

**CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE**

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Board of Governors held on  
Monday 13 March 2023 at 5pm via Teams**

**PRESENT**

Mr Mark Taylor	Mr Mike Hastings (Vice Chair)
Mr Clarence Crosdale (Vice Chair)	Ms Lindsey Flynn
Ms Dionne Barrett (from item 5(b))	Mr Scott Thompson (from item 5 (a))
Mrs Amanda Tomlinson	Mr Trevor Dutton
Mr Mal Cowgill	Mrs Hshaana Knight
Mr Sam Duru	Ms Ioana Axinte
Ms Nisha Rai	Ms Anya Priya Luis (Student) (from item 7(2))

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Mr Peter Merry	-	Deputy Chief Executive
Mrs Louise Fall	-	Deputy Principal
Ms Lynn Parker	-	Assistant Principal
Mr Mike Dixon	-	Assistant Principal
Mrs Elizabeth Ball	-	Head of Governance
Mr Andrew Woodford	-	Director of Finance

**12/23 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM 1)**

Apologies were received from Mr Ian Gardner, Mr John Bradford and Ms Wendy Harris.

Mr Mark Taylor declared a conflict of loyalty as an employee of Wolverhampton City Council.

**13/23 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING (ITEM 2)**

**It was resolved that the non-confidential and confidential minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2023 be approved.**

**It was agreed that the confidential minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2023 could now be released for public inspection.**

The Board of Governors noted the attendance figures for the current academic year and that these were currently below the target of 80%. Attendance levels would form part of the discussions at the Governors Strategy Session on 24 April 2023.

**14/23 REPORT ON OUTSTANDING ITEM (ITEM 3)**

The Board of Governors noted the report on outstanding actions.

#### **15/23 CORRESPONDENCE (ITEM 4)**

The Principal reported that a letter had been received from UCU in relation to the restructuring that was taking place at the College and which affected staff in three areas.

It was noted that the Principal had responded to the letter and he agreed to circulate the response as soon as possible.

The Principal reported that the proposal had been agreed as part of the budget approval in July 2022 but was delayed, partly in anticipation of the Ofsted inspection, but also to see the level of enrolments for the College's ESOL provision in October 2022.

Governors asked whether concerns about staff performance related to individuals or the areas affected.

They were advised that the proposals related to the restructuring of two areas, the low levels of enrolments for ESOL and the reduction in funding for that provision by the West Midlands Combined Authority.

Governors asked whether the position in relation to ESOL provision had been considered as part of the Curriculum Planning process. It was noted that one Governor had attended a Curriculum Purchasing meeting where this had been discussed and the reasons for the reduction in staff was explained.

Governors commented that the letter indicated there would be a ballot to support industrial action and whether this was a risk and also whether there would be any potential claims.

The Principal reported that the relevant posts were redundant and staff had elected to take voluntary redundancy. As a result it was unlikely there would be any claims made. He advised, however, that the Union was free to ballot their members if they wished.

**The Board of Governors noted the report and the Principal agreed to circulate his letter in response and further notes about the position as soon as possible.**

#### **16/23 SDIP – RAIL PROPOSAL (CONFIDENTIAL) (ITEM 5(a))**

*Scott Thompson joined the meeting*

#### **17/23 KPI REPORT (ITEM 5 (b))**

The Principal presented the report which provided an update on performance against Key Performance Indicators.

Governors noted the areas which were being monitored closely including apprenticeships and levels of attendance, but questioned the target for staff engagement for 2023/24 which had been increased to 90%.

The Deputy Principal reported that there was a push to improve levels of staff engagement through a number of strategies including Pulse Surveys.

Governors asked if these surveys were working and were advised that those that have taken place so far were positive.

***Dionne Barrett joined the meeting.***

They also suggested that the report include a RAG rating which would ensure that they could focus on performance measures that need to be monitored.

**It was resolved that the report be noted.**

### **18/23 PROPERTY UPDATE (ITEM 5)**

#### CoWTechC

The Deputy Chief Executive reported that work is progressing at the Wellington Road site, but that the detailed explorations have uncovered extensive coal mining activity which require ground work treatment. It was noted, however, that a contingency for this had been included in the budget.

#### CLQ

Governors were advised that the College continues to have discussions with the Bank and DfE about the City Learning Quarter and potential refinancing. It was reported that delays are causing significant inflationary pressures for which additional funding will be required and discussions are taking place with the City Council to explore how this could be achieved.

