

**Solihull College and University Centre  
Minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 31st January 2022  
on MS Teams starting at 5.00 pm**

**Present**

Barbara Hughes (Chair)  
Christine Abbott  
Paul Assinder  
Stan Baldwin  
Scott Beasley  
Tasleem Chaudary  
Badri Gargeshnari  
Sarah Horton-Walsh  
Lucy Lee  
Neil Ladwa  
Tony Lucas  
Donna Poole (Staff Governor)  
Lindsey Stewart  
Geraldine Swanton  
Harrison Thompson  
Sally Tomlinson  
Zane Richter (Student Governor)  
Amaan Ukaye (Student Governor)

**In Attendance**

Heather Evans (Vice Principal Finance)  
Pete Haynes (Vice Principal HR and Student Services)  
Rebecca Gater (Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality)

Claire Powell (Head of School, Animal Care)  
Alka Prinja (Careers Service Manager)  
Adam Thomas (Director of Student Services)  
Rosa Wells (Executive Director Employment and Skills and IoT)  
Theresa Lynch (Clerk to the Governing Body)

*This meeting was recorded.*

### **Pre-Corporation Presentation: Careers**

The Chair welcomed the Director of Student Services and Careers Service Manager.

The Careers Service Manager presented information regarding careers in the college in relation to:

- The Importance of Careers education and statutory guidance
- The Gatsby Benchmark
- Careers Hubs/Enterprise Adviser Network
- Careers Leadership Team

She confirmed that the Careers Team worked closely with schools and providers in the area and that students from the local sixth form college, as well as secondary schools were invited annually to the College's careers fair.

Q. In relation to linking curriculum to careers, what impact do you have on the College's curriculum?

A. She explained that she met with Heads of School to look at the curriculum and careers opportunities, as well as working with curriculum staff to complete the audit trail for the Gatsby Benchmark. The Chair

noted that the College's twitter feed (on the Governors' Portal) provided information about careers activities in curriculum areas.

Q. Do you have any incentives to try to encourage students to use the careers service?

A. It was noted that students were encouraged to use the careers service through ensuring that the message was widely spread of the importance of having a clear goal and this was communicated largely through the career action plan process that took place in the first term. Generally, students that had a clear direction tended to be more successful, as they were motivated to achieve their goal. The Fast Forward resource also supported students to consider what they needed to do to achieve their career objectives. The Chair suggested that Governors review the Fast Forward information, as it was a really useful resource.

Q. Work Experience – how many students do work experience and what were the issues during COVID?

A. It was noted that some work experience had been done remotely during the COVID period, which had been very useful. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality explained that it is mandatory for all students on a study programme to do work experience (normally 30 hours per year, unless more are required due to course requirements). There had been an impact due to lockdown, however, some opportunities continued, and a range of opportunities were put in place to support student engagement with careers and work roles.

Q. A lot of what you do is embedded in the curriculum and structure – do you have good take up of the extra opportunities you offer?

A. Yes, take up is very good and a record is kept of which curriculum areas have engaged with careers and how many students have taken part in the activities. Engagement has increased across all campuses over recent years. All curriculum areas worked with careers to promote employability opportunities and planning for students.

The Careers Service Manager explained that the college would be assessed for the Careers Quality Kite Mark on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2022 and that the college was applying for Gold again.

The Chair thanked the Careers Service Manager for the presentation and her team for on-going support for students, and she and the Director of Student Services left the meeting.

The presentation would be shared with Governors via BoardEffect following the meeting. **Action.**

The Chair welcomed the new Student Governor, Amaan Ukaye, to his first meeting. He introduced himself to the members of the Corporation.

The top risks were noted in relation to the current agenda. The Chair reminded the Corporation that it had been agreed that as it was so important that finance would remain on the top risks list.

The Acting Principal provided an update on the challenging situation during January 2022 in relation to staff absence due to COVID. She confirmed that the Chair had been kept informed of the absence levels. It had been a challenging time, but due to very committed staff activities continued, as planned, including over 1000 BTEC/RQF exams.

