

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporation of West Thames College
Held on Wednesday 01 April 2020 via Telephone Conference due to the
COVID-19 Pandemic**

Members Present	Mr S Wilcox (Chair)	Ms T Aust	Mr A Luke
	Mr J Bolt	Dr B Armstrong	Mr J Bryant
	Ms C Ajit Singh	Mr T White	
Also present	Mr J Allen	Mr D Evans	Mr M Cooper
	Mr M Michaelides		

The meeting commenced at 18.00

1. APOLOGIES, QUORACY, ANNOUNCEMENTS & WELCOME

There were no apologies received in advance of the meeting. Ms B Sandhu was unable to participate in the conference call and, due to the closure of the College, the two student governors did not participate in the meeting.

Mr Dave Evans was welcomed back after a period of absence.

The Clerk confirmed the meeting was quorate.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Due to the special circumstances in which the meeting was being held, the Chair advised governors that the approach to be taken is papers for the meeting will be taken as read, to allow for detailed conversation on the Executive Report, data dashboard and the impact of COVID-19 on the College.

The Clerk confirmed the resignation from the Corporation of Jayme McClory (staff governor - due to taking up a new post at a different college) and Mukesh Malhorta (due to ill health). The Corporation placed on record appreciation of their contributions during their tenure of office.

The Chair confirmed the agenda item for the Head of Marketing to outline marketing plans for student recruitment has been deferred to the next Governors' Strategy Day.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declared interests against any agenda item.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the Corporation meeting held 11 December 2019 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting (Paper 1)

4. SUMMARY ACTION LIST & MATTERS ARISING

The 'Summary Action List' was received (Paper 2). The following updates were made available against each outstanding action point from the previous meeting:

Ref & Date	Action	Review Update 01 April 2020
Ref & Date	It was confirmed that work is in hand by the executive to ensure the opening page on the data dashboard is reviewed	Agenda item

	in a timely manner to provide governors with the latest and accurate information. It was confirmed this would be in place for the next corporation meeting.	
8(i)	To make available to governors the agreed timetable and timeframe for uploading monthly Management Accounts	Timeframe and timetable for updating the DD has been issued to governors
8(i)	A progress update to be made available at the next meeting on the review of the College's Staff Well-Being Strategy	The Human Resources Annual Report was considered by the Finance Committee on 11/3/20
8(ii)	Draft of the 3-5 Year Strategic Plan to be discussed at the Strategy & Business Development Committee	Was discussed at the meeting of the Strategy & Business Development Committee held 31/1/2020
9(i)	The Chair informed the meeting that the inaugural meeting of the Strategy & Business Development Committee is to be held on 31 January 2020. As this meeting needs to take place to inform the agenda for the Governor's Strategy meeting that was scheduled to be held in February, it has been agreed to defer the strategy meeting to a later date, yet to be confirmed.	Strategy day to be held on 13 May - an all day event (COVID-19 permitting)

MONITORING COLLEGE PERFORMANCE

8. Monitoring College Performance - Data Dashboard Review

The review of the data dashboard was in two areas - curriculum with Mr D Evans leading the review and finance, with Mr M Cooper leading the review.

(I) Curriculum KPIs Review:

The review covered the headline curriculum KPIs on teaching, learning and assessment; on attendance, and on deep dives as at 20 March 2020.

It was reported there have been 159 Learning Walks (LWs) completed between 5th September and 20th March, with the LW2 commencing in January as scheduled.

It was confirmed LW2 included the Student Voice, where selected students were actively involved in the LWs and feedback their findings to the observers.

Out of the 10 curriculum areas that had completed their LW2, TLA profile improved in 6 areas. The LW2 cycle was on track to be completed by 3rd April but observations have been suspended due to the current situation.

In 6 areas that completed LW2, there was clear improvement. English

improved from 78% green in LW1 to 100% green in LW2. Travel, Sport & Public Services improved from 45% green in LW1 to 86% green in LW2; Supported Learning improved to 75% green; Art & Media 88% green; Science 100% green; Construction 100% green.

Of 26 teachers whose sessions were previously graded amber, 14 have been re-observed and graded green, 6 have been re-observed and remained amber. Out of 9 sessions previously graded red, 7 teachers have been re-observed; 4 were graded green, 3 amber. The remaining 7 teachers (6 amber and 1 red) are being re-observed within agreed timeframes and are subject to additional support and performance management. Following LW2, three of previously improved teachers have been graded amber again. Support has been put in place for these members of staff but is currently being reviewed.

