

Corporation Meeting

Wednesday 9 March 2022

West Herts College – Watford (D114)

5pm – 6.30pm

MINUTES

Attendees: (v=virtual attendance)

Members	Role:	Other Attendees	Role
Phil Thompson	Chair of Corporation	Gary Dixon	Deputy Principal West Herts
Gill Worgan	Principal & CEO	Cath Gunn (v)	Principal of Barnfield College
Guy Ainsley	Independent Governor	Sarah Knowles (v)	Deputy Principal WHC Group
Phil Berry	Independent Governor	Eamonn McCarroll	Director of Finance WHC Group
Sue Farnfield	Staff Governor	Tammy Nuthall	Deputy Principal Barnfield
Irina Kendix	Independent Governor	Anne-Marie Kinsella (v)	Clerk to Corporation
Richard Lewis	Independent Governor		
Matt Luheshi (v)	Independent Governor	Apologies	Role:
Chris Nicholls	Independent Governor	Heather Lunn	Student Governor
Jamie Robertson	Student Governor		
Jason Smith	Independent Governor		
Ben Stapleton	Independent Governor		
Paul Thompson (v)	Independent Governor		
David York	Staff Governor		

Ref Agenda Item

41/21 1.1 Apologies for absence and quoracy

Apologies were noted and accepted, and the meeting was quorate.

1.2 Declaration of pecuniary interests

There were no declarations.

1.3 Requests for urgent business

There were no requests for urgent business.

42/21 2.1 Minutes of the last meeting (9 February 2022)

2.1.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting and were approved for electronic signature.

2.1.2 The minutes of the Audit Committee were noted by the Corporation.

DECISION 1 - On recommendation from the Audit Committee, the Corporation formally approved the following items:

- **Anti- Bribery Policy**
- **Financial Regulations**

2.2 Actions from previous minutes

There were no outstanding action items from the previous Corporation meeting.

Action items from the Audit Committee Meeting (22/02/22)

DECISION 2 – The Corporation formally approved the following items:

- Amendment to the Audit Committee Terms of Reference to allow an additional Governor to join the Committee
- The appointment of Jason Smith to the Audit Committee

2.3 Agree process for approval of external auditors

The Director of Finance and the Chair of the Audit Committee gave a verbal update to the Corporation on the tender process undertaken to appoint an External Auditor for the College. A tender exercise had been undertaken, and two

firms were shortlisted. A tender evaluation panel comprising the Chair of the Audit Committee, the Director of Finance, the Head of Finance, and the College's Procurement Adviser had reviewed the tender submissions against the tender evaluation criteria, and the panel also met with both firms. Buzzacott scored higher in the evaluation, and the panel are recommending that Buzzacott be appointed. This takes account of Buzzacott being assessed as scoring higher on added value, how they would deliver and manage the audit, and the price.

A special meeting of the Audit Committee has been arranged for the 23 March 22 to review the tender evaluation.

It was clarified that it was a requirement of the Audit Code of Practice to retender the external audit contract every 5 years. The contract with the external audit firm is yearly and there is a commitment to pricing for 5 years. The lead auditors' role is normally rotated within the firm every 10 years.

The Corporation were satisfied with the information presented to them and a special meeting of the Audit Committee will not be required.

DECISION 3: The Corporation formally approved the appointment of Buzzacott as External Auditor for the audit of accounts from 2021-22, for up to 5 years.

2.4 Matters Arising not on the agenda

There were no matters arising not on the agenda.

43/21 Principal's Report

The Report was circulated in advance of the meeting for the Corporation's consideration.

The College is performing well against the key performance indicators (KPI's). Cyber security remains a key priority, particularly in the light of the war in Ukraine.

The recommendations from the Augar Review were discussed, in particular, the requirement for English and maths to secure loans for higher education courses and the reduction in fees for foundation courses.

There is a high expectation from the government to increase the number of students enrolling on level 4 and 5 courses, this has been difficult due to the low demand for these courses from adults and employers. The College will target those who wish to upskill or retrain.

The Report was noted.

44/21 Strategic Planning and Corporate Policies

4.1 Annual Safeguarding Report

The Report was circulated in advance of the meeting for the Corporation's consideration.

The report outlined the work undertaken in the last academic year to meet the key priorities to safeguard students.

The increase in student referrals for mental health was highlighted and the actions taken to address these concerns were outlined.

It was noted that Safeguarding within the College has received external validation from the external auditors and Ofsted. Reassurance was given that resources for the Safeguarding Team are a priority and additional staff have been recruited at senior levels.

Delays for DBS returns is unavoidable and is not a regular occurrence, all risks associated with this are identified and addressed.

The increase in the number of incidents reported is due in part to the increase in mental health concerns but also the effectiveness of the systems and resources in place for students to report any issues and the early signs recognised by staff.

The responsibility of the college for safeguarding concerns can extend beyond College activities. If students report issues that occur at home the College still has a duty of care to follow this through and report or refer the case to the appropriate agencies. The Principal gave a few examples of recent reports and the actions the College had taken.

The Report was noted.

4.2 Safeguarding and Prevent Policy

Since the last review in October 2021 the COVID addendum has been removed and the changes to the Safeguarding team updated.

DECISION 4 - The Corporation formally approved the Safeguarding & Prevent Policy.

45/21 Quality of Education

5.1 Quality of Provision (Full-time further education provision 16-18)

The Report was circulated in advance of the meeting for the Corporation's consideration.

Overall retention and progress are good. Most students are engaging and making progress with English and Maths lessons. Intervention plans are in place for those students who are not engaging. Regular meetings effectively monitor progress.

