

**College of West Anglia
Minutes of
The Corporation Board Meeting
6 December 2023
8.30am**

U125, University Centre, King's Lynn Campus

Present	Gill Rejzl	Governor (Chair)	In person
	Chris Ashman	Governor	In person
	Dave Clarke	Governor	In person
	Sam Fletcher	Governor	Remote
	Paul Gibson	Staff Governor	In person
	Ray Harding	Governor	Remote
	Seb Ivanov	Governor	In person
	Fliss Miller	Governor	Remote
	Sally Mitton	Governor	Remote
	Alan Measures	Governor	In person
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal/CEO)	In person
	Cally Rand	Governor	Remote
	Hein van den Wildenberg	Governor	In person
	Donna Woodruff	Staff Governor	In person
In Attendance	Paul Harrison	Vice Principal Corporate Services	In person
	Kerry Heathcote	Deputy CEO/Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality	In person
	Paul O'Shea	Assistant Principal Student Services	In person
	Rob Petto	Assistant Principal Funding & Performance	In person
	Clare Pelling	Learning Experience Manager	In person
	Jules Bridges	Head of Governance	In person

No.	Action
<p>1 Apologies There were no apologies for absence</p>	
<p>2 Declarations of Interests There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
<p>3 Minutes of the last meetings held on 11 October 2023 The minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2023 were reviewed and agreed as being an accurate record of the meeting subject to replacing the word 'varying' with 'bearing' in the first paragraph of item 2.</p>	HoG
<p>4 Matters Arising The actions arising from the previous meeting were summarised in the progress report and all actions reported had either been resolved, or where appropriate, an update had been provided on progress elsewhere on the agenda.</p> <p>The Head of Governance will work with the Deputy CEO/Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality to resolve and update the governor links, both business support and curriculum.</p> <p>It was noted that observations/learning walks will change to lesson visits and further training will be available for governors.</p> <p>All other completed items are to be removed from the report</p>	HoG DCEO/VPC&Q
<p>5 Appointments A recruitment campaign commenced in the autumn term to find a staff governor successor for Scott Leadley, and five nominations were received. The closing date</p>	

of the election was 20 November 2023. The Head of Governance thanked governor, Dave Clark for verifying the election process and votes. The Corporation **approved** the appointment of Paul Gibson, Programme Manager for Creative Arts as staff governor to serve a term of office of four years.

The two student governor positions on the Board have been vacant since the end of the summer 2023 term. An election campaign is running and voting closes at the end of this week. It is hopeful that two student governors can be recruited from this campaign.

The Corporation was informed of other membership changes by report and noting a few vacancies, the Chair encouraged governors to share contacts of potential governors who may be interested to join the Board.

6 Committee Chairs' Briefing Items

1. Performance Review and Quality Committee

The Chair of the committee commented that governors had considered the Self-Assessment Report, 2023/24 Quality Improvement Plan, and the Equality Scheme and Action Plan, making some comments and suggestions for improved reporting. The Equality Action Plan has been aligned to the SAR process to ensure increased frequency of updates and visibility of college wide progress against the plan.

Apprenticeship/Technology remains the priority focus area for the committee and understanding/impact of removing apprenticeship legacy data to improve visibility of current performance. The committee has put forward suggestions to improve reporting processes to evidence/demonstrate how initiatives/progress are making a difference.

2. Finance and General Purposes Committee

The Chair of the committee mentioned that members had seen the updated marketing plan which is demonstrating a positive impact. Subcontracted provision was discussed and the draft accounts for the year ending were considered. The committee received and considered the September management accounts and a special meeting will be convened in January 2024, as the committee has asked for the budget to be recast. Work continues to progress the Tower Roof repairs and costings have been requested for a potential roof solution. The financial regulations have been considered by the committee and the Treasury Management Policy has been finalised.

3. Audit Committee

The Chair of the committee reported a full agenda despite not receiving the year end accounts. Internal audits have been completed on IR35, the Single Central Record, and Subcontracting standards. Apprenticeships remain a high priority focus for the committee. Members were made aware of the behavioural issues at Wisbech campus and the solutions in place to manage the situation. The risk management strategy has been updated and a new Board Assurance Map developed. The report from the outsourced DPO confirmed a positive GDPR culture across the college. The Schedule of Matters Reserved has also been received by the committee and the Chair confirmed that the student union account is to close.

