

Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held 13 December 2021

Present Joanne Chilton (*Chair*), Amanda Allen (*Vice Chair*), Andy Dobson (*Principal*), David Allen, Andy Hanson, Lance Hanson, Thomas Huntbatch, Tiffany Harvey-Pallent, Zubeda Limbada, Gail Rothnie and Joanne Rouse.

In attendance Joanne Williams (*Deputy Principal, Director of Learning and Teaching*)
Jennifer Sunter (*Clerk to the Corporation*)

It was agreed that agenda item 6.2a be taken as the first substantive item.

1		Apologies
		Apologies were received from Helene Jones, Jonah Woodley and Jacque Carman.
2		Declarations of Interest
		David Allen declared his interest in agenda item 6.1a Staff Pay Review. Andy Dobson, Joanne Williams and Jennifer Sunter declared their interest in agenda item 10.1 Minutes of the Remuneration Committee held 24 November 2021.
3		Minutes
	3.1	Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held 29 September 2021
		The minutes of the Corporation Meeting held 29 September 2021 were approved as a correct record. Under Matters Arising the Clerk updated members on actions outstanding: Actions from the meeting held 30 June 2021 8.1.2a, under Governor Offices and Membership of Committees, including Additional Roles Membership Update, members had agreed that biennial appointment to offices should be taken forward in the review of framework documents. The Clerk reported that the update had been addressed in Standing Orders which were awaiting approval. 8.1.4a, under Calendar of Meetings 2021/2022, members had agreed to additional committee dates in October 2021 to specifically address training, combined with an overview of the start of the academic year 2021/2022. The Clerk reported that this had been difficult to schedule. Members noted that training would be part of the Corporation Away Day in January 2022.
	6.2a	External Audit: RSM UK Draft Audit Findings Report year ended 31 July 2021
		Anna Spencer-Grey confirmed that any outstanding items following the Audit Committee review of the Draft Audit Findings Report had been completed with no further amendments. The report included control points arising from the new work on funding income. The report also included housekeeping and best practice notes. Andy Dobson asked and received confirmation from the external auditor who confirmed that there were no further audit points and that they were satisfied and ready to sign off the Annual Members' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2021.

		<p>The Corporation accepted the RSM UK Audit LLP Halesowen College Audit Findings Report for Year Ended 31 July 2021 and the letters of representation and the assurance therein that;</p> <p>‘We believe that the audit approach adopted will provide those charged with governance with the required confidence that a thorough and robust audit has been carried out.’</p> <p>‘Our audit work is substantially complete and subject to the successful resolution of outstanding matters, we anticipate issuing an unmodified audit opinion on the group’s financial statements and an unmodified regularity conclusion in line with the agreed timetable’.</p>
		<i>Anna Spencer-Grey left the meeting.</i>
4		Strategic
	4.1	Principal’s Report
		<p>Andy Dobson reported on a challenging first term but that student numbers on study programmes were holding, with the College remaining above its current year contract with the ESFA. The College remained hopeful of in year growth funding. Adult enrolment remained under contract which was not uncommon across other colleges with a similar adult offer. However, much effort was being given to increase enrolment onto adult provision.</p> <p>Andy Dobson noted a significant rise in Covid cases, due to variants of the virus which were impacting both student and staff attendance, which could therefore not be managed in a standard manner. Additionally, the large increase in mental health challenges arising for the safeguarding team was noted.</p> <p>Members also noted the positive action in the opening of the new Cyber Security and E-Sports suite on 26th November, by James Morris MP, and the positive first strategic conversation meeting with the ESFA.</p> <p>Members asked a range of questions.</p> <p>The basis of opening a skills shop in the town centre was explained.</p> <p>The rise in mental health concerns was further questioned and discussed to seek assurance that there was continuing staff capacity and that the safeguarding team were able to access supervision regarding their wellbeing. It was noted that the team engage in peer supervision and have access to external supervision through Dudley Children’s Services if required. The members recorded their thanks to the safeguarding team.</p> <p>The impact of rising Covid concerns on planned adult course marketing and recruitment was further raised, noting that the College would continue with its approach, but that further Covid restrictions could impede January recruitment. A change in Government rules could impact the WMCA approach to clawback.</p> <p>The Principal’s report was received.</p>
	4.2	Careers Strategy
		<p>Joanne Williams reported that the Careers Strategy and associated operational plan were brought to Corporation for approval. The strategy had been drafted against the eight Gatsby benchmarks of Good Career Guidance, so that students were well placed for good progression.</p> <p>Members asked questions about how Careers support was led operationally. Joanne Williams explained the work of the careers team and Andy Dobson explained that the College would be recruiting to a revised Learner Services senior role.</p>
	Action	It was agreed that a further report on Careers would be returned to the Corporation.

