

College of West Anglia
Minutes of Search and Governance Committee
Wednesday, 5 February 2025
8:30am – 10.30am
Remote Meeting, via TEAMS

Present	Dave Clark	Governor (Chair)
	Gill Rejzl	Governor (Vice Chair)
	Ray Harding	Governor
	Sally Mitton	Governor
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal/CEO)
	Hein van den Wildenberg	Governor

Attending	Jules Bridges	Head of Governance
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No.		Action
1	<p>Apologies Apologies for absence were received from Chris Ashman.</p>	
2	<p>Declarations of Interests Sally Mitton and Hein van den Wildenberg highlighted their interest in item 6.2 on the agenda and would withdraw from the reappointment decision. There were no other items of interest declared</p>	
3	<p>Minutes of the Previous Meeting on 9 October 2024 The minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2024 were reviewed and agreed as being an accurate record subject to amending the ninth paragraph on page 2, to read "It is predicted that c.£8k of ALS funding incorrectly claimed will be clawed back".</p>	HoG
4	<p>Matters Arising The progress arising from the previous meeting were summarised in the progress report and all actions reported had either been resolved or, where appropriate, an update had been provided on progress elsewhere on the agenda.</p> <p>The Head of Governance was tasked to organise campus visits to Milton and Wisbech for new governors. A tour was arranged at Wisbech as part of the agenda for the training/development morning held in November 2024, but not all new governors attended. Tours are to be arranged again for Wisbech incorporating a visit to the Milton campus also.</p> <p>All other completed items are to be removed from the report.</p> <p>The actions arising from the governor 'check-ins' with the Chair have been progressed and completed. A short survey sent out to governors confirms that most governors (12 out of 14 responses) find that an 8.30am start for meetings is convenient for them. Alternative times suggested were 9.00am or 9.30am but comments were made that traffic into King's Lynn at this time of the morning is not always easy.</p> <p>The committee is to consider apprenticeship employment experience on the Board when considering the recruitment of new governors. This was picked up under agenda item 6.</p>	HoG HoG
5	<p>Principal's Strategic Update Succession Planning This item was deemed to be confidential.</p> <p>Funding Update The decision for in-year growth funding is expected next Thursday although this was not guaranteed and still subject to affordability however it may not be granted in full. Additional NI</p>	

costs are also not guaranteed, although assurance has been given that NI employer contributions will be met, there is concern that this too may not be made in full. The proportion of the £300m funding for the sector that the college may receive is still unknown but may be in the region of £200-300K (£50m of the total amount is expected to be shared across colleges between April and July this year). Likewise, the capital funding based on the condition of the estate is also unknown but could be in the region of £1m. A recast budget is being worked up including likely pay award and impact of national living wage increase and this will be presented to the Finance and General Purposes committee at the meeting to be held on 12 March 2025.

The committee considered the risk of the college making a higher pay award without the confirmation or knowledge of whether/if NI employer contributions will be met, and in full. Staff expectations on pay will have to be managed until there is more certainty of any likely funding award.

16-18 growth for CWA is positive but in year growth funding is subject to affordability. The government has indicated that £50m of the £300m funding for the FE sector has been hived off for college allocations post Easter and £250m allocated to fund forward growth and increase rates so there is confidence that CWA will receive increased funding albeit the actual sum is still unknown.

Adult funding is positive, and CWA is likely to meet the CPCA allocation plus a further 10% (tolerance). The non-devolved allocation is also likely to be achieved. The tolerance level is 10% and CWA is forecasting currently at 105% of allocation. The four Skills Boot camp bids have been successful with two that have recruited well on engineering (cohort of 13) and construction (cohort of 10) although the sustainability programme failed to attract learners and likewise electric vehicle maintenance gained interest but not enough to recruit a viable cohort.

HE this year disappointingly has not recruited well. The government has held up the Lifelong Learning Entitlement and the Office for Students has stalled all registration applications due to capacity until at least September 2025. There is some level 4 provision that CWA can get funded through the existing adult loans initiative and the college is rapidly trying to bring some flexible approaches to other core provision but is steering toward HE not being viable unless recruitment improves.

Apprenticeships is broadly on budget and the quality of teaching and learning has improved. The deep dive undertaken at Christmas concluded that the college was right to self-assess this area as 'requires improvement' but the picture for teaching and learning is much improved and can be evidenced as 'good' now. High Needs continues to grow with a predicted £500k growth on budget resulting in an overall forecast outturn on the original budget at £245k surplus.

Norfolk apprenticeship awards

The college has two students shortlisted for the awards this year. One of the shortlisted apprentices is WorldSkills Gold medal winner, Charlie Moore for Electrical Installation.

ESFA Financial Health

The ESFA has assessed CWA financial health as outstanding, but this has been challenged by the Principal/CEO and requested that they revisit our own assessment of financial health as 'good' as the assessment of 'outstanding' was only achieved because of the one-off £400k overage received, so the underlying financial health therefore is 'good'. It is hoped that this will be considered before the ESFA confirm this in writing.

