

# Wakefield College Corporation

## Board of Governors

### Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 January 2021

1 **Present:** Yasmin Ayub, Kaitlen Blacker, Claire Corneille, Julie Craig, Dmitry Fedotov, Andrew McConnell (**Chair**), Ben Porter, Joshua Poole, David Powell, Ruth Sacks, Martyn Shaw, Neil Warren, and Sam Wright (**Principal**)

Clerk to the Corporation (**Clerk**)

**In attendance:** Executive Director of HR and OD, Executive Director of Quality and Planning and Executive Director of Finance and Resources

**Apologies:** None

## 2. Declarations of Interest

2.1 The Chair welcomed the new Academic Staff Governor, Ben Porter to the Board.

2.2 Governors had no declarations of interest.

## 3. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 8 December 2020

### Resolved

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2020 be approved.

## 4. Matters Arising

4.1 The Clerk noted the following matters arising from the Board meeting of 8 December 2020:

- (i) On minute 4.2(i), the Principal agreed to address the benefits arising out of the pandemic at the governor strategy session. It was noted that a governor strategy session had been arranged and this would be actioned as agreed.
- (ii) On minute 4.2(iii), the Executive Director of HR and OD agreed to report back to the next meeting with a plan regarding governor unconscious bias training. It was noted that this would be discussed at Agenda Item 10.
- (iii) On minute 4.2(iv), the Clerk agreed to arrange a deep dive group regarding the staff cost ratio issue following the provision of the internal auditor's report on the same. It was noted that the College's internal auditors had yet to complete their report.
- (iv) On minutes 4.2(v) and (vi), the Clerk agreed that a governor strategy session would be arranged at which the College's mission and KPIs would be reviewed. It was noted that this would be actioned as agreed.
- (v) *This item is confidential as it contains commercially sensitive information.*

- (vi) On 4.2(x), the Executive Director of HR and OD noted that she would report back to the Board with updated information regarding counselling wait times. The Clerk noted that he had done so, via email, on her behalf.
- (vii) On minute 4.3, the Principal agreed that the Executive Director of Quality and Planning would provide an update on how Microsoft Teams was evolving as a tool to assist learning. He noted that this had been actioned via email.
- (viii) On minute 6.1(iii), the Chair agreed to write an email to staff thanking them for their hard work over the previous year. It was noted that this had been actioned.
- (ix) On minute 7.1(ii), the Clerk agreed to arrange for appraisals to take place in January 2021. It was noted that this had been actioned.
- (x) On minute 7.1(iii), the Clerk agreed to inform governors of Education and Training Foundation (ETF) training opportunities. The Clerk noted that the ETF were rescheduling the relevant sessions which he would arrange for governors to attend.
- (xi) On 8.3, the Principal agreed to report back to the Board with the results of feedback from the student body regarding online learning. It was noted that this would be addressed at Agenda Item 8.
- (xii) On 10.2(ii), the Principal agreed to address the College's plans to move to 'Outstanding' at the governor strategy session. It was noted that this would be actioned as agreed.
- (xiii) On minute 13.3, the Principal agreed to request that year on year comparison information be included in the safeguarding update. The Chair noted that, despite the changes that had been made to the report for the meeting, further improvements could be made. The Clerk noted that he had set up a meeting between Julie Craig, the Lead Governor for Safeguarding, and the College's Student Wellbeing and Safeguarding Manager to address this.
- (xiv) On minute 13.4, the Executive Director of HR and OD noted that she would seek an explanation from the author of the Health and Safety Annual Report regarding her opinion that minor accidents were expected and report back to the Board. It was noted that this had been addressed via email.

## **5. Chair's Business**

### **5.1 The Chair noted the following:**

- (i) That he was grateful to governors for taking part in appraisals and that several improvements to Board business had been identified, which would be addressed.
- (ii) The way in which questions should be asked before and during Board meetings. He noted that questions of clarification, those that may not be possible to answer immediately, and those relating to briefing papers (where appropriate) should be asked in advance while substantive questions should always be asked at meetings and minuted as evidence of appropriate governor challenge.
- (iii) That the governor strategy session had been scheduled for 23 February 2021.