	4.2a	
		The Corporation approved the Careers Strategy and Operational Plan
5		Performance
	5.1	Minutes of the Students, Curriculum and Quality Committee held 23 November 2021 and Committee Chair's report.
		The minutes of the Students, Curriculum and Quality Committee held 23 November 2021 were received. The Committee Chair outlined key discussions held, particularly the in-depth discussion on diversity and support for students identifying as non-binary.
	5.1a	Self-Assessment Report
		<p>Joanne Williams provided key points in summary of the College self-assessment findings.</p> <p>There had been some movement from the previous year's assessment rating, but grading remained good across all key areas. Some areas were moving towards outstanding provision and some areas had maintained their previous year assessment.</p> <p>Delivery of enrichment activities across Microsoft Teams was noted as challenging but several activities had been delivered.</p> <p>Achievement data remained strong but Functional Skills, Apprenticeships and ESOL notably required improvement.</p> <p>Quality assurance is partly addressed through 3 curriculum area reviews which are termly. Phase 1 looks at performance in the previous year, Phase 2 at interim performance and Phase 3 at initial results and planning for the following year. Courses are put under notice where there is underperformance and the Corporation receive updates on progress.</p> <p>Students had good behaviour, good engagement with and attitude to learning and teachers were qualified, knowledgeable and enthusiastic.</p> <p>The curriculum offer was relevant, met local and regional priorities, was ambitious and included enrichment.</p> <p>Self-Assessment was effective, and grades were not overrated.</p> <p>Safeguarding was addressed proactively by the team.</p> <p>The resources and environment were good and maintained with some industrial standard equipment in place.</p> <p>Areas for improvement were also outlined and included ESOL, attendance for GCSE and Functional Skills, rebuilding work placements and developing T Levels.</p> <p>Members noted that Apprenticeships remained assessed at Grade 3 with continued Covid pressures impacting for the foreseeable future. A mock inspection was however planned for January 2022.</p> <p>Members further noted the planned work to support ESOL students to enrol on a rolling programme of shorter courses.</p>
		The Corporation adopted the Self-Assessment Report 2020/2021
	5.1b	Quality Improvement Plan 2021/2022
		Members noted the actions planned, arising from the Self-Assessment Report as discussed. The Quality Improvement Plan was accepted.
	5.1c	Higher Education Self-Assessment Report