S4PL

Solutions for Polymers Ltd have achieved independence and are now on the APAR (Apprenticeship Provider and Assessment Register). The college continues to support the transition of learners to S4PL and the ESFA have approved the transfer of learners through the ILR using an authorised code. The date of transfer is set for 31 March 2025.

Green Skills Centre – King's Lynn

The building will be officially opened on Friday this week and work is due to commence at Wisbech for the Green Skills Academy.

Ofsted

CWA still awaits the call and there is no prediction when inspection will take place.

6 Membership Review

1 Resignations

There are no resignations to report at this time although it was noted that the corporation received the resignation of Alan Measures in December, and this was confirmed at the Corporation meeting held on 18 December 2024.

2 Reappointments

There are three governors, Sally Mitton, Cally Rand, and Hein van den Wildenberg, whose first term of office will expire in March 2025 but all three are eligible to stand again for a second term (to March 2029). They have all expressed their wish to stand again. The committee, with the exclusion of both Sally Mitton and Hein van den Wildenberg, concluded to confirm the reappointments and will make a recommendation to the Corporation at the meeting to be held on 26 March 2025.

3 Corporation and Committee Structure

The maximum membership for the Board is 21 governors, although the current target composition is 20 governors, to include the Principal/CEO, 2 staff governors and 2 student governors. Currently there are 19 governors in post and therefore one vacancy (exposed by Alan Measures who resigned in December 2024).

4 Vacancies

In March 2025 Sam Fletcher will have completed two terms of office. This will create a vacancy on the board and on the Performance Review and Quality committee. The committee was also reminded that the second term of office (8 years) for Chris Ashman, Vice Chair of the Corporation and Chair of the Performance Review and Quality committee is due to end in December 2025. Albeit this is some way off the committee is to consider its plan for succession as Chris Ashman, and Sam Fletcher's departure will expose big skills gaps for the Performance Review and Quality Committee.

The committee is keen not to recruit like for like skills to replace Alan Measures, or Sam Fletcher however Green Skills/sustainability would be useful and perhaps Sam could be approached to see if there may be an appointment at Norfolk County Council from educational areas. We could approach Peridot for education specialists should we not be successful in our search. An approach could also be made with Cambridgeshire County Council.

7 Equality and Diversity Board Review

The EDI monitoring form has been refreshed and governors completed this over the summer. A recommendation of the external governance review (see action 3.1 of the External Governance Review action plan) suggested that 'further exploration of diversity in membership reflecting students and communities is undertaken so the results provided in the report included the demographic profiles of students and staff to see if the Board is representative of the communities it serves. Comparisons had been made where possible of gender, age, disability and ethnicity noting that the college does not collect student data for other protected characteristics such as religion, relationship status or sexual orientation and mechanisms are in place for staff data to be collected for these categories but is incomplete and therefore not reportable at this time.

The Chair of Governors commented that they disapproved of positive discrimination around appointment, but CWA must ensure that advertisements are seen by as broad a range of people as possible. Diversity on the board is diversity of thought and ideas rather than being able to tick a demographic box. Board diversity is notoriously difficult but decisions around appointment must be in the best interest of the college.

8 Governor Attendance – Mid-Year Review

An analysis of governors' attendance is compiled for review by the committee at the mid-year point as well as at the end of each year. Aspirational attendance targets remain at 80% overall attendance and 80% board attendance.

Chair

Governors have, to date, achieved an overall average attendance level of 83% which is down on the 91% achieved in the same period last year but is however 3% higher than the aspirational target of 80%. Attendance for Corporation meetings is disappointingly down from 93% last year to 78% this year to date (2% below the aspirational target of 80%). Apologies for absence were received from 6 governors for the October meeting, and 5 governors for the meeting held in December 2024. When reviewing the reasons for apologies given, there is no indication that the location of the meeting was a factor for any absence, governors in the main had other commitments, or were away.

Governors' attendance at the planning and training morning in November was lower than the November event the year before with 67% attendance, compared to 82% in 2023. In summary attendance year to date has declined overall compared to the same reporting point last year but remains overall above the aspirational target of 80% at 83%.

Committee members are keen to keep this in focus as it is disappointing that attendance has dipped and contributions at meetings have been particularly low. The Chair of Governors is conscious to ensure that every governor has opportunity to contribute. It was frustrating at the December meeting that so many governors dipped in and out of the meeting, but this may have been a one-off and therefore this will be kept under review. Governors asked for the schedule of meeting dates to be released earlier if possible so that commitment can be checked and diarised well in advance.