It was also reported that the College is working with the City Council to release the College's share of the property to support the project.

Governors asked whether the refinancing has the potential to repay the Barclays debt. The Deputy Chief Executive reported that this was the ambition, but a decision is needed from the Treasury. This was causing a delay and impacting on the project and inflationary pressures.

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that he and the Director of Finance were in the process of preparing the business case for submission.

**The Board of Governors noted the report.**

### **19/23 APPOINTMENT OF STAFF GOVERNOR (ITEM 6)**

The Head of Governance reported that one nomination had been received for the role of Staff Governor from Wendy Harris who is a Quality Manager at the College. As a result it had not been necessary to hold an election.

**It was resolved that Wendy Harris be appointed as Staff Governor for a period of four years to 12 March 2027.**

## **20/23 COLLEGE REPORT (ITEM 7)**

### **Ofsted report**

The Deputy Principal referred Governors to the recent Ofsted Inspection report, the College Quality Improvement Plan and the Ofsted feedback report.

It was noted that the Ofsted feedback had been incorporated into the Quality Improvement Plan and that the main area of focus related to the College's apprenticeship provision.

The Deputy Principal reported that each area of the College also has a Quality Improvement Plan to ensure that relevant actions are taken and Governors asked what action is taken where a specific area is under performing.

The Deputy Principal advised that reviews of the Quality Improvement plans for each area and staff appraisals and that the College continues to improve communication with staff and staff morale, particularly ensuring that staff that are not involved in teaching appreciate that their role is also critical in supporting what happens in the classroom.

Governors asked what action was being taken to address the point made in relation to adult learners on Access to Higher Education courses being aware of the range of opportunities available to them.

The Deputy Principal reported that Access to HE students are focussed on moving onto a degree course at University, but that information is provided about other routes that are available to them.

Governors noted that Inspectors had discussed Safeguarding with Governors and that Governors had indicated that the increase in referrals was seen as positive as it evidenced that the College's processes are effective.

They asked, however, whether Managers were reassured that there are sufficient resources to respond to the increase.

The Deputy Principal reported that the College continues to invest in the Safeguarding Team and in the training of Mental Health First Aiders. In addition, training has been provided by the City Council and as a result there are sufficient resources to support the level of referrals.

**The Board of Governors noted the outcomes of the OfSTED Inspection Report and actions planned to further improve performance.**

### **1. Student Engagement**

#### **Safeguarding Referrals – Update**

The Deputy Principal presented the report and highlighted the increase in the level of referrals, particularly in relation to mental health. It was noted that levels of

homelessness were also increasing and there were obvious signs of the impact of the cost of living crisis.

The Deputy Principal assured Governors that the College has sufficient resources to provide the necessary support. Governors commented that during the pandemic students were encouraged to access pastoral support and these students are now going through the College system, which may be contributing to the increase in numbers.

The Deputy Principal confirmed that the Mental Health First Aiders are also providing support for staff.

**The Board of Governors noted the in-year tracking of Safeguarding referrals which indicates an increase in comparison to last year.**

## **2. Student Success**

### Accountability Agreements

The Deputy Principal introduced the report and advised that the College must develop and submit an annual Accountability statement by 31 May 2023.

Governors noted that the College is working to produce the statement which will set out how the College is aligning to the priorities outlined by the LSIPS and that it will need to be signed off by the Board at their meeting in May 2023.

It was reported that the FE Commissioner has advised that as the College remains in intervention, they should be involved in the preparation.

***Anya Priya Luis joined the meeting.***

**The Board of Governors noted the expectations on the College to develop and submit an annual accountability statement which forms part of the Accountability Agreement.**

### T Level Development

The Assistant Principal presented the report and confirmed that the College will be delivering its first T levels from September 2023.

The report detailed the intent, implementation and impact of the proposals and it was noted that staff and Governors had received awareness training from the Education and Training Foundation.

It was reported that one of the main challenges is the work placements that all students must complete and that to facilitate this, staff are working with both new and existing employers. However, it was highlighted that it is also challenging to ensure that students and parents are aware of the options available to them, so a series of marketing activities are taking place.

The Deputy Chief Executive reported that the outcome of the application for the Facilities Grant would not be known until the summer, but that the College had also received an automatic grant to enable some improvements. However, he advised that this money will not be spent until the outcome of the grant applications is known.

