

**The College of West Anglia  
Minutes of  
The Chairs' Meeting  
2 September 2020  
8.30 am  
Remote Meeting – Microsoft Teams**

<b>Present</b>	Sam Fletcher	Governor (Chair)
	Chris Ashman	Governor
	Sharon Cambridge	Governor
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal)
	Gill Rejzl	Governor
<b>Attending</b>	Stephen Halls	Clerk to the Corporation

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**1 Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from Andrew Cave.

**2 Declaration of Interests**

No interests were declared.

**3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 29 July 2020**

The minutes of the meeting of 29 July 2020 were agreed as being an accurate record.

**4 Matters Arising**

The progress against the outstanding matters from previous meetings was summarised in the report for item 4. This was accepted by the meeting and there were no questions raised.

**5 Principal's Update**

The Principal provided updates on several matters:

- a) Staff Meeting – Rather than the usual meetings held at each campus at the commencement of the academic year the Principal held a remote Zoom meeting yesterday (1/9/20) with approximately 360 staff attending. The presentation was recorded for those who were unable to attend.
- b) Campus working – most teaching staff had returned to their respective campuses over the last few days. Several teams, mainly from the support departments, would continue to work from home for the time being; this would continue to be reviewed under the College's flexible working policy.

- c) Re-opening – regular planning meetings for the re-opening of the campuses had continued throughout the summer break. Signage, sanitiser stations, room layout and so on had been reviewed by Health & Safety staff. The facility at Providence Street which had at one time been considered unsuitable for safe teaching in the current climate had now been adapted for safe working and would re-open this term. A concern had been raised regarding the safe use of air conditioning, particularly in the tower block; this had been investigated with no issues found. Staff welfare would remain a priority for management along with the need to provide the best possible educational experience for students coming to the college this term. Managers continued to review government guidance, with the latest publication being released on Saturday 29 August (morning), quickly followed by an amended publication being released by the lunchtime.

Governors reported that they had noted comments that the tower block would be out of action due to issues with the air conditioning. The Principal advised that this was incorrect and that he would strive to correct any mis-communications that had been circulated by the staff and student populations.

- d) Return of Students – the start times for students would be staggered to avoid everyone arriving at the same time. Information would be emailed to students in advance with clear instructions for the start of term; information would also be placed on the website. Guides would be placed at various locations across the campuses to direct students.
- e) Transport – Governors asked about transport arrangements. The Principal advised that there had been various discussions with Norfolk County Council on this matter. All students would be expected to follow the guidance (i.e. face masks to be worn when travelling). Until students returned it was unclear if maximum numbers on certain buses would be reached, noting that some students would be studying remotely at home on various days so not all students would be travelling every day.
- f) Student Numbers – Andrew Cave had submitted a question for Item 7 on the agenda, but it was deemed appropriate to take the question as this time, regarding student numbers for the new academic year. The Principal advised that enrolments for 16-18 students, numbers were potentially 144 (5%) up on the same time last year, although actual acceptances on offers were only 3% up at the current time. The enrolment process was ongoing and so final numbers were not currently available. Governors asked how the numbers were affected by demographics. The Principal explained that the demography indicated that numbers would increase for 2020/21, then dip for 2021/22 and then begin to rise going further forward. The financial benefit of the additional students would not be realised in the income received until 2021/22 due to the funding model.

Governors asked about the effect of coronavirus on student applications and likely attrition rates. The Principal advised that more 16-18 study programmes were available with increased numbers expected to attend but overall market share against sixth forms would not increase. Apprenticeship numbers had been affected by coronavirus, circa 13% down on a typical year. Attrition rates during the first 6 weeks of a new academic year tended to be around 5%.

The Principal reported that HE numbers were currently at 92 (21 down on the previous year). The financial impact of this reduction would be calculated in due course. During the recent clearing process only 5 additional students applied, whereas in the previous year this figure was 16.

Governors asked if the reducing HE numbers would be a concern for ARU. The Principal advised that this would be discussed with ARU at the next review meeting. The College would challenge ARU on its delay in validating particular courses (e.g. Level 5 Nursing Associate Apprenticeship) which does not help in the timely recruitment of HE students for UcWA.

Information on adult courses was currently not available.

