

College of West Anglia
Minutes of
The Corporation Board Meeting
12 October 2022
8.30 am
Boardroom, U125, University Centre, King's Lynn Campus

Present	Gill Rejzl	Governor (Chair)
	Chris Ashman	Governor
	Dave Clark	Governor
	Kay Driver	Governor
	Mark Eastwood	Governor
	Sam Fletcher	Governor
	Ray Harding	Governor
	Tony Kenber	Governor
	Scott Leadley	Governor
	Alan Measures	Governor
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal)
	Gary Webb	Governor
	Hein van den Wildenberg	Governor
Donna Woodruff	Governor	
Attending	Paul Harrison	Vice Principal Corporate Services
	Kerry Heathcote	Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality
	Paul O'Shea	Assistant Principal Student Services
	Rob Petto	Assistant Principal Funding & Performance
	Stephen Halls	Clerk to the Corporation

Governors met at 8.30 am and received a tour of the new School of Nursing Studies facility from Adrian Debney, Head of Clinical Education.

Governors returned to the Boardroom and the business meeting commenced at 9.15 am.

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting, particularly Kay Driver, Mark Eastwood and Tony Kenber, recently appointed governors, to their first Board meeting.

The Chair gave her thanks to Gary Webb who would be retiring from the Board on 17 October 2022 after 12 years' service. The Chair noted that Gary had served originally on the Audit Committee, but more recently on the Finance & General Purposes Committee and the Search & Governance Committee.

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Sally Mitton, Carolyn Rand and Lee Smith. It was noted that Donna Woodruff would need to leave the meeting at 10.30 am.

2 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting – 6 July 2022

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2022 were reviewed and agreed as being an accurate record of the meeting.

4 Matters Arising

The progress against the outstanding matters from previous meetings was summarised in the report for Item 4.

Governors asked for clarification on Matters Arising No.4 from 6/7/22, regarding the tower block roof repairs and if the repair costs would be charged to capital or revenue. The Vice Principal Corporate Services reported that he had raised the matter of the necessary repairs to the external auditors and indicated that he would be charging the repairs to capital; the auditors had not expressed an opinion or given direction on this matter.

Matters Arising No 5 from 6/7/22, regarding the apprenticeship funding audit – the Chair noted that the Audit Committee would be reviewing this item at its meeting in November 2022.

The Chair was pleased that outstanding matters were being completed swiftly by the management team and asked the Clerk to remove all those items which had been completed.

ACTION-CLERK

5 Committee Chairs' Briefing Items:

- Chairs' Meeting Group – The Committee Chair reported on the meeting held 7 September 2022 where a positive start to the 2022/23 academic year had been noted. Student retention was a focus for all, and for the benefit of both students and the college finances. Timely management accounting information was expected with the appointment of the new Head of Finance over the summer period. There were budget pressure concerns regarding pay, income streams and energy costs. T Level outcomes in Health & Social Care were a concern, (and being challenged externally), as was the slight decline in A level performance; maths also continued to be a concern. Detailed information regarding the destinations of students needed to be confirmed. An inspection by Ofsted was likely within the next 2 years with its new focus asking the college to demonstrate how well it understood and met the skills needs for employers.
- Employment Policy Committee – The Clerk provided the update on behalf of Sally Mitton, Committee Chair, for the meeting held on 5 October 2022. The committee met Julie Howlett, the new Head of HR, who would be reviewing all employment policies in due course to ensure they were gender neutral, used the latest terminology and supported the rights of both the employer and the employee. The committee reviewed the latest legal updates, curriculum impact report and the annual report of the HR department, covering its work over the 2021/22 academic year. The Health & Safety report was reviewed for 2021/22, along with the Health & Safety Policy. The gender pay gap report, as at March 2022, was reviewed.
- Finance & General Purposes Committee – The Committee Chair reported on the meeting held 28 September 2022. The committee met and welcomed Jenny Quaif, the new Head of Finance. Sub-contractor activities were reviewed and it was noted that the performance for 2021/22 at present looked to be reasonably successful; current activity with one particular partner was behind target but this was being monitored by college managers. The preliminary financial results for 2021/22 were reviewed. The committee had asked for an update on financial impacts caused by recent government budget changes and other matters affecting the college; the Vice Principal had included this in his report at Item 8. An

update was provided on the new IT in-house service, operating from August 2022; this was now fully staffed and was working well. The committee discussed the necessary repairs to the tower block roof, although this would be covered in more detail within the Principal's report to the Board, later in the meeting.