Attendance is good, students with attendance lower than 85% are supported as part of the Colleges' intervention strategy.

In response to Governors questions, it was clarified that intervention plans are in place to ensure students from specific groups achieve to broadly consistent levels and concerns are addressed promptly. The areas for concern were discussed in detail and the actions taken to address them.

The system for evaluating the accuracy of predictions was clarified as being part of the self-assessment review (SAR). Actual outcomes are compared with predictions reported at the 4th data point.

The exams had gone well last year, and it was felt that the increase in exams this year should not impact negatively on qualification outcomes and grades.

It was agreed that going forward the retention rates 1- and 2-year courses will be reported separately.

The Report was noted.

5.2 Student Destinations

The Report was circulated in advance of the meeting for the Corporation's consideration.

Most College leavers 2019/20 have secured positive destinations within 4 months of leaving despite the impact of the pandemic. A high number of students have returned to further education courses.

Student destination data is collated and reviewed at 4 points in the academic year. The results of which are used to inform decisions about the College's curriculum and qualification offer in line with employers' needs.

The report detailed the most recent collation of data and included the percentage of students who progressed to employment, apprenticeships, further education, and higher education.

Going forward the collection of destination data for adults will be measured and the underpinning formula for this is currently being developed. Establishing an alumni can now take place with the use of destination data.

Students who could not be tracked were discussed. The data did not show trends that presented cause for concern and it was hoped that the number of students who could not be tracked will reduce as further data is collected over the coming months.

The Bravura project is having a positive impact on students securing employment, particularly following the pandemic where the opportunity to gain employment via apprenticeships has significantly reduced.

The Report was noted.

46/21 Monitoring

6.1 Together Training (Joint Venture Oaklands College)

Together Training (TT) works with 150 employers that includes some large, prestigious employers. TT is rated excellent on the government website. TT is working with Tech She Can to increase interest from females in technology roles. TT is also a member of the Trailblazers Group developing a new apprenticeship in Safeguarding.

The College has high regard for TT and the Corporation recognised its strategic and financial. It was noted that as TT delivers level 4 and 5 apprenticeship qualifications this may help to meet current government expectations.

The Report was noted.

6.2 Corporate Risk Register

The Report was circulated in advance of the meeting for the Corporation's consideration.

The Audit Committee had reviewed the Risk Register in detail at the last Committee meeting (22/02/22)

The Report showed there are 3 high-level risks; no risks have been added since the last report and one risk had been removed.

A presentation would be given by a head of school at the Corporation Meeting in May on how risks regarding the provision of industry placements for young people are managed.

The Report was noted.

6.3 Barnfield College Capital Project

The Report was circulated in advance of the meeting for the Corporation's consideration.

The Barnfield College Phase 1 is on budget and due to complete in June 2022. Phases 2 and 3 are dependent on the outcome of funding from the FE Capital Transformation Fund. The Capital Project Steering Group (CPSG) meet monthly to review progress The Report outlined in detail the progress to date.

In response to Governors questions, it was noted that the management of the project is good, there was no update on the transformation fund and using the contingency budget was accepted.

The Report was noted.

47/21 Governance and Members' Reports

7.1 Designated Safeguarding Governor's Update and presentation

The designated governor for safeguarding (DSG) had attended 2 Safeguarding Team Meetings since his last report in November 2021. He presented data to illustrate the rise in cases nationally for mental health, sexual harassment, and abuse. The increase in the number of reported cases for these concerns has doubled following the pandemic. The DSG gave details of the work being done nationally and within the College to identify and address the issues.

The College is proactive in meeting the needs of students. Additional staff have been recruited, there is an effective intervention programme, and employees are trained to enable them to recognise early signs of concern. Students are also educated to recognise signs relating to safeguarding matters including sexual harassment, and how important it is to report any concerns.

The DSG is confident that given the significant amount of support in place for safeguarding cases of mental health and sexual harassment receive high levels of support from the College?

7.2 Update on Corporation Membership

7.2.1 End of Terms – Phil Berry (PB) (17/04/22)

PB confirmed that he would like to continue as a member of the Corporation.

DECISION 5: The Corporation unanimously re-appointed PB as a member of the Corporation for a further 2 years from the 17 April 2022.

7.3 Update on Use of Corporation Seal

DECISION 6: The use of the Corporation Seal was approved by the Corporation.

7.4 Learning Walks; Visits and events feedback

Please see item 7.1

48/21 Urgent Business

There were no items of urgent business

49/21 Date of next meeting – Wednesday 11 May 2022. Barnfield College

50/21 Part 2

Finance Report – Confidential item please see part 2 of the minutes.

Minutes approved by the Corporation on 11 May 2022:

Ref	Summary of Actions	when
	No new actions	

Ref	Summary of Decisions
42/21/2.1.2	On recommendation from the Audit Committee, the Corporation formally approved the following items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Anti- Bribery Policy ➤ Financial Regulations
42/21/2.2	The Corporation formally approved the following items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Amendment to the Audit Committee Terms of Reference to allow an additional Governor to join the Committee ➤ The appointment of Jason Smith to the Audit Committee
42/21/2.3	The Corporation formally approved the appointment of Buzzacott as External Auditor for the audit of accounts from 2021-22, for up to 5 years.
44/21/4.2	The Corporation formally approved the Safeguarding & Prevent Policy.
7/21/7.2.1	The Corporation unanimously re-appointed PB for a further 2 years from the 17 April 2022.
47/21/7.3	The use of the Corporation Seal was approved by the Corporation.