

**The College of West Anglia
Minutes of
The Corporation Board Meeting
11 December 2019
8.30 am
Room U120, University Centre, King's Lynn Campus**

Present	Sharon Cambridge	Governor (Chair)
	Chris Ashman	Governor (Vice Chair)
	Andrew Cave	Governor (Vice Chair)
	Dave Clark	Governor
	Rebecca Hamilton	Governor
	Alan Measures	Governor
	Samantha Penn	Governor
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal)
	Gill Rejzl	Governor
	Lee Smith	Governor
	Adam Thompsett	Governor
	Roderick Watkins	Governor
	Gary Webb	Governor
Attending	Andrew Gedge	Assistant Principal Quality & Students
	Paul Harrison	Vice Principal Corporate Services
	Ruth Harrison	Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning
	Helen Dove	Tribal Consulting (part)
	Stephen Halls	Clerk to the Corporation

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Ray Harding, Scott Leadley, Lucy Nethsingha and Mollie Pemberton. Ruby Platt was absent from the meeting. It was noted that Sam Penn would be arriving late for the meeting.

2 Governor Discussion/Briefings: Tribal Consulting – Benchmarking Report

The Chair introduced and welcomed Helen Dove from Tribal Consulting who had recently undertaken a benchmarking review. The presentation began with an explanation of the work undertaken and the methodology used in looking at the core activities at the college. The findings of the review would be used by the senior management team to focus on specific areas of the college where potential savings and efficiencies could be realised. A number of radar charts were presented indicating how the college compared with others. Bar charts were used to display contribution rates by teaching areas. The Principal reminded Governors that there had been previous discussions regarding the need to focus on contribution analysis and that this report would aid management in identifying where costs could be removed from the college.

Sam Penn joined the meeting at 8.55 am

Governors questioned the analysis on corporate services which appeared to be out of line when compared to other colleges. It was explained that there were a number of non-pay items affecting this, including staff advertising, furniture, insurance and vehicle costs.

Governors asked if being a multi-campus college had identified any issues. Helen Dove explained that unit costs were higher due to the college being multi-campus and that this had been taken into account in the benchmarked comparisons.

Governors noted that the presentation had been very good and had provided managers with a quantity of information for them to now analyse the detail and report back with their findings. Governors noted that teaching unit costs were lower than the benchmark but that depreciation unit costs were higher. The Principal reported that there was a quantity of excess space at the Wisbech Campus, partly due to curriculum inefficiencies.

The Chair asked about the staff cost/income ratio noting that 65% was always quoted as being the accepted target for colleges to aim for. Helen Dove advised that 70% had been the accepted average in the general further education sector for some time.

Governors suggested that the graphs would benefit by having the contribution rates from the high performing colleges included for review and comparison.

The Principal noted that the data analysed did not take into account the effect of the summer staff restructure where £1.1m costs had been removed. The college finances were currently performing better than this time last year.

The Chair thanked Helen Dove for her presentation.

Helen Dove left the meeting at 9.15 am

The Chair confirmed that a report to Governors would be prepared in due course by the Senior Management Team using the information from the benchmarking analysis, identifying the areas to be addressed, actions to be taken and the potential savings to be achieved.

ACTION-PRINCIPAL

The Chair welcomed Gill Rejzl and Lee Smith to their first Board meeting.

3 Declarations of Interests

Gill Rejzl declared an interest in Item 6.i.a and undertook to withdraw from the meeting at the appropriate time. It was noted that only independent governors would consider items A1 and A2 at the end of the meeting regarding the appraisals and pay & conditions of the Senior Postholders and Clerk.

4 Minutes of previous meeting – 16 October 2019

The Minutes of the meeting of 16 October 2019 were agreed as an accurate record and duly signed by the Chair.

5 Matters Arising

The progress against the outstanding matters from previous meetings were summarised in the report for item 5. With regard to Item 11 on 16/10/19, the Chair noted that the results from the detailed survey regarding the Wisbech Transport Subsidy were still to be received. The Assistant Principal Quality & Students advised that this would be completed before the end of term. Governors asked if the county council should offer transport subsidies to students travelling to college. The Principal advised that historically county councils provided financial support but that this ceased some years previously.