	<p>The Higher Education Self-Assessment Report was provided giving detailed information which supported the Corporation's oversight of Higher Education provision.</p> <p>The 2019/2020 actions had been discharged and the current 2020/2021 Quality Improvement Actions were shared, noting that actions were being addressed. Course Reviews, External Examination Reports and Student Voice were also provided.</p> <p>The Higher Education Self-Assessment Report was accepted.</p>
5.1d	<p>Student Complaints Analysis</p>
	<p>Joanne Williams outlined the number and categorisation of complaints which had all been addressed with no escalation.</p> <p>Members asked and it was confirmed that none of the complaints had been of a Safeguarding nature.</p> <p>The Student Complaints Analysis Report was received.</p>
5.2	<p>Annual Plan and Targets 2021/2022 Update</p>
	<p>Members considered and asked questions on the monitoring update of the Annual Plan and associated targets for 2021/2022.</p> <p>Regarding Learning environments that make a difference, members discussed the current actions and estates strategy and whether the approach was meeting the aim that the learning environment was making a difference. Andy Dobson responded that the plan reflected current specific projects and that while some work was responsive and dependent on achievement of funding (when it became available to bid for), the approach to reviewing the longer-term estates strategy was currently being considered.</p> <p>A member raised points in relation to the time versus gains in continuing with Halesowen College Enterprises Limited. Andy Dobson explained that in addition to the covenanted funds returned to the College in pre pandemic 'normal' operational years, that the company did have a wider role in supporting the college through the efficient provision of services, as well as a community facing role, however, the point would be considered. Members also noted the value of company operated facilities supporting the student environment.</p> <p>Members also asked and were updated on work regarding the Skills Accelerator Bid.</p> <p>Members noted the update report on the Annual Plan and Targets for 2021/2022.</p>
Action 5.2a	<p>It was agreed that to develop a new Estates Strategy would be rated as amber in the current plan.</p>
5.3	<p>Equality and Diversity Annual Report</p>
	<p>Andy Dobson drew key headlines from the data rich report.</p> <p>While there was no gap between male and female students other gaps were identified on which to work. It was noted that, during the pandemic, students with a learning disability had performed significantly less well in English and Maths than in their main qualification.</p> <p>A member noted that the report provided many positive actions taking place and asked if more measurable targets could be introduced, and if there were any areas to prioritise. Andy Dobson responded that deciding areas of priority was perhaps subjective, but that there were a number of areas of focus. Current concerns included better understanding of hidden inequalities and finding ways to increase diversity in the staff body.</p>

		<p>There were also challenges to benchmarking data as college profiles were often more diverse than the locality in which they sat.</p> <p>Good examples of positive work were noted, such as working with an anti-racist group to remove barriers to progression. Also that the College was advanced in the sector regarding LGBT+, was working towards the Rainbow Flag Award and had seen two members of staff delivering a session at the recent Association of Colleges Conference.</p> <p>Members discussed the positive discussion held at the Students' Curriculum and Quality Committee and how work supporting individuals identifying as non-binary was being taken forward. The challenges in ESFA reporting and Ofsted inspection regarding gender specificity was being looked at.</p>
	Action 5.3a	Members asked for a specific update on the work being done moving forward with LGBT+.
		<p>Members also asked about work being undertaken at a more granular curriculum Level and Joanne Williams responded that yes, the current year was looking at gaps between SEND and non-SEND students.</p> <p>With regards to recruitment training, it was noted that minority ethnic staff were invited to become involved in recruitment activity if they wished.</p> <p>The Equality and Diversity Annual Report was received.</p>
6		Compliance
		Finance
	6.1	Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held 24 November 2021 – Committee Chair's Report
	Action 6.1	The minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held 24 November 2021 would be updated for approval by the Committee.
		<p>The Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee provided a verbal report on the meeting held. Key points were:</p> <p>That financial performance was compared with College own, and sector (historical) benchmarks and that the College compared favourably against sector targets.</p> <p>That the pay as a percentage of income target of 60% was not met under the model which did not include Learner Support Funding. Under the Casterbridge model used for college reporting Halesowen College was within its own 60% target. Distinction between two financial models had been discussed by the Committee and it was suggested that greater simplicity and explanation in reporting financial information was required and should support clarity in setting and monitoring targets.</p> <p>Andy Dobson explained that in considering the financial health grading of the College there were a range of areas which were supported by maintaining outstanding financial health, recent examples being the quick response in providing Covid-19 safety measures and computer purchases. The College was also mindful of the interdependence of financial targets.</p> <p>That the current year budget and the College's financial position was stable, however the College was aware of increasing pressures including, increased staff costs (including national minimum wage and National Insurance increases), capital projects, not meeting the adult education budget, rising non pay including utility costs, retention of students and achievement of in year growth funding.</p> <p>That the College Leadership Team are challenged to review any large areas of expenditure.</p>