In terms of the financial statements audit work the Assistant Principal Funding and Performance reported that there was one funding issue in the final report from RSM concerning an apprentice, which has been resolved. The management letter sets out several recommendations that the team is working through. The apprenticeship risk register will be updated to manage and prioritise the arising recommendations. The Audit Committee will keep this in scope and monitor through to resolution.

7 Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2022/23

A special meeting of the committee was convened for Monday this week but was cancelled as external audit field work was yet to conclude. This item was deferred, awaiting a special meeting of the committee and extraordinary meeting of the

Corporation to approve the annual report, financial statements for the year ended, and associated letters of representation.

There is confidence that the financial statements will be prepared for signing before Christmas and therefore can be submitted to the ESFA in time.

8 CWA Accounts for the year ended 31 July 2023

- 1. Members' Report and Financial Statements**
- 2. Audit Highlights Memorandum and Management Letter to 31 July 2023**
- 3. Letter of Representation**
- 4. Self-Assessment Questionnaire**

As noted above, all items were deferred, awaiting a special meeting of the audit committee and extraordinary meeting of the Corporation to approve the annual report of the audit committee, financial statements for the year ended, and associated letters of representation.

9 Overall College Self-Assessment Review 2022/23

The overall effectiveness judgement is 'Good', with an 'Outstanding' judgement for High Needs Learners, and confidence that a strong contribution towards meeting skills needs could be demonstrated. It was noted that a deep dive of High Needs provision will take place before Christmas to validate the outstanding judgement.

Governors commented that they found the self-assessment report particularly useful as it pulled out some key stories and narrative, which was helpful and interesting to read. The Principal/CEO predicts an Ofsted inspection in January 2024.

After due consideration and scrutiny, the corporation **approved** the self-assessment report and overall effectiveness judgement of 'Good'.

10 Strategic Targets 2023/24 Progress Review

There were three areas in the report where progress against the target could improve; Maths and English attendance, staff benefits and staff absence monitoring, and meeting ambitious carbon reduction targets. Governors challenged the disappointing Maths and English attendance levels and asked for the assurance that this was being improved. In response, it was reported that better progress has been made this year but undoubtedly the significant increase in student numbers has resulted in lower attendance rates. Timetables have continually moved and been adjusted to improve attendance gaps, and this is a strong focus area for the management team. Maths and English student numbers are far greater than the growth on study programmes with 58% more Maths learners, and 34% more on English. Staffing has been reconfigured, Century Platform deployed, and a mentoring model rolled out to encourage staff into Maths and English teaching roles. No classes have been cancelled and notably, attendance is improving.

Staff benefits and staff absence monitoring are priority areas for the HR Team. The Principal/CEO confirmed that the Senior Management Team is aware and are supporting the team to make good and better progress. There are some system issues with obtaining accurate absence data, but the IT team is working with the HR department to resolve these.

Governors wondered if there were any consequences of not meeting carbon reduction targets. It was confirmed that there is no financial consequence but reputationally the college prides itself in its ambitious sustainability strategy and strives to achieve net zero for scope 1 and 2 by 2030.

11 Learner Outcomes 2022/23

The report detailed the learner outcome success measures across all areas of college provision. Governors asked to see the national achievement rate for A Levels in the table of the report. This had been omitted as it was explained that A Level achievement in an FE setting is difficult to extract as national rates include schools and sixth form achievement so would not be comparable to use. Governors however,

thought this would be interesting to see and benchmark the college against, so it was requested this be included in future reports.

DCEO/VPC&Q

Apprenticeship achievement has dipped slightly compared to the previous year, but the concerns are understood, and progress is being made. A dedicated Maths and English team for apprentices has been created, the apprenticeship standards are being rationalised and the team is working closely with the Technology faculty, who jointly report to the Performance Review and Quality committee, to ensure there is triangulation and consistency of data and reporting. A bespoke Quality Improvement Framework has been put in place, matched to the Accountability Framework and this is monitored regularly. Although the target achievement level of 65% was identified as seeming low, it was reported that the gap last year between national achievement rate and CWA achievement narrowed so the target this year is pragmatic and achievable. An aspirational target would be 80%. National rates were included in the report, but governors commented that achievement comparisons with other providers would also be useful to see.