### **1. Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **2. Declarations of Interest in relation to this agenda**

There were no new declarations of interest. The Chair noted that there was an additional item at the end of the agenda regarding Sanctuary Housing, so due to her existing conflict of interest the Vice Chair would Chair this item.

### **3. Minutes of the meetings held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021 and 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

Paul Assinder noted that he was in attendance on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

The minutes of the meetings held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2021 and 5<sup>th</sup> January 2022 were agreed as an accurate record, subject to Paul Assinder being included in the attendance list, and signed by the Chair.

#### 4. Curriculum Presentations – Intent to Impact!

The Chair noted that schools had previously presented to the Corporation regarding the intent of their curriculum, and Heads of School were now invited to provide how that intent has impacted.

##### 4.1 Animal Care

The Head of School provided an update with regard to Animal Care and the impact of their curriculum intentions. The presentation would be shared with Governors via BoardEffect following the meeting. **Action.**

Q. In terms of course outcomes, what are the broad statistics for students progressing onto education or employment?

A. Internal progression is strong – students often stay from level 1 through to BSc. There are a variety of pathways at HE levels and some may go to other institutions to specialise. Some move onto apprenticeships or employment after level 3. The work experience opportunities often lead to students moving into employment with that employer – they work one day per week throughout the programme and employers often then take them on after their studies. The Chair noted that on page 19 of the Self-Assessment Report provided data regarding progression and destination information. The Chair requested a breakdown of destinations by curriculum area. **Action.**

The Head of School was thanked and she left the meeting.

##### 4.2 Engineering

The Chair noted that due to illness the Engineering presentation would be deferred to the next meeting.

Q. This was an area of concern – are things starting to improve?

A. Things are beginning to improve, and it would be possible to provide evidence of improvement, if Ofsted visited, including more positive survey results and improved student attendance. Managers are working hard to be clear about expectations and are working with staff to ensure improvement.

#### 5. Institute of Technology Report

The Executive Director Employment and Skills and IoT presented the report and explained that recruitment of staff was continuing. The Central Hub was currently being built at the Aston campus, although there had been some issues leading to minor delays, DfE had been very supportive and were giving permission to move funding into 2022/23. There were a number of projects were underway with partners that were progressing well. She explained that the DfE were finalising KPI dashboards, and these would be shared with the Corporation at a future meeting. The membership fee would not need to increase for 2022/23 and the potential need for future increases was being considered.

Q. The IOT has been in existence for over 12 months now. It would be great to visit the Hub when complete. As the IoT is a limited company its activities are subject to its own Board. In governance terms is the relationship correct and will it be possible to reflect on the governance structures in the future?

A. The Acting Principal confirmed that she was not a director of the IoT, and that Rebecca Gater was actually the Director. IoT Board Accounts are reported to the Corporation. In terms of the wider relationship it would be useful to identify specific elements that the Corporation would like to consider. The Vice Principal Finance confirmed that the arrangements for the relationship were identified in the Financial Regulations.

Discussion took place about the on-going partnership arrangements and governance arrangements and safeguards in place for partner organisations. The Clerk noted that advice was obtained from RSM to confirm how the relationship should work and how reporting to the Corporation should take place, but that it may be timely to review this. It was noted that it may be useful in the future to report on wider governance elements like equality and diversity etc.

Q. Are the IoT governance arrangements prescribed by the government or are they ad hoc?

A. They are not specifically prescribed, although there is an advisory framework. The collaboration agreement had to be approved by the DfE. Any changes to the governance structure would have to be approved. This provides an element of assurance given that DfE have clear guidance and oversight.

Q. Where are we compared to other IoTs – will there be data?

A. Not sure if there will be comparable data – the DfE see each IoT as very unique and specific and are therefore not aiming for comparisons. There is likely to be feedback on our specific KPIs.