- Performance Review & Quality Committee – from the meeting held on 21 September 2022, the Committee Chair reported that the committee focused on its usual priority areas of maths & English, ESOL, Apprenticeships and Technology and would be considering how these areas could be progressed to completion. The committee observed the change in the management of key areas during the summer months, which presented both opportunities and risk for the college. The meeting agenda was too large to give sufficient attention to all of the items and so future meetings would be extended by 30 minutes and the agenda would be more considered going forward. The Corporation Chair noted that she would be liaising with the PR&Q Committee Chair to discuss how best to review detailed performance data for the committee and then for reporting upwards to the Board whilst avoiding duplication.
ACTION-CORP.CHAIR/PR&Q CHAIR
- Search & Governance Committee – The Chair noted from the meeting held on 5 October 2022 the annual attendance summary as detailed further under Item 15-Governance Items and encouraged high attendance of members. For 2021/22 overall attendance was at 86%, which had dropped slightly from the 94% achieved in the previous year. For Board meeting attendance, specifically, this only achieved 76%, compared to the aspirational attendance level of 80%. The Chair noted that the future use of hybrid meetings would be considered, subject to the technology being made available in the Boardroom; the Assistant Principal Funding & Performance commented that remote meeting technology for groups was being made available in one room on each campus. The Chair noted that attendance was lower for the meetings held at the Cambridge and Wisbech campuses, but was keen that these continued as it provided the opportunity for staff at these sites to meet governors, and also for the governors to view other campuses. The Chair asked governors to consider other ideas which could encourage improved attendance.

The updates were noted.

6 Principal's Strategy Report

- i. FE 'Cold Spots' in East Cambridgeshire & St. Neots

The item was deemed 'Confidential.'

- ii. Carbon Net Zero Centre Update

The Principal confirmed that £2m had been awarded for the project from the CPCA's Recycled Growth Fund. An investment bid from the Levelling-Up Fund, managed by Fenland District Council had increased to £7.7m with a decision on this expected by the end of the autumn term. The Chair asked about the likelihood of this bid being successful; the Principal explained the competitive nature of the bidding process for local authorities and the difficulties central government now faced with the current economic pressures; however, the Principal was assured that the project had the full support of Fenland District Council, noting that the new facility would be sited within an area of deprivation.

- iii. Damage to the Tower Block roof, King's Lynn

The item was deemed 'Confidential.'

The Principal's report was noted

7 Strategic Targets 2021/22 – Final Review

Governors reviewed the final out-turn of the strategic targets for 2021/22 and raised the following questions:

1.5b re: Attendance & retention – the year noted in the comments section had been incorrectly stated as 2022/23. The Clerk would amend this to 2021/22. **ACTION-CLERK**

1.2 re: Achieve 'Quality in Careers' Standard' – this had not been achieved. Dave Clark, Link Governor for Careers and Paul O'Shea, Assistant Principal Student Services responded to this item: the target for 2021/21 had been perhaps a little too ambitious and progress had been delayed due to limited staffing resources; staffing responsibilities had changed this term and it was now expected that the standard would be achieved in 2022/23, possibly in the spring term.

