

**The College of West Anglia
Minutes of
The Corporation Board Meeting
18 March 2020
8.30 am
Room F102. Wisbech Campus**

Present	Sharon Cambridge	Governor (Chair)
	Andrew Cave	Governor (Vice Chair)
	Dave Clark	Governor
	Rebecca Hamilton	Governor
	Ray Harding	Governor
	Scott Leadley	Governor
	Lucy Nethsingha	Governor
	Mollie Pemberton	Governor
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal)
	Adam Thompsett	Governor
Attending	Andrew Gedge	Assistant Principal Quality & Students
	Paul Harrison	Vice Principal Corporate Services
	Ruth Harrison	Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning
	Stephen Halls	Clerk to the Corporation

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting that one or two absences had been caused due to the concerns of the growing coronavirus situation. Item 14, Risk Register Review, would be brought forward on the agenda and taken after item 4, during which there would be an update on the coronavirus situation. The Chair advised that she would be reviewing future meetings with the committee chairs, Principal and the Clerk in due course.

1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Chris Ashman, Alan Measures, Sam Penn, Ruby Platt, Gill Rejzl, Lee Smith, Roderick Watkins and Gary Webb.

2 Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of previous meetings

The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2019 and the special meeting on 29 January 2020 were agreed as being accurate records of those meetings and were duly signed by the Chair.

4 Matters Arising

The progress against the outstanding matters from previous meetings were summarised in the report for item 4.

16/10/19 Item 11 - Transport: The Chair asked for management's view on the subsidised bus travel in the fenland area. The Principal advised that the survey was inconclusive as to

its success in recruiting additional students; the feedback from students had been difficult to gauge. The scheme will be continued for 2020/21.

29/1/20 Item 3 - IFMC: The Principal reported that the IFMC return had been submitted to the ESFA with no late changes necessary. The College had received comments of appreciation from the ESFA in being the first college in the region to submit its return.

11/12/19 Item 26 – Student Behaviour: The Chair confirmed that the students responsible for behaving badly had been identified and spoken with. Letters of apology had been received from both students.

Lucy Nethsingha joined the meeting at 8.37 am

5 Review of the Risk Register

The Vice Principal Corporate Services noted that the scores for two risk items had been updated. Two new risks had been added to the register: Future of the National Construction College at Bircham Newton (CITB) and the Impact of COVID-19 on College Operations. The latter risk was rapidly changing with its score being revised twice since the agenda pack was circulated, influenced by the guidance being received from the government. The reputational, financial and operational risks were now considered to be high and the closure of the College appeared to be imminent.

The Principal reported on the Prime Minister's briefing on Monday (16 March 2020) that those individuals in high risk categories should self-isolate by the coming weekend for 12 weeks; 24 staff at present had been identified as being in this category. 93 staff members were considered to be vulnerable. There had been no confirmed cases among staff or students. From Monday 23 March 2020 it was anticipated that 1 in 8 staff members would be off work. The following action had been taken: the Hair Salon had been closed; educational visits had been cancelled; various events had been cancelled (eg. Race for Life, Apprentice Awards). Decision making was considered to be unprecedented at this time. The College Leadership Team met the previous day (17 March 2020) for an emergency planning session to discuss the closure of the campuses. It was reported that some colleges had closed that week with teaching taking place remotely. The ESFA had issued a notice the previous day (17 March 2020) encouraging all colleges to remain open.

Ray Harding joined the meeting at 8.44 am

Governors asked about on-line resources available to the College. The Principal explained that the Learn portal was available to students and would be the ideal platform for on-line teaching in a number of courses; however, there would be difficulties for the skills-based courses. Each faculty had been tasked with identifying the best way it could deliver and support teaching to its students.

Governors asked about those students without internet access. The Principal did not have exact numbers to hand but considered that most students would have some form access, even if only via a smart-phone. The Assistant Principal Quality & Students reported that a few student groups, such as Foundation, would be highly disadvantaged with remote learning. The Student Governor added that she would consider that only a small percentage of fellow students at the Cambridge campus were without internet access.

The Principal advised that meetings of governors would not be taking place on campus, hence the need for the Clerk to include a late item in his report at Item 5 seeking approval to amend the Instrument & Articles of Government to allow for both televisual and audio conferencing.