The Principal updated Governors on the CITB site at Bircham Newton. A local college had shown an interest in the site and was currently at “preferred bidder” status in its negotiations. The Principal was having discussions with the Local Enterprise Partnership.

6 Governance Items:

i. Board Membership

Gill Rejzl left the meeting at 9.25 am (declared interest)

a) Chair of Audit Committee:

The Board ratified the Chair’s Action appointing Gill Rejzl as Chair of the Audit Committee on 27 November 2019. It was proposed by Andrew Cave and seconded by Sam Penn to appoint Gill Rejzl as Chair of the Audit Committee for the remainder of the 2019/20 academic year. This was agreed.

Gill Rejzl re-joined the meeting at 9.27 am

b) Resignations from the Board: The Clerk reported the resignation of Jyoti Saita from the Board, and the very recent resignation of Matt Walsh. These were noted.

c) Governor Performance: The Clerk reported this item had been withdrawn from the agenda.

ii. Training Morning Feedback – the feedback regarding the training morning held 30 October 2019 was positive and included comments from Ray Harding (*in absentia*). Governors had no concerns or issues with the matters discussed during the training. The need for information regarding the introduction of T-Levels in 2020/21 was noted. The Clerk reminded Governors that a training session looking at T-Levels was taking place for Governors in February 2020.

iii. Training Statement – Governors noted the college’s policy regarding training for Governors.

iv. Governor Learning Walks - Governors reported on the recent Learning Walks they had undertaken:

a) Chris Ashman – A Levels courses (various). Lessons were good with strong interaction from the students. The small class sizes were a concern as this limited the academic community experience of scholarly activity. The enthusiastic work of the temporary A Level Co-ordinator (covering maternity leave) was noted.

b) Ray Harding – Cambridge Campus (primarily practical sessions).

The Chair asked Governors to undertake a learning walk before the next Board meeting (18 March 2020). **ACTION-ALL GOVERNORS**

v. Link Governor Feedback – The comments regarding A Levels had been reported in the Governor Learning Walks item, above.

7 Committee Chairs’ Briefing Items:

- Audit Committee – The committee met on 27 November 2019 with three new members present. The Committee Chair thanked the college executive staff for their help in

supporting committee members during the meeting. The committee had reviewed the annual report from the previous internal auditors, RSM. The committee had a concern with the level of assurance from the internal audit plan and had requested a report from the Vice Principal Corporate Services for its next meeting outlining how this would be addressed. It was noted that Scrutton Bland, the new internal auditors, were not present for the meeting. The Vice Principal Corporate Services advised that the new contract did not require Scrutton Bland to be present for all meetings. This requirement had helped to reduce the cost of the service. The committee had reviewed the statutory accounts, audit report from KPMG and its own annual report to the Board, all of which were on the agenda later in the meeting. The committee would be looking in more detail at the risk register. The Committee Chair noted the recent developments with the CITB site at Bircham Newton and would be looking for this to be included in the next update of the risk register.

ACTION-VP CS

- Finance & General Purposes Committee – The Committee Chair reported that the two main topics from the last meeting, Statutory Accounts 2018/19 and the Medium Term Financial Plan were on the agenda later in the meeting for Board consideration.
- Performance Review & Quality – The committee was focusing more on apprenticeships with a report requested for each meeting. Teaching, Learning and Assessment would now focus on Learning and Curriculum, looking at what was taking place in the classroom, attendance, teaching techniques, questioning and student performance. The Safeguarding report had been scrutinised by the committee, noting an increase in the number of concerns raised from 217 in 2017/18 to 359 in 2018/19. It was considered that an improved reporting system could explain some of the increase. The Applewood Nursery would be reviewed by the committee at all future meetings for the time being following its second “requires improvement” grading from OfSTED.

The updates were noted.

8 Principal’s Strategy Report

1. *This item was deemed “Confidential – Restricted.”*
2. Overall College Self-Assessment Report 2018/19 – Governors noted that this was a lengthy and detailed report and asked if a summary report could be produced. The Chair reminded Governors that the issues identified in the self-assessment report go on to form the basis of the Quality Improvement Plan for the year, which was monitored by the Performance Review & Quality Committee and the Board at each meeting. It was agreed that the Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning would produce a short summary of the self-assessment report for Governors’ use.