DCEO/VPC&Q

In terms of Ofsted, governors questioned if the learner outcomes in the report are calculated in the same way by inspectors. Typically, data is viewed by inspectors by sector subject area (SSA) so it was agreed that the Assistant Principal Funding and Performance would work with the Deputy CEO/Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality to see what data could be aggregated. A briefing to provide the narrative against the data would be useful for governors to receive at the earliest opportunity.

APF&P /
DCEO/VPC&Q

12 Current Performance Data and KPIs 2023/24

The pre-census study programme retention target was achieved again this year demonstrating that the withdrawals strategies have worked effectively. The Area Performance Reviews are used to interrogate the data presented to governors to ensure that an accurate picture is visible and transparent. The judgements made in reports are made from evidenced and demonstrable achievement, not a judgement made and then evidence found to substantiate it.

The work of the Performance Review and Quality Committee has ratified and built confidence that the data is accurate, and the position is transparent to the Board. The committee has kept its focus on the areas of concern and scrutiny and challenge has been evident and robust.

Governors commented that attendance overall at 85.8% was a concern and asked if this had been investigated. It was confirmed that there are no significant differences compared to the attendance rates at the same point last year and no identified patterns. Attendance at 90% or above would be a better expectation and compared to other regional colleges, CWA tends to do better, with no other regional college consistently reporting attendance over 90%.

Noting that the number of withdrawals at this point is 185 students, and the total for the year before was 831, a governor commented that this represents 20% of withdrawals lost at this point in the year and wondered what if anything more could be done to 'save' students. October half term and Christmas tend to be the biggest pressure points and 303 learners withdrew at the same reporting point last year, so the BRAGP and consistent monitoring of those 'P' rated, 'Perilous' (at risk of withdrawal) demonstrates that more is being done to support students and keep them in learning.

13 Management Accounts – September 2023

Noting some significant variances and revisions since the budget was set for the year the Finance and General Purposes Committee has proposed that the budget is recast this month, and a special meeting of the committee is convened in January 2024 to consider the recast budget. There is confidence that the committee has received sufficient reporting around the management accounts and the current income and expenditure position, despite not having visibility of more current management accounts.

14 **Financial Regulations**

The Finance and General Purposes committee had made some amendments and a few additional points to align with the schedule of matters reserved and scheme of delegation (item 21 below refers) are to be inserted. Subject to the assimilation of the amendments proposed by the committee and alignment with the schedule and scheme of delegation the Corporation **approved** the Financial Regulations.

Regarding the ONS reclassification, the sector awaits a financial handbook from government which will be shared once available. Once the handbook is released, the Head of Governance will provide a short briefing to outline the requirements of the Corporation under this guide.

HoG

On page 23, point 99, a governor asked if 30 days cash balance was sufficient as this seemed particularly low. For assurance it was noted that this related to looking at the cash flow forecast over two years where the cash flow may fall below a level to support 30 days of activity, not that the college would operate with only 30 days cash in hand.

15 **Funding Position 2023/24**

The study programme position is the highlight of the current funding position. The R04 return has been submitted which 'locks in', the in-year growth allocation. There are 3,010 study programme learners, which is 205 learners up at the same point last year. There are 30 learners that could be pulled retrospectively from the claim if they do not attend learning so a prudent approach has been taken to exclude these from the forecast growth, which would be c.£651K. The increase in study programme learners will also attract an additional £1.5m lagged funding for 2024/25.

The first curriculum planning phase has just concluded with planned numbers across the college notably positive and optimistic. Most areas have achieved their curriculum planned numbers, so the position is looking strong. A small number of additional roles have been forecast. The counter to this is that AEB is looking challenging. The Princes Trust provision has been reprocured and is unlikely to achieve the same number of cohorts of learners in the year. The budget was based on £200K in-house growth and this is being tracked but there is reducing confidence that this can be achieved. Although not specifically AEB but within the sphere of adult delivery, the college has secured funding to deliver its first Level 3 Engineering Skills Boot Camp so every opportunity to find other funding streams are being explored.

