



**Warrington
& Vale Royal
College**

**MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION MEETING
HELD ON 22 MARCH 2021
by remote participation**

Present:

Mervyn Ward	Chair
Andrew Bainbridge	Member
Martin Berman	Member
Steven Broomhead	Member
Michelle Cloney	Member
Robert Cox	Member
Andrew Ellams	Member
Christine Kerr	Member
Sue Martin	Member
Sam Naylor	Member
Nichola Newton	Principal & Chief Executive
Peter Scott	Member
Kirstie Simpson	Member
Nicola Wilson	Staff Governor

In attendance:

Cath Brierley	Assistant Principal - Business Collaboration & Growth
Michelle Seeley	Deputy Principal Finance and Resources
Rebecca Welch	Assistant Principal - Quality & Learner Experience
Andrew Williams	Assistant Principal - Curriculum
Lindsey Parton	Interim Clerk to the Corporation

The meeting opened at 5.00pm.

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

For information: to receive any apologies for absence

- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Peter Fitzhenry, Peter Lloyd and Geoff Spencer.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

For information: to receive any declarations of interest from members in any items on the agenda

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest from Members in any item on the agenda at this point in the meeting.
- 2.1 Michelle Cloney declared an interest later in the agenda in relation to agenda item 11.

3.1 MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 15 DECEMBER 2020

For resolution: to consider and if so minded, approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2020

It was **RESOLVED** that Members approved the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporation held on 15 December 2020 as a correct record.

3.2 MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD ON 20 JANUARY 2021

For resolution: to consider and if so minded, approve the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2021 as a correct record

It was **RESOLVED** that Members approved the Minutes of the meeting of the Corporation held on 20 January 2021 as a correct record.

4 MATTERS ARISING

For information: to consider any matters arising from the previous meeting

- 4.1 Members reviewed and updated the Action Log.
- 4.2 The Clerk reported that an update would be circulated following the meeting with regard to Action 4 arising from the meeting dated 20 October 2020. It was noted that Action 7 from the meeting dated 15 December 2020 had now been completed; and that Action 8 would be updated to reflect that this matter had been deferred until September 2021.

5 CHAIRMAN'S ACTION

For resolution: to approve any actions taken by the Chairman on behalf of the Corporation since the last meeting

- 5.1 The Chair gave a verbal update of action taken on behalf to the Corporation to approve the Capital Transformation Fund Application by the deadline of 22 March 2021, in accordance with Minute No 7.6.3 (c) of the Finance and Resources Committee dated 1 March 2021.
- 5.2 The Principal and Deputy Principal Finance and Resources gave an update on the detail of the bid and the funding criteria. It was noted that there was uncertainty about the outcome of the bid, based upon the categories defined by the DFE condition survey, and compared to bids by other Colleges which may be deemed to be a higher priority.

Michelle Cloney joined the meeting at this point in proceedings.

6 GOVERNANCE MATTERS

- 6.0 The Chair of the Corporation gave an overview of matters considered by the Search and Governance Committee at the meeting held on 10 March 2021 and introduced the following reports on Governance matters to the Corporation.

6.1 MEMBERSHIP OF THE CORPORATION AND ITS COMMITTEES

For resolution: to receive and note a report on current and future Board vacancies and membership of Committees and to approve, if so minded, the re-appointment of three Governors

- 6.1.1 The Corporation received the report and considered the recommendation made by the Committee in respect of the re-appointment of three Governors for a further four year term of office.

It was **RESOLVED**

- a) That the report be **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**;
- b) That Steven Broomhead, Peter Fitzhenry and Mervyn Ward be re-appointed as a Governor of the Corporation, for a further four year term of office, commencing on 1 August 2021; and
- c) That the current appointments of these Members, as Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporation, and as Chairs of Committees continue post 1 August 2021, as previously determined by the Corporation.

6.2 GOVERNANCE ISSUES

For resolution: To receive and note the key issues for Governance, arising from the recent Government White paper; and to refer the broader strategic issues arising to the Corporation for discussion at a future Corporation Strategy Session

It was **RESOLVED** that the key issues for Governance, arising from the recent Government White paper, be **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**; and that the broader strategic issues arising be referred to the Corporation for discussion at a future Corporation Strategy Session.

