

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporation of West Thames College
Held on Wednesday 16 December 2020 in the Banks Room**

Members Present	Mr S Wilcox (Chair)	Ms T Aust	Ms L Weatherill
	Mr J Bolt	Mr A Luke	Ms B Sandhu
	Mr T White	Mr J Bryant	Ms C Ajit Singh
	Mr A Smith	Mr W Tyrell	Ms L Gomes
	Mr R Gallagher	Mr A Barke	

Also present Mr J Allen Mr M Cooper Ms S Davies Ms C Callinan
 Mr M Michaelides

The meeting commenced at 16.30

1. APOLOGIES & QUORACY

An apology was received from Mr B Armstrong. The Clerk confirmed the meeting was quorate.

2. GOVERNOR APPOINTMENTS & WELCOMES

- (i) It was **RESOLVED** to approve the recommendation from the Governance & Search Committee to appoint Charlotte Callinan to the position of External Governor for the period 01/01/2021-31/12/2024 and to be a member of the Finance, Resources & Capital Projects Committee;
- (ii) It was **RESOLVED** to approve the recommendation from the Governance & Search Committee to extend the current term of office for Tommy White from 31/12/2020 to 31/07/2021;
- (iii) To accommodate the appointment of Charlotte Callinan, and the extension of the current term of office for Tommy White, it was **RESOLVED** to approve to increase the size of the Corporation membership from 15 members to 16 members, with 12 external governors; and
- (iv) To note the student body has nominated two student governors - William Tyrell - Level 3, Sport, 2nd year & Lavanya Gomes - Level 2, Aviation.

The Chair welcomed the two student governors and introductions were made.

The Chair informed the meeting that Charlotte Callinan was attending the meeting in the capacity as an 'observer', as part of her induction programme, prior to commencing her appointment from 01 January.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declared interests against any agenda item.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the Corporation meeting held 14 October 2020 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting (Paper 1)

5. 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 previous meetings:

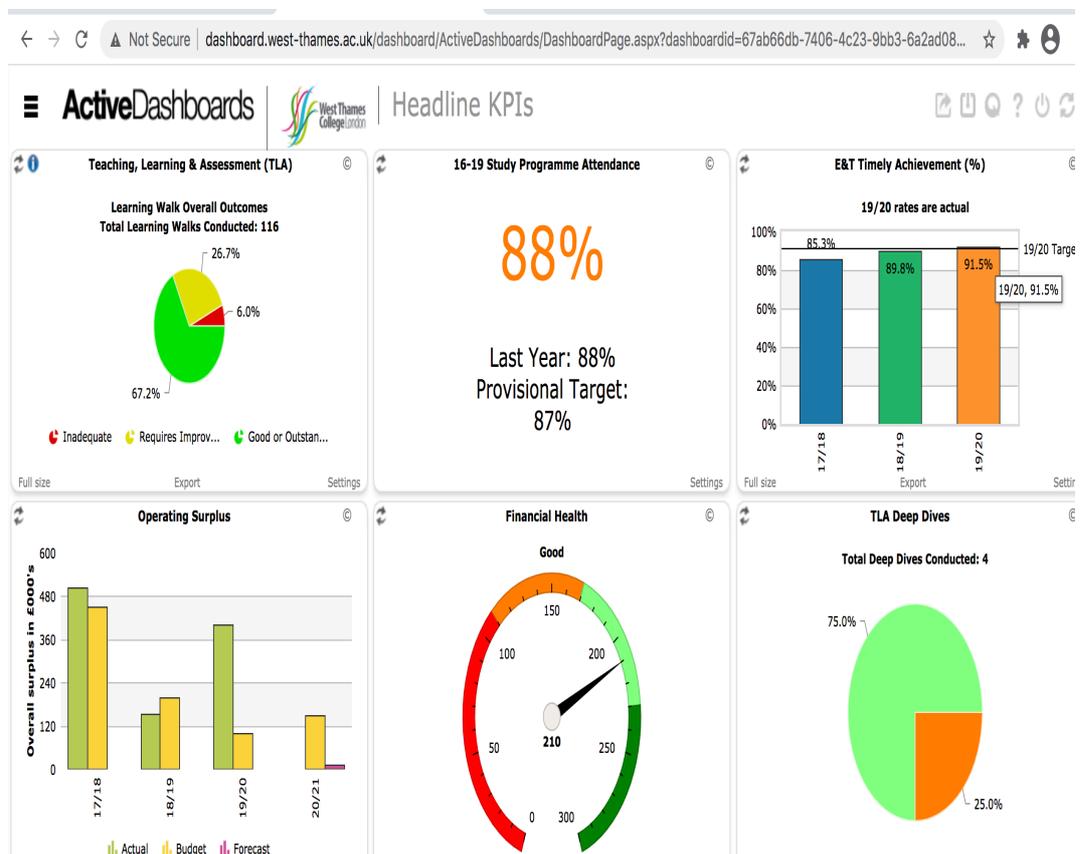
Ref & Date	Action	Review Update as at 16/12/2020
11 - 8/7/20 meeting	To task the Strategic & Business Committee, in conjunction with the Executive, to undertake further development work on the Strategic Risk Register for the Corporation to consider at a later date	This remains work in progress
7(ii) - 14/10/20 meeting	Outcomes of the review Values, Mission and Principles are to be reported to the Corporation.	Agenda item
9 - 14/10/20 meeting	Governors were asked to conduct their link visit/learning walk after the SAR validation meeting held in November and before the end of February, to enable a summary report (to be collated by the Chair of the Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee) of all visits to be presented to the March Corporation meeting.	Visit schedule to be confirmed in January. Principal's PA to organise the visit schedule for governors.