Apprenticeships is in a similar position compared to last year. There was uncertainty with the S4PL contract and the current budget for this income line is £4.02m, which is looking challenging. Actual enrolment figures will be known shortly and are likely to be comparable with last year. Some additional processes have delayed sign-ups, as compliance has taken priority.

Governors noted that two subcontractors have withdrawn from delivery this academic year and these contracts are currently being reprocured and/or are planned to be redistributed.

There is growth in high needs learner income, but this comes with the challenge of recruiting Learning Support Officers (LSOs) to provide the 1-2-1 support needed for these learners. Staff recruitment though has been good with more, higher calibre applicants. Good LSO recruitment has been seen at King's Lynn but there is increasing demand in Cambridge, which cannot be accommodated. There is a fine balance with the provision to continually manage demand and provide and deliver on learners' needs.

The meeting was postponed for a break at 10.25am and resumed at 10.40am

16 **Risk Management Strategy and Risk Register Review**

The revised strategy sets out the management of strategic risk. The Chair of the Audit committee commented that members felt the document was clear and concise and in terms of the risk register, the committee would like to see a risk reduction of risk 3

from 16 down to 12 now that there is more assurance and confidence that the financial pressures from funding limitations are resolved.

VPCS

On a more general point and using a few risks on the register as examples, the residual score of some risks may be high (red) but the indicators on updates on controls/actions and progress are all green, which may suggest that there are controls/actions missing. From review-to-review governors further commented risk movement is relatively unchanged which would also suggest that risks are being monitored but not necessarily being managed. The Chair would also like to see commentary included in the strategy around the purpose and importance of the heat map.

VPCS

The Vice Principal Corporate Services confirmed that DfE surveyors have been on site to look at the five locations identified as potential areas with RAAC concrete. They have determined that there is no RAAC present in any location, but one area has been flagged 'amber' as the material identified is unknown; however, there is confidence that it is not RAAC. Surveyors also found a leak in one of the flat roofs.

It was noted that the submission document for capital funding from the UoS has been approved but funds are yet to be released. The outcome of the DLUHC bid to add a second storey to the School of Nursing is expected before Christmas.

Finally, regarding risk 5, 'Inability to recruit and retain high calibre staff', a governor commented that in an earlier discussion the potential to create a bank/pipeline of staff had been mentioned but this didn't appear as a control/action in this risk, so it was questioned how risks are updated and if risk owners link risk to making decisions. It was agreed that a thorough review of the register would be carried out including a fresh look at the level of tolerated risk in tandem with the mitigated risk and that the newly created board assurance map, which details how risks are managed and can impact risk-based decisions will be shared.

VPCS/HoG

17 **Safeguarding**

1. **Annual Monitoring Report 2022/23**

The report provided the trends and statistical oversight of the issues presented by students in the 2023/23 academic year.

The college has benefitted from the Boost Project funding enabling CWA to employ a mental health practitioner to provide in-house support for students identified as struggling with mild to moderate mental health difficulties. This fund runs out in April 2024, but the college will continue to provide this necessary resource for students.

Noting the lower percentage of apprentices who report concerns compared to the higher percentages of students on other programmes, governors queried why fewer apprentices have safeguarding needs. The Assistant Principal Student Services confirmed that safeguarding has been made more accessible to apprentices and employers to heighten awareness. Learners are given contact cards and assessor meetings with apprentices are targeted around ensuring that the learner feels safe. Apprentices also have the support of their employer and are generally more resilient. It was noted that the statistics include T Level students by programme area rather than reporting as a discrete category. The programme area with the highest percentage of students with concerns is science, and governors wondered why this was the case. The Assistant Principal Student Services commented that the statistics relate to specific individuals and quite often are linked to cases of bullying, where this can involve multiple learners and/or those with mental health issues. It was agreed that the Safeguarding Oversight Committee will conduct a deep dive to understand the issues in this programme area.

APSS/Chair
(Safeguarding
Lead)

Appendix 2 of the report showed higher retention, pass and achievement rates compared to the rates of students who have a safeguarding concern and governors asked if the data could show how successful safeguarding has been to help learners achieve. This could be shown this year by reporting on the number of learners who

had an intervention or were at risk (purple-perilous) of withdrawal but have continued with their studies. The Assistant Principal Student Services will investigate how/if this can be reported.

