



**Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporation
held on Tuesday 10 May 2022**

Present: - Igor Andronov (Chair)
Tony Bramley
Tony Ford
Laura Johnston
Debbie Lambert
Alan Layng
Jeremy Nicholls
David Williams (Principal)

In attendance: - Jo Ricketts (Deputy Principal)
Edward Gwillim (Director of Finance)
Debra Baldwin (Director of Personnel)
Linda Watkins (Clerk to the Corporation)
Alison Layton-Hill (Exeter College)

The meeting was quorate as eight Governors were present at the meeting

1.
 - I. **Apologies for absence**
Apologies were received from James Caird, Julia Cotton, Adam Matthews, Liz Quinn and Ben Whiteley.
 - II. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Alison Layton-Hill, Clerk to the Corporation at Exeter College, who was observing the meeting as part of a reciprocal external review of governance. The report would be reported to the next Search and Governance Committee and Board meeting.
 - III. **Declaration of Interest**
Governors who were recommended for re-appointment declared interests.
2.
 - I. **Minutes of the last meeting**
The Board agreed that the Chair should sign the minutes of the Board meetings held on 14 December 2021 and 8 February 2022 as true records. The resolution dated 18 February 2022 and approved was also noted.
 - II. **Matters arising**
The Clerk had received contributions from some Governors to purchase a gift commissioned by an ex-student from Ludlow College who is an artist. An event would be arranged at the start of the next academic year.

Action

L Watkins

III. Notes from Governors' Workshop: 14 December 2021 - noted

The Board agreed: -

- To approve the minutes

Discussion

3. Principal's Report

- I. The Principal's written report was noted with questions invited and the following discussion. A Governor asked for clarification about Hoople; this is a company who manage care homes, provide payroll, HR services and IT support to Herefordshire Council, schools, academies and NHS. The Principal had discussion about apprenticeship delivery, health care provision, work placements and opportunities to work together.

The Government have relaxed Covid-19 guidelines; the College is encouraging staff and students to follow practices to ensure good ventilation and high standards of hygiene continue. The number of positive cases had decreased with only isolated cases across the campuses currently.

There is ongoing discussion with Wye Valley Health Care Trust regarding provision of training which dovetails to the Strategic Development Fund (SDF) project. Some apprentices have placements at the Trust.

Rachel Laver is the new Chief Executive at the Marches LEP. The role of LEPs in both devolved and un-devolved areas (the latter included Herefordshire and Shropshire) is changing; Governors will continue to be informed of changes.

The Principal had a useful meeting with Herefordshire Cllr Ellie Chowen, Chair of Herefordshire Climate Board. The College will arrange a carbon assessment of Pound Farm at Holme Lacy Campus. The Climate Board has a couple of sub groups; it might be possible for the College to work with the agri and construction sub groups regarding sustainability. There was a suggestion to consider positive aspects of the river Wye which runs parallel to the farm land.

DfE will release a second tranche of SDF available in the region of £2.5M. The College is leading a bid working with Telford College and Shrewsbury College to secure funding to develop a facility and expertise to deliver training in new and emerging environmental technologies (heat pumps, solar PVs, electric cars and agri-tech). There has been interest from other institutions in the region to join the bid. A Governor suggested the College pursue alternative mechanisms to proceed in collaboration with other colleges in the event that the bid was unsuccessful; this was supported.

The College's bid to ESFA to develop construction, science, hairdressing and beauty therapy facilities at Oswestry Campus was successful. The original bid, based on receiving 70% of the estimated £1.6M cost. ESFA subsequently reduced this to 50%

equating to a grant funding offer of £835k. A Governor asked about contingency levels which was around 15% based on the architect's assessment. Investment at Oswestry campus and its impact are crucial from both an economic and cultural aspect. Discussion progressed to the timescale, particularly as the project would cause disruption to teaching and learning delivery. It was unlikely that it would be feasible to commence the project during the summer holidays; however, the project would be carefully managed. A Governor reiterated that this was positive news for the area which should also be publicized locally. The bid to develop new animal management facilities at Holme Lacy campus was declined; it was anticipated that there might be another opportunity to submit a bid for Holme Lacy Campus.

The Skills Bill and Post-16 Education Act received Royal Assent earlier in May with pertinent issues outlined. This requires colleges to respond to Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) and meet employer needs in the area. Employer Representative Bodies (ERB) will be responsible to develop and monitor LSIPs geographically. LEPs cannot be ERBs with options being discussed with Shropshire Chamber and Herefordshire and Worcester Chamber to consider a joint expression of interest. It was crucial that the colleges in the Marches, including all Herefordshire Colleges, work collaboratively. The July Governors' Workshop would be used to discuss the implications of the Skills Bill for the College.

D Williams/
L Watkins

16-18 funding will reduce in 2022/23 reflecting this year's recruitment shortfall and the lagged funding methodology. SLT are monitoring applications and reasons offers are declined. 'In person' open days have been reintroduced following the pandemic; these have proved to be more effective than online. The College is continuing to work with years 10 and 11 in schools. The enrolment procedure has been simplified this year with basic information submitted online followed by face to face enrolment. Applications are high this year; however, it was unlikely that all applications convert to enrolments. A Governor enquired if applications had increased to specific faculties noting that applications had increased across the whole College with marginally lower applications to vocational courses at Ludlow College to date. Consultants have been commissioned to review the College's marketing approach; a headline finding will be reported to the Board.