Q. Could the IoT be in scope for inspection?

A. Not a registered provider and does deliver qualifications for IoT students. May be invited to support a visit to providers. Ofsted may speak to students who are under the IoT banner, but they would only really obtain student feedback about the impact of the IoT for them in relation to equipment, progression etc.

Q. When will the Hub be complete?

A. Building should be available in early April and then equipment likely to be in May and students are expected from September 2022.

Q. How are specialist equipment delays impacting on the students?

A. The equipment was ordered with a September 2022 start date in mind. What was planned until then was staff development using the equipment, so that is what will be happening over the summer, with the aim to be ready to go in September 2022.

Q. IoT related projects – are they only IoT projects

A. It varies, some are for IoTs only, but most are for all providers. Collaborative bids are being encouraged and therefore that is one of the advantages of being in an IoT.

Discussion took place regarding the unsuccessful projects submitted by Aston University and BMet.

## 6. Apprenticeships Report

The Executive Director Employment and Skills and IoT presented the report and explained that the proportion of 16-18 and adults had balanced more for 2021/22, which was positive. Recruitment was good, although still lower than previous years. There had been some difficulty in meeting prior achievement rates due to furlough and inability to complete apprenticeships on time. Learners had identified facilities as a strength, which was good as it seemed that students were accessing facilities more.

A dashboard was being produced to manage progress of apprenticeships across the college and work-based environments. It is hoped that this will improve communications channels between the college, assessors and employers. Some elements of the dashboard was working and assessors were using it to manage 'at risk' learners. Some additional levels were being added.

Continued planning was taking place to plan apprenticeships in the future, as the employment and employer environment changes.

Q. Alternative approaches – what is the hybrid approach – any insight into that would be useful to understand

A. Cover such a wider variety of sectors. Many are back working in the workplace, however, there are some areas that are planning on maintaining a large remote working environment. This may be difficult for apprentices in starting their careers. It may be, therefore, that it may be better to

increase full time provision so that students can move on to these types of apprenticeships at a later stage.

Q. What is the anticipated achievement %?

A. A review would take place regarding current learners' achievement. There had been some withdrawals due to the pandemic.

Q. The 2020/21 survey identified the need to improve communication with employers – until the CRM scheme is in place, what is being done?

A. The Apprenticeships Manager was communicating more often with employers and an apprentice had been put in place to improve student voice. This had ensured improvements whilst awaiting completion of the CRM.

A Governor had undertaken a focus group session with an apprenticeship group, and he confirmed that generally feedback had been positive. He noted that there were a couple of issues around turnover of assessors.

The Executive Director Employment and Skills and IoT explained that she would be featured in the Observer in March 2022 as part of a DfE campaign to increase the number of teachers and assessors in FE.

Ofsted – the Acting Principal explained that the college was anticipating an inspection. She noted that a lot of preparation work was underway. She was producing her presentation for Ofsted and in reviewing it it provided a real boost for staff about the good work that had been taking place. She explained that the college was hoping to aim for outstanding and staff were very keen demonstrate their good practice. The presentation was to be recorded and presented to all staff, so that there was a shared and consistent voice about the college. It would be made available to Governors too.

## 7. **Sub-contracting Termly Update**

The Acting Principal presented the report and explained that approval was required to award a contract for ESFA funded provision outside of the WMCA area). She explained that the college received funding for students that lived within the WMCA and for those outside the area, which had to be claimed separately. It was agreed to:

Approve the award of the contract for AEB to Learning Curve, as set out in the report (Subcontracting for ESFA funded provision outside the WMCA area).

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality confirmed that RMF had had the new provider monitoring visit with Ofsted in January 2022, and they got reasonable progress in all the key judgements, which was a very positive outcome and provided external validation regarding the quality of education. The Acting Principal confirmed that there were a range of controls in place to monitor and oversee the quality of provision, as well as the compliance aspects of the provision.

