



Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held on Monday 6 March 2023

Present: -

- Mervyn Jones (Chair)
- Abigail Appleton (Principal)
- Jennette Arnold OBE
- Professor Robin Baker OBE
- Peta Darnley
- Joe Hedges
- Clive Hodgeman
- Kate Murrie
- Tim Newsholme
- Myfanwy Page
- Caroline Sedilek
- Charlotte Semus
- Zara Woodhouse (Teams)

In attendance: -

- Xaviere Hughes (Vice Principal FE)
- Justin Gregory (Vice Principal HE)
- Linda Watkins (Clerk to the Governors)
- Tim Williams (Finance Director)

The meeting was quorate as twelve Governors were present during the meeting.

1. Process of the Meeting

- I. The Chair welcomed Myfanwy Page, Staff Governor, to the meeting.
- II. Apologies for absence were received from Oliver Cameron-Swan. The FE Student Governors have not attended any meetings agreeing that the Clerk would have formal conversations with them to ascertain their commitment to the roles. **ACTION: CLERK**
- III. There were no new declarations of interests.

The Board agreed: -

- To accept the nomination of Myfanwy Page as Staff Governor for a 4-year term in office

2. Minutes of the Last Meetings

- I. The Board agreed the Chair should sign the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2022 as a true record.
- II. The action list was noted evidencing that all actions were in progress. The new course policy and drugs policy will be taken to the F&GP Committee and AQ&S Committee respectively for approval.
- III. There was some discussion about obtaining energy comparisons. The College uses West Mercia Energy, a purchasing consortium for the public

- sector. A Governor had obtained several quotes for energy within their business; this information would be shared. **ACTION: FINANCE DIRECTOR**
- IV. The Safeguarding policy will be updated within the normal review period to meet KCSIE in September 2023. It was confirmed that the current policy meets all legislative requirements.
 - V. The Principal updated Governors on the Prevent risk regarding visiting speakers which she had investigated notifying OfS of this risk as a reportable event. Following OfS guidance this was not a reportable event with no action required.

The Board agreed: -

- To approve the minutes

3. **Principal's Report**

- I. The Principal highlighted key developments from her written report particularly recent guest speakers including photographer Mark Neville who is based in Ukraine. HE applications are higher year on year with FE lower at this early stage in the year; interventions have been implemented by the marketing team. A summary of applications by course was provided. Government policy changes to simplify Level 3 qualifications to A Levels and T Levels have had some concessions with a reprieve to UAL courses until 2025; the College delivers these. The Principals from Hereford colleges are meeting Jesse Norman MP to discuss; there was a suggestion to notify Bill Wiggin MP of the situation. There have been ongoing concerns about the effectiveness of health and safety, and wellbeing with support being put in place to address issues including the introduction of more risk assessment templates and refreshing the student health and safety induction. The Accountability Agreement is due to be submitted to ESFA by 31 May 2023 with an option to request submitting a draft and deferring the final Accountability Agreement to 31 July 2023. It is anticipated that Ofsted will review the agreements and the progress against the objectives. This is an opportunity for the College to work closely with employers which dovetails into the major strategic review which will include consultation with employers and stakeholders. Governors agreed that this was a sensible approach.
- II. Progress to date against the College objectives and KPIs showed no significant changes to the RAG ratings. The College is awaiting a proposal for the lease for CRC from Herefordshire Council. An estates strategy will be commissioned based on the draft guidance issued by ESFA. Joe Hedges had agreed to join the industry development panel with a pilot meeting arranged with several companies, including regional companies. Staff have responded positively to the concept.
- III. The risk register was presented with key risks addressed in the Principal's report. A Governor asked if all rooms are occupied at Station Approach for

September 2023. Room bookings have opened with some confirmed to date. Wye Valley Trust have requested some spare rooms for allocation to medical students who will meet the criteria for the accommodation.

- IV. The finance report did not show any significant changes from the previous month. The main variances related to the positive variance on payroll and negative variance on utility costs. The EBITDA is close to breakeven excluding increases to utility costs. On the assumption of inflation, increased salaries and that funding was not likely to increase it will be crucial to be realistic about the financial position when setting the budget and strategic plan.