ACTION 1: That the broader strategic issues arising be referred to the Corporation for discussion at a future Corporation Strategy Session.

6.3 GOVERNOR ATTENDANCE STATISTICS

For information: to receive and note an update on Governor attendance statistics for the current year

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**.

6.4 GOVERNOR TRAINING UPDATE

For information: to receive and note an update on Governor training for the current year

6.4.1 Members considered the report presented and noted the broad range and high volume of training undertaken by Governors to date during the current academic year.

C: A Member reported being ineligible to register for a T Levels course, on the basis that the College was not currently running these courses.

R: A further Member reported that they had been able to register and had completed the first stage of the online learning module. The Member recommended that it was premature to complete the further stages of the training until such time as the College's future direction on T levels was determined.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**.

6.5 ROLE DESCRIPTIONS

For resolution: to consider and, if so minded, approve the role descriptions for the Chair, Vice Chair, Committee Chairs, Members of the Corporation, Co-opted Members and Link Governors; and to nominate seek a Governor nomination for the new Careers Link Governor role

6.5.1 Members considered the proposed role descriptions for Governors.

It was **RESOLVED** that the role descriptions for the Chair, Vice Chair, Committee Chairs, Members of the Corporation, Co-opted Members and Link Governors be approved; and that any nominations for the

new Careers Link Governor role be made to the Clerk following the meeting, and be approved by the Chair.

ACTION 2: To fill the role of a Careers Link Governor.

6.6 REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS

For resolution: To consider, and if so minded, approve proposed changes to the Corporation's Standing Orders

6.6.1 The Committee considered the recommendations of the Search and Governance Committee with regard to proposed amendments to the Corporation's Standing Orders.

Q: A Member asked if there was a repository for documents such as the Standing Orders which the Governors could access for reference.

R: The Corporation was advised that there was a recognised need for such a repository and that this action was currently being addressed by the Standards and Curriculum Committee. The Deputy Principal Finance and Resources reported that "sharepoint" worked well for the College in terms of Officer access to documents, and that this option could be similarly be explored for Governors, with password protection.

ACTION 3: Clerk to explore the option of using "sharepoint" as the repository for Governance related documents.

It was **RESOLVED** that the proposed changes to the Corporation's Standing Orders be approved.

6.7 CORPORATION PUBLIC CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

For resolution: to consider and, if so minded, approve a Public Contribution Statement

6.7.1 The Committee considered the recommendation of the Search and Governance Committee that the approval of a Public Contribution Statement, which was a planned starting point from which to assess the current level of stakeholder engagement.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Public Contribution Statement be approved.

6.8 The Chair invited the Chair of the Search and Governance Committee, who had now joined the meeting, to add any further comments in respect of the business conducted by the Committee. The Committee Chair thanked the Chair for the summary presented, and highlighted a further point, in that the Committee had agreed that in light of COVID 19 restrictions, that attending learning walks, and other onsite college activities by Governors, should be formally paused and put on hold until the new academic year, and that they should not form part of performance measures at the current time.

FINANCE MATTERS

7.0 The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee gave an overview of matters considered by the Finance and Resources Committee at the meeting held on 1 March 2021, and introduced the following reports on Finance matters to the Corporation. The Chair particularly highlighted the deficit of £145k in the period 6 management accounts, which was 145K better than the revised budget year to date and the reduced income forecast by approximately £260k due to COVID restrictions. The Chair also reported on discussions held regarding the financial contributions of the Winsford campus, which was now being monitored at each Committee meeting. The Deputy Principal Finance and Resources reported on expected funding reconciliation of COVID costs, which were not expected to meet the full extent of the staffing costs incurred, and emphasised that the continued close monitoring and management of the budget to the year end was imperative, to ensure a positive budget outturn despite ongoing pressures.

Q: A Member requested that further discussion regarding the financial contribution of the Winsford campus be held at a future Corporation Strategy Session.

ACTION 4: That further discussion regarding the financial contribution of the Winsford campus be held at a future Corporation Strategy Session.

7.1 EMERGING COLLEGE BUDGET FOR FORTHCOMING YEAR

For information: to receive and note the emerging college budget for the forthcoming year

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**.