## **6. Governance issues**

- 6.1 Governors debated whether the proposed amendment to the Standing Orders, which included flexibility for governors to serve more than the stated maximum term where in the best interests of the College, would stifle the introduction of new governors. Governors agreed that it was necessary to allow experienced governors to remain on the Board, where appropriate.
- 6.2 The Chair noted that the Standing Orders referred to an annual public meeting and asked whether this meeting was a requirement. The Executive Director of HR and OD noted that such meetings had been held in the past but had been very poorly attended. The Executive Director of Quality and Planning noted that the College was no longer obligated to hold such meetings. The Principal agreed to consider whether such meetings would be held in future or reference deleted from the document.
- 6.3 The Clerk outlined the lessons learned from the appraisals as follows:
- (i) That Board paper executive summaries were to be shortened.
  - (ii) That Board presentations be shortened to give more time for governor challenge.
  - (iii) That agenda timings be made more realistic.
  - (iv) That a virtual student/governor focus group be scheduled for governors to get to know students better, given the limitations of lockdown.
  - (v) That thought be given to ways in which governors might get to know each other better.
  - (vi) That a governor development session focussed on the College's curriculum and how it meets the needs of the district be scheduled to address a governor knowledge gap.
  - (vii) That induction training should be repeated after the first year in office.
  - (viii) That board papers be provided in a single pdf and individually for ease of reading.
- 6.4 The Clerk noted that the Chair's appraisal had been overwhelmingly positive and that new governors would be asked to participate in this process following the end of the academic year.

### **Resolved**

- (i) That the proposed changes to the Standing Orders, documenting the AoC recommended maximum term for external governors, as recommended by the College's internal auditors, be approved.
- (ii) That the Clerk be permitted to delete the clause referred to at minute 6.2 should the Principal decide that it is no longer needed.

## **7. Student update**

- 7.1 The student governors noted the following:
- (i) That the Students' Union meetings now included class representatives which had resulted in more comprehensive student feedback. Attendance at the meetings had increased significantly compared to the previous year.
  - (ii) That a Christmas jumper campaign had raised £102 and helped to lift students' spirits.

- (iii) That an online safety campaign had been initiated to help students stay safe when using the internet.
- (iv) That several new clubs had been established.
- (v) That three campaigns had been planned for the spring term including staying safe in relationships, stress relief and an online quiz for the British Heart Foundation.
- (vi) That a period poverty campaign had been initiated and that products would be available in every toilet when students return to College.
- (vii) That students had attended the AoC 'Colleges Live' event which received a mixed reception.
- (viii) That students had met with the Director of Estates to consult on the refurbishment of the refectory.

7.2 The Principal thanked the Student Governors for their proactivity and informative presentation.

7.3 Governors noted/asked the following:

- (i) How are students finding online learning? The Student Governors noted that MS Teams had improved, they liked the new breakout room function and student/teacher communication was getting better following feedback given to the Student Experience Team. The Principal thanked the Student Governors for giving their feedback and noted that students could attend College if they had issues with internet connectivity or technology.

## **8. Principal's Business**

8.1 The Principal noted the following:

- (i) That the 'White Paper' had been published and that the Executive Director of Quality and Planning would be circulating a briefing paper to governors in due course.
- (ii) That the governor strategy session had been scheduled for 23 February at which the Executive Team would outline its strategic plans for governors to challenge and approve. A draft strategic plan would then be presented to governors for approval at the Board's July meeting.
- (iii) *This item is confidential as it contains commercially sensitive information.*
- (iv) That the College had responded well to the second national lockdown and was delivering a near full timetable, online. A small number of vulnerable students were attending in person. Facilities at the Wakefield and Castleford campuses had also been made available to students without access to necessary technology.
- (v) Most of the College's staff were working from home.
- (vi) The statistics relating to staff and students suffering with COVID-19.
- (vii) That COVID-19 testing centres were being set up at both campuses in partnership with Wakefield Council.
- (viii) That retention was strong at nearly 99 per cent.
- (ix) That attendance had slightly declined compared with the previous year but had improved for adults. Those students who had not been attending were being contacted. She noted that the number of students who did not attend post-Christmas was a concern but that the situation had now significantly

improved due to the hard work of the Attendance and Student Support teams.