Governors were concerned with the financial implications of this situation. The Principal was not yet aware of what financial support would be made available to colleges. It was possible that emergency cash support could be offered, such as the retrospective claims for costs that happened in 2001 following the foot & mouth outbreak. The College would be collating data on any additional costs incurred during this time. The Principal assured governors that the 16-18 income stream was secure; there were risks with commercial income, apprenticeships and the activity for the following year. At present, commercial income had drastically reduced with several training courses being cancelled. The Association of Colleges was issuing a daily update notice outlining the operational difficulties and financial concerns.

The Principal reported that OfSTED had put inspections on hold for the time being. There was concern in the sector regarding learners completing their courses, end point assessments and exams.

Governors were concerned about students travelling to the campuses, especially where the buses and trains were busy. The Principal explained that the current guidance was that travelling could continue unless an individual had symptoms, in which case they should stay at home.

The Principal said that management would take a calm and sensible approach to the coronavirus situation and would continue to assess the best practice that was being taken across the sector.

The next discussion was deemed "Confidential."

The updates to the risk register were noted.

6 Governance Items:

i. Re-appointment of Roderick Watkins

Governors ratified the Chair's action of 20/1/20 to extend the term office for Roderick Watkins to 18 March 2020

It was proposed by Ray Harding and seconded by Andrew Cave that Roderick Watkins be re-appointed to the Board for a period of 4 years. This was agreed.

ii. Schedule of Meetings for 2020/21 – the proposed listing of meetings for the next academic year was noted.

iii. Governor Learning Walks - Governors reported on the recent Learning Walks they had undertaken:

- a) Andrew Cave – A Level revision courses in Biology and Chemistry; A Level History.
- b) Lucy Nethsingha – Cambridge Campus: Animal Care; Level 2 Small Animals and Dog Grooming; Practical session with animals. Thanks was given to administration staff for arranging the visit.
- c) Scott Leadley – sports courses.
- d) Rebecca Hamilton – Wisbech Campus – Computing, Hair & Beauty, Art & Design.
- e) Dave Clark – Hair & Beauty; Beauty Therapy; Travel & Tourism; Hospitality. Mention was made of KES students visiting the campus at this time. The Principal

advised that the visit was in relation to Key Stage 4 vocational courses where learner numbers were currently low, however, progression for those who did visit tended to be high.

- f) Ray Harding – ESOL (Chinese new year activities); Photography (editing); BA Childhood Studies/Early Years.
 - g) Sharon Cambridge – Hospitality tutorial and a practical session for pancake day.
 - h) Gill Rejzl (as noted by the Clerk) – English (3 classes; mention was made of students in coats and wearing headphones).
 - i) Adam Thompsett – Hospitality (adult provision).
- iv. Link Governor Feedback - Governors reported on their recent meetings:
- a) Andrew Cave - Maths & English - staffing issues had been discussed as well as learner performance in both subjects.
 - b) Lucy Nethsingha – Careers – a meeting was planned to follow this Board meeting.
 - c) Ray Harding – Wisbech Campus – a sparse campus was noted at the time of the visit; positive comments were received regarding the recent funding approval for new building works; during the visit mock interviews for students were observed.
 - d) Sharon Cambridge – Safeguarding – there were no current concerns. The Safeguarding Board was looking at issues regarding the far right and the extreme right wing. DBS checks were at an acceptable level, with a few currently outstanding for casual staff members.
- v. Remote Meetings – Proposal to amend the Instrument & Articles of Government: The Clerk explained that should the college close for a period of time due to the coronavirus situation there would be a need for governors to meet remotely. The current regulations allowed for televisual meetings but did not allow for audio conferencing. In addition, the current regulations did not allow for the Chair to use any remote meeting technology. Governors considered that small committee meetings would work effectively using remote technology but expressed their concern with holding a full Corporation meeting with high numbers attending, although was accepting that this may be the case in the near future. The Chair advised that the changes being suggested were temporary and would be reviewed in time.

It was proposed by Ray Harding and seconded by Lucy Nethsingha to:

Approve the temporary amendment to the wording in the Instrument & Articles of Government to allow Corporation members to attend meetings using audio conferencing, in addition to televisual facilities and other visual electronic medium as was already specified;

Approve the temporary amendment to the wording in the Instrument & Articles of Government to also allow the Chair to attend meetings by televisual facilities, other visual electronic medium or audio conferencing.

This was agreed.

