

Minutes of the Corporation Meeting Held on 6th July 2021 online by MS Teams, starting at 5.30pm

Present

Barbara Hughes (Chair)
Paul Assinder
Stan Baldwin
Scott Beasley
John Callaghan (Principal)
Tasleem Chaudary
Lucy Lee
Tony Lucas
Geraldine Swanton
Harrison Thompson (External Member)
Sally Tomlinson
Sarah Horton-Walsh
Stuart Lyons (Student Governor)

In Attendance

Lindsey Stewart (Deputy Principal and Stratford Chief Operating Officer)
Heather Evans (Vice Principal Finance)
Rebecca Gater (Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum)
Pete Haynes (Vice Principal HR and Student Services)
Theresa Lynch (Clerk)

Rosa Wells – Executive Director Employment and Skills & IoT (*Items 4 and 13 only – left at 6pm*)

Dave Gartside – Director of IT (*Item 9 only – joined the meeting at 6.40pm*)

The meeting was recorded.

The Chair welcomed all and set out the agenda for the evening. She noted that the first Financial Oversight Group meeting had taken place to consider the finance items on the agenda and had considered the budget, financial planning and benchmarking in detail.

Top 3 Strategic Risks

The Chair presented the 3 top risks and noted that they had been reviewed and amended by the Audit Committee and management. She noted that the Director of IT would be joining the meeting to provide an update on IT, particularly in relation to any potential risks highlighted by the recent cyber attack on a local college. Direction of travel had been added as a new column to the risk document to provide a visual indicator of the movement in the risk level.

Q. Why have the first two risks no direction of travel arrow and why is the IT arrow showing forwards and backwards?

A. The first two risk are new risks added therefore there is no direction of travel. The IT arrow is forwards/backwards as this the same status as when last reported ie no higher or lower risk.

1. Apologies for Absence

No apologies for absence were received.

2. Declarations of Interest in Relation to this Agenda

There were no new declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of previous Meetings, Actions and Matters Arising

The minutes of the meeting held on 27th May 2021 were **agreed** as a true and accurate record and signed with the Chair's e-signature.

The contents of the actions report were noted.

3.1 Matters Arising: Sub-Contracting – RMF Contract

This item was deemed confidential.

4. Institute of Technology – Termly Update

The Executive Director Employment and Skills & IoT presented the report and noted that the Principal had signed a number of contracts on behalf of the IoT. It was noted that when a signatory was required on an IoT contract, but had to be signed on behalf of the College, this would be the Vice Principal Finance, to ensure clarity in the division of responsibilities and accountability between the College and IoT. There had been changes to members of the IoT Board, due to staff changes at partner organisations. The new Principal at BMet had joined the Board. She had IoT experience and had already been very actively supporting the on-going partnerships and developments.

The Executive Director Employment and Skills & IoT confirmed that work was on-going in relation to setting up the structure and governance of the IoT and that the IoT Manager currently based at Blossomfield, was supporting her to develop the project. It was hoped that he would be able to move to the Central IoT Hub at Aston University early in 2022.

The DfE capital project at Woodlands had been completed on time and on budget. Capital projects for other partners were on target. The Central Hub had been slightly delayed due to the NCATI application and there were issues with the supply of steel, so completion was likely to be February 2022, rather than December 2021.

The Executive Director Employment and Skills & IoT presented the KPIs confirming that the DfE were satisfied with the results for the first year. There was currently a focus on increasing numbers of students from under-represented groups.

Q. How are applications looking for the IoT against the target for 2021/22 of 210?

A. The target of 210 consists of 67 CPD learners (short courses and upskilling) and 143 substantial part-time apprentice learners. In relation to the 67 CPD learners, these will be supported through the ESF funded STEM-Up Project and the launch of the new Siemens accredited short courses/upskilling which has been added for 2021/22. When reviewing the pattern of applications through the academic year, it is clear that the vast majority of our applications for the IoT part-time/apprenticeships are submitted in August & September. When comparing the number of applications that we currently have with previous years, we are on track to see a small growth in enrolments this year which would support meeting the 142 new starts. We will continue to review application numbers through the summer and in consultation with our IoT partners. It was noted that the DfE were happy with an annual business plan being submitted setting out recruitment targets overall and by organisation, enabling the IoT to be agile and responsive to employers.

