

**The College of West Anglia
Minutes of
The Chairs' Meeting
28 April 2021
10.42 am
Remote Meeting – Microsoft Teams**

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

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Andrew Cave.

2 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 3 March 2021

The minutes of the meeting of 3 March 2021 were agreed as being an accurate record.

4 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5 Principal's Update

The Principal provided updates on several matters:

- a) Further Education in Peterborough – the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (CPCA) had been looking to increase FE capacity in the Peterborough area, and more specifically to create an FE facility within the new Peterborough university which it was heavily funding, to be managed by ARU. The College had been in discussions with the CPCA as being a possible provider of the FE provision. Unfortunately, the CPCA had recently advised that it no longer had the funding secured and so the project was now on hold for at least 12 months. The Principal would continue discussions with Roderick Watkins, Vice Chancellor of ARU in the meantime.
- b) Fenland – The CPCA had been hoping to increase FE capacity in the Fenland area. Following meetings with the CPCA, the College had submitted a Capital Transformation Bid for funding to develop the construction facilities at the Wisbech Campus which would be matched funded with a grant from the CPCA. However, the CPCA had

advised that this was no longer possible as the potential funds, controlled by Fenland District Council, had now been earmarked for other projects in its district. Sadly, the College was not in a position to match the funding from the Capital Transformation Bid itself and so the project would now be put on hold.

- c) CITB – Bircham Newton – it had been recently announced in the press that the transfer of the CITB site to West Suffolk College had been withdrawn, with CITB retaining ownership and management of the site and responsibility for delivering training. The full reasons behind the cancellation of the transfer had not been made known.
- d) Local Skills Improvement Plan trailblazer & Strategic Development Fund pilot – this was published on Monday (26/4/21). This funding excluded the involvement of combined authorities and local enterprise partnerships, all of whom were wanting to work with colleges and local chambers of commerce to secure funding within their respective localities. The Principal will be attending a meeting tomorrow (29/4/21) to look at possible collaborative approaches. Cambridge Regional College had announced its wish to lead on the project within the Cambridge area. The Principal will be speaking with fellow principals from Norfolk and Suffolk at 6.00 pm today (28/4/21) to gauge interest. The deadline for applications for funding is 25 May 2021.
- e) Community Renewal Fund – regional funding is available and so the College will be putting in bids to both the Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Combined Authority (for Cambridgeshire) and Norfolk County Council (for Norfolk). Awards will be primarily for revenue projects and would need to be spent by 31 March 2022 – this being a tight timeframe.
- f) *This item was deemed 'Confidential.'*
- g) *This item was deemed 'Confidential.'*
- h) Board Meeting, 17 March 2021 – the Principal gave his apologies for the Strategic Targets Review paper that went to the last Board Meeting. The quality of the data and the reporting of information was poor. Targets which had been previously managed by Andrew Gedge, Assistant Principal Quality & Students, had been passed to other managers who then struggled to update the data for the report. This caused difficulties for Governors to assess the current performance of the College during the meeting. The Principal assured Chairs that the standard of reporting on the strategic targets would be much improved in the next report.
- i) Adult Education Clawback – as had been mentioned at the Strategic Planning Morning on 21/3/21, the tolerance level had been announced at 90%. Most colleges would be affected by the level. CWA's current activity level was around 80%, however, the level of clawback will be offset by the reduction in payments made to subcontractors where their respective levels of activity had also reduced.
- j) FE Collaboration Fund – this was yet another potential opportunity for the College to investigate in due course.
- k) College Budget & Reforecast – following the recent reforecast exercise and update of the medium-term financial plan the position for the current year was fairly positive. An original budget deficit of £166k had now become a surplus of £897k in the reforecast. The cash position was good, although the pay/income ratio was at 69%, still more than the FE Commissioner's benchmark of 65%. The financial health grading in the current and future years was 'good' with 'outstanding' being shown in 2022/23. Pay awards and the effect of the job evaluation process, once finalised, will affect the pay/income ratio and may cause unwanted scrutiny from the FE Commissioner, even though other KPIs remained good. Governors noted that during the pay review undertaken in 2019

the consultant advised that the pay/income ratio across the sector should be more realistically set at 70%. The Principal added that the FE Commissioner had recently reviewed and amended its KPIs, although left the pay/income ratio unaltered at 65%.

Governors commented that if the workforce was required to be high-performing then in most cases high pay costs were to be expected. The Principal added that those colleges that tended to fail financially were suffering with a multiple of financial indicators: deficits, low cash, debt servicing and high pay/income ratio.

On a positive note, the Principal advised that the Technology faculty was currently fully staffed, and that the previous difficult-to-fill teaching positions had been recruited to.

Further conversation on pay costs was deemed 'Confidential.'

