

CORPORATION

**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 12 December 2023 at 17:30
Redditch Campus**

Present

Governors:	David Ash	Chair
	Michelle Dowse	Principal
	Jane Britton	
	Helen Butler (Virtual)	
	Gaynor Cheshire (Virtual)	
	Vicki Davies	
	Adam Hall	
	Chris Hallam	
	James Hancher (Virtual)	
	Julie Hurlston	
	Tony King	
	Denis Miles (Virtual)	
	Steve Stanier	
	Evan Whakahau	

In Attendance:	Nicki Williams	Deputy CEO & Vice Principal Corporate & Resources
	Cherie Clements	Vice Principal – Finance and Corporate Operations
	Julia Breakwell	Vice Principal Student Experience and Stakeholder Engagement
	Claire Beaman	Assistant Principal - Curriculum & Quality
	Donna Gibson	Deputy Clerk
	Kay Kavanagh	Clerk to the Corporation
	Simon Kibble	Deputy Principal
	Peter Robinson	Vice Principal – Curriculum and Standards
	Tony Green	Assistant Principal, Funding, Data & External Contracts

Action

63.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed governors to the meeting. Apologies were received from Gary Woodman.

63.2 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.

63.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting

Governors approved the minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2023 as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

63.4 Matters Arising

Governors **reviewed** the Matters Arising report and **noted** progress.

Discussions have taken place with students regarding Student Voice, and it has been agreed that students will be involved in Open Events.

Options are being considered for the staff survey, with a final provider in place ahead of March 2024.

Guidelines around AI have been shared with staff, along with information on ChatGPT, TeacherMatic, and the blended learning consortium. The Principal is also on the AoC technology Group. SLT are discussing the possibility of an AI policy.

A governor **asked** if there were opportunities to build AI into the curriculum, or of there would be courses developed for AI. The Principal advised that the policy could include an area regarding how AI is used/built into curriculum and that courses will be developed, following a successful bid for AI development.

A governor asked if staff are prepared, and how they are kept up to date. The Principal explained that as part of the PIAP, along with more CPD, AI will be covered.

Action: TG to confirm if data from Turnitin can be provided (use of AI)

TG

63.5 Determination of any other urgent business

There was no other urgent business declared.

63.6 Corporation

Governors **approved** the appointment of Steven Stanier to a first 4-year Term-of-Office, from 12/12/2023.

Governors **noted** the resignation of Stephanie Simcox as governor and Chair of the Audit Committee

Governors **noted** the resignation of Poppy Chambers as Student Governor.

63.7 Principal's Report

a) Principals Update:

The Principal provided the following highlights of the report:

- The Estates Strategy Review is now well underway with Peter Marsh spending 3 days on site reviewing the quality and usage of the site. Early indications are that site usage is circa 20% meaning there is considerable under-utilisation. The Chair of the Finance & Resources has requested to attend the feedback sessions. **Action:** TK to be invited to the feedback sessions from Peter Marsh.
- Positive feedback has been received from staff following the introduction of a more proactive internal communications strategy.
- We are 140 students above allocation. This means some financial challenges due to lagged funding, however, next year will benefit us by circa £900k. There are some large class sizes, particularly for Maths and English.
- £283K of revenue for 23/24 and £419K of capital funding over 2 years has been secured from the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF). This is being utilised to develop a Business Hub in the College and to deliver a programme of bite-sized learning to share best practice with SMEs
- An AI Centre of Excellence will be created following a successful bid where we have been awarded £150k. This will be used to employ 2 graduates to look at industries use of AI and report back.

MD

A governor **asked** for an update on the St Wulstans Building. The Principal explained that different options are being explored, one in line with the existing contract with National Star and others around the Smart Living facilities, Care qualifications and possible hiring space. It was added that the site needs to generate income as it is currently making a negative contribution due to costs of maintaining the building.

A governor **asked** if there was a timescale for repaying the loan. The Vice Principal – Finance and Corporate Operations explained that there would be an update at the next F&R committee meeting, with proposals then being presented to Corporation. Due to the ONS reclassification, consent is required if the loan is to be paid back early, but it is required to be paid back to not breach the covenant.

