



Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held on Monday 10 July 2023

Present: -

- Mervyn Jones (Chair)
- Abigail Appleton (Principal)
- Jennette Arnold OBE
- Professor Robin Baker OBE
- Clive Hodgeman
- Helen Hurford
- Dr Kate Mori
- Tim Newsholme
- Myfanwy Page
- Lucy Ramsey
- Dr Russell Roberts
- Caroline Sedilek (Teams)

In attendance: -

- Xaviere Hughes (Vice Principal FE)
- Justin Gregory (Vice Principal HE)
- Linda Watkins (Clerk to the Governors)
- Tim Williams (Finance Director)
- Mary Malcolm (AoC Consultant) observer
- Dr David Hawkins (Vice Principal SESD)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly Mary Malcolm (AoC Consultant) who was observing the Board as part of the external review of governance. The Chair specifically welcomed Helen Hurford and Lucy Ramsey (the new Student Governors), Dr Russell Roberts and Dr Kate Mori. He finally welcomed Dr David Hawkins, Vice Principal Student Experience and Business Development.

The meeting was quorate as twelve Governors were present during the meeting; there were nine Governors present to endorse the appointment of Governors.

1. Appointment of Governors

The Board agreed: -

- To appoint Judy Balderson and Dr Russell Roberts (Independent Governors) for 3-year and 1-year term in office respectively
- To appoint Lucy Ramsey and Helen Hurford (FE and HE Student Governors) respectively

2. Process of the Meeting

- I. The Chair had made opening remarks at the start of the meeting.
- II. Apologies for absence were received from Oliver Cameron-Swan, Peta Darnley, Joe Hedges and Charlotte Semus.

- III. Mervyn Jones declared an interest regarding his appointment as Chair of the Corporation.

3. Minutes of the Last Meetings

- I. The Board agreed the Chair should sign the minutes of the meeting held on 9 May 2023 as a true record.
- II. The action list was noted evidencing all actions had either been completed or are in progress. Myfanwy Page summarised the maths programme specifically for Governors arranged on 11 September in collaboration with HLNSC. Recently appointed Governors will be invited to the training.
ACTION: CLERK
- III. The resolution dated 30 June 2023 had been passed to allocate additional capital expenditure of up to £100,000 for the School of Digital Futures build at College Road from the College's unallocated capital budget for 2023-24. This has enabled progression of the contract with the intention to commence demolition works in the summer. This is a tight timescale with the project due for completion at the end of January.

The Board agreed: -

- To approve the minutes

4. Principal's Report

- I. The Principal highlighted key points from her written report particularly New Designers of the Year London when an Artist Blacksmithing student was awarded the runners up prize. The Head of School of Materials and Design was awarded an MBE in the King's Birthday Honours for her contribution to heritage craft and blacksmithing. The Board sent their congratulations to Joe Shevelan and Delyth Done on their achievements.
ACTION: PRINCIPAL

Student applications were outlined in the report along with the strategic approach and monitoring with more involvement of senior staff in marketing including building relationships with feeder schools and commissioning a trial of UCAS Course Feasibility Reports. The grade profile from exam boards and positive feedback from externals on the quality of shows evidenced the high quality of students' work. The College will follow up leavers' destinations in the autumn. The College is embedding a whole College approach to quality improvement with HE quality improvement processes revised to mirror the FE Self Assessment Report (SAR) process. The NSS survey has also been used to identify course organisation feedback across all HE programmes. These will be used to generate an action plan and feed into the HE SAR.

Personal and professional development for students is established with work experience placements offered in FE. The College has recently established links with Hereford Wild Life Trust regarding sustainability and networking. Carbon literacy training has been held for staff as part of staff development. Staff development will address a significant

amount of regulatory training but will also offer some inspirational staff development and College community building activities.

The Fire Service recently conducted an inspection identifying some areas for improvement which are being addressed as a priority. These were reported to the F&GP Committee.

A Governor enquired about progress towards meeting the Care Leavers' Charter and Military Covenant. The College is addressing these to support students. Some FE students are from Service families (Military families), the College could also provide training for personnel leaving the Services or veterans; the Services provide funding to retrain their employees who are leaving the Services.

The Principal met the new Council Leader who is supportive of the College. A Governor asked if there was any risk to the CRC lease. The whole CRC site is designated for educational use; therefore, it is unlikely that the Council would withdraw the lease for other uses.

