

Approved Minutes of the Corporation Meeting

Held Wednesday 23 October 2024

Present Joanne Chilton (Chair), Andrew Hanson (*Vice Chair*), Aisha Benachour, Jacquie Carman (Principal), Ian Hughes, Alison Jarrett, Raj Joshi, Gail Rothnie, Anna Sutton, Shabir Chagan, Tegan Powers, Sarah Dawson, Stuart Fisher, Tiffany Harvey-Pallent,

In attendance Joanne Williams (*Deputy Principal*)
Andrew Woodford (*Vice Principal and Chief Finance Officer*)
Craig Tucker (*Assistant Principal Quality and Standards*)
Jon Priest (*Chief Information Officer*)
Rob Lawson (*National Leader in Governance*)
Jennifer Sunter (*Clerk to the Corporation*)

Members agreed agenda items 9.4, 10.1 & 11 be taken prior to confidential items at 9.2 & 9.3.

1		Apologies
		Apologies were received on behalf of Mark Sterling, Kate Taylor and Oli Preece and Mark Hammond.
2		Declarations of Interest
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All staff present declared their interest in agenda item 9.1a Staff Pay. Senior Post Holders declared their interests in confidential minutes at items 9.2 & 9.3. The Clerk to the Corporation declared her interest in agenda item 9.4 Recruitment of Director of Governance.
3		Minutes
	3.1a	Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held 3 July 2024.
		The minutes of the Corporation Meeting of 3 July 2024 were approved as a true record.
	3.1b	Actions and Matters Arising
		<p>From the Corporation Meeting 12 December 2023, item 7.2, Review of Conflicts of Interest, members noted that following consultation a new form had been addressed.</p> <p>From the Corporation meeting held 3 July 2024, item 5.2a, Annual Plan 2024/2025, financial reporting of specific project costs was being provided across 2024/2025 calendar of meetings, specifically student attendance, which continued as a key area of focus in the new academic cycle to monitor, costs value and impact.</p>
4		Strategic
	4.1	Principal's Report
		<p>The Principal referred to the detailed and comprehensive report provided for members, highlighting a few key areas including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The changing educational landscape, not least the approach of the new Government, but also that of changes to Principals in the locality. A lack of clarity in qualification reform, but introduction of the new Industrial Strategy which broadened opportunities for curriculum areas such as Performing Arts, Catering and Technology. Increased opportunity for scrutiny of new Free School proposals.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased enrolment numbers impacting on overcrowding and the need to find more accommodation, which could only be leased, due to the lack of opportunity to borrow for capital development. • The College Leadership Team’s progress in the College’s agenda for positive change. • The principles and policy on Artificial Intelligence (AI) were also now in place with a checklist being developed to guide staff and students. • Increased work on quality and compliance for Apprenticeships provision, with a clean audit opinion in place. • An impactful approach to reducing the number of NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training). <p>Members asked several questions:</p> <p>In relation to the enrolment of T Level students, the student governor shared that awareness of T Levels was low prior to attending College for advice and guidance. The Principal agreed that this was an area the College was improving through promotion to schools through the School Liaison Team. The College was also working to simplify the complex qualification landscape for students and parents, including providing talks at the College Open Events.</p> <p>Further to this members noted that the volume for T Levels had increased and asked about capacity regarding placements. Members noted examples in approaches such as Health and Digital. Members were encouraged to provide placement suggestions.</p> <p>Members discussed the approach to reducing the number of NEET’s and the need to collaborate with Colleges West Midlands to address the challenges to encourage and motivate young people not already with provision. Members also raised the increased cost implications in addressing provision for NEET’s.</p> <p>Members commended the work in AI and asked about digital competency for staff and students. The Principal highlighted that Digital was one of the power pack skills and that Cedric the Digi Bus would be pushing out into the community. Additionally the staff CPD (Continual Professional Development) programme used workshops and drop-ins to support staff practically.</p>
Action 4.1a	<p>To see analysis of impact of the work in digital developments, a report would be provided to the July 2025 Corporation meeting together with review of the Six in Six weeks programme.</p>
	<p>Regarding the accommodation strategy members also discussed the challenges in getting Shenstone House available to timescale and how this was being managed. Additionally, the need to look at leasing additional space was noted.</p> <p>The Principal’s Report was received.</p>
4.2	<p>Risk Oversight</p>
	<p>The Chair noted that the high level risk report was provided directly to Corporation for information and assurance, with encouragement for risks relating to Committee areas to be provided through the cycle of business.</p> <p>The Chief Finance Officer outlined the high level risks and opportunities for the College.</p> <p>Regarding funding and pay the College was not expecting funding increases or VAT exemption from the October Budget, with concerns for an increase in employer National Insurance contributions. The Association of Colleges had also issued a pay recommendation of 2.5% which some Colleges would not be able to afford.</p> <p>Members noted that regarding the risk highlighted pertaining to student behaviour with both far right and gang issues, the College was adjusting its pastoral and security team arrangements. The Chair also affirmed that the safeguarding team were also working hard with support from key contacts.</p> <p>The Student Governor raised a query on the use of AI and fake news regarding far right concerns. The Chief Information Officer explained that work in classrooms to support the</p>