1.7 re: progression from L2 to L3 was 19% behind other colleges. The Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality informed governors that progression would be one of the priorities for the current year; the Principal added that NEET statistics for Norfolk were higher than other areas in England and that, further, statistics for West Norfolk were higher than other areas within the county; locally, many young adults tended to move quickly into low paid, unskilled employment to support their households. The Assistant Principal reported that there was no repetition of the same course for students, although some learners had moved sideways within L2 to a different curriculum area; further, national data was not comparable to local data and that a clearer understanding of a learner's progression would be seen from the destination data; the Principal added that the college had engaged Purlos to assist in the collection of destination data.

2.11 re: external hire – governors were interested in the value and source of income from external hire and other commercial activities. The Vice Principal Corporate Services noted that a consolidated value was included within the accounts, but would provide and circulate a breakdown of the income received for information. **ACTION-VPCS**

2.11 re: external hire and commercial income – the Chair asked that the Finance & General Purposes Committee reviewed external hire and commercial income to the college. **ACTION-CLERK/VPCS**

4.14 re: Providence Street – governors asked if there had been any further consideration for the relocation of students from the Providence Street centre. The Principal reported that there had been no further consideration for moving students to the main campus and that this particular provision was successfully operating away from the main campus.

Governors asked about space utilisation across the campuses. The Principal considered that there was a mix across all campuses where in some areas the available space was good, whereas for some curriculum areas useable space was tight (noting dog grooming at Cambridge). The use of the Wisbech campus was gradually increasing as student numbers improved.

Governors commented that, should the college receive an Ofsted inspection, inspectors would be concerned about adult recruitment and student retention and attendance, as noted in the executive summary report and considered that perhaps there should be a stronger focus on performance data. The Principal advised that these matters had been noted and addressed in the reports from the Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality

The report was noted.

8 Preliminary Financial Results 2021/22

The Vice Principal Corporate Services reported that the preliminary figures had been reviewed by the Finance & General Purposes Committee at its meeting on 28 September 2022. For the 2021/22 year a surplus had been generated of £151k against a budget of £355k; the financial health score was 'Good'; the loan covenants had been met and the college had cash balances of £7.1m. The figures were subject to late change, pending final income reconciliations to be carried out and the review of the auditors. The Vice Principal noted also two concerns, those being the possible need for an impairment provision regarding the tower block roof repairs and also a possible clawback provision relating to apprenticeship income. The Chair was disappointed that the budget surplus of £355k had not been achieved and noted that budgets for 2022/23 were very tight, with little headroom available should problems arise during the new financial year.

Donna Woodruff left the meeting at 10.30 am

Governors asked about the external auditors' review of apprenticeship income. The Assistant Principal Funding & Performance advised that the auditors had selected a small sample of files for review, and as yet, no issues had been raised.

Governors commented on the tight surplus of £151k against an income level of £29m. Governors asked about the new Head of Finance who commenced over the summer period; the Vice Principal noted that the finance team had worked well without having a Head of Finance since October 2021; the new Head of Finance was settling well into the role and with the finance team, and was undertaking training, particularly with regard to the further education sector.

The Vice Principal noted that the Finance & General Purposes Committee had asked for information on the impact of the recent economic and political developments on the college's financial position and this had been included in the report at section 8. The college would benefit from the NI reductions recently announced. Energy cost implications were still to be determined, offsetting the future prices against the government's support to businesses for 6 months.

The report was noted.

9 Funding Out-turn 2021/22 and Indicative Numbers 2022/23

The Assistant Principal Funding & Performance reported that year end reconciliations for 2021/22 were nearly complete and that no significant changes were expected to the final income figures. Looking at income for the new academic year, it was considered too early at the present time to provide a view regarding adult education income, however for ESOL and the main study programmes income was considered to be good, noting particularly for study programmes where learner numbers were circa 100 up on the previous year, with no indications yet that this would reduce before the census date later in October. The Chair asked about the actions used to support new students this year and the positive effect these might have had on retention; the Assistant Principal advised that both the increased support now available from Student Services staff and the use of student mentors had provided a notable benefit in the support of students at the beginning of the academic year, helping retention levels and avoiding new students dropping out at the start of their course. The Chair commented positively on the improved student numbers for 2022/23 and noted that the quality of teaching in some areas, particularly in ESOL, needed to be maintained to ensure high levels of student retention.

