

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Board of Governors held on
Thursday 19 September 2024 at 5pm in Room 206A, Wellington Road**

PRESENT

Mrs Amanda Tomlinson - Chair	Ms Louise Fall - Principal and Chief Executive
Mr John Bradford - from 5.10pm	Mr Darren Shaw - on Teams
Mrs Jane Carter	Ms Doina Surchicin
Mr Sam Duru	Mr Mark Taylor – on Teams, from 5.20pm
Ms Wendy Harris	

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs Alison Buick	Head of Governance
Mr Paul Davies - on Teams	Director of Finance
Mr Mike Dixon	Assistant Principal
Mr Peter Merry	Deputy Principal and Chief Executive
Ms Lynn Parker	Assistant Principal

Mike Hastings was not present so Amanda Tomlinson would chair the meeting.

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting, including Doina Surchicin, who was attending her first meeting since appointment as Student Union President and Student Governor for 2024/25.

01/25 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM 1)

Apologies were received and accepted from Mike Hastings, Simon Evans, Scott Thompson and Dionne Barrett. Hshaana Knight was not in attendance.

Mark Taylor made his usual declaration regarding his conflict of loyalty as an employee of Wolverhampton Council. This was relevant to agenda items relating to CLQ.

02/25 MINUTES (ITEM 2)

It was **resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2024 be **approved**.

03/25 MATTERS ARISING AND ACTIONS (ITEM 3)

Governors reviewed the action from the previous meeting and noted that it would be covered later in the agenda.

04/25 CHAIR'S ACTIONS (ITEM 4)

Since the last meeting there had been one Chair's Action. This related to a mini competition process for provision of sandwiches and associated products under the TUCO framework. The contract had been jointly awarded to Simply Lunch and Tiffin Sandwiches Ltd.

It was **resolved** that the Chair's Action be **approved**.

05/25 CORRESPONDANCE (ITEM 5)

Governors noted receipt of a letter from ESFA dated 11 September 2024. This referred to the transfer of current functions into DfE and closure of the ESFA with effect from 31 March 2025.

06/25 PROPERTY, RAIL AND CLQ UPDATE (ITEM 6)

The Deputy Principal and Chief Executive gave an update, noting that details had been shared with CTOG earlier in the week and the slides from that meeting had been shared with all Governors.

Governors noted the following:

ATAC

- ATAC was now open. A launch event, attended by the Leader of the Council and the WMCA Mayor, had been held on 11 September 2024.
- Enrolments in Engineering and Automotive had seen an increase.
- There had been some delays to procurement of fixtures, fittings and equipment but none that had impacted teaching and learning. Discussions with the Council, who were leading the procurement on this, were ongoing.

(John Bradford arrived at 5.10pm)

- There were currently no budget concerns for ATAC.

CLQ

- There was a potential delay to the completion date for reasons which were explained. Discussions about this were ongoing with the Council and contractor. The Project Board had recently met and were aware. Planning for the transition into CLQ and the communications around this were agreed as key.
- The legal agreement was still not completed. The Council was keen to have this signed by the end of September as there were some risks with the building under construction and no formal funding agreement in place. DfE approval was also needed.

The Chair asked about the approvals for this that the Board had already agreed. The Deputy Principal and Chief Executive stated that there was delegated authority agreed for the Chair and Vice Chair (Amanda Tomlinson).

Other Property Matters

- The decant of some departments from Paget Road in the summer had meant that it had been possible to close off some areas of the site that were no longer required.
- A project group was in place to look at the disposal options for Paget Road. It was hoped to start marketing in October.
- It had been confirmed that St Peter's were likely to need to retain use of the leased land at Paget Road until summer 2026. The college would maintain communications with DfE over this.

(Mark Taylor arrived at 5.20pm)

- The speed gates had been installed at Wellington Road and were now operational.
- The newly refurbishment kitchen and food hub at Wellington Road was now operational.

- Developmental work was ongoing at Aston.
- Work on the decarbonisation plan at Wellington Road continued. A bid for Salix funding was being submitted. Further approvals in relation to this would be brought back to a future meeting.

A Governor asked if students were seeing the impact of the improvements. The Student Governor responded that more students were using the food hub as a social space and that queuing times had improved.

Newhampton Arts Centre Disposal

- The Board had approved the disposal in March 2024. However there had been further discussions with the Council and more independent advice taken. Part of the discussion with the council was in relation to the overages. The college had been advised to accept the Council's revised offer, as detailed in the written paper. The agreed overages were:
 - Years 0-5 - 50% of uplift on disposal after deduction of all costs incurred up to the date of disposal including fees;
 - Years 6-10 - 25% of uplift on disposal after deduction of all costs incurred up to the date of disposal including fees.

It was **resolved** that the Board **approved** the NAC disposal on the updated terms and conditions.

07/25 COLLEGE UPDATE (ITEM 7)

The Principal and Chief Executive commented on some recent sector and other developments, including:

- The Government had announced a 5.5% pay award for school and academy teachers. This did not apply to college staff. AOC had received the joint pay claim from trade unions but were yet to make a pay recommendation.
- Ofsted had changed their inspection gradings for schools. There had been an announcement that there would be changes for other sectors, including colleges, possibly from September 2025.
- The agreement with Bilston Town FC had now been signed.