7.2 REVIEW OF THE FINANCIAL REGULATIONS (STANDING ITEM)

For resolution: To consider, and is so minded, agree any updates to the Financial Regulations

Amendments are proposed to the Financial Regulations in respect of the Bad Debts Policy

It was **RESOLVED** that the update to Financial Procedures in respect of debtors be approved.

7.3 WRITE OFF OF BAD DEBTS

For resolution: To consider, and if so minded, approve the write off of bad debts totalling £11,792.48

Q: A Member referred to one bad debt on the accompanying schedule which amounted to £5.5k and asked whether this was a one off historical issue.

R: Members were informed that this was a historical issue which had now been addressed through revised procedures and that the process had been improved to ensure that this issue was not repeated.

It was **RESOLVED** that the write off of bad debts totalling £11,792.48 be approved.

7.4 The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee drew Members attention to the recent good news and ESFA letter dated 24 February 2021. The letter confirmed the Good financial health of the College for 2019/20 and predicted Good financial health for 2021/22 and beyond and informed the College of the lifting of the Financial Notice to Improve. The Committee Chair reported that this result was due to a great team effort over a sustained period and expressed his thanks to all concerned.

It was **RESOLVED** that the thanks of the Corporation to the Deputy Principal Finance and Resources, the Director of Finance and the supporting team for the excellent result achieved in securing the lifting of the Financial Notice to Improve, be placed on record.

8 CURRICULUM MATTERS

8.0 The Chair of the Standards and Curriculum Committee gave an overview of matters considered by the Standards and Curriculum Committee at the meeting held on 15 March 2021, and introduced the following reports on Curriculum matters to the Corporation. The Committee Chair emphasised that the Committee had been pleased to see progress in all areas reported and advised that there had been a lot of good news to report. The Chair referred in particular to extensive compliance reviews conducted in relation to OfS and HE and paid tribute to the Safeguarding team, which had maintained a high standard of delivery against the backdrop of an increase in the number of referrals made to the team.

8.1 KPI UPDATE

For information: To receive and note an update on KPIs (including recruitment, retention, achievement targets and 6 week drop out)

Q: A Member indicated that it was pleasing to see positive progress on the KPIs and asked if the RAG rating could be applied to the current year in addition to the figures for 2019/20.

R: Members were informed that this was a presentational error, and that the fuller suite of KPIs, which had been presented to the Standards and Curriculum Committee, had in fact included the RAG rating. This would be corrected for future reports.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**.

8.2 CURRICULUM REVIEW

For information: To receive and note a report on the curriculum review focusing on 16-18 and adults

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**.

8.3 APPRENTICESHIP UPDATE REPORT

For information: to receive and note a report on apprenticeships

Q A Member referred to the Apprenticeship Deep Dives and asked if a “summary of impact” could be included for future reports.

R Members were advised that the data in terms of achievement was now very encouraging, and that additional lines could be included in future reports to show the real impact.

ACTION 5: That future Apprenticeship Updates reports include a summary of impact.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**.

8.4 TEACHING, LEARNING AND CPD REPORT

For information: To receive and note the teaching, learning and CPD report

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**.

8.5 STUDENT SATISFACTION REPORT

For information: To receive and note a report on student satisfaction

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**.

8.6 CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS UPDATE

For information: To receive and note a customer complaints and compliments update

Q: A Member asked if there were mechanisms in place to consider areas of dissatisfaction which were at a lower level than constituting a formal complaint, and how this fed into quality assessment.

R: Members were informed of several mechanisms which were in place, including termly feedback from students and student surveys conducted twice per year. In addition Members were advised

Confirmed

that there was a concerted focus and an embedded staff culture to pick up and resolve potential problems as early as possible.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**.

8.7 OFFICE FOR STUDENTS UPDATES

For information: To receive and note a report on Office for Students updates

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**.

8.8 HE UPDATE REPORT

For information: To receive and note a HE Update Report, including Office for Students

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**.

8.9 SAFEGUARDING AND VULNERABLE LEARNERS

For information: To receive and note a report on safeguarding and vulnerable learners

C: A Member commented on the excellent work undertaken with regard to the operation of the Food Bank, which was a much needed service.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**.