HoG

9 Code of Good Governance/Action Plan Progress

Progress against the plan at the meeting held in October 2024 was 52% complete. The plan is now 65% with 15 of the 23 targets achieved. Of the remaining 8, 2 are planned to be achieved in time for the summer report and the other 6 will complete at our next Ofsted inspection. The plan therefore is on target for all actions to be completed by the end of the 2024/25 academic year.

10 External Governance Review/Action Plan Progress

Progress against the plan at the meeting held in October 2024 against the 18 actions was 28%, targets achieved. The plan is now 72% with 13 of the 18 actions completed. The action plan is on track to be completed by the end of the academic year.

The Chair of Governors commented that the new governance portal is working well although more thought around which documents are to be appended may be needed. Policies for example can still sit as an appendix if tracked changes have been used in the document and the executive summary provides an overview. The Head of Governance will give more thought when constructing the PDF pack of papers and uploading to the portal. Conversely if papers are for information only there are other ways to share such information with the Board perhaps through the portal or in a briefing. There is also the danger that if all documents are appended, they may not necessarily be read.

HoG

11 Annual Governance Self-Assessment Proposal

At the last meeting of the committee, in October 2024, the Head of Governance presented a revised annual governance self-assessment matrix using BRAGP with a justification score card. The committee was concerned that the BRAGP score was not applied appropriately and were keen not to over engineer the process, asking the Head of Governance to propose an alternative approach.

The matrix has been reduced from five to four judgements to align language used in external governance reviews, 'Strong', 'Good', 'Reasonable' and 'Limited' thus enabling the outcome of the annual review to translate into the judgement for Leadership and Management in the college SAR. It is still proposed that the score card is used for governors to complete individually and then collectively hold a discussion at the November governors' training/development morning as part of the agenda as a workshop activity to agree the judgements made against each of the 6 principles of the code.

The committee liked the new matrix as it followed a key line of inquiry approach and a format that worked well although some further work on the content of the judgements against each principle is needed. For example, the points listed in the 'good' judgement against principle 1,

determination of aims and oversight, should be 'strong' and vice versa and principle 2, responsibility and accountability lists board attendance below target in the 'limited' judgement but is not mentioned in any of the others so this needs to be added so that progression from 'limited' to 'strong' is reflected and measured. In summary the committee was supportive of the assessment matrix subject to refining the content of each judgement. The Chair of Governors offered to work with the Head of Governance to work up the next iteration.

Chair of
Governors /
HoG

12 Skills Audit

The refreshed skills audit was released over the summer and was reported to the committee in October 2024. This report now updates the resignation received from Alan Measures and therefore his skill scores removed from the matrix. Scores have been colour coded for ease of identifying areas of strength and/or skills gaps for training/development. Overall, the audit shows a good balance of skills and experience across all categories and there are governors, Joe Yexley, Russel Liddington, and Sally Mitton who have the expertise in the fields where development/skills gaps have shown lower collective scores.

The audit has also been sliced to show the skills strength/gaps at committee level. Errors reported at the meeting held in October 2024 have been corrected although the Chair noted that his score for financial planning and management should be a score of 4, not 2 which the Head of Governance will correct in the master copy. Nonetheless, in summary, committee membership is balanced and shows no area(s) where a change of membership may enhance the performance of the committee. The skillsets of Chris Ashman and Sam Fletcher will impact most significantly on the work of the Performance Review and Quality committee so succession planning for a Chair and membership to replace these key individuals the committee agreed will be crucial.

HoG

Governors commented that it was useful to see the cumulative skills across the matrix which confirms a strong board. The Head of Governance will remove the scores of Chris Ashman and Sam Fletcher to see how their departure from the board impacts the skills balance as governors said that this would be useful to see. It was noted the scores of Malcolm Pearson are also to be removed now that he has stepped down. The Head of Governance was also asked to approach student governor, Chloe Rothwell and governor, Seb Ivanov to refresh their scores as some skills were perhaps over or under scored. Likewise, Staff Governor, Donna Woodruff had scored 2 (some/limited knowledge/experience) against Further Education but has worked in the sector for years.

HoG

HoG

13 Any Other Business

It was noted that the County Council have indicated that there will be more news today about Norfolk Devolution.

13 Chairs Items for Briefing to the Corporation

- The Chair is to recommend the reappointments of Sally Mitton, Cally Rand and Hein van den Wildenberg to the Corporation at the meeting to be held on 26 March 2025.
- Good progress has been made against the action plans emerging from the 'Check-in' meetings with the Chair, Code of Good Governance Assessment, and the External Governance Review. All are predicted to complete by the end of the academic year.
- The committee has developed a new governance annual self-assessment which is expected to be launched in the summer, reflecting and evaluating our governance performance over the 2024/25 academic year.
- The committee is currently succession planning for Sam Fletcher whose term of office has come to an end and for Chris Asham whose term will expire in December 2025.

20 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday 23 April 2025 at 8:30am, Remote Meeting, via TEAMs

Meeting Ended at 10.10am