

**The College of West Anglia
Minutes of
The Corporation Board Meeting
14 October 2020
8.30 am
Remote Meeting – Microsoft Teams**

Present	Sharon Cambridge	Governor (Chair)
	Chris Ashman	Governor (Vice Chair)
	Andrew Cave	Governor (Vice Chair)
	Dave Clark	Governor
	Sam Fletcher	Governor
	Rebecca Hamilton	Governor
	Ray Harding	Governor
	Scott Leadley	Governor
	Lucy Nethsingha	Governor
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal)
	Gill Rejzl	Governor
	Lee Smith	Governor
	Roderick Watkins	Governor
	Gary Webb	Governor
	Donna Woodruff	Governor
 Attending	Andrew Gedge	Assistant Principal Quality & Students
	Paul Harrison	Vice Principal Corporate Services
	Ruth Harrison	Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning
	Stephen Halls	Clerk to the Corporation

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Alan Measures.

2 Declarations of Interests

Declarations of interest were noted for the Principal, Vice Principal Corporate Services and Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning in respect of Item 5.iv – The Annual Report from the Remuneration Committee. A declaration was also noted for Donna Woodruff for Item 5.i - Staff Governor ratification. Roderick Watkins noted his interest in the School of Nursing when it was discussed in Item 7 – Principal’s Strategy Report.

3 Minutes of the previous meeting – 1 July 2020

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 July 2020 were reviewed and agreed as being a correct record of the meeting.

4 Matters Arising

The progress against the outstanding matters from previous meetings was summarised in the report for item 4. There were no questions or concerns raised on the items.

5 Governance Items

1) Appointment of Staff Governor

Following the recent recruitment campaign, Donna Woodruff, Programme Manager at the Cambridge Campus was elected as Staff Governor.

Governors ratified the appointment of Donna Woodruff as Staff Governor for a period of 4 years.

2) Members' Terms of Office Summary

The report prepared by the Clerk relating to terms of office was noted.

3) Governor Attendance 2019/20

The Clerk reported that the overall attendance at meetings was 82% for 2019/20 which was a decrease on the previous year's attendance of 88%. Attendance during the autumn term had been low, but had improved during the spring and summer terms, particularly since the move to meetings being held remotely.

4) Remuneration Committee – Annual Report 2019/20

The annual report from the Remuneration Committee was noted.

6 Committee Chairs' Briefing Items:

- Employment Policy Committee - The Chair reported that the committee had reviewed the draft restructure consultation report and had approved it for circulation, subject to some minor amendments being made. The Committee had recognised the work of Nicky Rowland, Head of HR, and Danny Huddleston, Health & Safety Officer during the recent months and for their help and support to colleagues during the coronavirus lockdown period and subsequent re-opening of the campuses.
- Performance Review & Quality Committee – The Committee Chair noted that the committee continued to focus on Maths & English, Apprenticeships and Technology. A new performance reporting method had been outlined by the Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning and would be reviewed at the committee's next meeting in December 2020. Student feedback via surveys over the summer had been very positive. There had been, however, several complaints due to the exam results situation caused using Ofqual's grading algorithm and the government's late decision to change to using centre assessed grades.
- Search & Governance Committee – The Chair reported that the committee had discussed learning walks and how they could be carried out in the current period as there was currently a concern and sensitivity with observers joining remote lessons from the teaching staff. This matter would continue to be reviewed. The training morning for governors planned for 4 November 2020 would comprise 4 topics: T Levels, Education Inspection Framework, General Data Protection Regulation and Improving the use of electronic documents and Teams.

The updates were noted.

7 Principal's Strategy Report

The Principal provided the following updates to his report:

1. FE Commissioner - *This item was deemed "Confidential."*
2. Policy Update – With regard to coronavirus, the Principal reported that several individuals were currently self-isolating, but to date, only 2 students had tested positive, both of whom were new students and had not actually attended the campus so far this term. For staff, 2 members had been infected, with both now recovered and back to work. The mix of on-campus and remote teaching continued. There had been some issues in the remote delivery of English and Maths at the beginning of the term, but these had been quickly addressed, with attendance currently at 70% per week.

Governors asked how the College was managing the behaviour of its students with regard to the regulations. The Principal advised that high standards of conformity were being noticed on campus, with students wearing face masks when required. The Principal was unable to comment on how the College's students behaved when not on the campuses.