Governors noted the amount of work experience that is required and asked how that will be provided.

The Assistant Principal reported that this is still being worked on with the intention that it will be delivered over the two-year period. She advised that there is a commitment to mentor students with 40% of the qualification being linked to the work experience aspect.

Governors asked whether this was an opportunity to feed into the pre-higher level apprenticeship group and the Assistant Principal confirmed that the College is working with the apprenticeship employers with some indicating that they would be prepared to take students on the day when apprentices are in College.

Governors suggested that this may also be an opportunity to work with new providers, as the commitment is not as great as with apprenticeships.

The Assistant Principal reported that in addition to providing the work placements, there is a concern about the removal of BTEC provision, as learners studying T levels must have grade 4 English and maths.

Governors commented that whilst there is a concern about socially disadvantaging learners, T levels do present an opportunity for the College.

This was acknowledged by the Principal, however there are concerns about the impact on students if T levels become the only route available and that whilst there will be level 2 and level 3 qualifications available for those who do not want to study T levels, there is a concern that funding for these may be lost.

**The Board of Governors noted the T Level developments and progress that leads to delivery from September 2023.**

#### Maths and English Performance Update

The Assistant Principal presented the report and the updated Maths and English Strategy.

It was reported that the emphasis in-year has been on improving the student experience and further embedding Maths and English into the whole College ethos to improving engagement, attendance and results.

The Assistant Principal highlighted key changes, including the return to full face-to-face teaching, using CENTURY only as a supplementary tool.

It was noted that levels of attendance had improved from last year, but Ofsted had commented on levels of attendance in Maths and English. A Task and Finish Group has been established to identify actions and make improvements.

Governors asked whether levels of attendance are affected as students are finding Maths difficult. The Assistant Principal reported that some students do not understand why they have to continue to study Maths and may have had poor experiences in the past. She advised that new systems and actions have been introduced and these will be measured to find out if they have been effective. Attendance at the full mock exam will be a measure of whether the strategies have worked.

Governors asked whether the College offers coaching to students to try and address 'limiting beliefs' or whether this could be addressed as an extension of the support provided for mental health issues or by specialist support.

The Assistant Principal emphasised the importance of understanding the context but that both English and Maths need to be more embedded into the curriculum. She reported that the College does have 'Bootcamps' and one-to-one sessions are helpful. Revision sessions are also held during the year.

The Deputy Principal advised that levels of attendance appeared higher at the recent whole mock Maths exam.

Governors asked whether the College had obtained feedback from students about why they did not attend Maths and English sessions.

The Assistant Principal reported that staff and Curriculum Managers are constantly obtaining feedback from students and that often it can be that they just do not want to go or do not see the point in the sessions.

Governors asked whether another option would be to use peer learning or whether hybrid learning would be successful in engaging students.

The Assistant Principal reported that when the students returned after the pandemic there was some online learning, but attendance was low and students' feedback was that they wanted to have face-to-face teaching.

However, students do have access to Google Classroom and other learning platforms which can be used at any time and so there is some hybrid learning taking place and also some peer support.

### **The Board of Governors noted the progress of interventions to improve GCSE Maths and English performance.**

#### Student Achievement Gaps

The Deputy Principal presented the report which provided an overview of any achievement gaps between students.

It was highlighted that the material gap in achievement between adult male and female students is being monitored with Curriculum areas monitoring this via their Quality Improvement Plan.

It was reported that gaps in performance by students by ethnicity vary from year to year depending on the number of students enrolled and where there are low numbers the performance of one student can have a big impact.

In relation to students identifying as having a difficulty, it was recognised by OfSTED that across the piece those learners who receive support achieve well.

**The Board of Governors noted the monitoring of student achievement gaps in year.**

### 3. **Business Success**

#### Management Accounts

The Director of Finance presented the report and highlighted key points including variances in relation to income and pay and non-pay budgets.

It was noted that the College's cash position remains strong, but Governors recalled that it had been suggested that a group be established to review the presentation of the Management Accounts and the inclusion of a forecast year end position. Trevor Dutton volunteered to be part of that group.

The Director of Finance advised that whilst this was not included for the January 2023 Management Accounts, February will show the reforecast position.

Governors asked if commercial revenue is included within other income and whether with the proposals that had been discussed there was an opportunity to grow that further.

The Director of Finance confirmed that the reforecast was relatively prudent and that it is hoped that commercial income will increase. He also advised that there are further opportunities for the College to exceed its ESFA and WMCA funding forecast.