Q. The Principal was asked to comment on IoT Developments in neighbouring localities.

A. He noted that the element of success in relation to the GBS IoT was due to the delivery being by existing partners and although there has been some capital investment, the project was not reliant on these to progress. Essentially the GBS IoT has set up the spokes before the hub and this has enabled the project to begin to recruit students even before the building is in place. This has led to the GBS IoT hitting targets in the first 2 years and the Team and the model being highly regarded nationally. The Executive Director Employment and Skills & IoT explained that the strategy had been to gradually scale up numbers, grow expertise and for the partners to learn from each other and so far this had been very successful. She noted there were still improvements to make but compared to some other IoTs the project was progressing well. This tended to be a very different model to other local IoTs

The Executive Director Employment and Skills & IoT was thanked and she left the meeting.

5. Strategic Plan 2021-24 and Annual Priorities 2021/22

The Principal presented the Strategic Plan for 2021-24 and Annual Priorities for 2021/22. It was noted that the Corporation had been very involved in the development of the plan since the initial development session in January 2021.

It was noted that the final Plan was excellently presented and the Principal confirmed that he would let the Designer know that Governors had been happy with the final version. **Action.**

Resolved to approve the Strategic Plan for 2021-24 and Annual Priorities for 2021/22

6. Finance Reports

6.1 Budget 2021-22 and Financial Forecasts 2022-23 and 2023-24

The Vice Principal Finance presented the budget for 2021/22 and financial forecasts for 2022-23 and 2023-24 and explained the assumptions, key risks and sensitivities underpinning the figures. She confirmed that initial discussion had taken place at the last meeting and detailed discussion had taken place at the Financial Oversight Group. She set out the following:

- ESFA Funding.
- AEB and Apprenticeship Income.
- HE Income.
- Income from full costs tuition fees, ESF projects, TGH overage payments and ad hoc income from sales and lettings.
- Expenditure – pay, non-pay and capital projects.
- Cash flow and cash balances

KPIs were noted in relation to EBITDA value and it was noted that a detailed discussion had taken place at the Financial Oversight Group and the impact of requiring a surplus budget and the KPIs, as set out, had been confirmed as appropriate, as was the setting of a deficit budget, which was in line with assuring the KPIs and good financial health for the College. The underlying operating position was noted for 2020/21 to 2023/24 and it was noted that following adjustments for a variety of projects, one-off items and accounting adjustments, the underlying operating position was in surplus for all years.

Q. What is the submission date for College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR)? Why are some pay costs and other operating costs in brackets as they are not negative values?

A. The submission date for the CFFR is 31st July 2021 and detailed analysis of the figures was still taking place. A draft version of the CFFR was attached, but the final version would be shared with Governors prior to submission. It was noted that bracketed figures were still being worked on.

The Chair of the Financial Oversight Group set out the discussion that had taken place at the meeting and confirmed that that there had been a detailed and open discussion about the underpinning assumption and figures. The Group challenged and interrogated the assumptions and figures and were able to compare the College's performance and position against other colleges.

Resolved to approve the Budget for 2021/22 and Financial Forecasts for 2022-23 and 2023-24.

6.2 Notes of the Financial Oversight Group meeting held on 30th June 2021

The contents of the notes of the Financial Oversight Group for the meeting held on 30th June 2021 were noted for information and in relation to the setting of the budget and financial forecasts in item 6.1 above. Detailed discussion had taken place regarding surplus/deficit budget-setting and cash balance requirements.

6.3 ESFA Benchmarking Data

The Vice Principal Finance presented the benchmarking information and explained that there was the EFSA letter and benchmarking tool, as well as the comparison data that the Principal had presented at the May Corporation meeting. She confirmed that the benchmarking data would be used, when appropriate for specific projects, but that there would be no further analysis at the current time.

6.4 Dashboard: Finance and Resources and PMR May 2021

The Dashboard and the PMR for May 2021 were noted for information.

Clarity was sought regarding the green risk for HE in the May PMR compared to the amber RAG ratings given in the Vice Principal Finance's presentations. The Vice Principal Finance explained that it was green in the PMR as income was in line with budget for 202/21 as this had been sensitised. However, going forward this was less certain and there were some amber ratings to reflect this.

6.5 Contribution Analysis

The Vice Principal Finance presented the overall contributions for 2021/22 and explained that these were now structured in line with the revised College structure (now incorporating Stratford provision within the main Faculty structures, rather than as a separate area).

6.6 Natwest Loan Variation

The Vice Principal Finance explained that there had been changes to the regulations relating to interest and this would, therefore change the loan agreement details that would need to be signed by the Chair and the Principal over the summer.

Thanks were expressed to the Vice Principal Finance and her Team for all their hard work during a difficult year.