- (x) That the number of students referred to the Student Support Impact Group was similar to the previous year which demonstrated that a healthy amount of students were accessing the help they needed.
- (xi) That student engagement had declined since Christmas, but students were receiving individual support where necessary.
- (xii) That exams would not be taking place at the end of the academic year and further updates would be provided once the detail became available.
- (xiii) That student feedback regarding online learning was positive but the majority preferred face to face delivery to online learning. The High-Performance Team had, however, been implementing measures to support College staff to ensure the student experience was the best it could be.
- (xiv) That the College was publishing a weekly Lockdown Newsletter for students which included help and advice and contacts for dealing with the difficulties of lockdown.
- (xv) That quality review activity was ongoing despite lockdown. She reminded governors that this was more 'light touch' to ensure staff felt well supported. She outlined the plan for the summer term and reiterated the College's goal to achieve Ofsted 'Outstanding'.
- (xvi) That Ofsted inspections had been postponed until the summer term. She noted that the College could be in scope for a one-day 'Support and Assurance' visit.
- (xvii) That the College was engaging potential students via a full engagement programme and continued to target existing students for progression.

## 8.2 Governors asked/noted the following:

- (i) *This item is confidential as it contains commercially sensitive information.*
- (ii) Are the College's testing centres available for students and staff and how many staff are expected to use them? The Executive Director of HR and OD noted that the offer would be for staff initially before being made available to students. No data was available regarding staff numbers at the time of the meeting.
- (iii) How is staff wellbeing? The Executive Director of HR and OD noted that termly staff surveys were being issued, information was being provided to the Executive Team by managers regularly and the approach to performance reviews had been altered to ensure staff felt supported. She noted that positive feedback had been received following the Principal's recent staff address.
- (iv) How does the data for students with zero attendance for January 2021 compare with the previous year? The Principal noted that the figures for non-attendance in the first week of January were 414 students compared with 163 the previous academic year but that, by week three, the difference was approximately 100. Governors were content with this given the difficulties of lockdown.

## 9. Staff Pay Award

*This item is confidential as it contains commercially sensitive information.*

## 10. Equality and Diversity Annual Report

10.1 The Executive Director of Quality and Planning noted the following:

- (i) That the College was recruiting strongly from ethnic minority groups, minority achievement rates were strong and the College was achieving its equality objectives.
- (ii) That the publication of new equality objectives had been pushed back to allow the College to carry out a full review.

10.2 Governors asked/noted the following:

- (i) Why does the College have more BAME students than the district norm? The Executive Director of Quality and Planning noted that this was due, primarily, to the location of the College.
- (ii) Does the College analyse representation at each level of the College including leadership? The Executive Director of HR and OD noted that this would be contained in the HR Annual Report which would be provided to governors later in the year.
- (iii) Can the College externally assess its equality and diversity progress? The Executive Director of Quality and Planning noted that the College was considering the Investors in Diversity accreditation, among others, but that this would have to provide added value.
- (iv) To what extent is COVID-19 expected to increase inequality and what is being done to guard against this? The Executive Director of Quality and Planning noted that the College was doing a substantial amount of work on modelling the impact of COVID-19 on the district which would inform the College's curriculum and that ongoing support would be provided to students and emerging inequalities tracked and addressed.
- (v) Is the ethnicity of staff by role monitored? The Executive Director HR and OD noted that the College collected this data in accordance with AoC guidance which would be presented to governors in the HR Annual Report.

10.3 Claire Corneille noted that she and Dmitry Fedotov had met with the Executive Director of Quality and Planning and the Executive Director of HR and OD prior to the meeting to discuss the report. She stated that this meeting had been positive and that it had been explained that, while equality and diversity information relating to staff would be delivered to governors later in the year, the actions resonate for both students and staff and, as such, the Executive Director of Quality and Planning and the Executive Director of HR and OD had agreed to work more closely together to create consistency in the equality and diversity approach for staff and students.

10.4 The Chair noted that the Executive Director of HR and OD had been asked to consider ways for the Board to ensure that it is not unconsciously biased. He stated that unconscious bias training had been mooted but, after careful discussion, governors had decided that this would not be sufficiently effective. He explained that Claire Corneille and Dmitry Fedotov, in their Lead Governor roles, and Yasmin Ayub had agreed to keep the Board's conduct under review on an ongoing basis. Claire Corneille suggested that the equality impact section of the Board's coversheets be carefully completed going forwards and that equality and diversity be a part of the Board's considerations when reviewing meeting effectiveness. Governors concurred and agreed that these recommendations should be actioned but acknowledged that a detailed consideration of equality and diversity when considering meeting

effectiveness might not prove viable. The Clerk agreed to make unconscious bias training available to governors who requested it.