Governors welcomed the data Dashboard and it was confirmed that the RAG rating is based on the year-to-date.

It was emphasised that whilst knowing the current position was helpful, Governors needed to understand what the forecast is and how any shortfall will be remedied.

**The Board of Governors received the Management Accounts to January 2023.**

#### Mid Year Reforecast

The Director of Finance reported that the reforecast is based on a 6+6 basis, with actuals for the six months to January and a forecast for the remaining six months of the year.



Governors noted the key changes in income and that pay costs through the year have been consistently below budget. It was also noted that since the budget was put together in July 2022, a number of items that could not have been forecast have taken place.

The Director of Finance reported that the reforecast will form part of the paper that is submitted to the Bank and DfE in relation to the College's debt position.

**The Board of Governors noted the 6 plus 6 reforecast.**

#### Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan, together with the Defining Green Futures Action Plan which sets out the actions the College will take to achieve carbon net-zero by 2033.

Governors welcomed the strategy, but commented that it will be necessary to make resources available to achieve the objective.

They also questioned whether, as education is seen to be key, there is an expectation for individuals and for the College to reduce the use of valuable resources.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that all students need to understand the climate issues that are being faced and their role in trying to remedy the position. However, it is not just about learners. As education takes up 1% of land space in England institutions also have a role in how efficient they are.

**It was resolved:**

- **That the Sustainability Strategy and Action Plan be approved, including a commitment to achieve carbon net zero by 2033 and declaring a climate crisis.**

***Scott Thompson left the meeting***

***Sam Duru left the meeting.***

#### Bidding Update

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the report which provided a summary of projects for the 2022/23 year-to-date.

He confirmed that the two capital bids approved at the last meeting were successfully submitted on time.

In relation to the capital bids, Governors asked whether the College had capacity for delivery. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the College has established a formal bidding group that meets weekly to ensure that good quality bids are submitted. However as there cannot be any certainty about which bids will be successful, when a capital bid is approved there is a need to increase capacity for delivery.

**The Board of Governors noted the report on capital bidding in the year-to-date (including T Level capital submissions)**

### Partnership Update

The Deputy Chief Executive presented the report which summarised the aggregate achievement rates for partners as at the end of February 2023.

It was reported that the College works with a small number of partners and the majority have high retention and achievement rates. One, however, has a one-year decline in achievement and the contract will be terminated.

Governors noted that partners in scope for OfSTED had been inspected and that in line with ESFA and WMCA guidance the College performs a number of subcontracting checks and quality activities. As the College subcontracts more than £100k of provision, an independent report on the systems and controls in place to manage subcontracted provision is required. This will be carried out by the College's internal auditors.

It was noted that Scott Thompson was involved in a small amount of provision with the College and that his should be recorded, as he is a member of the Board of Governors.

#### **The Board of Governors:**

- **Noted the report and the contract termination with FMBS**
- **Approved the increased ESFA allocation for NIS.**

### **4. People Engagement**

#### Pay Award

The Principal provided an update in relation to the restructuring that has taken place and the considerations for Governors when discussing a potential pay award for staff.

He advised that the College is committed to backdating any award to 1 February, but that currently there are many uncertainties both internally and externally, including the ONS reclassification, the impact of the living wage and pay differentials.

It was noted that the College continues to negotiate with UCU in relation to a new Teaching contract.

The Principal commented that as the College remains under a Financial Notice to Improve, some concerns were raised when the College has previously made pay awards, however this has helped to retain staff.

He confirmed that the position will become clearer over the next few months and that when an award was made it would apply to all staff at the same level.

**The Board of Governors noted the report.**

The Head of Governance reported that a written resolution had been circulated on 17 February 2023, with a lapse date of Saturday 25 February 2023.

It was noted that the resolution was passed.

**The Board of Governors endorsed the written resolution.**

**22/23 ANY OTHER BUSINESS (ITEM 9)**

Governors asked if a future report could consider issues relating to plagiarism and how it is being challenged.

**24/23 CONFIDENTIALITY (ITEM 10)**

**It was resolved that the following reports remain confidential:**

- Rail Proposal
- Bidding Update
- Partnership Update

**25/23 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING (ITEM 11)**

**Governor Strategy Session – 24 April 2023 1pm-5pm**

**Board of Governors – 15 May 2023 at 5pm**