

Minutes of the Corporation Meeting

held Wednesday 29 March 2023 at 6.00pm supported through Microsoft Teams

Present Joanne Chilton (*Chair*), Joanne Williams (*Interim Principal*), Aisha Benachour, Shabir Chagan, Lee Clulow, Alexandra Fratila, Clair Graham, Andy Hanson, Ian Hughes, Tiffany Harvey-Pallent, Alison Jarrett, Raj Joshi, Joanne Rouse and Mark Sterling,

In attendance Jacquie Carman (*Interim Deputy Principal, Chief Operating Officer*)
Craig Tucker (*Assistant Principal Quality and Standards*)
Jennifer Sunter (*Clerk to the Corporation*)

		<i>Student Ambassadors Presentation Q&A was deferred. The Chair reported on a visit to the Student Focus Group.</i>
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1		Apologies
		Apologies were received on behalf of Gail Rothnie and Helene Jones.
2		Declarations of Interest
		The Clerk declared her interest under agenda item 6.1b Business and Support Staff Contracts.
3		Minutes
	3.1a	Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held 13 December 2022
		The minutes of the Corporation Meeting held 13 December 2022 were approved as a correct record.
	3.1b	Actions and Matters Arising
		Members received an update on the status of actions listed. Regarding actions under the Minutes of the Corporation Meeting 6 July 2022: 5.3, Ofsted Update a) It had been agreed that an update would be provided to each Corporation meeting, which remains ongoing and is under the agenda. b) Members asked to be invited to any relevant training relating to the new Inspection Framework. An update was provided at the Corporation Development Day January 2023, and the action was closed. 8.6a, Corporation Self-Assessment Report Governance Review/self-assessment was undertaken at the January Development Day and members have instigated review of impact from each meeting and the action was closed. Regarding actions under the Minutes of the Corporation Meeting 28 September 2022: 5.3a Annual Plan and Targets 2022/2023 It was noted that the national benchmarked data would be provided for the Students, Curriculum and Quality Committee in accordance with the cycle of business. This remained ongoing.

		<p>6.2b, Review of Expenses Policy</p> <p>The Corporation had deferred the Review of the Expenses Policy as previously considered, which had now been overtaken and was closed.</p> <p>Regarding actions under the Minutes of the Corporation Meeting 13 December 2022:</p> <p>5.1a, Minutes of the Personnel Committee held 1 December 2022- Committee Chair's Overview</p> <p>As agreed, the Chair of the Personnel Committee had instigated a deep dive on recruitment and retention of staff supported by the Assistant Principal for Quality and Standards and the Director of Human Resources. This had been addressed by the Personnel Committee and a report provided under the agenda. The action was closed.</p> <p>5.3a, Report on Safer Recruitment of Staff</p> <p>The Clerk had liaised with the Director of Human Resources to update and record the approach to safer recruitment of governors. The item was closed.</p> <p>5.4a, Report on Training and Development</p> <p>The Clerk had provided all governors with the details of the staff development day 3 January 2023 and the action was closed.</p> <p>6.2a, Annual Plan and Targets 2022/2023 Update</p> <p>An update column had been included in the report to enhance meaningful monitoring of the plan. The action was closed.</p> <p>6.3a Equality and Diversity Annual Report</p> <p>It was agreed that research on the impact of staff diversity in relation to student diversity would be undertaken and reported to the Corporation. This action was being progressed and was pending.</p> <p>8.2a, Search Committee Annual Report</p> <p>The Clerk reported that Equality Data of the Corporation was now reported annually to the DfE as required. The action was now closed.</p>
		<i>Clair Graham joined the meeting.</i>
4		Strategic
	4.1	Principal's Report
		<p>Joanne Williams reported on the key areas of focus.</p> <p>While recognising that student retention had dipped in the previous year, a continued dip in the current year was considered, in relation to a national decline in retention and the College's approach to being tough but tender in assessing students remaining fit to study.</p> <p>Areas of concern were highlighted. A key area of decline was in Level 1 and in recognising this, managers were reviewing offer to provide more attractive, practical and enjoyable courses.</p> <p>The College also recognised that there were increased expulsions and exclusions. While each of these had been a necessary course of action, the College was particularly aware and concerned regarding the diversity data. Members asked questions about the data relating to both exclusions and expulsions and also about the diversity of decision makers. Joanne Williams reported that the staff panels varied by division and would be looked at. Steps were also being taken through consultants to see if earlier preventative work could be undertaken.</p> <p>Attendance was noted as being slightly higher than at the same point in the previous year. The College had invested in measures to support better attendance</p>