The Board agreed: -

- To note the reports
- To agree to seek permission from ESFA to submit a draft Accountability Agreement by 31 May and the final by 31 July 2023 based on the rationale that the College has commenced a major review of its strategy. **ACTION: PRINCIPAL**

4. Safeguarding

- I. Safeguarding Prevent and Wellbeing Annual Report 2021/22 was provided which had been delayed due to staff sickness. The Vice Principal FE gave a briefing on safeguarding explaining that MyConcern tracks all safeguarding concerns showing a substantial increase in incidents logged in the last 4 years increasing from 497 in 2019/20 to 744 this year to date. It was reassuring that students are talking about their concerns and seeking help. The pandemic and additional training and awareness raising have increased the number of issues. Categories reported enable training and awareness to be provided to address these. A new functionality Ofsted dashboard has been purchased on MyConcern. A student mentor has been employed to work with students and provide additional support. The Safeguarding Governor commended the work, experience and passion from staff confirming that she had also checked the Single Central Record this term. Governors who had not completed their annual safeguarding training on the Smartlog platform were reminded to do so. Assurance was provided that safeguarding resources are robust with senior staff committed to safeguarding. Governor briefings and training will be arranged periodically. Herefordshire Council's safeguarding audit had been completed with three actions identified which are being addressed. A Governor asked about information gathering pre-enrolment with secondary schools; the College contact safeguarding leads in schools to request sharing documents via MyConcern which can be time consuming. A question followed if students who raise safeguarding concerns about their peers are actioned which was confirmed.
- II. The Prevent self assessment and risk assessment were noted

- III. The Low Level Concerns Policy was approved in 2021 which is also incorporated in the Staff Professional Code. The policy safeguards both staff and students and embeds a culture to report any concerns; training has been provided for all staff. There was a question about vexatious issues asking if there is a contingency for such cases. Issues raised remain in a confidential inbox and are not declared to HCA People or potential employers. HCA People would only be notified if an incident needed to be reported to the LADO. Vexatious claims against staff are also covered in the disciplinary procedure.

The Board agreed: -

- To accept the Safeguarding Annual Report 2021/22
- To note the self assessments and safeguarding audit
- To approve the Low Level Concerns Policy

5. **Equality and Diversity Policy**

The policy had been aligned to the Freedom of Speech Policy. The Chair asked if information is provided at induction for staff and students which was confirmed. Visitors are provided information as part of the External Speakers' Policy which is being presented to the AQ&S Committee for approval.

There was a request to track changes in policies in future. **ACTION: CLERK/SLT**

The Board agreed: -

- To approve the Equality and Diversity Policy which will be published

6. **Implementation of the Staff Wellbeing Strategy 1-year on**

The staff wellbeing strategy was approved last year which included core principles. Pay and progression remains a concern for several staff. A consultant has been commissioned to review pay scales and progression subject to the College's financial position. A report will be presented to the F&GP Committee.

There has been positive feedback from staff on some initiatives introduced.

Staff have been invited to discuss wellbeing and make suggestions to SLT; a suggestion was recently received from a member of staff to change the furniture in the staffroom which will be implemented. A Governor enquired to what extent are there wellbeing discussions amongst teams noting some teams meet less frequently; SLT are following this up with teams. Overall staff concerns include pay, workload and fairness of workload in some areas, operational inefficiencies and poor communication.

A new PDR process had been implemented which will be added to the action plan as under-performance of staff can often mean their colleagues take on additional work. Several outstanding health and safety policies are being updated which will be published on staffnet for staff to access.

Wellbeing will link with the College's overall strategy.

7. Any Other Business

Mary Malcolm, has been appointed to complete the External Review of Governance following interviews with several consultants which had been commissioned through the AoC. This will review governance processes and involve input from Governors during the next few months.

8. Date and Time of Next Meeting

This was a revised date due to the additional bank holiday of Tuesday 9 May 2023 commencing at 4.30pm