8.10 The Chair of the Standards and Curriculum Committee informed the Corporation that Rachel Butt and Charlotte Barratt were both gaining an excellent reputation amongst peers, within the North West and beyond, as experts within their respective fields of Ed Tech and Safeguarding, and that this was raising the profile of the College.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Corporation's thanks and congratulations to Rachel Butt and Charlotte Barratt be placed on record for raising their profile, and that of the College, amongst peers within the North West and beyond.

9 AUDIT MATTERS

9.0 Andrew Ellams, in the absence of the Chair of the Audit Committee, gave an overview of matters considered by the Audit Committee at the meeting held on 3 February 2021 and introduced the following reports on Audit matters to the Corporation. The Deputy Principal Finance and Resources updated the Corporation on the tender exercise currently being undertaken for both Internal and External Auditors. Members noted that the Selection Panel included the Chair of the Audit Committee, that interviews were being held during the week commencing 22 March 2021, and that a recommendation regarding the appointment of Auditors would be submitted for approval following the Panel meetings.

9.1 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

For resolution: to consider and, if so minded, to approve the following Internal Audit Reports:

9.1.1 Payroll

9.1.2 HE Framework

9.1.3 Health and Safety and Estates Management Arrangements – COVID 19

9.1.4 Progress Report

It was **RESOLVED** that the Internal Audit reports presented be approved.

9.2 ANNUAL FRAUD RISK ASSESSMENT AND COUNTER FRAUD STRATEGY 2020/2023

For resolution: To consider, and if so minded, approve the Annual Fraud Risk Assessment and Counter Fraud Strategy 2020/23

Q: A Member commented that the Fraud Risk Assessment and Counter Fraud Strategy were good documents with detailed actions, and that moving forward it would be helpful to have an independent review of arrangements by the Internal Auditors.

R: It was agreed that this suggested approach would be helpful.

ACTION 6: That an independent review of the Fraud Risk Assessment and Counter Fraud Strategy be undertaken in due course, perhaps by RSM as part of their Program.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Annual Fraud Risk Assessment and Counter Fraud Strategy 2020/23 be approved.

10 PLAN FOR RE-OPENING THE COLLEGE SAFELY (PRO) UPDATE

For information: To receive and note a verbal update from the Principal and the Deputy Principal Finance & Resources on the Plan for Re-Opening the College Safely (PRO)

10.1 The Deputy Principal reported that it had been a challenging year which had involved rapidly changing and complex Government guidelines with regard to COVID 19. Members noted the following key points:

- The College had safely re-opened in January 2021, followed by a further close down and a move to operating on an A/B week basis;
- 16-18 students as possible returned to College with effect from 8 March 2021; with the return of adult & higher education students and apprenticeships due to commence from 22 March 2021;
- A number of measures had been put in place to enable the impact of COVID to be assessed, including "bubbles" of students and seating plans for all classrooms and workshops;
- The Test Centre in S Block at Warrington had continued for staff and vulnerable learners on site since January 2021, with a smaller facility in operation at Winsford;
- Following the Government announcement on 22 February 2021 swift action was taken to facilitate the testing of all students 3 times per week and arrangements were made for home testing kits to be issued;
- 4000 on site tests had been carried out to date and over 79% of all learners had been tested;
- No positive tests had been identified; and there were currently only two students in isolation (due to family members testing positive);
- Data sets continued to be returned to the Local Authority and to DFE;
- Arrangements were now being finalised for the scaling down of the test centre facilities;
- A huge staffing effort had been required to operate the test centre which had involved colleagues from various departments including MIS, HR, Finance and also from ELT and Senior Managers;
- PRO meetings continued to be held with Governor representation by M Ward, S Broomhead and M Cloney. The final meeting was likely to be held after Easter, once the final adult learners had returned to campus;
- Staff wellbeing post COVID continued to be given a high priority and focus.

Q: A Member asked if the College was aware of, or was using, the NHS App, which was a proximity detector.

R: Members were advised that some staff and students were using the NHS App, and that the Track and Trace facility was the predominant tool in use.