and continued to address this. It was recognised that attendance required continuous action and the College sought to put attendance officers in place. Members asked if targets remained realistic and Joanne Williams responded that it would be appropriate to review these, following publication of the National Achievement Rate Tables (NART).

Members were encouraged to note that information on vocational pass rates showed better than previous year performance, in particular the results for Law and Health and Social Care year 2.

An improvement in IT pass rates was noted. The anomaly between Level 2 and Level 3 IT pass rates was outlined, which seemed to be course related and would be reviewed.

Apprenticeship provision was improved, however data remained low for the previous year and it was important that the College understood the reasons for non-completers and was able to evidence these.

A governor reported on positive points seen through a visit to Apprenticeship provision and that it was good to see how students were able to utilise their learning. It was also reassuring to hear from Amanda Spielman, that in reviewing any low performance, inspectors would focus on what actions Colleges had in place. Joanne Williams responded that the College had looked at the data to illustrate the difference in Apprenticeship performance, had no additional action been taken.

Overall, the outcomes for learners were noted as positive.

Governors thanked staff for their continued hard work and also discussed how the College was now celebrating staff achievements. Staff had been put forward for national and regional awards and should be congratulated. The Chair noted that it was hoped to develop an award from Governors as part of Staff Awards.

The Safeguarding and Wellbeing update was also noted by members.

The College remained very busy addressing high needs and mental health issues. The Chair reported that in attending a recent student focus group, responses confirmed that students knew how to get help and who to talk to, however the waiting period to see a counsellor was raised. Members noted that while this was a few weeks, the College was able to offer an appointment more quickly than perhaps through outside agencies, such as through their General Practitioner.

A member also asked about the work being done on staff wellbeing and noted the staff groups and the access to external services provided. Work in relation to being trauma informed around wellbeing and protection was noted and would be highlighted through reporting to the Personnel Committee.

Jacque Carman updated members on meetings taken regarding the development of the Local Skills Improvement Plan since the Corporation's January Development Day.

Information indicated that a large proportion of small and medium enterprises were entrenched in their current year delivery and lacked time and skill in strategic leadership. Meanwhile, employers saw a lack of basic skills in new employees around appropriate digital skills, communication and in timekeeping. Key areas of skills needed lay in data analytics, events management and IT Literacy. Employers also favoured short, more immediate modular qualifications, with hostility towards lengthy Apprenticeships. This was however contrary to what learners wanted.

There were clear actions for the College around addressing appropriate training offer to meet identified needs, working with partners on provision and clarity in marketing and communication, to avoid confusion for employers.

Members asked if there were further opportunities available and Jacque Carman outlined a potential bootcamp being pursued.