A Governor commented that there was a proposal for separate inspections of 14-16 provision. Details were on the Ofsted website.

Student Engagement

Safeguarding Policy and Procedure

The policy had been updated following the annual publication of Keeping Children Safe in Education. There were minimal changes. Dionne Barrett, Safeguarding Link Governor, had met with the Safeguarding and Equality Manager and had also reviewed the draft policy. She had no comments to make.

It was **resolved** that the Board **approved** the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure.

Safeguarding Annual Report

The Principal and Chief Executive presented the highlights of the report, which gave assurances about tracking and monitoring and also showed any emerging trends. Governors noted that the overall number of referrals was down and that the categories were broadly similar to last year.

Data and feedback confirmed that students felt safe in college.

It was **resolved** that the Safeguarding Annual Report was **received**.

Enrolment Update

This was week 3 of term with enrolment of 16-19 students being over the budgeted target by c.130. Changes, such as transfers and any withdrawals were still being processed so the final number was subject to change.

Enrolment had been strong in Early Years, Sport, ICT, Construction (particularly brickwork, multi skills and electrical), Engineering and Automotive. The opening of ATAC had encouraged more enrolments for Engineering and Automotive.

Enrolments were currently down in Science, A Levels, Art & Design and Music.

There had been a 45% increase in enrolments for GCSE Maths and English re-sits compared to 2023, where enrolments had increased by 30%. This has added pressures to group sizes, rooming and other resources.

There were some staffing pressures in Construction.

Adult recruitment was ongoing so analysis of this would be brought to a future meeting.

HE would start in the next few weeks.

A Governor asked if more enrolments were expected for courses based in ATAC. The Principal and Chief Executive thought potentially there could be. The final cut off for enrolment was October half term.

A Governor noted the need for agency teaching staff and asked about the quality. The Assistant Principal responded that this was mixed. The Principal and Chief Executive added that there were daily enrolment meetings, so staff were constantly reviewing student numbers, room allocations and staffing.

Student Success

Achievement – Progress to Date

The Assistant Principals gave an update which covered the following:

- Retention was 96.8%, which was 2.3% higher than last year.
- Overall achievement was 92.2%, compared to 89% in the previous year.
- The breakdown of achievement by levels was set out in the written report. For young people, achievement was 89%, 1% higher than last year.
- There had been a significant increase in adults that had completed qualifications this year, up 6,000 compared to 2023. Adult retention was 97.8%, an increase of 5% on 2023. Adult destinations were also very positive.
- Apprenticeship achievement was predicted to be 53%, below the 55% stretch target but higher than the 49.2% from 2023. There were still results to be

- processed. There had been some impact from the re-structuring in Hair, but most subject areas had improved their results from the previous year.
- GCSE results were mixed. Pearson had completed some English re-marks free of charge and all results returned so far had improved. The final GCSE position would be reported to a future meeting. English grade boundaries had increased this year.
 - The achievements and high grades for Maths and English were as set out in the written report.

A Governor asked if GCSE results had impacted on students' next steps. The Principal confirmed that they had for some as they had determined whether they needed to re-sit or what level course they could enrol on.

- The impact of Covid and other disruptions (such as teacher strikes) on the education of the 2023 and 2024 cohorts was noted. This had created a number of challenges that were expected to be seen for future cohorts as well.
- There had been a 7% increase in A Level results, to 83%. The percentage of high grades was static. It was noted that the college continued to offer a range of A Level subjects but that some with low enrolment numbers had been cancelled. Affected students had been offered alternative courses.

Governors discussed the continuing effects of Covid and how long these may be seen. It was difficult to predict as there had been much disruption at primary school for pupils now at secondary level. A Governor commented that evidence suggested that the most disadvantaged pupils were disproportionately affected.

People Engagement

Staff Survey and York Benchmarking

- The survey had been completed in the summer and the response rate had increased to 45%.
- Benchmarking data had been collated by York College. 45 other colleges were in the data set. Information on this was included in the written report. It was pleasing to see that many areas for the college were RAG rated as green compared to the last survey.
- The report included all of the comments received from staff.
- The results would be used to create an action plan. Some of the areas that would be included were explained.
- Management's view was that the survey response was overwhelmingly positive but that there were some areas to work on. A working group of staff was to be set up.

The Principal and Chief Executive added that she was planning some work on reviewing the college values.

A Governor asked if there would be a move away from anonymous responses. The Principal and Chief Executive noted that there had been an option for staff to include their name if they wished. Some had. There was a discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of anonymous responses, and also whether making responses mandatory would be helpful.

The Staff Governor commented on her participation in a previous working group with HR to improve the response rate. It appeared that some staff were cautious about responding if the survey was not anonymous.

A Governor suggested that some management training and coaching may be beneficial and help improve future scores. This was an area to be considered.

