

**Minutes of the Corporation Meeting Held on
Tuesday 10 December 2024**

Present: Subhaan Ali, Damien Bourke, Amanda Bromley, Malcolm Bruce, Jonathan Frankham, Michael Ginger, Nicky Littler, John Lyne (Chair), Jackie Moores, Jemma Newton, Remell Thompson-Bell, Atta Ul-Rasool

Nils Elgar, Clerk to the Corporation

In Attendance: Dave Dobson (Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure), Leon Dowd (Deputy Principal Quality and People), Pewist Osman (Assistant Principal Student Services and Inclusion)

ACTION

24/25.29 Apologies for Absence

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to accept the apologies of Simon Boyle, Phill Brown, Kirk Cornwall and Mariam Rana and Nicola Welland. **Accepted**

24/25.30 Declarations of Interest

It was noted that:

Noted

- (i) Jonathan Frankham had a standing declaration that he was an employee of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), the College's principal funder and regulator;
- (ii) in relation to Agenda Item 16 (Confidential Minutes of the Board Meeting, 21 November 2024), Staff and Student Governors and College officers would withdraw from the meeting for the consideration of this item.

24/25.31 Minutes of the Meeting Held on 21 November 2024

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2024. **Approved**

24/25.32 Matters Arising

There were no Matters Arising.

24/25.33 Committees' Report

The Clerk to the Corporation reported the following points:

- (i) the only committee meeting held since the date of the last Board meeting was the Audit Committee on 26 November 2024;
- (ii) the meeting began with a joint session with the Board to consider the Annual Report to the Governors on the External Audit for the Year Ended 31 July 2024. Although not finalised, this was a very positive report and the following recommendations were made:

- the Board of Governors approve the signing of the Statement of Members' Responsibilities by the Chair of Governors;
 - the Board of Governors approve the signing of the Letters of Representation by the Chair of Governors and Principal / Accounting Officer;
- (iii) other year-end documents considered (solely by the Audit Committee) included the Audit Committee Annual Report 2023/24 and the Members' Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2024. Both were recommended to the Board of Governors for approval. All the above-mentioned papers were being taken forward later in the agenda.

Governors were content with the report as presented.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 26 November 2024. **Noted**

24/25.34 Safeguarding Annual Report 2023/24 and Policy

Damien Bourke, Jonathan Frankham and Michael Ginger joined the meeting during this item.

The Assistant Principal Student Services and Inclusion raised the following points:

- (i) key strengths and effectiveness of safeguarding:
- the College had self-assessed the arrangements for safeguarding as effective; Ofsted also reached this judgement during the College's inspection in March 2024;
 - in the January 2024 teaching and learning survey, 96% of students said they felt safe in College;
 - the College's vulnerable students were well supported;
 - safeguarding policies and their implementation fully complied with statutory guidance and local authority processes;
 - in 2023/24 there were 1,790 safeguarding incidents relating to 628 students. 256 students needed the involvement of external agencies. While there was a reduction in the number of incidents, the number of students being supported increased by 24.6% on the previous year;
 - mental health and domestic abuse remained key concerns;
 - one Prevent referral was made to Greater Manchester Police;
 - the overall achievement rate for students receiving support was 81.9%. This was 4.1%-points lower than the achievement rate of students who received no support (86.0%). Similarly, the retention rate for those supported was 86.0%, which was 4.3%-points less than the retention rate of those who did not receive support (90.3%);

- the overall achievement rate for care experienced students in 2023/24 was 83%, a 7%-point increase on 2022/23. This resulted in a significant narrowing of the gap between care experienced and the 16-18 cohort average. The retention rate for care experienced students was 87%, also a 7%-point improvement on 2022/23. Attendance was 84.5%, which was a 6%-point increase on 2022/23;
- (ii) recent developments:
 - a revised Safeguarding Policy developed in partnership with the Open University;
 - a comprehensive health and wellbeing strategy;
 - development of a new referral process to enhance use of technology to make prompt referrals;
 - new partnership with Local Authority to deliver safeguarding training to Designated Safeguarding Leads in the borough;
- (iii) policy update:
 - the Safeguarding Policy had been revised to reflect Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024, as well as guidance from the Open University;
 - the Prevent Strategy has been revised to reflect the latest Home Office and DfE statutory guidance;
- (iv) emerging themes 2024/25:
 - the College was monitoring the rise in the number of students with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP);
 - a significant number of students remained involved with Children's Services and who were receiving statutory support including Child Protection, Child in Need and Early Help Assessments;
 - mental health continued to be the greatest factor in referrals;
 - the College continued to support a number of students with serious domestic violence disclosures;
 - to ensure vulnerable students are provided with the best support possible, attendance, retention and support needs are monitored through regular meetings and analyses of data, particularly care experienced and EHCP students.