		Members also noted the importance of using clear language and presentation to see with ease what training was being offered. The report was received.
	Action 4.1a	Management would look at the diversity of panels used in disciplinary action.
	Action 4.1b	The Chair and Clerk would liaise with the Principal regarding a Governor Award to Staff.
	Action 4.1c	Work in relation to being trauma informed around wellbeing and protection was noted and would be highlighted through reporting to the Personnel Committee.
5		Performance
	5.1	Minutes of the Students, Curriculum and Quality Committee held 15 March 2023 - Committee Chair's Overview.
		<p>The minutes of the Students, Curriculum and Quality Committee held 15 March 2023 were received.</p> <p>The Vice Chair of the Personnel Committee highlighted some of the key points arising from the Committee meeting as not brought forward under the agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pastoral reporting had highlighted the excellent achievement of The Gold Award in Safeguarding. This recognised a great deal of effort undertaken by staff. The College was notably one of only two institutions in the sector to achieve this. • The College had updated its Higher Education Strategy and the Learner Involvement Strategy. • The College was awaiting publication of the Local Skills Improvement Plan.
	5.2	Curriculum Update
		<p>Joanne Williams highlighted that the landscape of Level 3 qualifications was under debate, with uncertainty over defunding of some qualifications and their replacements. The College was therefore taking a sensible approach to moving forward with curriculum planning to provide appropriate pathways.</p> <p>While the College remained agile the changing base of qualifications impacted student choice and could significantly impact on the shape of provision.</p> <p>Members were updated on T Levels with plans to deliver the Level 2 Transition Pathway. While other new pathways, such as Hairdressing had been considered, they had not been pursued at this stage due to a lack of specifications. These were now not available for 2023/2024.</p> <p>Some A Level provision was also affected and members noted the impact on students in the College not being able to offer the current Criminology pathway or Applied Psychology, similarly, changes to Public Services would have impact.</p> <p>Members also noted that large qualifications in Sport, Performing Arts and Art were being developed.</p> <p>The update was received, with a watching brief in place.</p>
	5.3	Annual Plan and Targets 2022/2023 Update
		<p>Jacque Carman focused on key points arising from monitoring of targets and the annual plan.</p> <p>In reporting to the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) it was imperative that the College had more comprehensive destination data.</p> <p>Recruitment of a Head for Marketing and Sales was also underway as part of the actions to improve the College's approach, particularly in digital and social media.</p>

		<p>Members discussed the potential need for further outsourcing of services if recruitment of necessary skills was not successful.</p> <p>Members noted the key risks to the model and the actions being taken to support the objectives in the annual plan.</p> <p>The update was received.</p>
	5.4	Updated Equality and Diversity Policy
		<p>Joanne Williams outlined that the Equality and Diversity Policy had been updated, to become more of a living document for the College.</p> <p>It was also positive to note that the College had been successfully reaccredited as a Leader in Diversity.</p> <p>Members noted the importance of the equality objectives as provided in the policy document and the separate update against the action plan, which had been provided for monitoring.</p>
		<p>The Corporation approved the updated Equality and Diversity Policy and the Objectives and Actions contained therein.</p> <p>The Corporation noted progress being made against the current objectives and action plan.</p>
	5.5	Prevent Strategy
		<p>Members noted the requirement to have a Prevent Strategy in place and that this was kept up to date.</p> <p>The Prevent Risk Assessment was also provided for assurance and monitoring.</p> <p>The Chair asked about Martyn's Law, which would impact on certain areas of College provision. The College would look to address this considering risk in relation to education and public areas.</p>
		<p>On recommendation of the Students Curriculum and Quality Committee the Corporation to approved the updated Prevent Strategy and Action Plan.</p>
	5.6	Ofsted Update (verbal)
		<p>Members noted that Ofsted were undertaking a review of Initial Teacher Training under their inspection of the University of Worcester.</p> <p>It was further noted that T Levels would be within scope of inspections from September 2023 and the College may wish to consider this as an area for a deep dive.</p> <p>Craig Tucker also highlighted that there was a notable trend of Further Education Colleges receiving the requires improvement grade for their Apprenticeships provision.</p> <p>The update was received.</p>
		Compliance
6		Personnel
	6.1	Minutes of the Personnel Committee held 8 March 2023 - Committee Chair's Overview
		<p>The minutes of the Personnel Committee held 8 March 2023 were received.</p> <p>The Chair of the Personnel Committee highlighted some of the key areas of work, particularly the employee referral scheme and revised Dignity at Work/Harassment Policy.</p> <p>Particularly, as reported under the agenda, the Personnel Committee had undertaken a deep dive on recruitment and retention of staff.</p>

