

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Board of Governors held on
Monday 24 September 2021 at 10am
Conducted via Microsoft Teams**

PRESENT

Mr Mark Taylor (Chair)	Mr Clarence Crosdale
Mr Mike Hastings (Vice Chair)	Mrs Amanda Tomlinson (to item 7(a))
Ms Emma Bull (to item 7(b))	Ms Lindsey Flynn
Mr Mal Cowgill	Mr Sam Duru
Ms Sally Slater (Staff)	Ms Anya Priya Luis (Student) (to item 7(a))
Mr Ian Gardner	Mr Scott Thompson
Mrs Hshaana Knight	Mr John Bradford

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs Louise Fall	- Vice Principal Student Engagement
Mr Ian Browne	- Vice Principal Student Success
Mr Peter Merry	- Vice Principal Business Success
Mrs Elizabeth Ball	- Head of Governance

78/21 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM 1)

Apologies were received from Nisha Rai, Ioana Axinte, Amardeep Singh and Trevor Dutton.

The Chair declared an interest as an employee of City of Wolverhampton Council.

79/21 APPOINTMENT OF STUDENT GOVERNOR (ITEM 2)

The Head of Governance reported that Anya Priya Luis had been nominated by the Student Union Executive as the Student Governor for the current academic year.

It was resolved that Anya Priya Luis be appointed as the Student Governor until 31 July 2022.

80/21 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING (ITEM 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 July 2021 were approved as a correct record.

Matters arising

Governors noted that a report on St Peter's School would be provided as part of item 6 on the agenda.

It was also noted that the Safeguarding Annual Report would be presented at the next meeting of the Board of Governors and that Governor training will be updated as part of the Governor development programme for the year.

81/21 REPORT ON OUTSTANDING ITEMS (ITEM 4)

The Board of Governors received an update on actions that were outstanding from previous meetings.

82/21 REPORT ON MEETINGS (ITEM 5)

The Chair reported that Governors had been asked to give their views on whether they were comfortable with face-to-face meetings, online meetings or a hybrid approach.

He advised that whilst there were some reservations about meeting face-to-face it was proposed that meetings continue to take place online, whilst an appropriate hybrid solution is identified which would allow some Governors to continue to attend virtually.

It was agreed that meetings of the Board of Governors and Committees continue to be held on Microsoft Teams, but that the position remains under review whilst the potential for hybrid meetings is explored.

83/21 CLQ AND COWTECHC, PAGET ROAD AND EV UNITS UPDATE (ITEM 6)

The Vice Principal Business Success presented an update in relation to the College's property developments.

CoWTechC

It was noted that funding for the project has been confirmed by the Combined Authority, but that the necessary approval from the City Council is unlikely to be received before the end of October 2021.

The project would then progress to full tender but in the meantime some re-design work is taking place and the legal formalities are being completed.

It was noted that the Council does have a process whereby decisions can be made urgently if necessary and the Vice Principal Business Success advised that the key issue was the build programme and that ability for the College to be in occupation by the end of 2022.

Post 16 Capacity Fund

It was noted that a bid had been submitted to the Post 16 Capacity Fund to provide mezzanine floors at the Wellington Road Campus.

The outcome of the bid was expected by the end of the autumn.

Rail Investment

Governors were advised that the College's Rail provision at Wellington Road is officially being launched on Wednesday 29 September 2021. It was noted that the provision has attracted significant external investment which will make it a first-class training facility.

Parking

The Vice Principal Business Success reported that in view of the developments at the Wellington Road site, there will be pressure on car parking at the site and as a result appropriate solutions to this are being considered.

Newhampton Road

It was reported that the College had now received a valuation for the property from the Charity that is in occupation which was significantly less than the valuation which had been obtained by the College.

The position remains that the charity is looking to find a way to fund the purchase of the building.