- l) Covid-19 testing – Governors asked for an update on this. The Principal advised that activity had now reduced since the majority of students had now received 3 on-site tests and had therefore been issued with their own home-testing kits, with students being trusted to use these appropriately, noting there was no method of recording if and when tests were carried out, or the subsequent result. Guidance currently stated that if a lateral flow test was positive, the individual should then obtain a PCR confirmatory test which, if negative, there was no longer a need to self-isolate and the individual could return.
- m) Teacher Assessed Grades – teaching staff and managers had carried out a great deal of work preparing to undertake teacher assessed grades (TAG) on their students. The College had shared its process/policy of this with the awarding bodies. The concerns and workload involved had been discussed during the Performance Review & Quality Committee held earlier that morning (28/4/21).
- n) Hairdressing Awards – two CWA students had achieved recent success in the National Hairdressing Awards; one student was placed within the top five; the other student was the overall winner!
- o) Institute of Technology – the College's joint bid with other stakeholders was progressing and was looking positive. The Principal would provide more details in his next strategy report to the Board.

The Principal's updates were noted.

6 Update from Committee Chairs

- a) Audit Committee – Carolyn Rand, recently appointed new governor had attended her first committee meeting on 24 March 2021, as had Virginia Grace, the new Head of Finance. Updates on the concerns of cyber security risks were noted. There had been a concern regarding how fire marshals were organised now that campuses had re-opened; this had been addressed by the Health & Safety Committee. Auditors were not present at the meeting and there was much discussion on risk. The College's publication scheme was approved, although there remained scope for the College to share more information in the future. The Whistleblowing Policy was reviewed and would be recommended to the Board for approval. The annual performance review of the Committee was carried out. The performance of both external and internal auditors was carried out with no concerns for the Board. It was noted that Stephanie Beavis of KPMG would be moving to a new assignment and so a new manager would be appointed for the College's next audit. The approach taken by the new Head of Finance in managing outstanding audit actions was welcomed. The audit plan for the next year would be considered at the next committee meeting.

In due course, once the strategic plan had been finalised, the Board may wish to consider in more detail the strategic risk and the College's risk appetite going forward.

- b) Employment Policy Committee – at its last meeting on 3 March 2021 the Committee reviewed the restructure of the College Leadership Team. This had now been actioned.
- c) Performance Review & Quality Committee – this meeting had taken place earlier that day (28 April 2021). Teacher Assessed Grades, particularly for maths and English would be challenging although there was confidence in the Head of Faculty in managing this process. Governors should be mindful of the expected dip in performance levels for the current year, taking into account the pandemic and its effects. A robust approach had been taken to address the issues within ESOL. The effects of the pandemic were still causing difficulties for apprentices and their employers. Management had been asked to reconsider how best to report data, particularly with regard to key performance indicators and the Quality Improvement Plan. An HE Strategy had been presented although the Committee felt that further work and more discussion was required on this and so this would be considered further at the Committee's next meeting. The Applewood Nursery was now awaiting its Ofsted inspection; it was considered that all previous areas of concern had been addressed. The Committee was confident in the approach taken by the Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning with regard to her areas of responsibility.
- d) Search & Governance – at its last meeting on 3 March 2021 the Committee reviewed the applications of 3 new governors to the Board, all of whom were appointed on 17 March 2021. Since then, 1 governor had attended their first committee meeting (audit) and 2 attended the strategic planning morning on 21 April 2021. Sharon Cambridge and Gill Rejzl will be meeting with Paul O'Shea, Designated Safeguarding Lead on 29 April 2021 to discuss the activities of the Safeguarding Board, its terms of reference and its reporting.

7 Review of the Committee's Performance, Terms of Reference and Annual Business Agenda

The Chair's Meeting group considered the review proforma as prepared by the Clerk and concluded that it provided a fair and accurate summary of the group's performance during the past year. It was noted that the scheduled number of 7 meetings for 2020/21 would reduce to 3 in the next year, although the group had the ability to call additional meetings if and when necessary.

The Terms of Reference were reviewed. Under Item 3 – Membership, it was agreed to amend 'The Principal' to 'The Principal or his Deputy' to allow for instances when the Principal was unable to attend. Under Item 4 – Meetings, it was agreed that the Principal, or his Deputy, should be a necessary attendee of this meeting, along with 3 other members. **ACTION-CLERK**

The proposed future business agenda plan was noted.

8 Any Other Business

Governors were asked if they would support the remote Student Awards sessions on 14, 15 & 16 June 2021. The Clerk would circulate details in due course. **ACTION-CLERK**

Governors asked about the morale across the College and the support offered to staff. The Principal reported that morale had been good during the initial period of the pandemic and staff had worked hard in their duties and had been supportive in their teams. Managers continued to support their staff as operations were slowly returning to a more normal level.

Many staff enjoyed a good break over the Easter period. The flexible working policy, once finalised, may be beneficial to many staff members. Some support staff were feeling anxious over the job evaluation process. Teaching staff were feeling the pressure of teacher assessed grades. SMT, with its two new members was working well.

9 Chair's items for briefing to the Corporation

There were no specific items to note for the Corporation.

10 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 16 June 2021 at 10.30 am.

The meeting closed at 11.48 am