D Williams

- II. The Annual Operating Plan (AOP) had been updated reporting progress against the strategic plan's key objectives. This had also been presented to the F&E Committee and Q&S Committee. In future a summary outlining key progress with applicable links will be provided to simplify the process. A Governor commented that the Audit Committee are considering introducing a Board assurance framework which would include current and target performance with a suggestion to include a RAG rating to track progress. A new AOP will be provided in 2022/23.

D Williams

The Deputy Principal explained that strong processes are embedded to monitor teaching, learning and assessment with

new mentors appointed for next year. Staff development is embedded in the teaching timetable across all faculties with collaborative working. 'VESPA' approach has been introduced at Ludlow College to improve value-added which will be introduced across other vocational areas.

The Director of Finance reported that a staff survey is being completed by staff to inform the digital strategy in addition to liaising with the IT Strategy Group and JISC.

Expenditure is being monitored closely with regular financial reports generated to budget holders. The Chair raised utilities costs which are anticipated to continue to increase; the Director of Finance is liaising with Crescent Purchasing Consortium who broker utilities. The Estates and Environment Strategy will incorporate methods to reduce energy usage.

The Director of Personnel updated Governors on several measures to improve staff engagement. A benchmarked staff survey will be completed by QDP in June; results will be reported to the F&E Committee.

A policy is being developed to enable staff to work from home up to five dates in the academic year and five volunteer days during a year.

- III. The Director of Finance presented the report showing different student enrolments, predicted inflation and the impact on cash flow in 2022/23 to 2023/34. There was an assumption that the College recovers funding in 2023/24; however, if income generated does not improve action will be required to reduce costs in 2023/24. It was noted that the current and historic strategy of the strong cash balance cushions finances. The Board would continue to monitor enrolments and finances with planning for restricting and reducing expenditure where feasible.

4. KPIs

The Deputy Principal presented the KPIs summarising that the main qualification attendance is 89.3%; changes introduced to the procedure to report attendance has had an impact on attendance impacted by challenges from covid-19. English and Maths workshops are being offered to students to assist them to prepare for exams. GCSE mocks were encouraging with students attaining 88%. Retention is currently 92.5% overall for FE fundable programmes. A number of students are being supported with interventions; some are experiencing mental health issues following the pandemic.

Apprentices overall achievement is 74.7% and timely achievement is currently 51.9%; the latter impacted by some apprentices being furloughed by employers. It was anticipated that these will complete by 31 August.

5. ESFA Financial Statements 2020/21 and dashboard

The Board noted the correspondence confirming that the College's financial health remains outstanding.

Decisions

6. Governance

The Board agreed: -

- To re-appoint Laura Johnston and Jeremy Nicholls for further 4-year terms in office
- To re-appoint Julia Cotton for a 3-year term in office and James Caird and Tony Ford for further 1-year terms in office
- To appoint Jeremy Nicholls to F&E Committee, Tony Bramley to the S&G Committee and Remuneration Committee and Alan Layng onto the Q&S Committee
- To appoint Debbie Lambert as a Co-opted Member of the Q&S Committee for a 1-year term in office
- To appoint Mazars, Financial Statements Auditors, for the year ending 2022 on a 3-year contract

7. Policies

The Board agreed: -

- To approve the Tuition Fees Policy 2022/23
- To approve the Health and Safety Responsibilities Policy

Information (the following items were received and noted)

8. Minutes from Committees

- I. Audit Committee: 28 March 2022. The Chair commented that the Auditors had confirmed excellent progress had been made to implement audit recommendations which had been confirmed in the follow up audit report with thanks recorded to the Director of Finance and team
- II. Quality and Standards Committee: 23 March 2022
- III. Finance and Employment Committee: 23 March 2022
- IV. Search and Governance Committee: 23 March 2022

9. Risk Register

10. Management Accounts to 31 March 2022

11. Reports

- I. Learner voice
- II. Apprenticeship learner voice
- III. Developmental Observation Cycle
- IV. Safeguarding
- V. Equality and diversity
- VI. Staff report
- VII. Health and safety report
- VIII. Annual estates report
- IX. Compliance to the revised AoC Code of Good Governance for English Colleges
- X. Governors' development and training plan 2021/22
- XI. RSM Auditor's governance processes audit report

12. Information Sheets

The SEND and Safeguarding key facts sheets were provided for information which would be added to Moodle as a useful reference resource for Governors.

L Watkins

13. Any other business and comments

- I. The Clerk reported that Staff Governor elections have commenced following applications from seven members of staff. The successful candidate will be invited to the next meeting.
- II. The Deputy Principal recorded appreciation to Governors who had participated in learning walks this term. Google Forms would be used to collate feedback from Governors.

J Ricketts

14. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Tuesday 12 July 2022 commencing at 2.30pm with a Governors' Workshop followed by the Board meeting at 4.00pm held at Oswestry Campus

[A confidential agenda followed]

Signed as a true record of proceedings

Chair: **Date:**