	<p>Andy Dobson noted that the rises reported were mostly inevitable, however it was right to ask the leadership team to look at the current model. The College Coach system was deeply embedded in the College approach and the potential impact of any change to this was unknown.</p> <p>The Procurement Policy had been approved by the Committee but would also be returned in a more accessible format.</p> <p>That the Learner Support Fund was not fully utilised, had been revised to introduce a new band and in the longer term would be assessed to improve promotion and accessibility.</p> <p>The Finance and General Purposes Committee Chair's report was received.</p>
6.1a	Staff Pay Review (Confidential)
	<p>Members noted that the Association of Colleges pay recommendation was based on what Colleges could potentially, realistically afford.</p> <p>The Chair of Finance and General Purposes Committee expressed that while the College wished to be a good employer its recommendation was based on sound financial reasons, underpinned by the current review of budget, uncertainty regarding growth funding and clawback of adult education grant funding and rising costs.</p> <p>Members asked how staff would receive this information. It was noted that staff seemed more concerned about redundancies and the impact of Covid-19 and would prefer to work for a financially stable institution, however, it was important to communicate the wider issues affecting the College budget and impacting any pay award.</p> <p>Andy Dobson commented that he is sympathetic towards the college unions' pay claim to bring FE pay in line with that in schools, whilst recognising that under the current funding model colleges would be bankrupted by meeting the pay claim.</p>
	<p>The Corporation resolved that the decision about the 2021/22 pay review be deferred until March 2022, noting that given the risks in the budget model it would not be advisable to make a decision at this point. In principle the College would wish to make a pay award, but levels of affordability must be considered.</p> <p>It was similarly not recommended to decide now not to make a pay award in 2021/22, as the College has already identified a significant risk of failure to recruit and retain staff. This is a sector-wide issue and failure to offer an attractive salary compounds this risk.</p> <p>The Corporation also approved that the pay scales are recalibrated to account for increase in National Minimum Wage.</p>
	Audit
6.2	Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held 30 November 2021 – Committee Chair's Report
	The minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held 30 November 2021 were received.
6.2a	External Audit: RSM UK Draft Audit Findings Report year ended 31 July 2021
	See above.
	<i>Following in depth discussion of queries raised on the final provision of the Annual Report and Financial Statements, the approval of items 6.2b Audit Committee Annual Report year ended 31 July 2021, 6.2c Annual Members' Report and Financial Statements 2020/2021 and 6.2d Halesowen College</i>

		<i>Enterprises Ltd Directors Report and Financial Statements 2020/2021 were deferred pending clarification. A Special Meeting of the Corporation was agreed to address these reports on 16 December 2021.</i>
6.2b		Audit Committee Annual Report year ended 31 July 2021
		This report was deferred until 16 December 2021.
6.2c		Annual Members' Report and Financial Statements 2020/2021
		Approval of this report was deferred until 16 December 2021.
6.2d		Halesowen College Enterprises Ltd Directors Report and Financial Statements 2020/2021
		Approval of this report was deferred until 16 December 2021.
6.2e		Audit Services Tender Review (verbal update)
		Members noted the update on the process for appointing External and Internal Audit services with it being timely to go out to tender.
		The Corporation approved the Audit Committee action that the approach to procurement for both Internal and External Audit services be returned to the Committee.
6.2f		Risk Report Executive Summary
		Members noted that the full suite of risk reports had been considered by the Audit Committee. The summary provided the risks which remained outside the risk appetite following mitigation.
		The Corporation approved the approach to Risk as outlined in the Risk Register Executive Summary, recognising the two red and seven amber risks that remain outside the risk appetite.
6.2g		Review of Audit Plan 2021-2022
		Members noted that the Audit Plan had been reviewed and updated to steer each audit to the area of high risk.
		The Corporation adopted the final Audit Plan for 2021/22.
7		Governance
7.1		Conflicts of Interests Review
		The Clerk reported on the processes in place to support an open and accountable approach to managing conflicts of interest. All governor and staff declarations had been returned and there were no areas of concern. The report Conflicts of Interests Review was received.
7.2		Election and Appointment of Chair – Students Curriculum and Quality Committee
		The Clerk reported that one nomination had been received for the post of Chair of the Students Curriculum and Quality Committee.
		The Corporation resolved to appoint Gail Rothnie as Chair of the Students', Curriculum and Quality Committee commencing 17 December 2021
7.3		Report on Review of Confidential File
		The Clerk reported on the review of the confidential file and the process for final review before release of items as listed.