Confirmed

- C: A Member gave feedback on attendance at recent PRO meetings, and indicated that the sheer scale of the operational planning was extremely impressive, as was the scale of the achievement for the College re-opening.
- C: A Member gave feedback on information received at the recent Standards and Curriculum Committee, in that Students felt generally well prepared for their end point assessments, despite disruptions, and reported that this was a great testament to the College and the way the difficult challenges to learning had been well managed.
- Q: A Member asked if apprentices were now out in the field.
- R: Members were advised that this was the case; that apprentices had collected testing kits, and that the importance of apprentices remaining COVID safe had been stressed.
- Q: A question was asked of Kirstie Simpson, whether anything had been missed, by comparison to the re-opening plans of the University of Chester.
- R: Kirstie Simpson responded to indicate that arrangements at the College felt very well planned and under control, that she was not aware of any aspects which had been missed, and that she was very reassured by the updates provided.

It was **RESOLVED** that the update be **RECEIVED** and **NOTED**; and that the thanks of the Corporation be placed on record to the Leadership Team and all staff involved in the successful and safe re-opening of the College.

Steven Broomhead left the meeting at this point in proceedings.

11 TOWN DEAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE ACADEMY BUSINESS CASE

For resolution: To consider and, if so minded, approve the Town Deal Health and Social Care Academy business case

Michelle Cloney declared an interest in this item, as a Director of the NHS Warrington and Halton Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust Board.

- 11.1 The Corporation received a presentation from the Principal and Deputy Principal Finance and Resources on the Health and Social Care Academy (HSCA) and an overview of the strategic business case for the project. Members noted in particular:
- The Journey so far which had led to the successful Town Deal bid for funding (£1,006m), in line with the College Investment and Growth Plan;
 - That HSCA had been identified as one of four projects for fast track and that the College was currently working to submit a more detailed business case to the Local Authority by the deadline of 1 April 2021;
 - The project overview and timeline including stakeholder involvement to agree the education and skills training offer over the short, medium and long term to become a regional centre of excellence for professional progression (from pre-entry to level 7) in the health and social care sectors;
 - The strategic case for the HSCA which was in strong alignment with the issues outlined in the Town Investment Plan (TIP) and several local, regional, national and international strategies;
 - A HSCA Outputs Table for the numbers of qualifications, apprenticeships, and short courses completed, and other outputs around school and business engagement;
 - That the economic impact of the outputs was currently being assessed by a consulting company;
 - The financial case, including growth expected from year 2 onwards;
 - That "G Block" would be repurposed under a grant funding agreement; and
 - That the College would provide a "staffing match" contribution of £2.5m over the life of the project.

Confirmed

- 11.2 The Principal reported that in accordance with the acceleration of the project, works would now be undertaken during the Summer, to enable the new facility to be ready for September 2021, and that the Business Plan would be adjusted accordingly to show estimated year one growth. The Principal expressed her particular thanks to NHS and Local Authority colleagues for the excellent collaborative working which had taken place to date.
- C: A Member commented that it was helpful that the College match funding would be allocated in line with annual student enrolment numbers; and that it was pleasing to see an array of different Outputs against which the success of the project could be measured.
- Q: A Member indicated that from a financial perspective it would be helpful to see the incremental costs in addition to income.
- R: Members were advised that the Business Case, with fuller financial detail, would be presented to the next meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee.

ACTION 7: The HSCA Business Case to be presented to the next meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee.

- Q: A Member asked why the incomes lines were for the same amounts for both 16-18 and Adult Apprenticeships.
- R: Members were advised that this was due to broad assumptions made at this stage, based on the anticipated number of new starts, which had been profiled evenly across each of the years.
- Q: A Member asked about expansion, competitors and the catchment area for the HSCA.
- R: The Principal responded and also gave a brief update of opportunities presented by the IoT bid in terms of catchment area.
- Q: A Member asked if it was a condition of funding with regard to boundaries being required to be within the Warrington Town area.
- R: Members were advised that no such parameters had been set.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- a) That Governors approve the business case as presented; and
- b) That Governors note that the College will be re-purposing 'G Block' at a capital cost of £1m, funded by the Town Fund, under a grant funding agreement to accommodate the HSCA, providing a 'staffing match' contribution of £2.5m over the life of the project.

12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

For resolution: to consider any items of other business

- 12.1 The Clerk reminded Members of the new Careers Link Governor Role and suggested that expressions of interest be made to the Clerk following the meeting.

13 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

For information: to note that the next meeting of the Corporation is to be held on 7 July 2021 at 5pm.

The meeting closed at 6.30pm.