



**Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held on Tuesday 9 May 2023**

**Present: -** Mervyn Jones (Chair)  
Abigail Appleton (Principal)  
Professor Robin Baker OBE  
Peta Darnley (Teams)  
Joe Hedges  
Clive Hodgeman  
Tim Newsholme  
Myfanwy Page  
Caroline Sedilek

**In attendance: -** Xaviere Hughes (Vice Principal FE)  
Justin Gregory (Vice Principal HE)  
Linda Watkins (Clerk to the Governors)  
Tim Williams (Finance Director)  
Judy Balderson (Co-opted Member Audit Committee)  
Dave Robinson (Operations Manager) for item 4

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

**1. Process of the Meeting**

- I. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Judy Balderson. He reported that Kate Murrie and Zara Woodhouse had resigned from the Board due to personal and work commitments. Sophie Curtis and Emily Kirkword, Student Governors (FE) had concluded that the role was not suited to them.
- II. Apologies for absence were received from Jennette Arnold OBE, Oliver Cameron-Swan and Charlotte Semus.
- III. There were no new declarations of interests. Mervyn Jones and Tim Newsholme declared interests regarding their appointment to AQ&S Committee (FE).

**2. Appointment of Independent Governor**

Several members of the Search and Governance Committee had met Dr Kate Mori recommending her appointment as an Independent Governor on the Board. The Chair gave brief summary of Dr Mori's background.

The Board agreed: -

- To appoint Dr Kate Mori as an Independent Governor for an initial 1-year term in office

### 3. Minutes of the Last Meetings

- I. The Board agreed the Chair should sign the minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2023 as a true record.
- II. The action list was noted evidencing that all actions were in progress.
- III. The Finance Director confirmed that he had received examples of energy quotes from a Governor in addition to quotes from West Mercia Energy Consortium, a public purchasing organisation, which are very competitive.

The Board agreed: -

- To approve the minutes

### 4. Cyber Security Update

The Operations Manager outlined his background and how the College is addressing IT and cyber security which included an application to Cyber Essentials which, once achieved, would be certified for 2 years with an option to apply annually. A Governor asked if cyber essentials is proactive by providing updates; it was confirmed that this continues to evolve with additional requirements to ensure compliance as cyber security develops. The College undertook an inhouse phishing exercise which will be repeated randomly with staff in future. A Governor asked if a phishing exercise had been conducted with students; this had not been completed; however, cyber security training for students is being investigated. Staff and students currently share the same network with permissions in place to prevent students accessing data available to staff. The Operations Manager is costing purchasing separate servers for staff and students. The College has a Business Continuity Plan and IT Disaster Recovery Plan with testing to be implemented.

The Board agreed: -

- To acknowledge the importance of increasing IT security measures, such as introducing MFA and removing the use of memory sticks and changing the culture throughout the College
- The BCP should be presented to the Audit Committee to provide assurance of risk management strategies **ACTION: CLERK/FINANCE DIRECTOR**
- To thank the Operations Manager for the presentation

### 5. Principal's Report

- I. The Principal highlighted key developments from her written report. The Office for Students (OfS) have confirmed that they have removed the B3 enhanced monitoring condition from the College. Governors' attention was drawn to the exemplary student achievements both locally and nationally. The College is working with secondary schools having recently held a creative careers day for year 8 students from three secondary schools funded externally; 77% of year 8 students indicated that they are considering a creative career. A summary of FE and HE applications to date was provided in the report with some discussion.

Employer engagement and the Skills Agenda are key priorities. The College has introduced two professional practice modules to engage students with core skills in FE and HE. Staff and students have participated in the conference acknowledging the commonalities and benefits of the modules providing some constructive feedback.

The Stronger Towns Digital Skills Centre project is out to tender. There have been complexities and challenges regarding development of an old building with detailed investigations required into the building structure. It is anticipated that value engineering will address significant cost increases. Achieving a net zero ambition for space A is proving challenging. The Principal recorded her thanks to Clive Hodgeman for his guidance regarding the project.

The local election has resulted in an increase in Conservative Local Councillors anticipating a Conservative/Liberal Democrats coalition. The Principal will invite the Local Councillors to the summer show and graduation.

The College had its annual strategic conversation with DfE last week which was very positive. Discussion included the College's strategy and its link to the economy and finances. The significant amount of activity in the College was acknowledged.

Staff changes were outlined noting that an appointment to Vice Principal Student Experience and Business Development has been made with a 2-year contract initially to provide flexibility.