St Peter's School

It was noted that a meeting had taken place with representatives from the DfE and the College had confirmed its support for the project which would involve use of part of the site at Paget Road as multi-sport areas, whilst the build programme takes place.

Bentley Bridge Lease

The Vice Principal Business Success identified the key points relating to the proposed lease of the premises at Bentley Bridge for EV provision.

Governors noted the details of the rental payments and that the lease was for a 10-year period with a 5-year break.

It was highlighted that the lease was outside the Landlord and Tenant Act and as a result there would not be an automatic right to renew and that the property was subject to a service charge. Whilst these were not fixed, the College was taking legal advice to ensure that there was some protection from unreasonable charges.

Governors were advised that as this project was a partnership with an external organisation, the set-up costs, rent and running costs would remain within budget. Rent will be paid quarterly and three months rent was required as a deposit.

Governors were also advised that in relation to modifications and signage, these would be as non-invasive as possible to avoid large costs of re-instatement.

It was confirmed that the property is within the City and that the Combined Authority is looking to secure funding to extend the tramline to the area.

Governors commented that it was rumoured that HS2 would not be completed until 2041 and asked whether this would affect the College's provision. They were assured that the extension of the track past Birmingham will support the Rail and Track provision at the College.

Governors asked how many students would be based at the Bentley Bridge site.

The Vice Principal Business Success advised that the turnover was approximately 100 students per month and the Principal confirmed that there was significant demand for the provision with funding being provided by the Combined Authority.

Governors also asked whether training for the installation of electric vehicle points would also be provided at the premises. They were advised that this would form part of the groundworks training provided by the College and that this is currently being developed.

Governors emphasised the need to ensure that there is capacity to grow the College's provision in relation to EV and charging points, particularly as the City has a high level of youth unemployment

In relation to the lease agreement Governors asked whether it was usual for a deposit to be required. The Vice Principal Business Success responded that this was a result of the College's current financial position.

The Principal confirmed that he was hoping that the lease could be signed as soon as possible and that this may be in advance of the next meeting of the Board of Governors.

Governors considered that they had received sufficient information to enable the lease to be completed without a further report being provided unless there was any significant change.

It was resolved that the Chair of the Board of Governors be authorised to approve the proposed lease of the property at Bentley Bridge and that the Corporation seal be affixed in accordance with the Instrument and Articles of Government.

84/21 COLLEGE UPDATE (ITEM 7)

(a) Student Engagement

The Vice Principal Student Engagement provided an update in relation to the College opening and Enrolments.

College opening and start of term

Governors noted the continued arrangements in College in response to the COVID 19 pandemic.

They also noted the low number of reported cases since the beginning of the new term.

The Vice Principal Student Engagement reported that whilst there was low take up of on-site testing, students were indicating that they were carrying out tests at home.

It was noted that the College was investigating whether it would be possible to have a vaccination centre on site.

Governors commented that it was good to hear that staff and students continue to wear masks and asked whether the Unions had raised any concerns about staff returning.

The Vice Principal Student Engagement advised that the College had worked hard to maintain a good relationship with the Unions during the pandemic and that they have been very supportive.

Governors asked how cases were impacting on students and whether they remained in bubbles. They were informed that the guidance has now changed and as a result those that were double vaccinated no longer had to self-isolate, nor does the College need to initiate isolation for other students or staff. Where a student or member of staff has tested positive extra precautionary measures are being taken including advice to take a PCR test as soon as possible.

It was noted that the College has been providing students with masks and Governors asked about the commercial impact of that. They also asked what the general views of students were in relation to the vaccine.

The Vice Principal Student Engagement replied that the provision of masks will be reviewed at the end of September at which point, whilst students and staff will continue to be encouraged to wear face coverings, these will no longer be supplied.

She also advised that in relation to vaccination, some students did not agree with the programme and if a vaccination centre was established on site, it was possible that there could be some action by anti-vaccine protestors.