- g) Key Stage 4 (school children attending CWA for vocational subjects) – the Principal advised that KES had withdrawn from offering CWA vocational subjects to its pupils. The Principal noted that there was a new acting headmaster in post at KES. The Principal commented that he was hoping that in time this provision would be reinstated.
- h) A Level & BTEC Results – the Principal referred to the national outcry regarding the formulation by algorithm of the A Level and BTEC results for 2019/20. The College had initially been adversely affected by the use of the algorithm and the Principal was pleased when the government announced that centre assessed grades would be applied instead of the those calculated using the algorithm. The Principal had been interviewed in the media with reports appearing in the Lynn News and on BBC Radio Norfolk with comments also being noted in the Times.
- i) School of Nursing – the Principal was confident that funding for this project was imminent, adding that the funding grant was just awaiting ministerial sign-off.

Governors asked if ARU was still supporting this project. The Principal advised that senior managers at ARU were supportive of this initiative although there had been some hold-ups by managers at lower levels. The Principal considered that ARU would validate the course, so as to maintain the good working relationship that the two institutions enjoyed, and also by knowing that funding had been approved.

Governors asked about the number of student placements for the course. The Principal reported that Libby McManus, the Chief Nurse at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital had now moved on and had been replaced in the immediate term by April Brown. The Chief Nurse, along with Caroline Shaw, Chief Executive, were very appreciative of the work being done by the College in setting up this course and would be providing the 20 students required in September 2021. The Principal added that other College partners and associates, such as the Borough Council, were all supportive of this project.

- j) Capital Funding Grant - £1,028,434.50 had been awarded to the College for investment in estates and IT infrastructure. The grant would need to be expended by 31 March 2021. The college's existing capital programme would be reviewed in light of this grant.
- k) National Student Survey 2020 – the College achieved its highest results ever in the results recently published with overall HE satisfaction at 92%. Some individual programmes achieved 100% from their particular students.
- l) FE Commissioner – remote meetings had continued with the Deputy FE Commissioner, Andrew Tyley during which he had indicated that he was supportive of the actions being taken by the College over the recent months. The Principal expected the final meeting with the FE Commissioners' team to be in February 2021.
- m) Complaints – 126 complaints/appeals had been received to date regarding the marking of results for 2019/20, and in particular the GCSE Maths and English awards. There had also been a number of Freedom of Information requests received on this subject, causing

additional work for staff. The same was being experienced in all colleges at the current time.

The Chair commented on the additional work involved by staff to support the affected students. The Principal highlighted the work of the Exams Department and provided an example of the work involved in preparing for the release of the BTEC results, which was then pulled at the very last minute by the exam board, Pearson, due to various issues.

- n) Planning – due to the issues of coronavirus since March 2020 and the issues with exams over the summer period, the Principal explained that management attention had been somewhat diverted away from the usual business of the College and in preparing for the new academic year. The Chair thanked the Principal for the additional work that had been undertaken over the recent months and for keeping governors informed via briefing emails and additional Chairs' group meetings. It was agreed that the Corporation Chair would issue a communication to all staff thanking them for their efforts over the past year.

**ACTION-CORPORATION CHAIR/CLERK**

## **6 Update from Committee Chairs**

There were no matters to raise since the last meeting.

## **7 Questions or Concerns Raised by Governors**

The Clerk advised that the only question received had already been dealt with under Item 5 (f) – Principal's Update.

## **8 Any Other Business**

Sharon Cambridge reported that she was now returning to her duties as Chair of the Corporation following her recent period of absence. Thanks were given to the Vice-Chairs, Chris Ashman and Andrew Cave, for covering during this time. An email would be issued to governors advising of the Chair's return to duties and to thank everyone for their support during the past academic year.

**ACTION-CORPORATION CHAIR/CLERK**

Governors asked about the support received by the Principal and Clerk from the AoC support network. The Principal advised that the various networks offered great support at the start of the coronavirus pandemic, but this was diminishing as the sector becomes used to the new requirements and new ways of working. The AoC was continuing its weekly webinar on current topics and the Principal continued to attend remote meetings of the regional Principals' group. Similarly, for the Clerk, the Clerks' network provided good support with weekly regional meetings being held remotely to share information and best practice; from September these meetings would reduce to monthly meetings. The on-line Clerks' network continued to be used to raise queries and concerns; the Clerk reported that the matters currently being discussed tended to be more business-as-usual in nature.

Governors commented on the recent survey forms completed as part of the annual returns exercise. The Clerk reported that the results of the surveys would be reviewed by the Search & Governance Committee and would be made available to all governors to review.

**9 Chair's items for briefing to the Corporation**

There were no specific items to note for the Corporation. Governors would receive the minutes of this meeting in due course.

**10 Date and time of next meeting**

Wednesday, 30 September 2020 at 10.30 am.

**The meeting closed at 9.44 am**