		<p>safe use of AI was being undertaken and the Deputy Principal also reported that the College was sourcing an external package to further support appropriate use. Additionally it was noted that the College firewall and e safe programmes continued to monitor and flag any issues arising.</p> <p>In response to questions about mitigating down, or removal of risks relating to capital borrowing, (due to Colleges no longer being able to do so), the Chief Finance Officer felt that as Colleges were continuing to lobby the Government on this issue, that it should remain listed at the current time.</p> <p>Regarding overcrowding a governor asked about mobile food outlets and members noted that the College was deploying an Air Stream food vehicle which could support daily provision outside the Bistro and support events.</p> <p>The Chair of Audit Committee agreed that high level summaries to Corporation underpinned by more detailed oversight by the Audit Committee, supported by relevant risks flowing to committees was a sensible approach. The Principle highlighted how this would relate to the approach, commencing with the review of the Strategic Plan and risks.</p>
	Action 4.2a	It was agreed that consideration of risks for each committee should be scheduled for at least one meeting in the cycle.
5		Performance
	5.1	Student Performance Update
		<p>The Deputy Principal outlined the key headlines arising from student data for 2023/2024 including that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achievement had improved, including higher grades on Apprenticeships with continued work on quality and compliance. • Intended destination data remained strong. • There was an achievement gap for high needs learners relating to English and Maths, therefore checking that sufficient support was in place was necessary. • Attendance continued to be very challenging and in the current year the College was highlighting an approach that focused on learning hours lost. • The highest level of student exclusions was in the Business division. <p>Noting that despite being a transformational project there had been a small increase in performance, members asked how the College understood what actions worked. The Deputy Principal referred members to the focus on English and maths where work with the heads of department on taking a consistent approach was key and that the vouchers system previously deployed had not impacted significantly. Regarding trends, students did not want to do their English and maths retakes and attendance usually dropped towards the end of the year.</p> <p>Members further asked about the percentage of students excluded and why Business was so affected. It was noted that Business was a broad curriculum area that attracted students who were unsure they wanted to be at College.</p>
	Action 5.1a	In considering the timeliness of receiving qualification and performance data for the previous year, it was agreed that for the 2025/2026 cycle of business a Students Curriculum and Quality Committee should be timetabled ahead of the first Corporation meeting.
	5.2	Annual Plan, Targets and Transformational Projects 2024/2025
		<p>Members considered the first review of the Annual Plan, targets and Transformational Projects for the year.</p> <p>Members contributed their thoughts on how future reporting to governors would best support assurance monitoring of progress against plan and actions, while recognising that some were less easily measurable and that timeliness was also key.</p>