7 Committee Chairs' Briefing Items:

- Chairs' Meeting Group – the Clerk reported on the meeting held 4 March 2020: The Principal had provided an update on all current matters; Lee Smith, Governor, had been asked to be the Link Governor for the Technology faculty; The FE Commissioner had asked the Board to review its terms of office. For this, the Clerk had been requested to prepare a report for consideration by the Audit Committee on proposed terms of office, prior to a recommendation coming to the Board in May 2020.
- Performance Review & Quality – The Clerk reported on the meeting held 12 February 2020: There were concerns within Chemistry A Level, Wisbech Uniformed Services, Hair & Beauty and Functional Skills Level 2 Maths. The Committee had received a report by the Quality Unit which supported teaching areas in monitoring and improving quality across the College.
- Search & Governance - The Chair reported on the meeting held 5 February 2020: Mid-year overall attendance was at 78% (88% last year); Corporation attendance was at 77% (79% last year). Governors were encouraged to attend all meetings when possible.

The updates were noted.

8 Principal's Strategy Report

The Principal provided the following updates to his report:

1. Institute of Technology – CWA would be working on a joint bid with other local colleges and the University of Suffolk. Expressions of interest had recently been submitted. Governors asked about the geographical area covered by the anticipated bids for the eastern region. The Principal said that he was aware of bids for Norfolk and Suffolk, but not for the Cambridge or Peterborough area.
2. College Collaboration Fund – CWA would be working with City College Norwich, East Coast College and Suffolk New College. Applications for this funding would be submitted by 8 April 2020. Governors asked if any colleges in catchment areas other than Norfolk were involved; the Principal was not aware of any colleges in the Cambridgeshire area looking to apply for this funding. Governors asked about the quality themes for the scheme; the Principal noted leadership & governance, financial & resource management and quality of education. Governors noted a change in government approach to encouraging regional colleges to work together, rather than in competition with each other. The Principal reflected that, overall, colleges in the eastern region tended to work well together.
3. Towns Fund & School of Nursing – all interested parties were being encouraged to support this initiative for the benefit of the area. Alan Measures, in absentia, had asked about capacity issues in managing this project. The Principal explained that the workload was being shared across the interested parties and that the college's input so far had been from the Principal and Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning, which formed part of their normal day-to-day work. The Vice Principal provided an update on discussions where the ARU Vice Chancellor had expressed his support for this course. It was anticipated that the Towns Fund would provide equipment and resources with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital assisting by providing staffing.
4. *This item was deemed "Confidential."*

The report was noted.

The Chair called for a short break in the meeting at 10.16 am

The meeting re-commenced at 10.23 am

9 Strategic Targets 2019/20 Progress Review

The Chair asked for the final results for 2018/19 to be included in targets 1.5a and 1.5b.

ACTION-APQS

Under target 3.4, governors queried why the proportion of staff who left in the autumn 2019 with less than 2 years' service was as high as 54%. The Chair replied that this matter was under review by the Employment Policy Committee. The Principal added that this related mainly to support staff and the salary structure. A pay review was carried out in the summer term of 2019 with job evaluations for support staff currently underway.

Governors asked about target 1.7a relating to the performance of apprenticeships which was RAG rated as red. The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning advised that this had been caused by a block on the certification for plumbers. The matter was being addressed by management.

The report was noted.

10 Student Governor Report

The Chair reported that national careers week had recently taken place across all campuses.

The Student Governor reported that concerns had been raised by fellow students regarding the animal accommodation at the Cambridge campus. This included the standard of cleaning, depth of bedding provided, ventilation and particular concerns relating to the care of the donkey. This would be investigated.

ACTION-VPCS/HoPS

The report was noted.

11 Management Accounts – January 2020

The Vice Principal Corporate Services referred to the table at paragraph 3 of the report highlighting the surplus in the current year was expected be £687k. However, with the coronavirus situation the financial out-turn was now very difficult to predict, particularly with regard to the immediate changes in commercial income. The College had a strong cash position with £5m in the bank as at the end of January 2020.

Governors were pleased to note the current position, accepting that it would change due to coronavirus. Governors asked if the College was aware of potential difficulties from local authorities in relation to funding for special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The Vice Principal advised that the potential for funding to cease if direct teaching was to cease had been taken into account in the medium-term financial plan. The Vice Principal advised that this funding was received only when the services had been provided by the College.