MONITORING COLLEGE PERFORMANCE

6. Monitoring College Performance

(i) Data Dashboard Review

The following headline KPIs were presented to the Corporation through the Data Dashboard that is accessed via the Governors Portal:



The following key points were noted from the review of the Data Dashboard:

Learning Walks

- There have been 77 learning walks completed up until the 18th of November 2020.
- 75% of the learning walks that have taken place have been graded as 'Green', 32% have been rated as 'Amber' with 8% rated as 'Red'.
- The first round of learning walks/ deep dives will be completed by the end of this term. When completed a full analysis will be undertaken.

Deep Dives

- The College has completed deep dives in Maths, ESOL (Adult and Threshold combined), Health and Care and Performing Arts. Business & ICT is underway and close to completion.
- Following the completion of deep dives action plans are issued to the curriculum team. These are monitored and reported in accordance with the agreed deadlines. There is a greater emphasis for managers to swiftly resolve any issues arising from a deep dive. Actions are focused around improving the teaching and assessment within areas.

Achievement 2019-20 Outturn

- Achievement rates for 2019-20 are very high with overall achievement at 92% (measured against a National Rate of 87%).
- English and maths have improved. GCSE English is at 39%, up 8 percentage points from the previous year. GCSE Maths has increased by 10 percentage points since last year and is now at 38% - this forms part of a three-year increasing trend.
- Level 1 FS English is now at 74% forming part of a three-year upward trend (2017-18 - 52%, 2018-19 – 53%).
- Level 1 FS maths has improved to 73% (up from 64% in 2018-19 and 69% in 2017-18).
- Adult learning programmes have increased 6 percentage points to 94% for Level 1 achievement. Level 3 programmes for this cohort have stabilised at 87.6%.
- Apprenticeships provision is showing an improved position.
- The first round of predicted achievement will take place in January 2021. In the meantime, Principal's Performance Review Meetings have taken place to monitor progress against targets in real time.

Attendance

- Currently, YTD attendance for all learners is 88%, compared with this year's target of 88% and last year's outturn of 87%.
- The Corporation was of the view that they expected attendance to have been more greatly impacted as a result of Covid-19, especially for learners having to access remote learning. Against this context, and against the data for the local schools, current attendance data was seen to be very positive.

Financial Health

- Based on an overall score of 210/300, the forecast year-end ESFA financial health grade for the College at 31st July 2021 is 'Good'. This represents a decline from the 2019-20 outturn of 'Outstanding' due to a lower EBITDA score for profitability.

- Operating surplus is projected to be only £10k (0.1% of adjusted income) at the year end, 31st July 2021. This is well below the target of 3-5% recommended by the FE Commissioner but is nonetheless positive, especially give the College's high depreciation charge. EBITDA is consequently fairly strong.
- Cash flow is forecast to average around £4.8m over the next 12 months with the projected low of £3.5m falling in March/April 2021. The College has good cash reserves and reasonable cash generation. It can comfortably continue to pay its operating expenses in the short term and is very capable of meeting its short-term liabilities as they become due. Cash days in hand average around 96 days throughout the year ahead, which provides an acceptable level of comfort.
- Borrowing as a percentage of income is high, but this is falling gradually and is not a concern whilst the College is able to maintain strong operating cash generation. There is projected compliance with both the Barclays loan covenants relating to debt service cover and operational leverage.
- Full-year staff costs as a percentage of income are projected to be 67.7%, which compares unfavourably with the budget of 65.2% and ESFA target maximum of 65%.

The Corporation placed on record sincere appreciation of the professionalism shown by all staff during the pandemic to ensure students had access at all times to teaching, learning and assessment.

(ii) Development Plan and Post Inspection Action Plan

One 'Amber' rated assessment was noted from the review of the Development Plan (Paper 3). This related to objective 2.5 - '*Grow and diversify income through increased partnership work and the development of new opportunities to improve the utilisation of the college estate*'. It was reported Covid-19 has impacted on long-term rental and short-term lettings income. In addition, the forecast income from London School of Basketball will not be met due to lower recruitment numbers than planned. Governors sought assurances on how the expected income shortfall will be mitigated against. In response it was stated these income reductions will be partly mitigated by increased income from extending Ambitious College's let of additional space in Spring Grove House to July 2021.