Amanda Tomlinson left the meeting

Anya Priya Luis left the meeting

Enrolments

The Vice Principal Student Engagement provided an update on the level of enrolments with the figures being provided in the meeting chat.

16-19 full time:

It was noted that there were some concerns about grade inflation which means that some students may be on a higher-level programme requiring staff to carry out diagnostics to ensure that there is appropriate support in place.

Governors were advised that enrolments will continue for a few weeks and that the College's marketing campaign is being adjusted to help ensure that all targets are met. It was noted, however, that there had been a high level of applications resulting from students applying to more than one institution.

Adult:

The Vice Principal Student Engagement reported that despite some concerns about the return of adult learners, levels of enrolment are improving.

HE:

It was reported that HE students usually enrol on the first day of the course and that the majority would commence in October at which point the picture would be clearer.

Governors asked about the position when enrolment continued over a period of time and the impact on teachers in relation to delivery.

The Vice Principal Student Engagement advised that the enrolment process was the same each year and that when students join after the start of the course, additional support is provided. This is also supported by the ability to use virtual resources.

Governors questioned the position in relation to the conversion of applications to enrolments and the fact that students had applied to various organisations. They asked whether there was any information about why students were not choosing to come to the College. They also emphasised that in view of the challenges facing young people in the City it was important to highlight the College's provision over the next few weeks to encourage people into Further Education.

The Vice Principal Student Engagement reported that some students may have been attracted by newer/more established facilities, for example in relation to hairdressing where the provision has moved to Paget Road, but the College will continue to follow up why students may choose another institution.

It was emphasised that the College has taken a different approach to marketing and is making more active use of social media.

Governors commented that information about skills shortages and the job market is available from the Economic Intelligence Unit at the LEP. The Principal advised that he Chairs the Education, Skills and Employment Board and has access to this information and that it was also key to be able to identify where future opportunities will be.

Governors noted that no information had been provided in relation to the College's apprenticeship provision. They were advised that for this provision August to October is the main period of enrolment and that a full update will be provided to the Apprenticeship Task and Finish Group at its next meeting.

The Board of Governors noted the report.

(b) Student Success

Curriculum Planning

The Vice Principal Student Success provided an update in relation to the curriculum planning process which would commence in November with validation meetings taking place at the end of the process.

Governors discussed the ways in which they could contribute to the process, particularly from a business perspective.

Potential areas for involvement were identified as:

- Using Governor links to input ideas during visits
- Establishment of a group of business Governors
- Testing of Curriculum intent during the validation meetings
- Mapping of roles and requirements e.g., in Health and Social care administrative and ancillary roles.
- Establishment of additional Gateway Programmes for students

The Principal identified areas where the College was supporting students into learning, including Gap and Laser courses and the Prince's Trust. He advised however that there are constraints in relation to funding, but that opportunities exist to work with DWP and the Job Centre.

He also emphasised the important of establishing a Youth Hub at the College as soon as possible and the need to influence this with the Combined Authority.

Governors highlighted the high percentage of organisations that are suffering from skills shortages and asked whether there were opportunities to provide a solution which would enable people to access those jobs. The Principal confirmed that the College was working to support training, including the establishment of the Sector Workplace Academies but that it is reliant on appropriate funding being available.

Engagement with businesses was emphasised to ensure that they are involved in the development of the provision and Governors asked how students could be involved with local businesses and whether they could link in with the Business Week.

Emma Bull left the meeting

Governors commented that if funding was the concern, there was a need to consider alternative ways to fund the provision, particularly as youth unemployment is a priority for the City Council.

It was noted that the College has two enrichments weeks during the academic year and in March there is a focus on careers and progression and that this may be an opportunity to hold a College Business Week enabling students to participate.

It was also noted that the College does have a School Liaison Officer who is able to visit local schools and promote the College's provision.

Governors noted that there was lots of activity taking place to tackle youth unemployment in the City and that the College is part of the Anchor Network.