Business Success

Management Accounts – July 2024

The Director of Finance presented the report and highlighted key points including variances in relation to income and pay and non-pay budgets.

Governors noted the following:

- The management accounts to July showed a draft year end surplus of £1.3m although this was subject to final reviews for all adult and apprenticeship funding lines.
- There had been some positive events in year, including the £942k pay award grant. However this had been a one-off and there was no indication of it being repeated in future.
- The key variances to the management accounts were explained
- The cash position was improved, which would allow further investment in capital works.
- Financial health was Good.
- The external audit would commence on 14 October for two weeks. Preparations for this were well in hand.
- A new Head of Finance had been appointed and would be in post from December 2024.

Questions and comments were invited.

A Governor asked if the final outcome of the funding audit that had taken place was yet known. The Deputy Principal and Chief Executive confirmed that a draft report had been received and was being reviewed. The final version would be presented at the next Audit Committee meeting in November 2024.

The Board of Governors received the Management Accounts to July 2024

Partnerships Update

The updates in the written report were noted. It was too early for an update relating to 2024/25. However, the outturn for 2023/24 was positive. Success measures were included in the report.

The RO14 return deadline was 14 October so the final figures would be presented to the November Board.

Some contract variations were expected in year, but, as usual, these would be brought to the Board for approval at the appropriate time.

Approval from WMCA for the wider rail contract was awaited. This was thought to be a procedural matter and not a major risk, given the demand across the region and the investments that the college had made with NIS support.

There was a discussion about the longer term contract in place with NIS. There was sharing of both risks and benefits by both parties. The college hoped to be able to bring back similar long term contracts with other partners in due course. The Board would be kept updated.

Martyn's Law Preparedness

The Deputy Principal and Chief Executive commented on preparation to ensure compliance with the new requirements, including:

- Installation of the speed gates.
- External advice received
- That the college did not expect to be in the highest tier of risk but that this was to be confirmed.
- The installation and testing of the new PA system.

A Governor asked how neuro divergent and vulnerable students would be made aware of new systems and offered support. The Principal confirmed that there had been information available at induction for new students and that there had been particular focus for Futures students on this.

The Chair suggested a progress report on Martyn's Law, including the impact on neuro divergent students, for the next meeting and this was agreed. Action: Deputy Principal and Chief Executive.

08/25 GOVERNANCE MATTERS (ITEM 8)

Appointment of an Associate Governor

The Head of Governance reported the recent resignation of Trevor Dutton as a Governor but noted that he was willing to stay as an Associate Governor for the Audit Committee.

Governors expressed thanks to Mr Dutton for his contribution to the work of the Board and its committees for over five years. Given his professional expertise and his knowledge of the college it was agreed that it would be appropriate for him to stay as an Associate Governor.

It was **resolved** that Trevor Dutton be appointed as an Associate Governor for Audit Committee for four years with effect from his resignation date of 4 August 2024.

There were now four Governor vacancies. Funding had been secured from DfE to recruit to one of these using Peridot, the DfE's approved contractor.

Board Agenda Plan 2024/25

The Agenda plan for 2024/25 had been provided for information. It would be used as a starting point for drafting the agendas for each meeting. However it was subject to change if Governors or EMT wished to add or remove items in year.

Committee Membership 2024/25

The suggested Committee Membership for the year had been provided. There was a vacancy for CTOG following Ian Gardner's resignation in the summer. Interested Governors were asked to express interest to the Chair or Head of Governance.

Resolved: that the Committee Membership for 2024/25 was approved.

Committee Terms of Reference 2024/25

The terms of reference for all committees and task & finish groups had been reviewed and there were only minor amendments to reflect changes to roles and job titles.

Resolved: that the Committee and Task & Finish Group terms of reference for 2024/25 were approved

External Governance Review Action Plan

An action plan had been drafted following the completion of the Governance Review in the summer. Some preliminary comments had been provided by the Head of Governance but a detailed review was needed by the Search and Governance Committee before a final draft was brought back to the Board at the next meeting.

09/25 COMMITTEE REPORTS (ITEM 9)

The minutes of the following recent meetings had been circulated:

- Audit Committee 26 June 2024
- Apprenticeships Task and Finish Group 27 June 2024

Only one other meeting had taken place in the term to date (CTOG on 16 September 2024) but this had been after the circulation of the Board papers so would come to the next meeting in November 2024.

The recommendations of the Audit Committee to approve the Internal and External Audit Plans had been approved at the last Board meeting in July.

The Board of Governors received the committee reports.

10/25 ANY OTHER BUSINESS (ITEM 10)

None.

11/24 CONFIDENTIALITY (ITEM 11)

It was resolved that the following reports would remain confidential:

- **Property, Rail and CLQ Update**
- **Committee minutes for the Apprenticeships Task and Finish Group**

12/25 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING (ITEM 12)

Board of Governors – Thursday 14 November 2024 at 5pm at Wellington Road

The Governor Strategy Session would be held on Thursday 17 October from 10am to 4pm at Wellington Road.

The meeting ended at 6.35pm.