7. Sub-contracting Plan Update

The Deputy Principal presented the Sub-contracting Plan for 2021/22 and confirmed the continuing contract with RMF, however, the cessation of work with SkillsWise, was both due to the poor Ofsted and the desire of the College to simplify and consolidate the sub-contracting offer.

She noted that the Sub-contracting Policy was being reviewed and would be presented at the next meeting, following advice from the College's auditor. **Action.**

Clarity was sought regarding the preferred option and the alternative options set out in the report and it was noted that the preferred option related to simplifying and consolidating the sub-contracting offer and, subject to approval by WMCA to be able to work out of area with students, may impact on the future relationship with Learning Curve, who had offered good provision and particularly in the priority area of health and social care.

Resolved to approve the updated Sub-contracting Plan for 2021/22, subject to confirmation relating to the preferred and alternative options set out in the report.

8. Property Update

8.1 Property Report

The Vice Principal Finance presented the report and provided an update regarding the Stratford Campus Re-development Project and progress regarding the CWLEP project works, including the

new Construction facility that would be in place for September 2021. No response had been received from the DfE regarding capital funding for Stratford upon Avon campus.

The Vice Principal Finance explained that the College was working with Solihull MBC (SMBC) in relation to a Heat Exchange project, with the aim of reducing carbon emissions.

Q. Will there be financial benefits longer term to the Heat Exchange project or is it purely an environmental benefit? I read the costing on annual costs and unit costs.

A. It is fair to say that the original costings were very provisional and appeared too high, so the Principal and VP Finance met with SMBC and the energy consultants on 5th July to seek clarification on several points. As a result, the figures will be reworked as the intention is that the costs including assumptions for boiler replacement will not be much more than we are paying now, however, the likelihood is that we will pay more. Clearly though the significant aim of this project is to reduce the college's reliance on fossil fuels and our carbon footprint and to meet a key target in our sustainability plan.

Resolved to approve, in principle, that the College enters into a contract with SMBC's ESCo for the supply of energy under the Heat Network Project subject to agreement of contract terms and costs.

8.2 Sanctuary

The Chair left during considered of the Sanctuary item. This item was deemed confidential.

9. IT – Termly Update

The Director of IT joined the meeting for this item.

The Vice Principal Finance presented the report and explained that following approval of the IT Strategy in March 2021 it had been agreed that there would be a termly IT report for Governors. This was based on the level of risk, expenditure and reliance placed on IT by the College and therefore seemed important for Governors to monitor and be aware of.

Q. Are there any lessons that the College can learn from the other Midlands college that has had a cyber-attack?

A. The Director of IT explained that the college that had had a cyber-attack was still having difficulties and although they had not publicly advised how the attack happened, it was possibly a vulnerability in a Microsoft exchange. He explained that Solihull College & University Centre IT team had identified some potential attacks through the security systems in place. It was noted that the College was exploring a piece of software called, Network, Detection and Response that would be able to prioritise the highest-level threats contained within the huge volume of traffic being processed by the College. It is anticipated that this will be an efficient tool to address potential threats, without a large staff input.

Q. Are there enough staff in place with the appropriate expertise to achieve the strategy?

A. Management are constantly reviewing the staffing structure as technology evolves and trying to reduce the impact of these security events by the implementation of the SIEM system to collate and prioritise security events. The Team is also trialling technologies that employ elements of AI to reduce the need for human intervention thereby freeing staff to concentrate on other key tasks.

Q. In terms of vulnerabilities are there still any unsupported applications or systems at the College?

A. There are some unsupported systems, but where these are necessary for College systems to continue to function, they are completely isolated from the public system, so that they are not accessible by external users.

The Director of IT provided an update regarding the printers and MFDs at the College and the actions being taken to fix a bug that had been identified in the system. There was currently no

printing across the College to remove the risk, but the College was working with Microsoft to find a solution.

Governors were asked to confirm the format and content of the report.

Thanks were expressed to the Director of IT for his report, but also to his Team for their on-going work to protect the College against attacks experienced by the Midlands college that had recently had a cyber-attack.

The Director of IT left the meeting.

10. Quality, Curriculum and Teaching and Learning Presentation

10.1 QIP Update

The Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum presented the Quality Improvement Plan and explained that the RAG rating indicated the items that were moving across to 2021/22. She explained that an area for improvement that had come to light recently was Adult Functional Skills achievement. Since the grades predicted in the Spring Term, assessment requirements in the reformed qualifications had been found to be more difficult than anticipated. The summer grades were therefore felt to be more realistic. Further, against the indicated national pass rate of 23%, the College was likely to perform well, although not in relation to previous years' grades. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality noted the importance of GCSE in that even if students achieved a grade 1, there was an element of improvement and progression if they achieved a higher grade each sitting, whilst Functional Skills did not provide this evidence of progression.