A governor **questioned** the timescale for the Business Hub. The Principal explained that it is being funded as part of the LSIF project and it is to complete by the end of March 2024. There is a Tender committee meeting taking place next week.

A governor **asked** for clarification regarding the termly conversations from the DfE. The Principal confirmed that these are new for the DfE. The areas likely to be covered are not the same as the College priorities (bootcamps as an example).

A governor **asked** if attendance issue of apprenticeships is fully understood. The Principal confirmed that the first round of curriculum data meetings was an opportunity to start drilling down into the data, to ensure accountability at curriculum level. The Principal added that employers don't always want to release the apprentices. So, there is a focus on if we have managed the expectations of employees, or do we need to look at the delivery of the programs. The Vice Principal – Curriculum and Standards explained that better relationships with employers is needed, with clear expectations. Employer meetings are starting in January.

Regarding the PIAP, the Principal explained that it had been updated following the feedback of governors and milestones have been added. Governors noted: Consistency and understanding of what good looks like for teaching and assessment – the HOW standard, is being developed.

The FE Commissioner's Office is supporting the College (particularly with High Needs). Opportunities are being sought to share practice across the sector.

Creation of the data dashboard as a 'single source of truth' is mission critical.

A Quality Assurance Program that holds people to account is also mission critical.

Improving governance remains a focus area.

The PIAP will be reviewed at least monthly by SLT.

MD

Action: MD to consider ways of presenting summary PIAP progress/data to the T&L committee.

The Assistant Principal, Funding, Data & External Contracts gave a presentation of the Data Dashboard.

Governors agreed that the level of data contained within the Data Dashboard was positive, and **asked the following questions:**

- Does each department have access to their data? Yes

Action

- Can the data be traced back (for audit purposes)? Yes, we have the details of where the data is from.
- Can governors get a simpler view of the data (weekly/monthly snapshots)? Curriculum data meetings have started to train staff in what we are looking for as key measures. SLT will also focus on different areas too
- Is there a date range option, and if so, how far can we go back to identify trends? As the Data Dashboard is new, trends will be seen moving forwards.
- When will the Dashboard be finalised? It will be ready in draft by mid-January, with the final version planned for Spring 2024.

Action: Data Dashboard to be added to the Internal Audit Plan for 2024/25.

Action: TG to ensure that governors do not have access to individual student details (governor view must be at a higher level)

NW

TG

The Principal provided an overview of the new KPIs. Governors noted the benchmarking against South Staffordshire College.

Action: 'Breaks in Learning' for apprentices to be added to the KPIs

MD

b) Financial KPIs

The Vice Principal – Finance and Corporate Operations confirmed that there is an improvement of the headline position.

EBITDA for the year is projected at £350k, which is £199k lower than budget. This represents 1.2% of income.

The Financial Health rating is currently at 'Good'. Current points are 200, if the College's score drops to 170 it would be 'Requires Improvement'. It was added that the bank covenant is likely to breach at year end (31 July).

c) Learner Numbers Update

16-18 Full time and High Needs actual numbers, as of 24th October 2023, which is past the 42-day attendance point, are over the College internal target and ESFA allocation, by approximately 140 students. Numbers will be confirmed once the ILR is submitted and will result in an increased allocation for 2024/25.

College apprenticeship income - The profile of new starts Aug-Nov is 161, compared to current of 150.

63.8 College Strategic Plan

The Principal reminded governors that the Strategic Plan had been previously presented at the workshop in September, and now it was presented for approval.

A governor **questioned** how the target for 'People' would be achieved (Recognised in Times Best Companies) and if there is a cost implication? The Principal acknowledged that not many colleges are at that standard, so it is something for us to aspire to and it will take time. There is a cost implication of £2600 for the anonymous survey.

A governor **asked** if the values were co-produced, or top down? The Principal explained that there are currently 4 values, but they don't fit currently, so the next step is to look at the values and all staff will be involved. Then our behaviour will be considered too.

Governors **approved** the Strategic Plan.

63.9 Update on the PIAP

See item 63.7 above.