		The report Review of Confidential File was received.
8		Any Other Business
		Appointment of Governor The Clerk outlined the process whereby candidate Mark Sterling was being recommended to the Corporation for appointment.
		The Corporation approved the appointment of Mark Sterling as a member of Halesowen College Corporation, commencing 10 January 2022, for a period of one year in the first instance and subject to meeting set eligibility requirements.
9		Date of Next Meeting The next meeting is scheduled for 28 January 2022.

		<i>Following resolution on withdrawal of members from the meeting, the staff governor left the meeting. Andy Dobson and Joanne Williams left the meeting.</i>
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10		Confidential
	10.1	Minutes of the Remuneration Committee held 24 November 2021 - Committee Chair's Report
		The minutes of the Remuneration Committee held 24 November 2021 were received.
	10.1a	Remuneration Committee Annual Report
		Members noted that information on data had been clarified.
		The Corporation approved the Remuneration Committee Annual Report and that a statement based on it be published on the College website.

The meeting closed at 8.30pm

Actions from Meetings			
Ref	Agenda item and action	Review Date	Reported by
Corporation Meeting 30 June 2021			
Action 4.2a	Draft Strategic Plan 2021-2025 Members were asked to provide any further comments to Andy Dobson by 9 July 2021. Andy Dobson would review the matters raised by governors and return the strategic plan to the Corporation for approval.	September 2021 Closed	Ado
Action 7.1.2a	Reappointment of Internal Auditors Clarification on the clauses used in the Internal Audit Letter of Engagement and Terms of Reference would be sought from TIAA.	September 2021 Closed	JCa
Action 8.1.2a	Governor Offices and Membership of Committees, including Additional Roles Membership Update Members agreed that biennial appointment to offices should be taken forward in the review of framework documents. September 2021 – Pending	December 2021 Closed.	JSu

	December 2021- Addressed		
Action 8.1.3a	Committee Terms of Reference It was agreed that a meeting be arranged with the Chair of Finance and Resources Committee to further consider the Committee Terms of Reference.	August 2021 Closed.	JSu
Action 8.1.4a	Calendar of Meetings 2021/2022 Members agreed to additional committee dates in October 2021 to specifically address training combined with an overview of the start of the academic year 2021/2022. September 2021 – Pending December 2021 – Action under Away Day January 2021	March 2021	JSu
Corporation Meeting 13 December 2021			
Action 4.2a	Careers Strategy It was agreed that a further report on Careers would be returned to the Corporation.	March 2022	JWi
Action 5.2a	Annual Plan and Targets 2021/2022 Update It was agreed that to develop a new Estates Strategy would be rated as amber in the current plan.	January 2022	JCa/ADo
Action 5.3a	Equality and Diversity Annual Report Members asked for a specific update on the work being done moving forward with LGBT+.	March 2022	JSu/JGr
Action 6.1	Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held 24 November 2021 The minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee held 24 November 2021 would be updated for approval by the Committee.	March 2022	JSu