Attendance is currently at 87%, in line with the target set. Governors asked what were the arrangements for recording attendance in light of the College closure as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was confirmed attendance is being monitored through engagement in on-line lessons, engaging with staff and completing and returning work set through remote learning.

Governors asked if students are required to log-in every morning? In response it was confirmed this was not required. Instead, students are expected to engage with staff and to complete work that has been set, and it is these measurements that are used to monitor student activity.

The Principal reaffirmed arrangements have been put in place for both staff and students to work remotely with the intention of carrying on with business as usual, so far as possible. The priority has been to cater for students and to ensure that they can continue with their studies. Students been set work to do by their teachers; resources have been made available on the VLE/Moodle; the work will be marked and feedback provided and will be given via the students' college email accounts. The College is also providing additional support to ensure that the College supports the most vulnerable students.

The Principal outlined the IT support that has been set up to deal with both staff and student queries. The College is utilising Microsoft Teams to support with meetings etc. The IT team have worked incredibly hard over to get this up and running in such short notice and the Principal placed on record her thanks for their amazing work. This was fully endorsed by the Corporation who also placed on record sincere thanks to the IT staff for their work and to all staff for responding so professionally to the crisis.

A positive outcome arising from on-line learning is the emerging of some excellent examples of good practice which will be taken forward into 2020-21.

Predicted achievement and assessing where a student is in terms of any final grades will be a key component following the announcement that GCSE, BTEC and A Level examinations scheduled this summer will now not be taking place. The sector is still waiting on further assessment guidelines from OFQUAL.

The latest information is that Functional Skills (FS) examinations will still take place when the lockdown restrictions have been removed and this could become problematic if FS exams are held in August. The Executive is keeping this under constant review.

(ii) Finance KPI Review:

The review covered the headline curriculum KPIs on operating surplus (including recruitment against funding contracts) and financial health as at 04 March 2020.

Based on an overall score of 220/300, it was reported the forecast ESFA financial health grade for the College at 31st July 2020 is 'Good'. The full-year forecast performance for the year-ending 31 July 2020 is an operating surplus of £100k (0.5% of adjusted income) which is in line with the budget for the year.

However, these assessments and forecasts were made prior to COVID-19 which could impact on current in-year forecasts.

As at the R07 ILR return on 04 March, it was reported the College had enrolled 1,686 ESFA-funded students against the 16-19 student number allocation of 1,803. The College would have normally continued to enrol small numbers of ESOL students over the next month or two so had expected to be around 100 students short of the target by the end of this year. However, in the current circumstances, with the College closure due to COVID-19, no further enrolments are expected. The impact of not meeting the 16-19 student numbers in the current year will impact on the budget for next year due to lagged funding.

It was confirmed there is more variability with the Adult Education Budget (AEB). Adult numbers are down compared to this time last year but the additional courses that were planned to be held in the summer term to address the shortfall will now not run due to the College closure. The impact of not meeting AEB funding targets will be felt in year. The sector is still waiting for clarification on how the Greater London Authority and ESFA will respond to any shortfalls in the AEB budgets arising from college closures.

It was confirmed the Executive needs to review further the impact on any non-funded activity such as course fee income, nursery provision income and income from lettings.

In conclusion, it was noted it is too early to make an assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on the current budget and the budget for next year but this will be kept under constant review by the Executive and the Finance, Resources & Capital Projects Committee. To this end it was **AGREED** to hold a separate meeting of the Finance Committee to look at the financial impact of COVID-19.

(iii) Development Plan/Post Inspection Action Plan:

Made available, and noted, were the Development Plan 2019-20 and the Post Inspection Action Plan 2019/20.

On the Development Plan, discussion took place on 2.4 of the Plan that covered student enrolment for 2020/21. At the time of making the papers available for this meeting, the assessment on progress to date against the action points listed was 'Green'. However, due to COVID-19 and the College closure this now must be 'Amber'. It was reported internal progression targets are on track to be met but the risk is on external applications. Although applications made to date are above the numbers at this time last year, to achieve the overall target, the College must receive the same number of applications that were received during the period April to July last year. The Admissions Team is keeping under constant review all external applications received and students can continue to enrol on-line. Telephone interviews are being offered in place of face-to-face interviews.