Q. In relation to attendance rates for English and maths – will there ever be a time when the College simply has to accept that rates are not as high as would be desired, given the range of initiatives that the College has put in place to address the issue?

A. No, this will continue to be an area for improvement and continue to attract focus for the College. A new initiative is being launched, Project X. This is a improvement project to start in the Autumn team. Teams across the College, where there is low attendance in English and maths, will focus on trying to find new ideas and initiatives to enhance attendance rates. It is hoped that these projects will show impact and where ideas work good practice can be shared.

10.2 Deep Dive Report

The Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum presented the report. She noted that it was currently week 2 of the annual staff development fortnight. There was a wide range of activities for staff to engage in. A number of the activities addressed areas for improvement identified through the deep dives and learning walk exercises throughout the year. Most of the sessions were optional, however, where a member of staff had a specific area of improvement identified they were expected to attend that session.

The Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum explained that there had been a re-focussing exercise in relation to the Teaching and Learning Coaches. This was aimed at increasing accountability and responsibility by identifying specialist areas for each coach. The areas included:

- English
- Maths
- Assessment and Feedback
- Working with more able students
- Working learners at lower levels

The priorities for specialisation were based on the areas for improvement identified throughout the year and reflected the College's priorities.

Q. Can we hear more about the resolution of issues in Engineering please?

A. Curriculum management has been rationalised so that now it is very clear who manages the department, who is responsible and accountable for its performance and progress. The Assistant Principal STEAM is working very closely with the Head of School on a detailed and very clear action plan in order to drive improvements and monitor progress.

Bespoke CPD has been arranged for staff, both ongoing in terms of coaching, but also as whole-team during development fortnight which is driven by areas for improvement identified during Deep Dives, Learning Walks and student feedback.

During the College's 'intent and implementation planning days', the Assistant Principal has worked with the team to ensure their curriculum is well designed and planned, and that their learners get the best start to the academic year.

Additional monitoring and scrutiny is in place to measure progress and keep improvements continuous, for example an additional faculty health check with the Principal and Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality in June. In 2021/22 there will be an early deep dive to measure the impact of interventions on the learners' experience.

10.3 In-Year Progress Report

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the report and confirmed that it was anticipated that there would be very limited grade changes. She noted that due to the inflation of grades in 2020 some students were able to study higher level courses than they would normally be able to and therefore the gap between the ability and the stretch targets was larger than would normally be the case. This was likely to have an impact on outcomes for 2020/21.

Q. Does this show the final teacher assessed grades for this year? Will there be any improvement on those 2 or 3 grades behind target?

A. The blue line on graphs is based on teacher-assessed grades and is unlikely to change in terms of achievement rates. There is likely to be some movement though in terms of attainment, as this report was produced during 'mop up' week where last marking, standardisation and verification took place, and some students will have been improving pieces of work based on feedback. Awarding body checks were currently taking place to ensure the marking and grading is accurate. It is important to bear in mind that in some departments, a significantly reduced practical offer resulting from lockdown for almost the whole of term 2, will have had an impact on students' ability to achieve high grades for some units. So, stretch targets should be through a 'Covid lens'.

11. Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee held on 14th June 2021 and related reports

The Chair of the Audit Committee presented the minutes of the meeting that took place on 14th June 2021. It was noted that there would be a development session for all Governors relating to the changes in relation to audit matters in the Autumn Term 2021.

11.1 Strategic Risk Register and Board Assurance Framework

The Strategic Risk Register and Board Assurance Framework was presented.

Resolved to approve the Strategic Risk Register and Board Assurance Framework.

11.2 Internal Audit Plan 2021/22

The Internal Audit Plan for 2021/22 was presented and it was noted that the Committee had been involved in developing the Plan and scrutinising the audits planned.

RSM had been newly appointed during 2020/21.

Resolved to approve the Internal Audit Plan for 2021/22.

11.3 KPMG Financial Statements Audit Plan and Strategy for 2021

The KPMG Financial Statements Audit Plan and Strategy for 2021 was presented. As part of the Plan, value for money would be assured, particularly due to the increase in fees following reappointment during 2020/21.

The ESFA were no longer going to give assurance for funding – the full impact of this was being considered.

Resolved to approve the KPMG Financial Statements Audit Plan and Strategy for 2021.

11.4 Insurance Report

The Insurance Report was presented.