They commented on the high levels of youth unemployment, the number of vacancies for Engineers and the pressures in Health and Social Care, and asked whether the College was training students to replace those that have moved on with their careers. They also asked whether there was an opportunity for the College to be more pro-active in encouraging students into Further Education rather than Higher Education.

The Vice Principal Student Success reported that the College does have a Sales and Accounts Team that engage with businesses and an employability lead who works with the community. It was noted that the College's Gap and Laser provision does help to address the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training but that some young people still do not want to engage.

It was also noted that there is a need to ensure that apprenticeships are properly promoted and it was suggested that this should be picked up by the Apprenticeship Task and Finish Group, particularly in raising the profile of the College and the options that are available.

Governors commented that in addition the College may be able to support businesses with finding young people to fill current vacancies which would result in a reduction in their recruitment costs.

Achievements

It was noted that information relating to A level results and GCSE results that had been circulated in August 2021.

The Vice Principal Student Success reported that some achievement data is still be collected and that a full report would be provided to the Board of Governors at their next meeting.

(c) Business Success

Barclays Bank Waiver (Confidential)

Management Accounts to July 2021

The Vice Principal Business Success highlighted key points from his report on the Management Accounts and Finance update and presented the Management Accounts to 31 July 2021.

It was noted that the overall surplus for the year was close to budget and that the year end cash position was higher than the previous year end evidencing a positive cash flow position.

ESFA Meeting

The Vice Principal Business Success reported that a meeting was taking place on 4 October 2021 with the Deputy Director of the ESFA, Kirsty Evans.

The meeting was taking place to discuss the funding for CLQ and issues associated with the College's Restructuring Fund Loan, particularly in the context of the College's bid for funding from the Further Education Campus Transformation Fund being unsuccessful.

It was noted that a presentation was being prepared for the meeting which lays out the history of the College's position, its direction of travel and the options that are available.

It was emphasised that the key to the presentation is the demographic growth in Wolverhampton which will outstrip the rest of the West Midlands and England overall. The level of investment in Wolverhampton College compared to other Colleges in the area will also be highlighted.

The Vice Principal Business Success reiterated the importance of the CLQ development to the College's financial recovery and the need to resolve the issue of repayment of the Restructuring Fund Debt. Aligned to this is the level of dilapidations at Paget Road and the need to line up the key financial decisions that need to be made to ensure the financial sustainability of the College.

Governors asked if it would be useful to have business testimonials in the document to evidence the challenges that are being faced and how the College can help to address these.

They also emphasised it was important to show how the College can help to achieve the Government's priorities.

86/21 REPORT FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE (ITEM 8)

The Chair of the Audit Committee presented the minutes of the meeting which had taken place on 8 September 2021 to consider the External Audit Plan for the year ended 31 July 2021.

It was noted that the External Audit Plan was being recommended for approval by the Board of Governors and that additional work was required as a result of changes to the Post 16 Audit Code of Practice.

It was resolved that the External Audit Plan for the year ended 31 July 2021 be approved.

**87/21 PART 2 CONFIDENTIAL NOTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 JULY 2021 (ITEM 9)
(CONFIDENTIAL)**

88/21 REPORT ON WRITTEN RESOLUTION (ITEM 10) (CONFIDENTIAL)

89/21 REPORT ON SUCCESSION PLANNING (ITEM 11) (CONFIDENTIAL)

90/21 ANY OTHER BUSINESS (ITEM 12)

The Board of Governors received the letter which had been sent by the Interim Accounting Officer and Chief Executive of the ESFA to Accounting Officers in College Corporations dated 22 September 2021.

91/21 CONFIDENTIALITY (ITEM 13)

It was resolved that the following reports and minutes remain confidential and not be made available for public access:

- **Bank waiver letter**
- **Confidential notes of the meeting held on 26 July 2021**
- **Report on written resolution**
- **Succession planning report**

92/21 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING (ITEM 14)

Meeting of the Board of Governors 18 October 2021 at 5pm