The Assistant Principal looked ahead to 2023/24 income and highlighted that due to the lagged funding model, the low retention rate at the start of 2021/22 would have a negative

impact on 2023/24 income; further modelling would be undertaken in due course to ascertain the value of the impact.

Governors asked about the unused Catch-up funds, introduced in 2020/21 to provide additional support and tuition to eligible learners who had lost learning during the Covid pandemic. The Assistant Principal explained that various schemes had been in operation by the college to utilise this additional funding, including paying existing staff to provide additional teaching sessions and the use of iTutor, an on-line teaching platform for students to use by themselves either at home or in self-study periods when on campus. The Assistant Principal reported that the college was now looking to use the unspent devolved AEB allocation to fund a substantive tutor role. Governors asked how other colleges were using their allocation of Catch-up funding; the Assistant Principal reported that other colleges were in a similar position as CWA and were also finding it difficult to find suitable ways to use the allocation for the benefit of students. The Principal added that when the funding was introduced it was thought to be a one-off allocation for colleges and therefore did not allow for any long-term planning for curriculum teams; however, more recently the allocation has been rolled forward.

The Assistant Principal reported that the college had been selected for an A125 ESF Apprenticeship Audit and that apart from the administrative burden of supporting the audit process there were no concerns with this audit. The Chair asked the Audit Committee Chair about the apprenticeship funding audit undertaken in the last academic year and the progress on the follow-up actions; the Audit Committee Chair advised that an update report would be received by the Audit Committee at its next meeting on 23 November 2022.

The report was noted.

10 Learning Strategy Annual Review

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality introduced the Teaching, Learning & Assessment Strategy, noting that it provided clarity and flexibility in how the document was to be used. The Vice Principal reported that staff responsibilities had recently changed in that Learning Practice staff now reported to the Head of Learning Improvement and the Learning Experience Manager now reported directly to the Vice Principal. Learning Walks would be arranged to focus on particular areas, or on particular themes. Learner Voice was an area noted for future focus; surveys would remain but other forms of data collection would be introduced, similar to those used during Ofsted inspections for gaining student feedback. The Chair commented positively on the use of Ofsted style data collection, which would help staff in the preparation for Ofsted inspection.

The Vice Principal commented on the 'deep-dive' process, where a review had recently been undertaken within the Technology faculty and for which a balanced report had been received; areas for focus from the review would be developed into an action plan. The Vice Principal would be engaging task & finish groups in areas such as English & Maths and would be reviewing predictive information in detail to assess performance and improvement.

The Vice Principal considered there to be many areas of good practice across the college which should be shared with all faculties. RAG rating scores had been updated to include 2 new categories: B=Best (bragging); P=Perilous.

The Chair considered that the new, fresh approach to the learning strategy was positive and would be an effective source of assurance for the Board.

Governors asked if there would be any changes to the way learning walks were managed for governors; the Vice Principal advised that calibrated learning walks would be undertaken, and would issue guidance notes to governors in advance of the walks.

ACTION-VPCQ

The report was noted. The Learning Strategy document was approved.

*The Chair called a short break in the meeting at 10.55 am
The meeting recommenced at 11.02 am*

11 Current Performance Data and KPIs 2021/22

The Chair thanked the Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality for her report which contained much detailed data regarding the area performance reports. The Chair also thanked the Vice Principal for her work in managing the area performance reviews.

The Vice Principal reported that colleagues in the sector found themselves in a similar position to CWA regarding the lack of benchmarking with national data. With regard to the internal area performance review process, there had been a focus on performance data and destination data; all 26 areas of the college had been reviewed; the Assistant Principal Funding & Performance had also supported this work. After submission, managers were asked to reconsider their judgements, based on a wide range of area-specific performance data and this resulted in some areas changing their overall assessments. The Vice Principal would continue to review the data from each area in detail. The Vice Principal had noticed that some managers had found the self-assessment process difficult and so future training and coaching on self-assessment would be organised. The Vice Principal considered that although for one or two areas the judgement of Grade 2, 'Good' could be difficult to evidence on data alone, other elements of the provision in those areas, and overall student experience, allowed the Grade 2 results to stand.