Governors asked about the College's ability to access testing kits for staff and students. The Principal advised that 10 kits had originally been supplied with more now on the way. The kits would be used for those staff and students who were showing symptoms of the virus, with the results being known within 2 days. Regular communications and guidance were being issued by the Head of HR.

Governors asked if testing of staff and students extended to those in the Nursery. The Principal responded that the measures covered all aspects of the College's operations including the Nursery. Some nursery staff had taken tests with negative results received. The children were noted to be making good use of the hand sanitisers when in the nursery.

3. Metalcraft - *This item was deemed "Confidential."*
4. School of Nursing – Governors asked for an update on this project. The Principal reported that the college was in the process of agreeing the contract with the Borough Council which had obtained the original funding grant from the government. The College was considering accommodation plans and equipment lists for the School of Nursing. The College was in dialogue with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) regarding how best to appoint a senior qualified member of the nursing profession. Validation of the course was a priority. The QEH and the Towns Fund board were both very supportive of the project.

The report was noted.

8 Strategic Targets 2019/20 – Final Review

Governors commented on the following targets:

1.5b regarding the small improvement in performance for English & Maths: The Assistant Principal Quality & Students advised that performance particularly in Maths had started at a lower base than others, but was now improving, adding that all colleges were reporting similar performance issues. The Chair of the PR&Q Committee added that she was confident that the Head of Department for English & Maths would be taking action to improve performance.

3.4 regarding the high attrition rate of newly recruited staff: The Principal advised that this particular target was being monitored by the Employment Policy Committee and related mainly to support staff where the effect of the national living wage had result in poor salary differentials between supervisors and staff. Support staff received a pay award in April

2020 and all support positions were currently being reviewed, subject to a re-grading exercise. Within teaching, there tended to be a higher proportion of leavers from those joining from other professions, rather than from those who had worked previously in teaching.

Governors asked about the disruption caused to apprentices as a result of coronavirus, and the subsequent effect on performance targets. The Assistant Principal advised that the earlier concern regarding training opportunities was continuing. The Principal added that the number of new starts allowed for in the College budget had been set at 250, whereas in a normal year it would have been around 450. Governors asked how this shortfall would be managed. The Principal reported that pre-apprenticeship courses were available and that the College staff were in regular dialogue with employers in the search for potential opportunities for new apprentices.

Governors asked about the general effect of coronavirus on overall performance. The Principal considered that a number of targets had not been achieved due to the effects of the pandemic and were showing as “Red” in the analysis.

The report was noted.

9 Preliminary Financial Results 2019/20

The Vice Principal Corporate Services reported that the external audit was currently underway with the review work due to be completed by the end of the week (16 October 2020). So far during the audit no issues had been identified that would greatly alter the reported draft figures. The provisional headline result would now be a surplus of around £1.5m, ending what had been a positive financial year, particularly as it included the sale of Gaywood Field for £1m. The out-turn surplus would reset the clock for the loan covenant and result in an ESFA financial health grading of “Good.”

Governors noted the improved cash position of the College but commented on the increased number of creditor days from 10 days in the forecast to 40 days in the final out-turn. The Vice Principal agreed with the good cash position, noting that creditor days was calculated at one moment in time, and that, on 31 July 2020, the creditor days did indeed stand at 40 days.

Governors asked about the effect of any pension scheme adjustment still to be accounted for. The Vice Principal advised that this was still to be included in the accounts, once finalised, and was expected to cause a large adjustment in the accounts, however, this would have no impact on the calculations of the key performance indicators.

Governors queried the interest payable cost, reported in the table at paragraph 11 of the report, where the out-turn was £130k against a forecast of just £79k. The Vice Principal advised that this was a mis-allocation and would be adjusted before the accounts were finalised.

Governors were concerned that the out-turn for partnership payments of £1.469m differed greatly to the forecast of £1.7m. The Vice Principal noted the difficulties of delivering and monitoring partnership performance during the recent pandemic, however, accepted that there needed to be an improvement in the way the finances were monitored, noting that the College had been prudent and tended to overstate partnership costs in its forecast.

Governors asked about the types of courses available to those aged 19 years+. The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning noted various areas of study, such as English & Maths, ESOL and Access to Higher Education courses. Funding for Adult Education was received from the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) and the Greater London Authority (GLA). The Assistant

Principal added that the number of 19+ starts had increased, noting that the College was trying to reduce its reliance on partnership activity moving forward.

