

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

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

Sam Fletcher would be arriving late and so it was agreed that Chris Ashman would chair the meeting.

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Gill Rejzl.

2 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 2 September 2020

The minutes of the meeting of 2 September 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) Deputy FE Commissioner, Andrew Tyley – periodic discussions were still taking place. The FEC was looking to improve the standard of management accounts across all colleges and had asked if CWA would be agreeable to engage in a best practice review along with a select group of other colleges. The FEC was also looking to offer free recruitment support assistance to help with succession planning for Boards. CWA

could make use of this service to help with finding qualified accountants for the F&GP Committee and also to assist with the diversity of board membership. The Principal had indicated to Andrew Tyley that the College would be interested in receiving this help and was currently awaiting a response.

- b) 2019/20 Financial Year End Out-turn – the bottom line position was currently £1.6m surplus, which included the £1m land sale of Gaywood Field. The financial indicators such as cash position, EBITDA and the ESFA's health score were all "good."
- c) Student Numbers – 16-18 yrs numbers were good at the start of the academic year with overall enrolments approximately 5% up. This would benefit the College financially in 2021/22. The focus would now be on student retention.
- d) Apprenticeships – 190 starts had been actioned so far against a target of 250 (reduced from 450 in a normal year). There was scope to add further starts throughout the remainder of the year.
- e) HE – 102 new students would be studying programmes at UcWA against a target of 100.
- f) National Audit Office Report - The Principal referred to the recent report regarding college finances in the FE sector, highlighting the difficulties caused by underfunding over recent years, noting that approximately 50% of colleges were currently in some form of financial intervention and monitoring. CWA would benefit from the recent capital grant, an increase in the base rate per student and the government's proposed new adult funding from April 2021 (National Skills Fund).
- g) Kickstart – The College was in discussions with DWP regarding this new initiative which would offer work experience to individual whilst being paid at living wage rates. The College would also be working with the Borough Council and local Chamber to provide other support services and skills advice.

Governors asked how the new initiatives and opportunities would affect the anticipated restructure, particularly if additional staffing resources were required. The Principal advised that the restructure was necessary in order to satisfy the requirements of the FE Commissioner and the Board, and so savings should be made, some of which would be achieved from current vacancies. In some areas, where there had previously been surplus capacity, this had since reduced in order to provide split-classes for some courses. The Principal was concerned that there was a risk of not coming out of informal intervention if the required savings were not achieved.

(Sam Fletcher joined the meeting at 10.54 am)

- h) Non-pay savings – the College had benefitted from reduced utility costs during the summer term due to remote teaching and home-working.
- i) Autumn Term – although a great deal of planning had taken place during the summer holiday period, now that the term was underway some adjustments had been required to those original plans. Student behaviour was considered to be good with masks being worn with little resistance being noticed. Technology students were very restricted due to the limited numbers allowed in each workshop. English & Maths was being fully delivered online and suffered a number of issues during the first week which had since been resolved. Attendance levels for English & Maths were currently at around 70%.
- j) School of Nursing – the funding award for this had been announced the previous week with good media coverage. Enquiries for the course, to commence in September 2021,

were already being received. The College would work hard to ensure all NMC requirements were met. Future staffing for the course was now being considered.

- k) White Paper on Further Education – this report, the first in nearly a decade, was anticipated to be published very shortly and was expected to address the working relationship between further and high education institutions.

l) *This item was deemed “Confidential.”*

6 Update from Committee Chairs

- a) F&GP – this committee had met earlier that morning. The 2019/20 Year-End Accounts and Funding Paper had been reviewed in detail. The gas and electricity procurement contract had also been reviewed and approved for a 2-year period.
- b) PR&Q – at its last meeting, the Committee had focused on reports from Maths & English, Apprenticeships and Technology. The Committee was particularly confident with the management of the Maths & English department. The challenges within Apprenticeships had been noted, with the manager working well in these difficult times. The Committee considered that Technology still needed further support and monitoring to improve its performance. A new reporting method for KPIs had been introduced by the Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning and would be used to report performance from the December 2020 meeting onwards.

The Chairs' Group noted the improved performance of the Maths & English department over past years, recognising the work of its manager.

Governors commented on the final results for 2019/20 academic year which were considered to be good, although would remain un-published.

The Area Performance Reviews (previously known as SARs) had taken place over the summer holiday period. Two areas within Technology had to be re-evaluated due to poorly completed assessments. It was noted that the review process was more effective being held at the end of the academic year, rather than during the commencement of a new academic year.

The Principal advised that there was an increased focus on Technology with more support being made available to improve the faculty's performance. Governors noted the on-going challenges of staff recruitment to this area and the need to support and retain staff once recruited.

- c) Search & Governance – Donna Woodruff, Programme Manager for Curriculum and Resource in Animal Care and Dog Grooming, had been recently elected by staff to be the new Staff Governor on the Board, replacing Adam Thompsett. Elections for the 2 student governor positions were currently underway.

7 Any Other Business

- a) Sharon Cambridge reported that she had received a kind email from Adam Thompsett who was now stepping down from the Board as Staff Governor. Adam had enjoyed his time in office and had valued the opportunity in serving on the Board.
- b) The Principal reported that Neil Harries, Head of Finance, would be retiring in January 2021. The recruitment process was well underway with interviews taking place the following day (1 October 2020). For this particular vacancy, Hays Recruitment Agency had been engaged to help source suitable candidates.

8 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.

9 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 25 November 2020 at 8.00 am.

The meeting closed at 11.22 am