

Minutes of: HCA Board Meeting

Date: 26th February 4pm Location: A10

Present	In attendance
Mervyn Jones (Chair) Abigail Appleton (Principal & CE) Judy Balderson Kate Mori Russell Roberts Peta Darnley Clive Hodgeman John Auckland Oliver Cameron-Swan (Staff Governor) Myfanwy Page (Staff Governor) Caroline Sedilek (Staff Governor) Charlotte Semus (Student Governor) Joe Hedges	Tim Williams (Finance Director) Justin Gregory (Vice Principal HE) Xaviere Hughes (Vice Principal FE) David Hawkins (Vice Principal BDSE) Rebecca Semple (Clerk to Governors)
Quoracy: Meeting was quorate	

1. **Apologies and introductions**
 - a. **Apologies for absence** – Kate Seekings
 - b. **Declaration of Interest** - staff and students will be asked to leave for confidential item 6b.
 - c. **Chair's remarks** - the Chair noted a letter from DfE following their recent visit, which will be detailed in Principal's report
2. **Minutes of last meeting**
 - a. **Approval of minutes of meeting held 11th December 2023** – Minutes approved as true and accurate, subject to Kate Mori to be added to those present
Action: Clerk
 - b. **Matters arising** - all actions completed or in progress. The procedure for evacuation in the event of a fire was confirmed by the Principal.
3. **College Five Year Strategy:** The Principal summarised the Strategy's main themes, and the outcomes of the Strategy Workshop that preceded this meeting.
The Chair proposed that:
 - the content and five themes of the Strategy were broadly agreed during the workshop preceding the meeting
 - positioning within the city (physically/otherwise) and the role of the student within the Strategy were highlighted as areas for further development
 - distinctive messaging to articulate the Strategy will be addressed by the new website in development

The Principal agreed to incorporate these recommendations (including 'distinction') in next steps of development of the Strategy, and to bring the Strategy back to May 2024 Board meeting.

***Decision:** the Board agreed to approve the substance of the Strategy and its main themes as presented today*

4. Principal's Report

a. Principal's written report

The Principal presented her written report, and outlined key areas:

- Recent DfE visit was noted as highly valuable by the Principal, and resulted in a very positive letter from them, showing their strong support of HCA ethos and ambition (letter to be shared with Board by Clerk). The draft Strategy was shared with DfE at this visit, and an offer from DfE for consultant support for Estates Strategy development was welcomed.
Action: Clerk
- Recruitment continues a significant risk, and recent intense input into this area has resulted in identification of skills gaps within the Marketing and Recruitment team, which have been addressed immediately. The need to accelerate development and marketing of new 2025 courses has also been noted.
- Bond and Coin have now been appointed to develop website, and the appointment of new Digital and Marketing Manager will complement and support this progress. Following a challenge from a Board member about how visible HCA are for those searching for creative courses, the Vice Principal (BDSE) confirmed that Education Cubed work in this area has increased the website traffic already, and new website developers will incorporate this search engine optimisation work in new website.
- HE Quality External Review by Mary Malcolm was hugely valuable in identifying priorities in preparing for a future TEF Gold application
- Staff Engagement work continues via new staff consultation group which has received good take-up
- Cyber Security continues to be noted as a key risk
- Recent meeting of Principal and Finance Director with Council Finance Director demonstrated a desire from them for increased HCA responsibility for the building, as well as some capital investment in the building for major structural repair work. A proposal is expected from Herefordshire Council to reflect this soon. A feasibility study is also being planned around expanding city student accommodation. A Board member raised a need for the Board to see the feasibility study – Principal will ensure this is requested. A Student Governor asked whether the financial impact for students will be taken into account in the feasibility study – the Chair noted that the initial study is likely to be about site and structure initially, but this consideration will be common to all institutions involved.
Action: Principal
- Fire Safety and Folly Lane lockdown response (in partnership with other FL colleges) have been recent priorities for Health and Safety work
- Post-16 reforms will likely have an impact on HCA, but detail is unknown as yet

A Board Member raised a concern around the drop in PA recruitment, and was updated by the Principal and VPFE on increased outreach work with schools to attempt to address this.

A Board Member asked when VIP day for Ferrous festival will be. VPHE and Clerk to circulate date.

Action: Clerk

b. **KPIs and objectives** – Principal presented this report, which was noted by Board, and highlights were discussed in main report above

5. **Risk Register** – The Finance Director presented this report, which was noted by Board, and the Finance Director reported that there were no major changes to highlight.

6. **Finance Report**

a. **Finance Update** – The Finance Director presented this report and noted that 50% of Stronger Towns funds have now been received. A Board member asked about the impact of a recent DfE grant. The Finance Director confirmed that January management accounts will be released within the next week and shared with Board as usual.

b. **Confidential discussion - General Pay Award** (*Officers, Staff and Student Governors left for this item*) Please see separate confidential minutes for details. It was confirmed to those returning to the room after this item that a decision has not been made, but that the intention is still to make this decision by April 1st.

Action: Clerk

7. **Staff Health and Wellbeing Strategy (annual review)**

The Principal presented the updated Staff Health and Wellbeing Strategy, with the proposal that it takes the form of a three-year strategy with annual action plan updates. Themes have been taken into account arising from recent staff survey and other staff feedback opportunities, including: staff feeling relentlessly being on duty, cost of living and pay levels, forward planning to mitigate pressures of short notice changes, communication and consultation of staff around changes, transparent pay policy. An action plan has been reformatted to show main priorities, particularly around Health and Safety.

A Board Member asked about Cybersecurity – it was noted as having a direct impact on Staff Wellbeing, and the CyberSecurity Link Board Member confirmed an upcoming meeting with the IT & Estates Manager.

Board Members asked further questions about communication of Annual Review of the Strategy to staff, responses to student discipline issues and staff progression, and noted the need to indicate key measures and vehicles for monitoring progress against these. A Board Member commented favourably on the breadth and detail of the Strategy and its ambition compared to other organisations they had worked with.

Decision: The Board agreed to approve the updated Strategy, subject to changes discussed and agreed

8. **Assurance Report (postponed from 11th Dec 2023 Board)**

a. **Remuneration Committee's Annual Report 2022/23** - The Board noted this report

9. **Any Other Business** – no other business was raised

10. **Date of next meeting:** 13th May 2024