Issues discussed by Governors included:

- (i) what the College was doing to help students to speak up on such issues (as this was difficult for some students). It was noted that this was particularly the case for male students and so in some male-dominated curriculum areas, such as Motor Vehicle, specific tutorial sessions were being provided;
- (ii) that it was important to build communities with students and the College's success in doing so was reflected in the key metric that 96% of students had said that they feel safe at College;
- (iii) that the College should be congratulated on what it was doing, however the growth in the number of students requiring support was partially due to the failure of other

organisations to provide the required support, and the College would likely reach its limit of what could be provided without additional funding. The Deputy Principal Quality and People opined that the College was almost at that point and agreed that the funding systems were no longer fit for purpose. He reported that the Senior Leadership Team was due to consider a paper later in the week for more resources in this area;

- (iv) whether securing a counselling service on site would be possible. It was noted that short-term funding had previously secured this kind of support but it had not been able to be sustained. A limited counselling service was still provided by the College.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the quality of safeguarding practice as judged in the self-assessment report. **Noted**

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve the revised Safeguarding Policy. **Approved**

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve the revised Prevent Policy. **Approved**

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the emerging themes from the start of the academic year. **Noted**

The Assistant Principal Student Services and Inclusion withdrew from the meeting at the end of this item.

24/25.35 **Members' Report and Financial Statements**

(i) **Annual Report to the Members of the Corporation on the External Audit for the Year Ended 31 July 2024 (incl. Letters of Representation)**

The Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure commented that an early draft of this report had previously been scrutinised by the Board of Governors in a joint meeting with the Audit Committee to meet the requirement of the ESFA. Key points included:

- (i) the College reported a surplus of £590k (2022: deficit £1,788k). After accounting for actuarial gain of £836k (2023: gain of £430k) in respect of the pension schemes the College reported total comprehensive income of £246k (2023: total comprehensive income of £2,218k);
- (ii) the College balance sheet position at the year-end showed net assets of £33,009k (2023: £33,255k);
- (iii) for the year ended 31 July 2025, the College had predicted a deficit of £351k within its financial budget prior to adjustments in respect of the pension schemes;
- (iv) audit opinion – WBG, the External Audit and Reporting Accountant, had issued an unmodified audit opinion;
- (v) regularity audit opinion – WBG had no issues to report in relation to their regularity opinion;

- (vi) going concern – WBG were satisfied that the Board of Governors' assessment of the going concern basis of preparation was appropriate;
- (vii) governance arrangement – WBG were satisfied that the College operated appropriate governance procedures and that management had adequate arrangements in place covering standards of conduct;
- (viii) internal controls – WBG had not identified any areas where the operation of internal financial controls could be improved.

Governors were content with the report as presented.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve the signing of the Statement of Members' Responsibilities by the Chair of Governors. **Approved**

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve the signing of the Letters of Representation by the Chair of Governors and Principal / Accounting Officer. **Approved**

(ii) Audit Committee Annual Report 2023/24

Governors noted that the Audit Committee Annual Report 2023/24 had previously been scrutinised by the Audit Committee and recommended to the Board of Governors for approval. The report had drawn on the work of the Internal Audit Service, External Auditor and Reporting Accountant as well as Ofsted and the External Governance Review. The overall conclusion of the Audit Committee was *"...that the Corporation had in place adequate and effective assurance arrangements, assurance over subcontracting, framework of governance, risk management and control processes for the effective and efficient use of resources, solvency and the safeguarding of its assets throughout the year ended 31 July 2024"*.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve the Audit Committee Annual Report 2023/24. **Approved**

(iii) Members' Report and Financial Statements

The Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure reported the following key points:

- (i) the outturn position including pension charges showed the College incurred a surplus before other gains and losses in the year of £1,876k (2022/23: surplus of £1,788k), with total comprehensive income of £246k (2021/22: £2,218k);
- (ii) if the demolition loss and pension entries were removed from the accounts, the College had reported an underlying operating surplus of £1,240k (2022/23: £2,205k). This was the position after stripping out the loss of demolition of £1,286k (2022/23: £0), net charges for payroll of minus £97k (2022/23: £620k) and interest income of £733k (2022/23: £203k);

- (iii) the Audit Committee had recommended the Members' Report and Financial Statements to the Board of Governors for approval.

Governors noted a couple of further minor changes were required and were content with report as presented.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve the Members' Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2024.

Approved

24/25.36 October Finance Report

The Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure reported the following:

- (i) as at 31 October 2024 there was an overall adverse variance of £212k. This included a £403k overspend in Non-Pay costs, related mostly to a timing issue in relation to exams costs. This was offset by a favourable variance in Pay Costs of £27k and a favourable variance in income of £117k;
- (ii) College capital expenditure was in line with agreed approvals;
- (iii) the College's financial health was planned to be 'Good' for 2024/25 due to setting a deficit budget. This might improve when the budget reforecast was done in January 2025;
- (iv) cash was expected to remain strong to the end of the year (£5.93m), which would ensure that the College could continue to operate effectively on a day-to-day basis;
- (v) an update on capital projects:
 - an update on the Further Education Capital Transformation Fund (FECTF) Project B (Motor Vehicle). This commenced in September 2023 and was opened to students in September 2024. Some external ground works remained together with some snagging. The overall cost for Projects A and B was £11.740m and some £36k project contingency remained;
 - summer 2024 works were largely completed as planned;
 - recent poor weather had highlighted that two older buildings (Dovestones and Medlock) needed further work to be made water tight and investigation work was now underway.