ACTION-VPCL

3. *This item was deemed “Confidential.”*

The report was noted.

9 Applewood Nursery – Update Report

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning reported that the nursery had been re-inspected by OfSTED on 12 November 2019 and received a grading of “Requires Improvement” for the second time. A new permanent manager commenced on 18 November 2019 and was very positive in moving the nursery forward. The nursery would be looking to improve the help, support and guidance it received from county council advisers. The Chair reminded Governors that the Performance Review & Quality Committee would also now be reviewing the nursery at each of its meetings to provide further support. Governors asked if mock inspections would be beneficial to monitor the progress being made within the nursery. The

Vice Principal advised that this was already covered through the regular learning walks that were carried out along with visits from the various external consultants/advisers.

The Clerk noted a question by Ray Harding (*in absentia*) asking if the nursery formed part of the core business of the college and whether an alternative delivery arrangement should be considered. The Principal advised that the nursery was definitely part of the core business activities, supporting both staff and students to work and study at the college. The Vice Principal added that with the introduction of T Levels in 2020/21 resulting in an increased number of students carrying out work placements this would lead to an increased demand for nursery provision. The Principal advised that the management of the nursery could be considered in the longer term, but for now, the priority was to make the changes necessary to improve the next inspection grading.

Governors asked about the management issues within the nursery. The Vice Principal explained that there had been difficulties throughout the year in recruiting a permanent nursery manager but was very encouraged that a manager was now in place to move the nursery forward. During the interim, management cover had been provided by the Head of Faculty and the Deputy Nursery Manager.

The report was noted.

10 Current Performance Data and KPIs 2019/20

The Assistant Principal Quality & Students reported that higher level & higher education provision was providing a broadly positive student experience although concerns had been expressed around the first year recruitment for HE learners. The Senior Management Team remained concerned with aspects in the classroom and training provision based on staff sickness with teachers and managers in key areas such as Care & Public Services along with ESOL provision. Attendance was a major concern currently. Whilst the retention of full time students was marginally up there were attendance issues within Maths & English which related to functional skills' level changes and also an underlying poor attendance from a minority of students. Apprenticeship provision also provided concern currently around both completions and timely completions and was being monitored closely.

Governors asked about the level changes taking place. The Assistant Principal explained that a number of students were being reassessed and, where necessary, moved to a more appropriate class.

Governors were concerned to note from the report that the Technology Faculty was experiencing a high number of students being late for lessons and being disruptive. The Assistant Principal explained that this was now being measured for the first time and that there could be data recording differences between faculties. The Assistant Principal assured Governors that this was being investigated.

Governors queried the improved figures for adult learners (19+) detailed in the report. The Assistant Principal apologised for an error and confirmed that figures were 7% up on starts with 1,443 this year compared to 1,351 last year.

The Chair of the Performance Review & Quality Committee noted her concerns with the attendance figures and questioned if the issue was due to administrative errors, particularly with the number of students changing classes. The Assistant Principal advised that there had been some errors initially but confirmed that the system had since been updated with the correct information. Measures would be put in place next year to avoid the complications experienced this year. Where there remained an attendance issue, this was being reported on a weekly basis and investigated with students being contacted through the student portal.

Governors noted the various Nicdex league tables that had been provided and asked if they were significant. The Principal advised that it was good to note the college's position on any published league table. The Assistant Principal referred Governors to the league table regarding Learner Satisfaction noting that the college scored 87.1%. Governors noted that the number of actual responses had been detailed, but that the percentage of respondents to the total number of students for each college would also be useful when considering the data.

The report was noted.

11 Quality Improvement Plan 2019/20

The Assistant Principal Quality & Students advised that the Quality Improvement Plan linked to the Self-Assessment Report, recently submitted to OfSTED, and the new Education Inspection Framework. The Chair noted that a question raised by Ray Harding (*in absentia*) regarding level changes had been addressed in Item 10. Governors were concerned that there was an 8% differential in the retention rates for Maths & English when compared to the college's total retention. The Assistant Principal added that attendance levels differed also, with Maths & English at 81% attendance compared to the overall college attendance of 90%.