Governors **approved** the PIAP.

63.10 HE Self-Evaluation & Action plan

The Vice Principal – Curriculum and Standards explained that the document is a self-evaluation report, and this is the review of the HE provision. Like the SAR, it covers the evaluation of the previous year and sets an action plan for the future.

A governor **questioned** the differences between full and part-time. The Vice Principal – Curriculum and Standards explained that full-time students are College students, but part-time students are predominantly CIPP. Part of the fees are paid for by the student, and part by the company/employer. Career breaks also impact the data.

A governor **asked** if the outstanding quality improvement actions will be repeated? It was confirmed that they are built into this year's actions.

A governor **asked** if the attendance and impact are linked. The Vice Principal – Curriculum and Standards explained that attendance is not a feature, however, the attendance is 92% and the College has received a bronze for both student experience and outcomes.

Governors approved the HE Self-Evaluation & Action plan.

63.11 Prevent Strategy & Action Plan 2023-24

This strategy which is reviewed annually outlines Heart of Worcestershire College's approach to supporting the National 'Prevent' agenda, linked to the safeguarding of our students and staff. This strategy is written with reference to the updated Home Office Prevent Duty Guidance (October 2023) which comes into force in January 2024.

A governor **asked** how we can evidence the impact? The Vice Principal Student Experience and Stakeholder Engagement explained that there is an action on the PIAP, and the action plan includes links to the PIAP action. Particularly around ESOL learners, we have introduced the DfE Regional Prevent co-ordinator, who will be having a session with ESOL teachers. The Quality Assurance processes are to be introduced, with improved focus on an Islamist threat.

A governor **questioned** the Ofsted feedback concerning Prevent and Apprenticeships. The Vice Principal Student Experience and Stakeholder Engagement explained that it related to their understanding of Prevent in the workplace. This is being discussed by SLT shortly, with the next step to be for all staff to have an enhanced session.

Governors **approved** the Prevent Strategy, Risk Assessment and Action Plan for 2023/24.

63.12 Health & Safety Report

The Deputy CEO & Vice Principal Corporate & Resources advised that this was the Term 3 update for Health & Safety and the report had previously been presented at the F&R committee.

There have been no RIDDOR or reportable accidents.

Action: A governor **requested** that the % of staff who have completed their mandatory training be added to the report.

NW

A governor asked what actions are being taken due to the number of trained first aiders reducing to 25. The Deputy CEO & Vice Principal Corporate & Resources advised that the reduction is due to staff leaving that had completed the training. Moving forward, a number of staff that are more 'building based' are required to be first aid qualified as part of their job description.

Governors **approved** the Health & Safety Report.

63.13 Use of the Corporation Seal – Annual Report

The Clerk to the Corporation provided an overview of the latest report on the use of the Seal. There were no questions.

63.14 Update on Overseas Opportunity

The Vice Principal – Curriculum and Standards reminded governors that before the summer the opportunity re HME logistics, and the facility for schools in the UK and overseas (Dubai), was discussed with the Corporation.

The College have assisted them in proceeding with their work (Duckworth centre use of ramps). Subsequently, we have not bid for a T-Level project that could have provided collaborative opportunities.

HME Logistics are now hoping to provide a B-Tech facility in Dubai by September. We are not involved in that project, and there are no other project opportunities at this time.

The Principal added that whilst the College should consider international opportunities, this should not be a focus until the College has returned to a 'good' Ofsted grade. All governors **agreed**.

63.15 Audit Committee Update

Governors **noted** the resignation of Stephanie Simcox and **approved** Chris Hallam as the new Chair for the Audit Committee.

The Chair of the Audit Committee thanked SLT for their work with both the internal and external auditors.

It is clear throughout the recommendations that Strategy is to be seen more prominently at all levels.

Action

2022/23 Financial Statements

RAAC is to be added (none has been identified at any site)
Governors **approved** the 2022/23 Financial Statements

Regulatory Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Governors **approved** the Regulatory Self-Assessment Questionnaire, noting the changes following the ONS reclassification.

External Audit Report

Governors **approved** the External Audit Report.