Governors noted the current underspend on non-pay costs. The Principal advised that managers were being asked to strictly monitor their expenditure going forward. Governors reviewed the pay costs on page 92 which indicated there was not a concern regarding pay expenditure in the full year; however, paragraph 10 of the report advised there was a concern. The Vice Principal apologised for the error and confirmed that there was indeed a concern with pay costs.

Governors reviewed the cash flow forecast at Appendix 1 and queried why there were no loan repayments being made in April 2020 and July 2020. The Vice Principal would investigate this and respond via email.

ACTION-VPCS

The report was noted.

12 Applewood Nursery – Update Report

The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning reported that OfSTED had announced that inspections had been temporarily put on hold due to coronavirus. Some members of nursery staff had been self-isolating. Parents who were not currently working had been asked not to bring their children into the nursery in order to reduce children numbers and reduce the pressure on the remaining staff.

Governors asked why additional funding for 2-year olds was not accessible. The Vice Principal explained that this funding was only available to those nurseries who were graded as “Good.”

The Chair asked if the College was confident in the guidance being received from the Early Years Advisers. The Vice Principal explained that the nursery manager was very experienced with developing nurseries and moving operations from “Requires Improvement” to “Good” and that the feedback that had been received from the Early Years Advisers was as expected. At the next inspection the nursery manager would work alongside the HMI to ensure that all of the correct information was provided.

Alan Measures, in absentia, had asked how staff were responding to the new nursery manager and whether the quality of the staff employed was at the appropriate level. The Vice Principal advised that staff had responded well to the directions of the new manager, who was very hands-on in her approach as well as being a good administrator. The quality of staffing in some instances was dependent of the levels of pay that could be afforded. Training was being undertaken to maximise the potential of all staff although pay scales would always be a concern in the recruitment and development of a quality workforce.

The report was noted.

13 Current Performance Data and KPIs 2019/20

The Assistant Principal Quality & Students reported that attendance levels had significantly reduced due to coronavirus. There was now a concern regarding the outcomes for learners with exam bodies having a watching brief over the emerging situation; further guidance was anticipated in due course. The Vice Principal Curriculum & Learning noted that the Exams Department was working under enormous pressure at the current time. The Principal added that there was a big exposure risk to the College from its exam invigilators, many of whom were in high risk categories for coronavirus. The Chair asked if there was the potential to provide joint exam sittings with other colleges to “pool” invigilation staff and other resources. Due to the different start times and individual requirements this was considered as something that would not be possible. The Vice Principal said that the College would concentrate resources on external exams for the time being, with the possibility that internal exams would be postponed or cancelled.

Governors commented on the low number of 16-18 students who had consented to the College sharing information with parents and guardians: 45%. The Assistant Principal advised that rules under GDPR allowed for students to decide on this matter. Governors asked about practices in other colleges. The Principal reported that on occasions, other colleges would share information and so would be in breach of GDPR rules. The Vice Principal added that during induction weeks students were encouraged to allow the College

to share information. Governors suggested understanding why students tended to avoid wanting to share information was important and then to address this.

The Assistant Principal highlighted from his report that 94% of students would recommend their course to a future student (an increase of 2% on the previous year).

The report was noted.

14 Quality Improvement Plan 2019/20

There were no issues or concerns on this report.

The report was noted.

15 Any Other Business

- a) The Chair welcomed back Lucy Nethsingha to the Board. The Chair explained to new members of the Board that Lucy had taken an approved period of absence during her recent term as a Member of the European Parliament;
- b) T Levels – the Chair advised that a number of governors had recently undertaken an introductory course on T Levels. A briefing session would be arranged for all governors at a future board meeting. **ACTION-VPCL/CLERK**
- c) The Chair reminded all governors that she was available to respond to any concerns or issues they may have, usually via email in the first instance. Following the May 2020 Board meeting the Chair would meet with new governors to discuss any issues or concerns that may have arisen so far during their first year. **ACTION-CHAIR/CLERK**
- d) Strategic Planning Morning 22 April 2020 – The Chair thanked the Principal who had invited David Hughes, Chief Executive of the AoC to speak to members during the planning morning. All governors were encouraged to attend this event.
- e) Chairs' Dinner – This was planned for Thursday 7 May 2020 in the Novus Restaurant. Invitations and menu options would be circulated in due course.

16 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 20 May 2020 at 9.00 am, Cambridge Campus.

The Chair thanked everybody for their attendance and participation in the meeting.

The meeting closed at 10.58 am