The Principal referred Governors to future events with invitations including the MA Fine Art show and Graduation Ceremony.

- II. RAG rated progress to date against the College objectives and KPIs was provided. The Vice Principal (HE) updated Governors on OfS measure B3 (the threshold to judge the sector based on continuation, completion and progression). The graduate outcomes survey was published last week with progression marginally below threshold at 55.4% compared to 60%. The granular data will be analysed which is anticipated to be affected by some Artist Blacksmithing graduates who may have incorrectly coded their category as manual labour; this can be amended once graduate outcomes are identified. The objectives for last year will guide KPIs for the next academic year which will be issued at the next meeting. **ACTION: PRINCIPAL**
- III. The risk register was presented noting that the risk to the relationship with UWTSD had increased based on a proposed increase in charges in the Financial Annex in the Memorandum of Agreement. The issue had been escalated to senior personnel at UWTSD. The Principal is discussing this with the Deputy Vice Chancellor.

The Board agreed: -

- To note the reports

5. **Accountability Statement**

This is a new requirement from the DfE for FE Colleges which must be completed annually. It is part of the funding agreement between the DfE and colleges. It was originally requested to be submitted by 31 May 2023 with the timescale subsequently revised to 31 July 2023 subject to a draft being submitted by 31 May

2023. The Accountability Statement had been prepared following DfE guidelines with objectives focused on skills priorities. It is likely that Ofsted will use the Accountability Statement during inspection. The Principal is working with colleges in the area regarding the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) which is based on construction and retro fit this year. Shropshire Chamber is the Employer Representative Body (ERB) leading the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and Telford College is leading the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) who are supportive of the College and creative industries. There was a comment that the FE map of student recruitment was dispersed throughout Herefordshire and its bordering counties. The group of colleges can bid collaboratively for funding. A Governor asked if there is any funding allocated for Herefordshire Council's 2050 development plan for the county noting that there is no indication of funding available to date. The College is anticipating representation on the Economic Board for the county and implementation of the 2050 development plan.

The Board agreed: -

- To approve the Accountability Statement which will be submitted to ESFA by 31 July 2023 **ACTION: PRINCIPAL**

6. Estates Strategy

The Principal explained that ESFA require colleges to commission detailed estates strategies which will be fundamental to attract capital funding. The College will invite companies to tender to prepare a more detailed strategy. In response to discussion at the Audit Committee regarding the implication of ONS reclassification of colleges, there is a requirement for colleges to have an estates strategy. The financial statements' auditors will review progress of this as part of the regulatory audit which is undertaken at the same time as the Financial Statements audit. The Principal had identified high-level principles to frame an estates strategy which had been discussed by the F&GP Committee and was recommended for approval.

The Board agreed: -

- To approve the high-level Estates Strategy

7. Finance Report

The Finance Director presented the reports.

- I. The College budget 2023/24 and financial forecast were presented summarising key points. The College's financial health will be 'Requires Improvement', which is based on ESFA financial indicators, for both 2023/24 and 2024/25. The College's financial health is constrained by the level of EBITDA – education specific. In 2023/24 EBITDA – education specific will be a £225K deficit moving to a surplus of £10K in 2024/25. The FE funding methodology is lagged and based on the previous year's recruitment. Assumptions on student recruitment for FE and HE were explained and risks highlighted. HE Level 4 recruitment has increased to take account of the offer of two additional courses from September 2024. A pay award and additional staff posts have been included in the budget. ESFA capital funding of £1m will net off to zero on the Income and Expenditure account. The income will be capital grants and cost will

be depreciation. The assumptions on the spending of the capital grants were high level and would probably change. In the event that the College does not spend the capital funding it is anticipated that ESFA will clawback. The College has a strong cash balance. The deficit is impacted by investment to develop and the decision not to cut costs to inhibit opportunity for growth. SLT will continue to monitor operational efficiency and, if necessary, potential savings during the year. FE high needs income is predicted to stay at the same level as applications from students with EHCPs have not increased. There was discussion about support for students with confirmation that the College ensures all students are supported; even students without EHCPs, which have increased since the pandemic. The College withdrew Level 1 programmes which might have reduced the number of students selecting HCA as its place of choice. The AQ&S Committee (FE) discusses support for students, including those with EHCPs. In summary, the budget shows an EBITDA deficit which recovers in 2024/25 following investment; however, operational costs will be closely monitored during the next 12 months.