Internal Annual Auditors Report 2022/23

Governors **approved** the Internal Annual Auditors Report 2022/23.

Audit Committee Annual Report 2022/23

Governors **approved** the Audit Committee Annual Report for 2022/23 acknowledging the input from Stephanie Simcox.

Risk Management 2022/23 Annual Report

Governors **approved** the Risk Management 2022/23 Annual Report.

Action: Governors requested a seminar for governors on strategic risks – to be delivered by RSM, onsite.

NW

Risk Management Plan 2023/24

Governors **approved** the Risk Management Plan for 2023/24.

Strategic Risk Register

A governor **questioned** if 'Ransomware' should have separate category to cyber risk. The Deputy CEO & Vice Principal Corporate & Resources advised that RSM are currently reviewing our cyber risks – we are awaiting the full report.

Action: NW to mention ransomware specifically – and ask RSM how much of a risk they consider it to be.

NW

Governors **approved** the Strategic Risk Register.

Annual Procurement Report (Value for Money)

Governors **approved** the Annual Procurement Report, noting that it gives assurance and confidence around contracts.

63.16 Finance & Resources Committee Update

The Chair of the Finance & Resources committee provided an overview of the meeting, explaining that as it was the first meeting of the committee, further refinements will be made agenda items moving forwards.

63.17 Teaching & Learning Committee Update

The Chair of the Teaching & Learning Committee provided an overview of the meeting, explaining that as the committee met shortly after the Ofsted visit, the agenda was

Action

adapted for the members have an opportunity to discuss the outcomes of the Ofsted inspection in more detail.

The Chair of the committee added that having now seen the Data Dashboard, it may not cover all areas of data that the committee would like assurance on. **Action:** GC, MD, SK and TG to revisit the Data Dashboard to ensure that it captures the relevant data for governors.

GC / MD /
SK / TG

KPIs are still being developed, with progress against the KPIs requiring tracking.

The curriculum offer for 2024/25 will be presented to the Corporation at the next meeting, following the next T&L committee meeting.

A governor asked if support for teachers was discussed (coaching and mentoring). The Chair of the committee confirmed that a detailed discussion had taken place and explained that it was difficult to have a generic process as teachers are at different levels/stages of their careers, so a more targeted approach will be taken. The Principal added that a Peer Mentoring Scheme is in place, although take-up is low.

63.18 Governance & Search Committee Update

The Chair has attended all committee meetings during the Autumn Term.

Recruitment of new governors continues, as there remains 2 vacancies, plus a student governor vacancy. A qualified Accountant is required for 2024/25, other areas of focus are Estates and Academic experience.

A process to look at the number of papers being presented to Corporation will take place, and minutes will be refined, to ensure that challenge is highlighted.

Induction for new governors will commence in the new year.

63.19 Remuneration Committee Update

Governors **approved** the Remuneration Committee Annual Report.

63.20 Governance:

Feedback on Committee Structure to date was invited. Governors felt that it was too early to see the impact of the new committee structure.

The principal added that the committees have provided the opportunity to focus in more detail at different areas, enabling more challenge, support and ideas.

A governor **asked** if there was a method for governors raising questions outside of Corporation meetings. The Chair explained that moving forward all governors would be sent agendas and minutes to all meetings, as an opportunity to raise questions.

Governors note the 'Governor 1-2-1 Feedback'.

63.21 Policies

Governors **approved**:

- Financial Regulations

Action

- Treasury Management Policy
- Safeguarding Policy & Procedures

Action: Vice Principal Student Experience and Stakeholder Engagement to advise on the number of staff that have completed the Safeguarding training.

JB

63.22 Any Other Business

There was no other business.

63.23 Confidential Items

-24 See Confidential Minutes.

63.25 Restricted Confidential Items (1 of 2)

See Restricted Confidential Minutes (1 of 2)

63.26 Restricted Confidential Items (2 of 2)

- See Restricted Confidential Minutes (2 of 2)

63.28

63.29 Date and Time of Next Meeting:

5 March 2024, The Source, Worcester

There being no further business the meeting ended at 21:45?