The report was noted.

12 Strategic Targets 2019/20 Progress Review

Governors considered the progress on the strategic targets during the autumn term, noting that this report also highlighted further concerns regarding Maths & English. The Chair added that Maths & English had been a focus for the college for some time. The Principal said it was important to maintain focus in this area to avoid it drifting.

The Clerk noted a suggestion from Ray Harding (*in absentia*) regarding the inclusion of actual figures for the previous year at the three reporting stages to allow for comparisons with the current year. It was agreed that comparable data would be included where possible.

ACTION-CLERK

Governors commented on target 1.7b regarding the poor performance within apprenticeships. The Assistant Principal Quality & Students advised that this would improve in time. The Chair of the Performance Review & Quality Committee reported that the issue regarding the timely reporting of activity within apprenticeships had been discussed within committee meetings and that the committee had confidence in the Head of Department that improvements would be seen. The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning added that previous issues regarding staffing and systems had been addressed.

Governors noted target 2.1 regarding the disappointing recruitment within HE. The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning said that all recruitment had been challenging, especially with HE. Courses were being looked at to ensure they remained viable, with some courses being combined if necessary. The Principal advised that HE students numbers overall were 3% down on the previous year, but 9% down with first year learners, which would cause difficulties in future years if recruitment did not improve. The college was actively working with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in setting up the Level 5 Associate Nursing Apprenticeship which would be very beneficial both to the college for increasing student numbers and also to the hospital in the recruitment and training of its future nursing staff.

It was noted that target 3.4 regarding staff turnover was displaying the incorrect colour indicator. This would be corrected.

ACTION-CLERK

The report was noted.

13 Student Governor

There was no student governor present to answer questions on the report and so it was taken as read. The Principal highlighted the recent activities of Ruby Platt who had worked with staff to organise the recent “hustings” event at the college to which a number of parliamentary candidates attended and answered questions from students. Thanks and appreciation for Ruby’s efforts were noted.

Governors commented on the requests from students for new lockers, seating areas etc. Students would be encouraged to use unspent funds in the student union account.

ACTION-APQS/CLARE PELLING

The report was noted.

14 CWA Accounts to 31 July 2019

The Vice Principal Corporate Services gave his thanks to the finance team and KPMG, external auditors, for their work in completing the accounts for 2018/19. Thanks were also given to the Finance & General Purposes Committee and the Audit Committee for reviewing the draft accounts at earlier meetings.

The final set of accounts had been amended to reflect recent changes and amendments (minor typographical errors). The Vice Principal confirmed that the external audit had been completed and that KPMG was happy to sign the accounts with an unqualified opinion.

Governors asked for confirmation that the £300k provision for restructuring costs in 2019/20 had been included in the 2018/19 accounts. The Vice Principal confirmed this and reminded Governors that this action, approved by the auditors, would be beneficial to the college in the 2019/20 year.

It was proposed by Andrew Cave and seconded by Gary Webb to approve the accounts for 2018/19, the letter of representation and the self-assessment of compliance with regulatory and propriety requirements. This was agreed.

The external audit report was noted.

The Chair called for a short break in the meeting at 10.10 am

The meeting re-commenced at 10.15 am

15 Management Accounts – September 2019

The Chair advised that she had agreed with the Vice Principal Corporate Services not to review this report in the meeting. It was considered that the updated medium term financial plan (Item 16A) now presented a more up-to-date summary of the college’s finances, noting also that the Management Accounts for October 2019 would be published that afternoon.

16A Medium Term Financial Plan - Update

This item was deemed “Confidential.”

17 Funding Position 2019/20

The Vice Principal Corporate Services advised that the matters highlighted within the report had been incorporated in the newly revised medium term financial plan.

The report was noted.

18 Annual Report of the Audit Committee

The Clerk advised Governors that it was a requirement of the Post-16 Audit Code of Practice 2018/19 for the Audit Committee to present a report to the Board outlining its work and activities throughout the year and to highlight any areas of concern.

Governors queried an historic incident of fraud which remained ongoing, as noted in the report. The Vice Principal Corporate Services advised that this related to a third party and that there was no reputational risk to the college.