		One member highlighted that the key areas of the Principal's Report, Risk Report and the Annual Plan and Targets reassuringly correlated.
	Action 5.2a	It was agreed that the Principal would review the report to both simplify and include clear visuals and information on timescales and distance travelled. This included that once approved, the overarching narrative relating to strategic aims could be removed.
6		Compliance
	6.1	Safeguarding Update Presentation – Keeping Children Safe in Education
		<p>The Deputy Principal provided members with the training PowerPoint which updated all staff on Keeping Children Safe in Education. The Chair reported on attending the Keeping Children Safe In Education update with staff and would be attending the Safeguarding Forum in December.</p> <p>Members further discussed planning regarding the Safeguarding Lead Governor role for 2025/2026 and noted, that in relation to the Committee remit, it would be beneficial if this governor sat on the Students, Curriculum and Quality Committee.</p>
7		Personnel
	7.1	Draft Minutes of the Personnel Committee held 9 October 2024
		<p>The Vice Chair of the Personnel Committee highlighted that the Personnel Committee were pleased with the Lead@Halesowen programme in its support for staff and its commercial potential.</p> <p>The Committee also commended the Power Bi Data Dashboard.</p>
	7.2	Management Staff Contracts
		<p>Members noted that the new management contract worked alongside changes in job descriptions and ongoing work with teacher managers. Historic issues were also resolved.</p> <p>The Chair noted that the review of contracts had highlighted the need to bring probationary periods of senior post holder roles in line with other staff.</p> <p>Members further discussed probationary periods and employment law.</p> <p>The Principal referred to risk and that rigour in staff onboarding processes was key.</p>
	Action 7.2a	It was agreed that probationary periods in senior post holder contracts should align with that of staff contracts going forwards.
		The Corporation approved the Management Contract of Employment.
8		Governance
	8.1	Governance Update – Membership and Appointments
		<p>The Clerk to the Corporation noted that the Corporation had a good balance of skills, experience and overall composition, with a gap for a further governor with FE management experienced remaining.</p> <p>The Clerk outlined the work of the Personnel Committee in recommending appointments and reappointments and stressed the need to have early consideration of the role of Chair needed for 1 August 2025. Members discussed recruitment and stipulated appointments process.</p>
		<p>The Corporation approved that subject to continuing to meet required declarations that; Anna Sutton and Kate Taylor be re-appointed commencing 22 January 2025 until 31 July 2028.</p> <p>Mark Hammond be appointed commencing 1 November 2024 until 31 July 2025.</p> <p>That Ian Jewkes be co-opted as a member of the Personnel Committee for one year in the first instance commencing 1 February 2025.</p>

8.2	Appointment of Vice Chair(s)
	<p>The Clerk to the Corporation reported that Andrew Hanson was standing down as the Vice Chair of Corporation.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Andrew Hanson for his support as Vice Chair.</p> <p>The Corporation looked to appoint two Vice Chairs and following consultation two members had indicated their interest. Nominations were called for and Ian Hughes and Raj Joshi were nominated and seconded. There were no further nominations.</p>
	Ian Hughes and Raj Joshi were duly appointed as Vice Chairs of Corporation for a period of two years commencing 1 November 2024.
8.3	Review of Confidential File
	<p>The Clerk to the Corporation outlined the process of annual review and that many of the most recent confidential reports could be released once any decisions regarding all staff pay have been realised.</p> <p>The Corporation noted that the review had been undertaken.</p>
9	Confidential
9.1a 9.1b	Staff Pay Confidential Draft Minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee meeting held 11 September 2024
	<p>The Principal reported that following consideration by both the Finance and Resources and the Personnel Committees, the Association of Colleges had made a pay recommendation of 2.5%.</p> <p>Members considered the AoC recommendation together with recommendations relating to any further funding provision, budget review and affordability and longer term consideration of College wide targets.</p> <p>Members also discussed communications with and understanding of staff.</p> <p>Members also noted the recommendations as provided in the minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee.</p>
	The draft minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee meeting held 11 September were received.
	<p>The Corporation approved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 2.5% pay award to be made from 1 September for all Halesowen College staff. • A second review point following budget revision 2, to establish if the 2.5% offer could be improved within the parameters of affordability. • The introduction of targets to be further considered from 2025/26 onwards for any pay awards above CPI.
9.4	Update on Recruitment of Director of Governance
	The Chair outlined the processes in place regarding the recruitment of a Director of Governance.
10	Any Other Business
10.1	Annual Report to Staff, Students and Community Stakeholders
	The Principal outlined the reintroduction of an Annual Report as an effective vehicle for communicating with Stakeholders and the community on the performance and direction of the College. This would include financial headlines and be brought to the December meeting of the Corporation.
Action 10.1a	The Principal would provide the Annual Report for the December meeting of the Corporation.