- II. Management accounts to 31 May 2023 were received. The main point of note was that the EBITDA – education specific surplus was large enough to move the Financial Health score from Requires Improvement to Good. The management accounts had already been discussed by F&GP Committee.
- III. A report was provided outlining proposed allocation of the ESFA capital funding to be submitted to ESFA by 31 July 2023. Funding must be allocated to FE and cannot be used on a leased site; allocation was based on the DfE survey on the College's accommodation. The Finance Director drew Governors' attendance to the item to replace the transformer on Folly Lane which exceeds £100k and therefore requires the Board's approval. Additional capital projects were noted including improvements to the IT network. Some projects will improve the FE environment at Folly Lane. There were suggestions to survey the condition of flat roofs, condition of concrete buildings and energy efficiencies such as replacing lights with LED lighting and sensors. It is anticipated that there will be additional funding from the DfE for reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC).

The Board agreed: -

- To approve the College budget 2023/24 and financial forecast for submission to ESFA at the recommendation of the F&GP Committee
- To approve the capital project programme including replacing the transformer in Folly Lane for submission to ESFA by 31 July 2023

8. Policies and Strategies

- I. The Student Charter was discussed by the AQ&S Committee and recommended to the Board for approval. This is the framework between each individual student and the College. It is reviewed annually by Student Council, Academic Board and AQ&S Committee.

The Student Council had requested the Charter to be made more visible which had been accepted; there will be a recap on some of the processes incorporated in the induction for students during the year. A Student Governor referred to the proposed change to include the College undertakes to 'Strive to provide reasonable adjustments' challenging if this met the requirements of the Equalities Act. The Vice Principal (HE) explained that the College is an inclusive organisation and that this does not reduce access for students; it had been amended as the College cannot always make adjustments to support students who receive the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA). However, this does not remove the requirement for the College to follow procedures to ensure it meets the contractual obligation for DSA students. There was a suggestion to make it more explicit that the College is inclusive to provide students with confidence that they will be supported. Further specific discussion on this point was required. **ACTION: VICE PRINCIPAL (HE) AND STUDENT GOVERNOR**

- II. The Health and Safety Statement was recommended for approval by the F&GP Committee. This outlines a high-level set of commitments to health and safety practices with no changes proposed.

The Board agreed: -

- The Student Charter would not be approved with a request to the Vice Principal (HE) and Student Governor to discuss the wording of the point discussed
- To approve the Health and Safety Statement 2023/24 which will be published

9. Governance

The Board agreed: -

- To adopt Mazars, Audit Strategy and Memorandum to 31 July 2023 which included additional work by the Auditors to incorporate the ONS reclassification of colleges.
- To appoint Mervyn Jones as Chair with Vice Chair to be appointed at the next meeting for 2023/24 as the composition of the Board changes.
- To agree Committee membership for 2023/24 with an amendment to appoint Dr Roberts onto the AQ&S Committee (HE)
- To agree the self assessment with no changes proposed
- The terms of reference reflect the role of the Board

10. Reports for information

- I. The curriculum report showed progress of HE course validation and revalidation which had been discussed by the AQ&S Committee and was presented to the Board for information. A Governor enquired about new course rationale noting that a new course development policy has been approved recently with new courses to be presented to the AQ&S Committee and F&GP Committee to consider the business and academic case.

II. Board and Committee timetable of business 2023/24.

11. Committee Minutes

- I. Audit Committee: 12 June 2023
- II. Search and Governance Committee: 29 June 2023
- III. Finance and General Purposes Committee: 29 June 2023
- IV. Academic Quality and Standards Committee: 20 June 2023 including inquorate notes of the FE meeting.

11. Any Other Business

- I. Governors were reminded that the Graduation Ceremony is on 14 September.
- II. The Chair requested the Vice Principals to thank everyone involved in the exemplary end of year shows. **ACTION: VICE PRINCIPALS**
- III. The Chair recorded appreciation to the Clerk to the Governors who was leaving following 27 years in post. Appreciation was recorded and reiterated from everyone.

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday 16 October 2023: Governors' Workshop at 3pm and Board meeting at 4.30pm

Signed as a true record of proceedings

Chair: **Date:**