The report was noted.

19 Student Union Accounts to 31 July 2019

The Student Union Accounts were noted, as reviewed previously by the Audit Committee.

It was proposed by Andrew Cave and seconded by Sam Penn to approve the accounts of the Student Union for 2018/19. This was agreed.

20 Annual Report on Risk Management and Review of the Risk Register

Ray Harding had enquired (*in absentia*) how often the risk management policy was reviewed. The policy was reviewed every two years. It was noted that the Audit Committee would be reviewing this in detail at its next meeting. From earlier discussions, it was noted that the CITB issue would be added to the risk register.

Ray Harding (*in absentia*) had queried the wording with Risk 2019 (1) – HE Complaints, particularly with regard to the causes for the risk. The Principal advised that he would review the narrative.

ACTION-PRINCIPAL

21 Health & Safety Policy Statement

The Health & Safety Policy, as reviewed previously by the Employment Policy Committee was noted.

Ray Harding (*in absentia*) had queried if the policy had been externally reviewed. The Chair advised that this had not been undertaken previously, adding that the policy was monitored by the college's qualified Health & Safety Officer. Governors asked about health & safety audits undertaken during the year. The Principal advised that normally three planned audits were carried out during the year, linked to perceived risk. Additional audits would be carried out if considered necessary. The Chair noted that the Health & Safety Officer attended the Employment Policy Committee when required to present reports and answer questions.

The policy was noted.

22 CWA Gender Pay Gap Report

The Clerk advised that Ray Harding (*in absentia*) had enquired if there was any comparable data available for FE colleges. The Principal reported that other local colleges had not yet published their reports for March 2019. It was noted that the Head of Human Resources who regularly attended the regional meetings of the Association of Colleges had no concerns with the college's gender pay gap. Ray Harding had also asked if there was an action plan in place. The Principal advised that there was not a specific action plan in place regarding the gender pay gap report other than continuous monitoring as there were no issues of concern. The Principal referred to the actions currently being taken as a result of the college wide pay review which had been undertaken during the summer 2019 term.

The report was noted.

23 Annual Safeguarding Monitoring Report

Governors considered the report which had been reviewed in detail previously by the Performance Review & Quality Committee. Governors noted the increase in concerns from 217 in 2017/18 to 359 in 2018/19. The Assistant Principal Quality & Students advised that the improved reporting system would account for some of the increase but noted that there had been a general increase overall. The Chair said that it was positive that students felt able to engage with staff and to come forward with their issues. The Assistant Principal noted that additional resources had been allocated to supporting students. The Chair of Performance Review & Quality Committee advised that the committee would be asking for a further report.

The report was noted.

24 Single Equality Scheme & Equality Objectives 2019/20

The Chair raised a query from Ray Harding (*in absentia*) regarding section 1 of the document stating that the College would not tolerate any behaviour or activity that discriminated without objective justification. The Assistant Principal Quality & Students advised that this was the accepted wording within the sector and had been recognised legally.

It was proposed by Chris Ashman and seconded by Gill Rejzl to approve the policy and the scheme objectives for 2019/20. This was agreed.

25 Equality Objectives – Annual Progress Review 2018/19

Governors asked if the college's own staff and students surveys asked about discrimination within the college. The Assistant Principal Quality & Students advised that discrimination had not been included in surveys previously but there was a plan to introduce questions relating to discrimination in future surveys.

The report was noted.

26 Any Other Business

- a) Governors noted the success of the staff awards evening held at the Duke's Head Hotel on 26 November 2019;
- b) It was reported that a Governor had observed bad behaviour from college students on the train arriving into King's Lynn that morning. The Principal noted the details and advised that this would be followed up. **ACTION-PRINCIPAL**

27 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 18 March 2020 at 8.30 am, Wisbech Campus.

10.58 am: The Principal, SMT members and Staff Governors left the meeting at this time with only Independent Governors remaining.

A1 Determination of the Pay and Conditions of Senior Postholders and Clerk 2019-20

This item was deemed “confidential - restricted.”

A2 Appraisals of Senior Postholders and Clerk

This item was deemed “confidential - restricted.”

The meeting closed at 11.13 am