	6.1a	Deep Dive – Staff Recruitment and Retention
		<p>The Chair of the Personnel Committee outlined the approach to the first deep dive, as undertaken on staff recruitment and retention. Members were appreciative of the work undertaken by staff and had questioned and engaged with the review outcomes. This had given reassurance that the College continued to do everything it could to take action on recruitment and retention of staff.</p> <p>Members asked about reasons for staff leaving the College and questioned the responses collated from exit interviews. Jacquie Carman noted that a question on what prompted a member of staff to look for a new job could be useful to add.</p>
	Action 6.1a	Jacquie Carman would initiate consideration of a question on reasons for seeking a new job as part of the exit interview questions used.
	6.1b	Confidential - Business and Support Staff Contracts incorporating revised Annual Leave
		<p>Jacquie Carman reported that the consultation on contract review had been a positive process. Feedback had been responded to and annual leave was increased, which may also support staff retention and recruitment. The College hoped to have the contracts in place following the Easter break.</p> <p>A member suggested that while the contracts were clear, that the College may want to give some consideration to the tone used.</p> <p>Members noted that language and phrasing did matter and managers noted that this was a pertinent point to take forward in the review of teaching staff contracts.</p> <p>A member asked about variance in holiday entitlement and noted that this was not uncommon in the sector.</p>
	Action 6.1b	Joanne Williams would instigate consideration of language and tone and how this reflects the College when reviewing contracts.
		<p>Dependant on the final formalities to be addressed with UNISON, the Corporation approved the adoption of the revised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Support Contract • Business Management Contract
	7	Finance
	7.1	Minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee held 22 March 2023 – Committee Chair’s Overview
		<p>The minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee held 22 March 2023 were received.</p> <p>The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee highlighted that the Committee had noted the increased energy and agency pay costs which would be kept under review.</p> <p>The Chair also highlighted that following previous discussion the Committee had approved a revised Financial Strategy, which had five clear strands to support the College priorities.</p> <p>Additionally the Committee had considered the feedback from students regarding the College Coaches. The importance of the coaches was highlighted and members noted that there were potentially areas of travel that were not being addressed that could be reviewed.</p>
	7.1a	Confidential Pay/Staff Salary Scale
		Members noted that the review of pay and recalibration of the pay scale stemmed from the rise in the national minimum wage. The raise successfully improved pay

		<p>by ten percent for those on the lowest pay grades. The College had adjusted pay to retain differentiation in grades. This impacted 109 members of staff with a full year cost of £137,000.</p> <p>The increases could also positively contribute to staff retention.</p>
		<p>On the recommendation of the Finance & Resources Committee the Corporation approved the new pay scale.</p>
	7.1b	Tuition Fees Policy 2023/2024
		<p>Jacque Carman presented the annual review of policy on tuition fees, which had been updated to reflect funding changes and the higher rate of Higher Education fees, as discussed by both the Students, Curriculum and Quality and Finance and Resources Committees.</p>
		<p>On recommendation from the Finance & Resources Committee, the Corporation approved the Tuition Fees Policy for 2023/24.</p>
		Audit
	7.3	Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held 7 March 2023 – Committee Chair’s Overview
		<p>The Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held 7 March 2023 were received. The Vice Chair of the Audit Committee reported on the work undertaken at the meeting, particularly noting that a positive response had been received through the tender process for internal audit providers. The Committee would be interviewing shortlisted firms at the next meeting.</p> <p>The Committee had considered changes to risk reporting and concluded that the full suite of reports did not need to be reviewed at each meeting. A spreadsheet had been instigated to give an accessible overview.</p> <p>The Committee had considered and questioned reports to provide assurance. It was noted that the Disaster Recovery Plan was being further discussed and that the report on governance training and development was also provided for the Corporation’s overview.</p>
	7.3a	Risk Management Mid-Year Update
		<p>Jacque Carman reported that the College Risk Group had met and following review of the new spreadsheet and the risk action plan, had concluded that there were more risks facing the College, which were driven by external factors. The College would continue to manage and mitigate against these within its capacity to do so.</p> <p>Educational reform was particularly impactful.</p> <p>Student attendance was flagged as rated amber in light of all the actions in place. This would continue as a risk in the year ahead.</p>
		<p>The risk management suite was approved by the Corporation on recommendation from the Audit Committee.</p>
	7.3b	Overview of Governor Development and Training
		<p>The Clerk outlined the requirement to review how governors had engaged in training and in reporting to the Audit Committee it was felt that the Corporation should have oversight and ownership of their training and development.</p> <p>Actions moving forward were noted and included changes to training modules being used for mandatory training. The Clerk was awaiting further information. Members noted the need for mandatory training to be completed quickly upon governor appointment.</p>