9. Strategic matters including the review of the Executive Report

Executive Report

The Executive Report provided updates on:

- Strategic Context
- Financial Matters
- Leadership & Management Update
- Achievement Rates
- Partnerships
- Student News, Winning Awards and College Events this term

The following key points were noted from the review of the report.

(i) Ofsted

The College received notification of the Ofsted Inspection on Friday 13 March. The College was fully prepared for this only to be informed on Monday 16 March that the Inspection was being cancelled as a result of COVID-19.

The Principal confirmed she has since written to Ofsted to request that College is inspected as soon as is possible when Inspections resume.

(ii) COVID-19

The summary in the Executive Report on how the College is responding to COVID-19 and the College closure was covered in detail during discussions on the data dashboard.

In addition, the Principal reported on the positive support being made available from the Association of Colleges (AoC) and sector group meetings (Principals/Finance Directors).

The AoC has advised that they see no reason why colleges cannot access Government funding for furloughing staff but no final decisions have yet been made on this. A consistent approach with other London Colleges should be the priority and further discussions are taking place with Principal/Finance Director group meetings.

The AoC has advised colleges to protect and safeguard their supply chain as far as possible. The Principal confirmed the College has written to suppliers and will continue to pay for their contracted services when no income is being received.

Governors asked for confirmation of the arrangements to provide free school meals or financial support for students to purchase meals. It was confirmed payments are made directly on student cards to those who are entitled to receive free school meals. In exceptional circumstances direct payments can be made to bank accounts.

Consideration is being given to introducing E-vouchers and an account is being set up with Tesco. E-vouchers can be emailed to those who have not supplied bank account details.

The Corporation welcomed the excellent support being given to vulnerable students during this difficult and challenging time, and this was further endorsed by the nominated safeguarding governor.

(iii) Achievement Data

The final validated achievement rates for 2018-19 were confirmed and it was noted there were no significant changes from the results previously reported to Corporation and that had been subject to detail review at the last meeting of the Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee.

Made available last week was the published national data. Initial review shows the College was ranked 3rd in London for 16-18 achievement data; 7th for 19+ and 6th overall. However, these figures might not be comparing like for like as some of the merged London colleges are part of a national College Group, and in such cases, it is difficult to determine the London figures.

The key message for governors is that the College is in the top 7 of London colleges and this places the College in a strong position.

A full analysis of how the College has performed against published national benchmark data will be made available to the Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee.

(iv) Partnerships

The report provided a summary of current partnerships that the College is engaged with, along with a summary of possible developing partnerships. It was noted partnerships would be a key focus for discussion at the next Governors' Strategy meeting scheduled to take place in May.

(v) FE Commissioner

The letter that the Principal sent to Ofsted was copied to the FE Commissioner (FEC). It has come to the knowledge of the Principal that the FEC is instigating a Strategic Options Review on another college close to West Thames College. However, West Thames College have not been officially informed of this and therefore no invitation has been received to participate in the Review. This is in spite of the College having been invited last term to participate in a Review of another London college. The official reason given by the FEC for not being invited to participate in the current Review was because of the current College's Ofsted grading of "Requires Improvement".

It was **AGREED** to authorise the Principal to write to the FEC to express the Corporation's disappointment at the stance being taken on this matter in light of a) the previous involvement of the College in another Review; and b)

that there should be some discretion in these extraordinary times, especially as the Ofsted inspection of the College had to be postponed due to COVID-19.

(vi) Strategic Plan

Governors asked of the impact of COVID-19 on further development work on the 3-5 year Strategic Plan. The Principal replied that there has been some impact due to the need to change priorities to deal with COVID-19. It seems very unlikely that the planned Governors' Strategy Meeting scheduled for 13 May will not take place, but a meeting of the Strategic & Business Development Committee that is scheduled for 01 May can be used to further discuss the Strategic Plan.

NON-DELEGABLE DUTIES (ARTICLE 3.1) AND STATUTORY AND OR COMPLIANCE DUTIES

10. GOVERNOR APPOINTMENTS

The minutes of the Governance & Search Committee meeting held 28 February 2020 were **NOTED**.

On the recommendation of the Committee, it was **RESOLVED** to appoint both Rhys Gallagher and Laura Weatherill to serve as governors of the College. Their appointment to be from 01 May 2020 for a period of 4 years, subject to a satisfactory review at the end of their first year of service.

It was noted that three governor interviews had to be postponed due to the scheduled Ofsted inspection and subsequent College closure. Arrangements will be made to conduct the interviews via conference calls.