The Chair asked for comments on performance from the Chair of the Performance Review & Quality Committee. The Committee Chair considered that particular targets reviewed by the committee were not achieving the required grade and that detailed information and a forensic analysis of the evidence would be required; the Committee Chair considered that the Vice Principal's challenge to managers on their overall self-assessment grading was the correct approach. A review of how best to report performance data to both the committee and then to the Board would be required.

The Chair asked how the purple (perilous) grading would be scored and what the long-term consequences might be; the Vice Principal explained that each curriculum area would determine its own grading levels, with the potential for the gradings to fluctuate during the year, depending on circumstances.

The Principal reflected on how performance was externally validated, noting that the deep-dive process involved an external consultant in the process; further, the college received a review from Landex on its land-based activities in the previous academic year, and of course, an Ofsted inspection was expected at some point in the next 2 years. The Principal reported on the HE ARU Periodic Partner Review, due every 5 years, which had just been completed; the review returned an unconditional approval judgement with no major surprises or concerns being raised; further, the college received a commendation for how it was meeting local needs and meeting the needs of the HE students.

The report was noted.

12 Hearing the Learner Voice 2021/22

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality noted again the new arrangements for learning walks, as mentioned earlier in the meeting and how these would be used as part of student engagement. The Vice Principal was currently working alongside the Learning Experience Manager reviewing survey forms and questionnaires and looking for improvements; already it had been noticed that the surveys used for apprenticeships were inappropriate and needed some updating. The priority would be for the development of bespoke, targeted and sustainable survey opportunities.

Governors commented on staff absences as detailed in the report and how this affected the progress for students, noting that this had been discussed at a recent meeting of the Employment Policy Committee; The Principal advised that short-term staff absence had increased in the previous year, and continued, due to Covid-related issues. Governors considered that staff absence resulted in a cost to college for the cover staff, and sometimes the need for agency staffing, and that improved use of occupational health services by the college could help the situation.

Governors asked how sustainability would feature in student voice activities; the Vice Principal explained that students would be encouraged to develop their ideas for sustainability across the college in a proactive manner, with the help and support of Sue Brown, Energy & Estates Officer.

The Chair highlighted from the report the need for wider skills to be increased and developed, and suggested that most governors would be able to help in this area.

The report was noted.

13 Review of the Risk Register

The Vice Principal Corporate Services confirmed that he would be updating the Risk Register in due course with the requests made during the meeting relating to 'FE Cold Spots' and the tower block roof.

With regard to Risk 2022 (1), apprenticeship data processing, governors asked about the processing of apprenticeship data and how this would be addressed in the longer term; the Principal reported that the current, temporary position of project manager overseeing the new software and improvements in the processing of data would be made into a permanent position, and that the previously held post of the project manager would be filled, again with a permanent member of staff, whereas previously only temporary cover had been provided.

Risk 2018 (4) – Staff Recruitment – governors asked for an update on staff recruitment; the Principal reported that the new post in HR of Recruitment Consultant had recently been recruited to and that progress was already being noticed in the college with regard to recruitment campaigns. The Principal reminded governors that a number of managers retired from the college over the summer period and that he was confident in the abilities of the new managers joining the college this term; further, the college leadership team had been extended to include 8 junior managers with everyone taking part in a recent team development day.

The report was noted.

14 Gender Pay Gap Report

The Vice Principal Corporate Services reported that the college's gender pay gap was slightly adverse to the national comparatives, although regionally the statistics appeared more favourable, with CWA having the third smallest gap in the region.

The Vice Principal would be reviewing the report and possible actions to take with the Head of HR, emphasising that the aim for the college would be to achieve a zero gender gap.