## **11. December Finance Report**

*This item is confidential as it contains commercially sensitive information.*

## **12. Carbon Management Plan**

12.1 The Director of Estates noted the following:

- (i) That the College's carbon management plans had begun in 2010 and he set out the steps that had been taken up to 2015.
- (ii) That, by 2015, the College had reduced its carbon footprint by 29%.
- (iii) He outlined the steps taken by the College since 2015 and the improvements made, including that the College had reduced its carbon footprint by a further 43%.
- (iv) That the College was committed to doing more to reduce its environmental impact and he outlined its plans and objectives to this end to 2025.

12.2 Governors asked/noted the following:

- (i) Has the College set a date by which it plans to be carbon neutral? The Director of Estates noted that the goal was to be carbon neutral, but no date had been set. Neil Warren asked whether governors thought a date should be agreed. The Chair asked the Director of Estates to report back to the Board with a decision as to whether a zero-carbon target date was to be set and, if not, provide an appropriate explanation.
- (ii) Does the College have a Procurement Policy? The Director of Estates noted that the College did not, but one was to be published which included sustainability provisions.
- (iii) What is meant by zero waste to landfill? The Director of Estates noted that a contractor had been employed to dispose of the College's waste which was required to certify its disposal methods. Some waste had been recycled, some incinerated but none had been sent to landfill.

### **Resolved**

That the Carbon Management Plan be approved.

## **13. Subcontracting Update**

13.1 The Executive Director of Finance and Resources noted the following:

- (i) The Due Diligence and Contingency Plan was a requirement of the ESFA.
- (ii) That the College was engaged in limited subcontracting.
- (iii) That the Chair and Neil Warren had been appraised of the College's subcontracting activities. The Chair noted that he and Neil were happy to give their assurances in relation to the College's subcontracting activities.

### **Resolved**

- (i) That the curriculum mix and value of subcontracted provision procured from The Skills Network Ltd be noted.
- (ii) That the pre-contract due diligence undertaken in respect of The Skills Network Ltd be noted.
- (iii) That the 2020/21 Subcontracting Fees & Charges Policy be approved.
- (iv) That the contingency plan for the College's 2020/21 contract with The Skills Network Ltd be approved.

**14. Briefing Papers**

14.1 The Chair noted that governors had submitted questions regarding the briefing papers prior to the meeting via email which had been answered.

**Resolved**

That the briefing papers be noted.

**15. Review of effectiveness of the Meeting and Identification of Emerging Risk**

15.1 Governors agreed that the meeting had been effective and that, due to good agenda management, they had been able to spend a considerable amount of time interrogating and challenging the papers provided.

15.2 The Chair asked that the improvements derived from the appraisals continue to be implemented.

Signed ..... Date.....

**Actions**

No.	Minute	Details	Deadline	Responsibility
1.	4.1(iii)	The Clerk agreed to arrange a deep dive group regarding the staff cost ratio issue following the provision of the internal auditor's report on the same	None specified	The Clerk
2.	4.1(x)	The Clerk agreed to inform governors of rescheduled Education and	None specified	The Clerk

		Training Foundation (ETF) training opportunities.		
3.	4.1(xiii)	It was agreed that improvements would be made to the safeguarding update.	The Board meeting of 23 March 2021	The Clerk
4.	6.2	The Principal agreed to consider whether annual public meetings would be held in future or reference deleted from the Standing Orders	The Board meeting of 23 March 2021	The Principal
5.	8.1(i)	It was agreed that the Executive Director of Quality and Planning would circulate a briefing paper on the 'White Paper' in due course	No date specified	The Executive Director of Quality and Planning
6.	8.1(xii)	The Principal agreed that information regarding exams would be provided once available.	No date specified	The Principal
7.	10.4	It was agreed that the equality impact section of the Board's coversheets should be carefully completed going forwards and that equality and diversity be a part of the Board's considerations when reviewing meeting effectiveness	The Board meeting of 23 March 2021	The Executive Team
8.	10.4	The Clerk agreed to make unconscious bias	None specified	The Clerk

		training available to governors who requested it		
9.	12.2(i)	The Chair asked the Director of Estates to report back to the Board with a decision as to whether a zero-carbon target date was to be set and, if not, provide an appropriate explanation	The Board meeting of 23 March 2021	The Clerk