Q. Please explain the link between Hettle Andrews and occupational health support?

A. As part of the insurance policy the College gets a bursary to spend with agreement of our insurers. In 2020/21 we have chosen to allocate this towards the occupational health surveys that are currently being undertaken.

Resolved to ratify the appointment of Hettle Andrews as insurance broker for 2021/22 and 2022/23 with an agreed fixed fee.

11.5 Health and Safety Report

The Health and Safety Report was presented. The Chair reported an accident in Motor Vehicle that had had happened since the report was written.

12. Election of Chair and Vice Chair

The Clerk presented the item and explained that a proposal had been put forward to nominate Barbara Hughes as Chair and Stan Baldwin as Vice-Chair for 2021/22. She had requested any other nominations prior to the meeting and confirmed in the meeting that there were no other nominations. There being no other nominations the following elections took place.

The Chair of the Corporation left the meeting during the election of Chair.

Agreed to elect Barbara Hughes as the Chair from 1st August 2021 to 31st July 2022.

The Vice Chair of the Corporation left the meeting during the election of the Vice-Chair.

Agreed to elect Stan Baldwin as the Vice-Chair from 1st August 2021 to 31st July 2022.

13. Apprenticeships

The contents of the Apprenticeships update report were noted for information.

14. Student Voice – End of Year Report

The content of the Student Voice End of Year Report were noted for information.

Q. How has the linked Governors been involved this year?

A. It has been a difficult year for direct face to face meetings. We have been delighted however that both Geraldine Swanton and Neil Ladwa have attended our steering group meetings.

15. West Midlands J2 Research Report

The contents of the West Midlands J2 Research Report were noted for information.

Q. How many learners were in scope for contact – what was the proportion successfully contacted? Will this work continue annually? What are the next steps?

A. The work was carried out with Colleges West Midlands to give us a comparison which will be reviewed in early July, but it is likely that the College will continue as part of the group. Information will be used to evaluate learners' progression as it provides external validation of this data. It also gives information about patterns of recruitment compared to other local colleges. There is a much higher proportion of employed adults than other Colleges. Numbers involved were as follows:

Breakdown of completed surveys WMCA AEB only

Cohort	Total
Data received from client	1270
Data included for survey	1239
No. of completed surveys	826
% of completed surveys	66.7%

Breakdown of Internal Progressions/UCAS Data

The College also supplied J2 Research with records where the destinations of these former learners were already known to them. These records were combined with those from the telephone survey to ascertain the destination codes and the known destination percentage.

Cohort	No.
Progression Data sent	529

16. Procurement Termly Update

The contents of the Procurement Termly Update report were noted for information.

17. Bids and Projects Report

The contents of the Bids and Projects report were noted for information.

Q. Is there any news of the outcome of the Capital Fund bid? Is there any progress on the bid for NHS training?

A. Capital Fund – there has been no update, it is understood that the DfE has been inundated with bids and is seeking additional funding although there has been no official announcement.

NHS – The NHS delayed the deadline for the return of documents related to the national CPD framework to the 5th of July; as such there is no update on whether our submission has been successful.

18. Regular Reports

18.1 Gifts and Hospitality 2020/21

The contents of the Gifts and Hospitality 2020/21 were noted for information.

18.2 Tender Update

The contents of the Tender Update report were noted for information.

18.3 Use of the College Seal and Chair's E-Signature Report

The contents of the Use of the College Seal and Chair's E-Signature Report were noted for information.

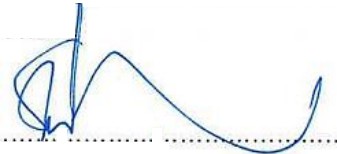
19. Final Dates for 2021/22

The date of the next meeting was Wednesday 29th September 2021 at 5.30pm.

The Chair thanked Stuart Lyons for his contribution as Student Governor and wished him all the very best for the future. The Student Governor thanked the College and the Corporation for the valuable experience he had had throughout his time as Student Governor.

The meeting ended at 7.25pm.

Signed

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke, positioned above a dotted line.

Date **29 September 2021**

[signed by the Vice-Chair, Stan Baldwin, with the authority of the Chair of Governors, in her absence]

Solihull College and University Centre

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Rosa Wells – Executive Director Employment and Skills & IoT (*Items 4 and 13 only – left at 6pm*)

The meeting was recorded.

3.1 Matters Arising: Sub-Contracting – RMF Contract

Solihull College and University Centre

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Theresa Lynch (Clerk)

The meeting was recorded.

Due to a declared conflict of interest the Chair to the Corporation left the meeting for this item.

8. Property Update

8.2 Sanctuary