- II. Progress to date against the College objectives and KPIs was provided; sustainability themes in the KPI will carry over next year. Some aspects of the objectives will be aligned to the Accountability Statement.
- III. The Finance Director referred Governors to the management accounts to 31 March 2023. West Mercia Energy Consortium have confirmed energy costs which are better than those budgeted despite an increase. ESFA have confirmed that the College will be awarded £811K in March 2023 from the FE transformational fund and £265K in April 2024. The College is required to return the spend allocation of the funding by 26 May 2023. The DfE review of estates in 2019 had identified areas for improvement. The funding must be allocated predominantly for FE provision; this could include the Digital Futures development. A Governor asked if the funding could be allocated to improve the student experience and outcomes. This was supported and, in addition, some sustainable benefits and cost savings would be considered such as energy savings to lighting. Funding must be spent by April 2026. The Chair proposed the F&GP Committee meet to discuss proposals and criteria for capital projects due to time constraints. *[Post meeting date extended, additional meeting no longer required]*

- IV. The F&GP Committee had discussed budget assumptions and implications. The budget will be based on 130 HE enrolments. Fixed costs are being reviewed for next year which will be incorporated in the budget to implement savings.
- V. The risk register was presented with no major changes. The risk regarding student accommodation at Station Approach was highlighted noting that the College has taken mitigating action to lease some rooms to Wye Valley Trust. The recent change of administration in Herefordshire Council will be added to the risk register. **ACTION: FINANCE DIRECTOR**

The Board agreed: -

- To note the reports

## 6. Skills Agenda

- I. The Principal reported progress against the Employer Engagement Strategy which the Board approved last year. The AQ&S Committee will measure implementation of the strategy. The Vice Principal Student Experience and Business Development will have a key role in employer engagement. A successful cross-college subject area industry liaison group had been piloted. A Governor enquired about work experience and if there were issues for students who are under 18 years visiting businesses due to safeguarding or working with micro businesses. The Vice Principal FE confirmed that this is an issue; risk assessments are completed. Ofsted recognise the importance of off-site work experience.
- II. ESFA require colleges to submit an Accountability Statement by 31 May 2023 including SMART targets which evidence how colleges will meet Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs). This will provide strategic direction and collaboration with stakeholders. Digital and Technology is one of the national skills priorities which is embedded in the Digital Futures curriculum. There is a focus on transferable skills and the benefit of these to learners. The Accountability Statement will be mapped against the draft Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), once available. The draft Accountability Statement will be shared with the AQ&S (FE) Committee this month and the final statement submitted to the Board in July for approval. **ACTION: PRINCIPAL**. This will include an executive summary explaining how the College meets the Skills Agenda. A Governor asked if the College could proactively work in secondary schools regarding development of soft skills; however, this is difficult based on the national curriculum schools are required to deliver. The College's 5-year strategy could incorporate delivery of soft skills to schools branded as HCA.

The Board agreed: -

- To submit a draft Accountability Statement by 31 May which will be approved by the AQ&S (FE) Committee and issued to Governors; the final

statement will be approved by the Board for submission to ESFA by 31 July 2023.

**7. Quality Strategy**

The Quality Strategy was recommended to the Board by the AQ&S Committee. This had been presented to the Board previously with several amendments to bring parallel links to FE and HE

The Board agreed: -

- To approve the Quality Strategy which will be published

**8. Governance**

The Board agreed: -

- To appoint Mervyn Jones as Chair of AQ&S (FE) Committee and Tim Newsholme to the AQ&S (FE) Committee
- To extend Tim Newsholme's term in office to 31 December 2023
- To appoint the Chair and Vice Chair as ex-officio members of committees with the exception of only the Vice Chair on Audit Committee

**9. Environmental Sustainability Update**

The College publishes an annual report evidencing environmental sustainability and an action plan. The Board will be required to approve the annual report and update against the action plan which will follow the FE Climate Commission road map.

The Estates Strategy will be prepared as a priority. There are some aspects which are easy to achieve; however, the Estates Manager had been requested to concentrate on health and safety issues as a priority, particularly in the period leading up to the summer show.

**10. Committee Minutes**

- I. Audit Committee: 27 March 2023
- II. Search and Governance Committee: 30 March 2023
- III. Finance and General Purposes Committee: 30 March 2023
- IV. Academic Quality and Standards Committee: 28 March 2023 including in-quirate notes

**11. Any Other Business**

Governors were invited to participate in training about the FE maths landscape delivered by the Maths in Education and Industry. This would be offered in collaboration with HLNSC Governors on 11 September. The Clerk will issue details to Governors. **ACTION: CLERK**

**12. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Monday 10 July 2023 commencing at 4.30pm