		The Corporation received the overview of Governor development and training and approved the actions to take forward.
		<i>Clair Graham left the meeting.</i>
8		Governance
	8.1	Review of Confidential File
		The Clerk reported on the annual review process to ensure that reports could be released where possible from the confidential file. Members raised the importance of appropriate redaction, not amendment, of historic documents.
		The Corporation noted the contents of the annual review and approved the approach taken to redact and release reports and minutes to the open folders, as appropriate.
	8.2	Notes and actions from the Corporation Away Day
		Members received the notes and noted actions from the Corporation Development Day in January 2023.
	8.3	Link Governors Feedback (verbal)
		Link governors took the opportunity to provide timely, current feedback. Members noted that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two governors were attending the Diversity Day in College on 31 March 2023. • Governor visibility remained an issue for more work. • That the Green paper on SEND had been considered.
	8.4	Consultation on FE Code of Governance
		The Clerk reported on the draft Further Education Governance Code which was out to consultation. The new code was shorter, clearer and well grouped around principles and was intended to be supportive and less prescriptive. While not a check list, if adopted, the Corporation would still be required to assess how it meets the code and report on a comply or explain basis within the Financial Statements. Members noted the draft feedback and would provide any further points for the Clerk to submit one response.
	8.5	Minutes of the Search Special Committee held 21 March 2023
		The minutes of the Search Special Committee held 21 March 2023 were accepted.
	8.5a	Appointment of Members
		The Clerk reported that following a recent resignation, the Corporation now had a vacancy. Members received the Search Committee recommendation regarding the current co-optee, and the recent application received, considering the skills and overall composition of the Corporation. Members also noted that the Search Committee would be considering terms of office completing and other succession planning needs at the meeting scheduled for 17 May 2023.

		<p>On recommendation of the Search Committee the Corporation approved that:</p> <p>Shabir Chagan be appointed as a full governor commencing 1 April 2023 until 31 July 2025.</p> <p>Sarah Dawson be appointed as a co-opted governor and a member of the Students, Curriculum and Quality Committee, for a period of one year in the first instance, in line with current procedures, commencing 1 May and subject to meeting declarations of eligibility.</p>
	8.6	Meeting impact review
		<p>In Considering impact, members noted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members challenged if retention and attendance rates remained appropriate. • Members asked about staff accessing and reporting on wellbeing. • Members asked if the language used in staff contracts reflected the College values. • The deep dive consideration of recruitment and retention of staff had been timely, pertinent and effective in reassurance and engagement in seeking ways to impact successful recruitment and retention. • A revised approach to risk management monitoring had been instigated.
	9	Any Other Business
		<p>Principal Recruitment Process:</p> <p>The Chair reported that following shortlisting, six candidates had been invited to interview.</p> <p>Period of Election:</p> <p>The Chair had asked the Association of Colleges (AoC) if there were any new implications for colleges as public sector bodies during periods of local or national elections.</p>
	10	Date of Next Meeting
		The next meeting was confirmed as scheduled for 16 May 2023.

