective basis, options for introducing minimum eligibility requirements (MERs) and options for reducing the foundation year fee cap to align it with access course fees.

The Principal reported that it is difficult at the moment to assess the impact of this on the College. The FE sector is concerned that the minimum entry requirements and caps will hit colleges the hardest.

#### **Reform of Level 3 qualifications:**

Ofqual published an important consultation on 24 February on how it plans to regulate alternative academic qualifications (AAQs) and alternative technical qualifications (ATQs). These are the temporary names for the qualifications that will sit alongside A-levels and T-levels in 2024-5 and beyond. DfE has instructed Ofqual to deliver a “meaningful improvement in quality” but also to “minimise disruption” in the process.

The Principal confirmed the College has participated in the consultation and the reform has implications on the College’s curriculum offer at Level 3.

#### **Staffing:**

The AoC have recently published a report on College Staffing Issues which follows on from the College Staff Vacancies Survey that was carried out in December 2021. The findings included an estimate of around 6,000 vacancies sector wide, including in Construction (65%), Engineering (58%) and Health and Social Care (27%) with these areas having the highest rates of persistent vacancies. Equally worrying were the increasing rates of persistent vacancies in support areas, such as learning support assistants (39%), learning mentors (23%) and facilities staff (30%). The impact of these vacancies is far reaching, putting additional pressure on existing staff, driving up agency costs and negatively impacting on the student experience.

The Principal stated the report accurately reflects the current College situation. Currently there are a number of posts some of which the College is struggling to recruit to. In all instances, interim arrangements have been put place but these often come at an additional cost.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the Executive Report.

#### **NON-DELEGABLE DUTIES (ARTICLE 3.1) AND STATUTORY AND OR COMPLIANCE DUTIES**

## **7. STUDENT VOICE**

A discussion took place on maximising the student voice, and from the discussion, the following points were noted:

- Student voice to be a fixed agenda item at all Corporation meetings.
- The link governor allocated to the student experience to feedback on any student activities attended – such as the Student Parliament.
- Student Governors to use the agenda item to raise any matters they would like to bring to the attention of governors.
- Head of Governance to report on any student activities attended.
- Governor Link visits – governors were encouraged to meet with students during their link visit, preferably with no member of staff in attendance.

## **8. GOVERNOR LINK VISITS**

Governors were asked to undertake their governor link visits during the spring term and for their visit report to be made available to enable a summary report drafted by the Chair of the Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee to be an agenda item at the March Corporation meeting.

For various reasons, five scheduled visits had to be cancelled and their visits are being re-arranged to take place after Easter.

On the reports received to date, the following summary was noted:

**Ofsted Review:**

There was a general feeling of both relief and delight that the Ofsted visit had been completed and at its result. There was a consensus that both staff and students had excelled in their interactions with the Ofsted inspectors and that all should be congratulated. Staff were generally very pleased at the result and felt that it was no more than the College deserved.

**Pandemic:**

The College had performed well when confronted with the challenges brought about by the pandemic. Staff were pleased with the way in which they had responded, and students, by and large, confirmed that they continued to feel supported throughout the period.

**Attendance:**

The College had spent a great deal of time and effort ensuring that attendance was appropriately recorded throughout the period of blended learning that had been adopted during this period. As a result, attendance overall was good, although not quite hitting the targets when compared to a more traditional 'face to face' year of interaction

**Behaviour / mental health / wellbeing:**

A number of areas reported an increase in such cases during the main pandemic period, which was to be expected. The College had anticipated this and had ensure that there was sufficient resource available to help cope with the individual cases. It is to be hoped that the incidence of such cases will recede over the coming years.

High achievement:

A number of subject areas raised concerns about this issue. It was felt that the absence of “face to face” interaction with learners has inhibited their ability to ‘stretch’ the students to the levels required to achieve at the highest level. Again, this is seen as being a result of the pandemic and it is hoped that this not be repeated in the future years.

Planning:

Many departments had already identified the aforementioned issues brought about by the pandemic and had addressed these within their QIP’s, as well as looking at the areas raised by the Ofsted visit

Staffing:

A number of areas were concerned about staffing or, more accurately, the lack of a comprehensive full-time staffing complement to support the students. Some had vacancies which had to be filled by temporary staff, which had the expected knock on effects on the students ‘learning outcomes. In other cases, Department Directors / managers were concerned about the overall wellbeing of their staff who had had to contend with the challenges of the pandemic

The full report summarising key points from all Governor Link visits to be an agenda item at the July Corporation meeting.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTING**

**9. Report from the Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee**

The report and minutes from the Committee covering the meeting held 23 February 2022 (Paper 6) was received and **NOTED**.

**10. Report from the Finance, Resources and Capital Projects Committee**

The report and minutes from the Committee covering the meeting held 02 March 2022 (Paper 7) were received and **NOTED**.

The Chair drew Governors’ attention to the minutes covering the Data Dashboard review on both Health & Safety and Human Resources.

**11. Report from the Audit Committee**

The report and minutes from the Committee covering the meeting held 09 March 2022 (Paper 8) were received and **NOTED**.

**12. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

**13. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

- (i) Corporation meeting: Strategy Meeting Wednesday 11 May 2022 at 4pm (venue to be confirmed)
- (ii) Corporation meeting: Wednesday 13 July 2022 at 6pm @ Isleworth
- (iii) Meeting dates 2022/23 were made available (Paper 9).

The meeting closed at 19.40

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ -

### SUMMARY ACTION LIST

<b>Ref &amp; Date</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Review</b>
6(ii) – 13/10/21	S & BD Committee to oversee a review of the Corporation's approach to risk and risk management and outcomes of the review will be reported to the Corporation.	13/7/22
6(ii) - 13/10/21	Strategic Plan ➤ Governors' Strategy meeting in May to review ➤ Final draft to July 2022 Corporation meeting	13/7/22
8 – 14/12/21	To receive a progress update on the succession arrangements for a new Chair to be in place from the start of the next academic year	13/7/22
5 – 23/3/22	Succession planning for new governors, Chair and Vice Chairs	13/7/22
8 – 23/3/22	Full Governor Link Summary Report	13/7/22
15(iii) – 23/3/22	To schedule in the Corporation's cycle of business an annual review of the Lease situation at the Skills + Logistics Centre.	13/7/22
16 – 23/3/22	In the longer term the aim is to agree on a framework for future pay awards and to delegate to the Executive the authority to operate the framework as agreed. Any deviation to the agreed framework would then be reported to the Corporation for review and approval.	2022/23