Governors asked about the amount claimed by the College for furlough payments to staff. The Vice Principal Corporate Services advised that the amount claimed was insignificant in the accounts due to the small number of staff who had been affected in this way.

Governors asked about the impact on nursery income during the lockdown period. The Vice Principal noted that the nursery generally did not make a positive contribution to the finances. The Chair added that the nursery was operated to support staff and students, without which it would not be possible for them to attend, either to work, or to learn.

The report was noted.

10 Funding Out-turn 2019/20 and Indicative Numbers 2020/21

The Vice Principal Corporate Services advised that the final return for 2019/20 was due to be submitted to the ESFA this week and that no changes were expected to the numbers included in the report, noting that the College was on track to deliver its target numbers prior to the coronavirus pandemic.

Governors requested an update on the recruitment figures for 2020/21 which would have an implication for the funding to be received in 2021/22 due to the lagged funding model. The Vice Principal reported that recruitment had been good for September 2021 and was cautiously expecting positive news. The Principal added that growth was currently up 5% on the previous year and that staff would be working hard to ensure systems accurately reflected all enrolments and leavers. The Principal was assured for 2021/22 in that a prudent approach had been taken for future targets, noting that base rates for learners had improved also. The Principal considered that, subject to further analysis, the need for a further staff restructure in the year might not be necessary.

The report was noted.

11 Applewood Nursery – Update Report

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning reported that the nursery was partially open. Early Years Advisers from Norfolk County Council had carried out a virtual visit the previous week and had been looking particularly at the nursery's work with children who speak English as an additional language. A further (virtual) visit would take place the following week to talk specifically with the room leads. The Chair of the PR&Q Committee would be sourcing an Early Years Inspector to provide additional support and guidance to nursery staff in the form of a readiness visit. It was noted that numbers were down for 2-year olds to the inability to receive grant funding due to the current inspection grading; to mitigate this, children were being re-allocated across classrooms to ensure good levels of care, whilst managing costs

The Chair asked if there was confidence in the information being received from the Early Years Advisers. The Vice Principal confirmed that there was confidence from the input, particularly as similar information had been received from other sources, such as nursery practitioners who had visited the nursery. The Vice Principal had confidence in the manager who was now in place. Governors asked if the reports from the Early Years Advisers could be made available. The Vice Principal confirmed that the reports would be circulated to Governors.

ACTION-VPCL

The Vice Principal continued: Room leads were strong; staff were positive and cared about the provision and were working hard to avoid a poor inspection grade; training was joined-up and this had been acknowledged by the advisers.

Governors enquired about the action plan following the last inspection, asking for assurance that the correct actions were being targeted to ensure a good inspection grade next time and also what the consequence would be if no improvement was found by OfSTED. The Vice Principal advised that the inspection report provided a listing of actions to be addressed and included the timeframes to follow, all of which had been addressed by the College. Due to coronavirus, full inspections were currently on hold throughout the autumn term although inspectors were carrying out interim visits on all providers. The Principal noted the need to achieve a good inspection result was a priority for the College, but accepted the difficulties faced in recruiting and retaining good staff and the problems faced recently with coronavirus.

The report was noted.

12 Current Performance Data and KPIs – 2019/20 Outturn

The Assistant Principal Quality & Students acknowledged the work of teaching staff for continuing to provide learning and support to students during the period of lockdown, throughout the summer term and into the holiday period, noting also the additional work caused by the late change in examination results and the use of centre assessed grades leading to a number of complaints received and requiring action. The Chair offered her thanks to the Assistant Principal for his work in co-ordinating these matters.

The Assistant Principal reported that the deadline for receipt of claims was this week; circa 300 delayed claims regarding assessments could miss the deadline and therefore not be credited to the 2019/20 year.

The final overall achievement rate was currently expected to be around 84%, but due to the delayed claims this may reduce by approximately 2%. Partnership provision had only delivered half of its expected target.

The Chair gave her thanks to all staff and senior managers for achieving the performance reported for 2019/20. The Principal noted his thanks to the Assistant Principal particular on quality matters and for managing the issues caused by the late changes in exams results.

Governors asked if the issues regarding late results were all related to coronavirus issues, or if there were any other difficulties being experienced. The Assistant Principal confirmed that this was the case, particularly with regard to late assessments caused by verifiers not visiting centres to carry out the required assessments, such as with dog grooming and motor vehicles.

Governors asked about the concerns with the delivery of Maths and what was being done to remedy this. The Assistant Principal advised that Maths was being monitored under Support to Improve, however, there were concerns of how successful the remote delivery of this subject area would be.