11. ARRANGEMENTS FOR OBTAINING THE VIEWS OF STUDENT & STAFF

The report from the Clerk confirmed the requirement from the Instrument & Articles of Government for the College to publish the arrangements for consulting with students and staff at the College on the determination and periodic review of the educational character and mission of the College and the oversight of its activities.

The proposed arrangements to consult with staff and students had been subject to review by the Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee, and following the review, the Committee recommended the Corporation to approve the arrangements.

It was **RESOLVED** to approve the arrangements to consult with staff and students and for the framework to be published on the College website.

12. SUMMARY REPORT ON RECEIVED GOVERNOR LINK VISIT REPORTS

The Corporation has agreed for a summary report on governor link visits to be authored by the Chair of Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee and for the report be made available to the Corporation following the governor link visits conducted in the spring term.

The majority of visits took place during January and February 2020. The reports reflected both the different approaches adopted by the areas visited and the governors' varying levels of interest and expertise.

Overall, the majority of reports indicated that the areas visited were well aware of both the PIAP and QIP, and had taken steps to address each of the requirements that both plans contained. There were not any "common themes" which ran through the majority of the reports.

Both the Chair of the Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee and Chair of the Corporation thanked governors for their participation in the link visits.

It was **AGREED** to make available to governors the full set of link visit reports and to make reports available to curriculum Directors.

13 SAFEGUARDING

The Corporation received for information purposes the Annual Safeguarding Report 2018-19 that was reviewed in detail at the last meeting of the Finance, Resources & Capital Committee.

Also made available for information purposes was the safeguarding governor visit report from John Bolt (nominated safeguarding governor).

The Annual Safeguarding Report demonstrated that the College continues to meet its legal requirements with regards to safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults and demonstrates an ongoing commitment to safeguarding as an organisational priority. The report set out broader background information about how safeguarding is organised at the College and provided trend information regarding incidences. The report outlined the policies and procedures, the links with external agencies and the training undertaken by staff.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the two safeguarding reports.

COMMITTEE REPORTING

- 14. Report from the Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee**
The report and minutes from the Committee covering the meeting held 05 March 2020 were received and **NOTED**.
- 15. Report from the Finance, Resources and Capital Projects Committee**
The report and minutes from the Committee covering the meeting held 11 March 2020 were received and **NOTED**.
- 16. Report from the Audit Committee**
The scheduled meeting of the Audit Committee was cancelled due to the Ofsted inspection and subsequent closure of the College. Agenda items will be deferred to the summer meeting of the Committee.
- 17. ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**
There was no other urgent business previously notified to either the Chair or Clerk.
- 18. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**
Wednesday 13 May 2020 Governors Strategy Meeting @ 1000
Wednesday 08 July 2020 Corporation meeting @ 1800

The meeting closed at 19.35

Signed: _____

Date: _____ -

SUMMARY ACTION LIST

Ref & Date	Action	Review
1	Head of Marketing to outline marketing plans for student recruitment This item has been deferred to the next Governors' Strategy Day	8/7/2020
8(ii)	It was confirmed the Executive needs to review further the impact on any non-funded activity such as course fee income, nursery provision income and income from lettings.	8/7/2020
8(ii)	It was noted it is too early to make an assessment on the impact of COVID-19 on the current budget and the budget for next year but this will be kept under constant review by the Executive and the Finance, Resources & Capital Projects Committee. To this end it was AGREED to hold a separate meeting of the Finance Committee to look at the financial impact of COVID-19.	8/7/2020
9(iii)	A full analysis of how the College has performed against published national benchmark data will be made available to the Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee.	8/7/2020
9(iv)	It was noted partnerships would be a key focus for discussion at the next Governors' Strategy meeting scheduled to take place in May.	8/7/2020
9(v)	To authorise the Principal to write to the FEC to express the Corporation's disappointment at the stance being taken on this matter in light of a) the previous involvement of the College in another Review; and b) that there should be some discretion in these extraordinary times, especially as the Ofsted inspection of the College had to be postponed due to COVID-19.	8/7/2020
9(vi)	Governors' Strategy Meeting scheduled for 13 May will not take place, but a meeting of the Strategic & Business Development Committee that is scheduled for 01 May can be used to further discuss the	8/7/2020

	Strategic Plan.	
11	The arrangements to consult with staff and students to be published on the College website.	8/7/2020
12	It was AGREED to make available to governors the full set of link visit reports and to make reports available to curriculum Directors.	8/7/2020