The Chair asked if the results would be different if some areas of the college operations were outsourced; the Principal considered that in some instances, such as cleaning, if this was outsourced, this would improve the college's gender pay gap as this operation typically employed more female staff, with cleaning staff also being within the lower pay bandings.

The Chair noted the importance of the report and its continued review to avoid the risk of equal pay claims being raised.

The report was noted.

15 Governance Items

The Clerk presented a number of items for review and decision within his report:

- i. Governance & Financial Management Regulations 2022/23 Draft – the Clerk advised that the Search & Governance Committee had asked for one late addition to its terms of reference to be made, under 1 (i) 'To have oversight of the triennial external governance review' but with the addition of 'and to monitor any agreed actions.'

The Clerk noted that 2 updates requested by governors were still to be made to the regulations.

The Chair asked for this item to be deferred until the requested updates had been made and reviewed by the appropriate committee. **ACTION-CLERK/VPCS**

- ii. Amendment to the Instrument & Articles, relating to the signing of minutes – there were no questions or concerns raised.

The Board approved the proposed change to the Instrument & Articles of Government.

- iii. Committee Chairs – The Chairs' Meeting Group

The Board approved the appointment of Chris Ashman as Chair of the Chairs' Meeting Group for the 2022/23 year.

- iv. Governance Self-Assessment Report 2021/22

There were no questions or concerns raised regarding the report, noting that it had been reviewed previously by the Search & Governance Committee as its meeting on 5 October 2022.

The Board approved the Governance Self-Assessment Report 2021/22

- v. Applewood Nursery Reporting

The Board approved the removal of the annual report from the nursery from the agenda plan for the PR&Q Committee **ACTION-CLERK**

- vi. Appointment of Head of Governance – the Chair provided a verbal report on the interview day held on 6 September 2022 and advised that Julie Bridges had been offered the position of Head of Governance, to replace the current Clerk to the Corporation who would retire in December 2022. The Clerk advised that this post

was a Board appointment, and although the Board had delegated responsibility for the recruitment process to the working group, Board ratification for the appointment would be required.

The Board ratified the appointment of Julie Bridges as Head of Governance.

- vii. Learning Walks – Hein van den Wildenberg reported on his recent visit to the School of Nursing Studies facility. The Principal commented on the recent ARU Periodic Partner Review where a commendation for the School of Nursing Studies had been given. Kay Driver reported on her visit to the Cambridge Campus.

The remaining items of the Governance Report were noted:

- viii. Governor Attendance 2021/22
- ix. Remuneration Committee Annual Report 2021/22
- x. Application of the College Seal
- xi. Finance Training Morning 9/11/22
- xii. AoC Regional Conference 30/11/22

16 CWA Public Value Statement - Update

The Clerk explained that the Public Value Statement had been updated to reflect the recent changes in the College's strategic ambitions. Under section 1, Delivering Outstanding Learner Success, the Chair asked for the reference to 'NEET' individuals to be removed; Under section 2, Impacting Positively on Local Social & Economic Prosperity, the Chair asked for the reference to 'recession recovery' to be reviewed.

Governors approved the Public Value Statement for publication, subject to the 2 amendments noted above.

17 Any Other Business

- i. Paul Smith, Head of Employer Liaison, Partnerships and Commercial Training, had recently achieved 40 years' service to the college. The Chair asked for this to be recorded in the minutes and for the Board's thanks to be passed to Paul. **ACTION-CLERK**
- ii. Ofsted Inspection Responsibilities – governors asked for information regarding the responsibilities for governors during an inspection. **ACTION-CLERK/VPCQ**
- iii. Cancer Research: Race for Life, Lynnsport Campus, 20 October 2022 – the Clerk would circulate details of the event to governors. **ACTION-CLERK**
- iv. Open Road, West Norfolk – The Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality, as a trustee of Open Road, advised that she would be attending a meeting of the organisation on 14 October 2022 to discuss opportunities between the college and the organisation.

18 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 7 December 2022 at 8.30 am.

The meeting closed at 11.48 am