The Acting Principal explained that the partnership with RMF was very positive for the college and would be a key element of discussions with Ofsted regarding sub-contracting provision.

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

## 8. **Treasury Management**

### **8.1 Treasury Management Report and Policy Update**

The Vice Principal Finance presented the report and explained that clarity was being added about where surplus funds would be invested and to clearly state that the college would consider social, ethical and environmental issues when considering investment plans.

The Vice Principal Finance described the suggested investment plans identified in the report and described the recommendations received from banks and fund managers/advisers regarding

investment strategies. Following a tender process to obtain a more varied list of investment advisers, it had been deemed appropriate to remain with the current bankers.

The Governor with special interest in Finance confirmed that he had discussed the investment plans with the Acting Principal and Vice Principal Finance and concurred with the proposals, as outlined.

Agreed to **approve** the Treasury Management Policy.

## **8.2 Bank Mandate**

The Vice Principal Finance presented the report and described the staffing changes that required amendments to the bank mandate.

Agreed to **approve** the bank mandate, as set out, and subject to minor amendment regarding payments rather than cheques.

## **9. Bids and Projects Report and Termly KPI Update**

The Vice Principal Finance presented the report and clarity was sought as to whether there were any areas of concern. It was noted that processes and procedures were in place to manage the projects well. The success rate for bids and projects was very good. The KPI information was very positive and useful for ensuring oversight of the projects.

## **10. Contribution Report**

*The Staff and Student Governors left the meeting for this item.*

This item was deemed confidential.

## **11. Principal's Appointment Update**

*EMT, Staff and Student Governors left the meeting for this item.*

This item was deemed confidential.

## **12. Pay Award for Senior Postholders and the Clerk**

*EMT, the Clerk, Staff and Student Governors left the meeting for this item.*

This item was deemed confidential.

## **13. Items for Information**

### **13.1 Property Update**

*The Chair of the Corporation left during consideration of this meeting.*

The contents of the Property Update were received for information.

Part of the report, relating to the Stratford upon Avon Campus residences, was deemed confidential.

### **13.2 PMR November 2021**

The contents of the November 2021 PMR were received for information.

### **13.3 Use of the College Seal and E-signature**

The contents of the College Seal and E-signature Report were received for information.

### 13.4 Tender Update

The contents of the Tender Update Report were received for information.

### 14. Date of the Next Meeting

The next Corporation meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> April 2022 at 5pm at Woodlands Campus, however, it was noted that there would be an additional meeting on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March at 6pm on Teams to consider the Principal's Appointment.

The Governors' Development Day was also confirmed as Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2022 9.30-12.45.

The Acting Principal thanked governors for the gifts and card in recognition of her long service (35 years).

The meeting ended at 7.40pm.

Signed



Date **06 April 2022**

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- Badri Gargeshnari
- Sarah Horton-Walsh
- Lucy Lee
- Neil Ladwa
- Tony Lucas
- Lindsey Stewart
- Geraldine Swanton
- Harrison Thompson
- Sally Tomlinson

**In Attendance**

- Heather Evans (Vice Principal Finance)
- Pete Haynes (Vice Principal HR and Student Services)
- Rebecca Gater (Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality)
  
- Theresa Lynch (Clerk to the Governing Body)

*This meeting was recorded.*

**8. Contribution Report**

*The Staff and Student Governors left the meeting for this item.*



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**In Attendance** Theresa Lynch (Clerk to the Governing Body)

*This meeting was recorded.*

**9. Principal's Appointment Update**

*EMT, Staff and Student Governors left the meeting for this item.*

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**In Attendance**                      No staff in attendance

*This meeting was recorded.*

**10. Pay Award for Senior Postholders and the Clerk**

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Rebecca Gater (Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality)

Theresa Lynch (Clerk to the Governing Body)

*This meeting was recorded.*

**11.2 Property Update**

*The Chair of the Corporation left during consideration of this meeting.*