	10.2	Corporation Report – Front Sheets		
	Action 10.2a	The Chair asked for member thoughts on the cover sheet for reports and it was agreed that the front sheet was not an executive summary and this would be further reviewed.		
11		Date of Next Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A Special Meeting of the Corporation will be called to address the appointment of a Governance Director 6pm, 5th December 2024. The next scheduled meeting is Tuesday 17 December 2024 at 4pm 		
		<i>On recommendation on withdrawal of members under Standing Orders the Student Governor, Rob Lawson and all staff excepting the Clerk left the meeting.</i>		
	9.2	Confidential Draft Minutes of the Remuneration Committee held 11 September 2024		
		The confidential Draft Minutes of the Remuneration Committee held 11 September 2024 were accepted.		
	9.3	Confidential Minutes of the Corporation 20 March and 3 July 2024.		
		The confidential minutes of the Corporation meeting held 20 March 2024 and 3 July 2024 were approved.		
The meeting closed at 8pm.				
Current Actions from Minutes				
Corporation Meeting 12 December 2023				
7.2a		Review of Conflicts of Interest The Clerk would consult under the review of governance on other practice for annual declarations of interest. Deferred until July 2024 and Addressed – September 2024.	March /July 2024	JSu
Corporation Meeting 3 July 2024				
5.2a		Annual Plan 2024/2025 While recognising the Complexity of lagged funding, and interrelationship of areas being measured, it was agreed that financial reporting of specific project costs should be provided across 2024/2025 meetings and specifically attendance, which continued as a key area of focus in the new academic cycle.	2024/2025	JCa
Corporation Meeting 23 October 2024				
4.1a		Principal’s Report To see analysis of impact of the work in digital developments a report would be provided to the July 2025 Corporation meeting together with review of the Six in Six weeks programme.	March /July 2025	JCa
4.2a		Risk Oversight It was agreed that consideration of risks for each committee should be scheduled for at least one meeting in the cycle.	Feb-March 2025	AWo /DG
5.1a		Student Performance Update In considering the timeliness of receiving qualification and performance data for the previous year, it was agreed that for the 2025/2026 cycle of business a Students Curriculum and Quality Committee should be timetabled ahead of the first Corporation meeting.	July 2025	DG
5.2a		Annual Plan, Targets and Transformational Projects 2024/2025 It was agreed that the Principal would review the report to both simplify and include clear visuals and information on timescales and distance travelled. This included that once approved, the overarching narrative relating to strategic aims could be removed.	March 2025	JCa
7.2a		Management Staff Contracts		

	It was agreed that probationary periods in senior post holder contracts should align with that of staff contracts going forwards.		
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10.2a	Corporation Report – Front Sheets The Chair asked for member thoughts on the cover sheet for reports and it was agreed that the front sheet was not an executive summary and this would be further reviewed.	Dec/ March 2024	