Governors considered the following issues:

- (i) that discussions on sufficiency were ongoing;
- (ii) that the Head of Estates was working up plans for further capital works for when funding became available. It was noted that capital monies was likely to be made available and so having projects that were 'shovel ready' was important.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the October Finance Report.

Noted

24/25.37 Finance Matters:**(i) Financial Regulations**

The Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure reported that he had reviewed the Financial Regulations and no changes were proposed.

Governors were content with the report as presented.

(ii) Treasury Management

The Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure reported that he had reviewed the Treasury Management Policy and no changes were proposed.

Governors were content with the Treasury Management Annual Report as presented.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the progress made in respect of the Treasury Management targets for 2023/24.

Noted

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve key targets for 2024/25.

Approved

24/25.38 Independence of the Data Protection Officer

The Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure reported the following points:

- (i) that he had been appointed into the Data Protection Officer (DPO) role from 1 September 2024;
- (ii) that during initial training he had identified that the appointment might be viewed as a conflict of interest, which was discussed during a recent Internal Audit Service review of GDPR Compliance;
- (iii) that in discussions with the Internal Audit Service he noted that it was not uncommon for an individual with his responsibilities to have this role but it was recommended that an assessment be done and presented to the Board of Governors for consideration;
- (iv) the paper set out the requirements to appoint a DPO and an assessment of the potential conflict of interest;
- (v) that Governors were invited to consider the requirements of the appointment of a DPO against the appointment of the Vice Principal, Finance and Infrastructure into that role.

Issues considered by Governors included:

- (i) that the issue was discussed at the last Audit Committee meeting and, on balance, it was felt that adequate safeguards were in place;
- (ii) that the Chair of Governors had also been briefed and had suggested that the document emphasise that the Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure had direct access to the

- Chair of Governors, Vice Chair of Governors and Chair of the Audit Committee in his role as DPO;
- (iii) that although he oversaw departments that had significant personal data processing responsibilities, his role as Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure did not require him to process personal information to any significant extent;
 - (iv) that responding to data breaches represented only a small part of the time of the DPO, with subject access requests much more time consuming. The majority of these were linked to College staff and HR was not within the Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure's remit;
 - (v) that Governors were content with the debate held and were supportive of the position reached by management.

Resolved: That the Independence of the Data Protection Officer report be noted.

Noted

24/25.39 Update on Governor Engagement and Development Activities

The following Governor development and/or engagement activities that had taken place since the last Board meeting were reported:

- (i) 23.10.24 – New Governor Induction – Mariam Rana;
- (ii) 08.11.24 – New Governor induction – Subhaan Ali;
- (iii) 11.11.24 – Meeting with Deputy Principal Quality and People re. Annual HR Annual Report and People and Culture element of the 2025 – 2030 Strategic Plan – Nicky Littler;
- (iv) 21.11.24 – Attended College for World Skills UK Competitions – John Lyne and Atta Ul-Rasool;
- (v) 16.11.23 – Graduation Ceremony – Malcolm Bruce, Nicky Littler, Jemma Newton, Atta Ul-Rasool.

Feedback was given by Governors who attended the World Skills UK Competitions held at the College and in relation to the Graduation Ceremony. Governors were encouraged to report any unrecorded training or engagement activities that had been undertaken with the Clerk.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the verbal update on Governor Engagement and Development Activities.

Noted

24/25.40 Items to Note

(i) Chair's Action

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note that no Chair's Actions had been taken since the date of the last meeting.

Noted

(ii) Use of the Seal of the Corporation

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note that there had been no use of the Seal of the Corporation since the date of the last meeting.

Noted

(iii) **Interim Report on Governor Attendance 2024/25**

The Clerk was asked to include a reference in his report to the Board meeting held on Thursday 21 November having a late change to the meeting date so as to avoid a clash with the World Skills UK competition being hosted by the College.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the Interim Report on Governor Attendance 2024/25 (80%).

Noted

Staff and Student Governors and College officers withdrew from the meeting at the end of this item. Before leaving, however, the Chair wished everyone a good Christmas break.

24/25.41 Confidential Minutes of the Meeting held on:

(i) **21 November 2024**

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve the confidential minutes (Part B) of the meeting held on 21 November 2024.

Approved

24/25.42 Time and Date of Next Meeting – Tuesday 11 February 2025

The Chair reported that the date of the next meeting was Tuesday 11 February 2025 (via Teams).

The Clerk to the Corporation mentioned that prior to the next meeting there would be a Governor Learning Visit to Motor Vehicle, followed by the Governors' Dinner in the College's Restaurant – these were taking place on Tuesday, 14 January 2025.

Minutes formally approved by the Corporation:

Chair

Date