Following resolution on withdrawal of members from the meeting under Standing Order 8, Proceedings at meetings, the staff and student governor left the meeting. Jacquie Carman and Joanne Williams also left the meeting.

11		Confidential
	11.1	Confidential Minutes of the meeting held 13 December 2022
		The confidential minutes of the meeting held 13 December 2022 were approved as a correct record.
	11.2	Update on Principal Appointments Process
		<p>Members noted the contract salary points advised in accordance with guidance on senior pay for public sector organisations. Actual pay would be approved by the Corporation on appointment to the post.</p> <p>The Chair outlined the remaining stages of the recruitment process and the arrangements for interview across two days.</p>

The meeting closed at 8pm

Actions from Meetings			
Ref	Agenda item and action	Review Date	Reported by
Corporation Meeting 6 July 2022			
Action 5.3a	Ofsted Update It was agreed that an update would be provided to each Corporation meeting.	Sept 2022	JWi
5.3b	Members asked to be invited to any relevant training relating to the new Inspection Framework. Closed 29.3.23	Dec 2022	
Action 8.6a	Corporation Self-Assessment Report That members review and highlight actions and governor contributions as the minutes unfold across the cycle of business to support governor self-assessment review. <i>Governance Review scheduled for January 2023</i> <i>Closed 29.3.23</i>	2022/2023 Jan 2023	All
Corporation Meeting 28 September 2022			
5.3a	Annual Plan and Targets 2022/2023 It was noted that the national benchmarked data would be provided for the Students, Curriculum and Quality Committee in accordance with the cycle of business March 2023. <i>Ongoing</i>	March 2023 July 2023	JWi
6.2b	Review of Expenses Policy The Corporation deferred the Review of Expenses Policy and asked that further options be provided for consideration. Closed 29.3.23	Dec 2022 March 2023	JCa
Corporation Meeting 13 December 2022			
5.1a	Minutes of the Personnel Committee held 1 December 2022- Committee Chair's Overview It was agreed that the Chair of the Personnel Committee would instigate a deep dive on recruitment and retention of staff supported by Craig Tucker the Assistant Principal for Quality and Standards. Closed 29.3.23	March 2023	MSt
5.3a	Report on Safer Recruitment of Staff The Clerk would liaise with the Human Resources Director to update and record the approach to safer recruitment of governors. Closed 29.3.23	March 2023	JSu/RC h
5.4a	Report on Training and Development The Clerk would provide all governors with the details of the staff development day 3 January 2023 with an open invitation to attend. Closed 29.3.23	Dec 2022	JSu
6.2a	Annual Plan and Targets 2022/2023 Update Moving forward an update column would be included to enhance meaningful monitoring of the plan. Closed 29.3.23	March 2023	JWi/JCa
6.3a	Equality and Diversity Annual Report It was agreed that research on the impact of staff diversity in relation to student diversity would be undertaken and reported to the Corporation. Pending	March 2023 July 2023	HBa/RC h
8.2a	Search Committee Annual Report	Jan 2023	JSu

	It was agreed that the Clerk would consult with the Head of Equality and Diversity on recording Equality Data of the Corporation. Closed 29.3.23		
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Corporation Meeting 29 March 2023			
4.1a	Principal's Report Management would look at the diversity of panels used in disciplinary action.	July 2023	
4.1b	The Chair and Clerk would liaise with the Principal regarding a Governor Award to Staff.	July 2023	
4.1c	Work in relation to being trauma informed around wellbeing and protection was noted and would be highlighted through reporting to the Personnel Committee.	Autumn 2023	
6.1a	Deep Dive – Staff Recruitment and Retention Jacquie Carman would initiate consideration of a question on reasons for seeking a new job as part of the exit interview questions used.	July 2023	
6.1b	Confidential - Business and Support Staff Contracts incorporating revised Annual Leave Joanne Williams would instigate consideration of language and tone and how this reflects the College when reviewing contracts.	July 2023	