APSS

2. Annual Policy Review

The Policy is updated annually following the latest release of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and this review highlighted some changes to the policy, primarily to address new national standards relating to online filtering and monitoring systems and processes. The Head of Governance will work with the Assistant Principal Student Services to include the Governor Code of Conduct in the policy. The **approved** the policy as presented.

HoG/APSS

C Pelling joined the meeting at 11.20am

18 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

1. Equality Objectives – Annual Review 2022/23

The Performance Review and Quality Committee considered the scheme and objectives at the meeting held on 8 November 2023 and asked for the final outcomes to be added to the action plan. The committee had found that some progress noted was out of date by the time it was reported. Coincidentally this had been identified by management and the action plan is now linked to the SAR process to ensure alignment, consistency, and increased frequency of reporting.

The Chair asked if there is a presentational way that any actions rolled over from one year to another could be identified and it was agreed that an indicator to show the actions that have rolled over would be considered. It was noted that as the plan is now linked to the SAR, it was an iterative process and therefore more narrative would be provided around why actions have not been completed. As an aside the Chair also asked for assurance that all policies considered by the Board/Committees are to include the corresponding impact assessment.

LEM

2. Single Equality Scheme and Equality Objectives 2023/24

The Corporation resolved to **approve** the Single Equality Scheme and Equality Objectives 2023/24.

19 Student Union Accounts 2022/23

It was reported that cash balances have diminished with the intention to close the student union account. The Board was reassured that there are other ways for students to represent their views. The proposition to close the student union will be put to students and the alternative ways to hear the learner voice discussed with them.

HvdWildenberg left the meeting at 11.30am

20 Health and Safety Policy Statement

The policy has been considered by the Employment Policy Committee and the Corporation was **approved** the policy as presented.

21 Governance

1. Standing Orders

As agreed by the Corporation, the governance arrangements have been separated out from the college's Financial Regulations and are now set out in the Standing Orders. Recognising some substantive and material changes proposed by governors the Standing Orders were **not approved** for publication. The Corporation delegated responsibility to the Search and Governance committee to develop the document further, perhaps including subset procedures to underpin practice and strengthen processes.

HoG

2. Schedule of Matters Reserved and Scheme of Delegation

Following the reclassification of colleges (and their subsidiaries) into central government as public bodies, colleges are now subject to frameworks for financial management such as Managing Public Money (MPM), and Senior Pay Controls.

These new requirements are set out in the Schedule of Matters Reserved, which not only demonstrates how the college has financial management oversight but principally it details how the Corporation responds to its responsibilities and exercises its powers under the Instrument and Articles of Government and other relevant legislative and regulatory requirements.

The Schedule of Matters Reserved is intrinsically linked to Scheme of Delegation, which was appended to the schedule for reference. Subject to some minor amendments proposed by governors the corporation **approved** the Schedule of Matters Reserved.

3. Learning Walks – Feedback

A governor reported that they had spent time with the Careers and Destinations Team, visited business studies, A Level computer science, and psychology. Visits were very positive, and students were enthusiastic about their course.

F Miller left the meeting at 11.35am

Another governor commented that they had visited business studies, medicine, and some areas of T Level provision. The confidence of students was notably high, and the T Level provision offers young people choice to go into work or onto higher education.

Governors were encouraged to complete the new learning walk forms and return these to the Head of Governance. As detailed above the Head of Governance will work with the Deputy CEO/Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality to refresh the governor links, both business support and curriculum.

In addition to learning walks the report confirmed the additional activities and training events that governors have been involved in since the last meeting of the corporation.

4. College Seal

It is a requirement of the Instrument and Articles of Government that a record is maintained of all applications of the Corporation seal. Since the last report to the Board in October 2023 the seal has been applied twice. The details of which were recorded in the report.

22 Any Other Business

There were no other items of business.

23 Date and time of next scheduled meeting

Wednesday, 20 March 2024 at 8.30am

All

HoG
DCEO/VPC&Q

Meeting ended at 11.45am