Governors enquired about the achievement and retention of Gypsy Roma learners. The Assistant Principal reported that this was a small category of students (only 16 learners declared in this group) with the statistics affected by the performance of just a few students.

Governors asked if the Maths results were over-inflated due to the centre assessed grading process. This was not the case, as had been discussed at the previous PR&Q Committee. The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning said that the results had been carefully controlled. Further, there had been specification changes for Functional Skills which had been taken into account. For Maths, the teaching staff tended to be “home-grown” and upskilled from other areas due to the short supply of Maths teachers locally and nationally. The quality of those applying for teaching positions in Maths tended to be poor.

Governors asked for clarification on the statistics provided in Appendix 4 relating to HE performance. The Assistant Principal advised later in the meeting (under Any Other Business) that the overall percentage of “Good” degrees achieved was 79%.

The report was noted.

13 Quality Improvement Plan 2019/20 – Year End Review

The Chair asked about the problems being experienced with regard to assessment and external quality assurance requirements. The Assistant Principal Quality & Students explained that there was a risk of blocks relating to sanctions from an awarding organisation typically around the concerns it may class as ‘high risk’ with the impact being blocks to new registrations and/or certification for a given qualification set.

The report was noted.

14 Hearing The Student Voice

There were no questions or concerns raised on this report.

The report was noted.

15 Review of Risk Register

Governors asked about the relationship between the risk score and the ESFA’s financial health rating detailed in Risk 2018(2). The Vice Principal Corporate Services advised that the health rating was volatile and changed frequently due to a number of factors within its calculation. For the College, it was a risk, however, due to improving demographics and increased income the health rating would improve. It was considered that the College’s risk register rating provided a better representation of any potential risk, rather than the ESFA’s health rating calculation. The Principal added that the diversity of income streams was a concern in that the College relied heavily on income from 16-19-year olds, and was therefore exposed when the student demographics reduce, as had been experienced in recent years.

Governors noted that Fraud had become a new entry on the Risk Register, 2020 (3). The Vice Principal explained that following a recent internal audit report the need to improve internal controls on procurement had been identified, with the recommendations from that report now being actioned. Additionally, there had recently been an alleged breach of procedure reported, although following an investigation this had been found to be in order.

The Chair of the Audit Committee advised that the committee had been reviewing fraud at its recent meetings. The committee Chair noted her thanks to the Vice Principal for updating the risk register, noting that target risk scores would be discussed at a future meeting. The document was considered to be valuable in the College’s management and monitoring of risk.

Governors asked about the College’s IT systems and if they were susceptible to on-line fraud. The Vice Principal assured governors that this matter was currently under review, with systems being tested and challenged, to date, no major concerns with systems or security had been noted. The Principal advised that a webinar on cyber security for college managers and governors was being held on 23 October 2020, provided by JISC and the Association of Colleges. The Clerk would circulate booking information following the meeting for those able to attend.

ACTION-CLERK

Governors referred to Risk 2020 (2) Potential Impact of Covid-19 on College Operations. The Vice Principal noted instances of staff reporting muscular-skeletal concerns due to poor work stations at home. Governors asked if there was a need for the College to have a Covid-19 outbreak plan which had been agreed with the Director of Public Health and shared with the Department for Education. The Vice Principal advised that this was not a requirement for FE colleges at present but would check the latest regulations for any updates.

ACTION-VPCS

Governors asked about Risk 2020 (1) National Construction College (CITB). The Principal advised that there was no update at the present time on this matter.

The report was noted.

16 CWA Public Value Statement

Governors noted one spelling error in the document which would be corrected prior to publication.

ACTION-CLERK

Governors approved the Public Value Statement for publication.

17 Any Other Business

- a) Governors commented on the motor vehicle on display at the Wisbech Campus which needed a good clean. The Assistant Principal Quality & Students reported that this had been attended to very recently.
- b) Student Behaviour off-campus – the Chair commented that she had noticed students around the town (Walks, Tennyson Avenue) moving aside and giving members of the public sufficient space when walking nearby.
- c) The Chair noted that a number of governors were now in their second year of office and advised that she would be willing to offer surgeries to meet with those governors, either in groups or individually, to discuss any concerns they may have, or their progress so far. The Clerk would make the necessary arrangements as required.

ACTION-CLERK

18 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 9 December 2020 at 8.30 am.

The meeting closed at 10.16 am