It was noted the Post Inspection Action Plan (Paper 4) was covered in detail through the review of the Data Dashboard in the area of teaching, learning and assessment.

7. Strategic matters including the review of the Executive Report

(i) Executive Report

The Executive Report (Paper 5) provided updates on:

- Ofsted
- Covid-19 & Economic Recovery
- AoC news
- Recruitment & Income Targets
- Pay Award
- Leadership & Management Staffing Update
- Achievement Rates 2018-19
- Partnerships & New Partnership Opportunities
- Student News

The following key points were noted from the report:

- Full Ofsted inspections will now not resume until the summer term. The Principal has written to Ofsted requesting that the College be one of the first colleges to be inspected when full inspections resume.
- The College re-opened fully in September, offering a blended learning model for students. As previously confirmed, a detailed Operational Plan and associated Risk Assessments are in place and have been kept under regular review. The College continues to follow the Government guidance, providing regular updates to staff, students, partners and unions. In line with Public Health England guidance, positive cases (for staff or students) are reported to the Health Protection Team at PHE for further guidance and instructions. It was confirmed appropriate continuity plans are in place in the event of either a national or local lockdown being imposed.
- Financial matters, recruitment and income targets, and achievement rates 2018/19 were reported on in detail during the review of the Data Dashboard.
- The recruitment process for the post of Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality has commenced with interviews to be schedule in February. Governors will be invited to participate in the interviews.
- The College has been successful in the award of funding to put in place a Youth Hub with a start date of 11 January 2021. Two benefits will arise from this project - serving the training and re-skilling needs of the local community and the offering of college courses for the unemployed (18-21 year olds).

It was **RESOLVED** to note the Executive Report.

(ii) Minutes of the Strategy & Business Development Committee

The minutes of the Strategy, Business & Commercial Committee (Paper 6), that met on 26/11/20 to consider and review the College's current Mission, Values & Principles, was received and **NOTED**.

The Committee noted the current values are well embedded across all areas of the College and are key to how staff work. The proposal was not to change the Mission, Values and Principles. Instead, it is good practice to step back now and then and ask the question - 'Are they still relevant and appropriate for today and during the period of the next strategic plan (2021-2024)?' If changes are to be made, there needs to be a clear timeline that involves staff. The consensus view of the Committee was that the three current goals that form the bedrock of the existing strategic plan are the right goals to take forward into the strategic plan for 2021-2024. The current strategic plan still feels relevant and appropriate and can be used to help inform the development of the strategic plan for 2021-2024.

The Chair suggested that, where improvements can be made, it is to make the Strategic Plan a clear, crisp and strong strategy document, confirming what the College will achieve, how it will be achieved, and by when.

In terms of further action, the following was noted:

- To hold a governor strategic planning meeting in March (date to be confirmed) and to use this meeting to receive strategic updates from the Executive, including outcomes from the curriculum planning process, and to commence governor input on the strategic direction of the college post 2021.
- Strategy & Business Development Committee to meet prior to the governor strategic planning meeting to plan the agenda for the March strategy meeting.
- Post the March strategy meeting, Strategy & Business Committee to meet to review outcomes from the March meeting and to put forward suggestions for further review by governors.
- To hold a second governor strategic planning meeting on 15 May (date already confirmed in the schedule of business) to further work on the strategic direction.
- College Management Team holds a strategic planning meeting in May and the proposal is for members from the Strategy & Business Development Committee to attend this meeting.
- To ensure staff are engaged in the strategic planning process, to use the Staff Development Day in June/July to obtain their input. Again, the proposal is for members from the Strategy & Business Development Committee to attend this meeting.
- Outcomes from the strategic planning process, culminating in the Strategic Plan 2021-2024, to be put to the July 2021 Corporation meeting for approval.

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

8. College Self Assessment Report 2019/20

Following the SAR Validation meeting of the Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee held 18 November 2020, the Corporation is asked to review and approve the College Self Assessment Report 2019/20 (Paper 7).

The following grade assessments were noted as proposed in the College SAR:

Overall effectiveness	Good
Quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good

The following key strength and areas for improvement from the College SAR were noted:

Key Strengths

- An ambitious, relevant and well-planned curriculum which is highly inclusive, meeting the diverse needs of our students and the local community which we serve. This results in a very high proportion of our students successfully achieving all of their qualifications, including in the core skills of English and maths.

- Very high student achievement – 92% overall for 2019-20 (National Rate is 87%). 16-18 achievement is 90% against a National Rate of 83% and for 19+, achievement is 93% against a National Rate of 90%. A 7% point improvement in Level 2 achievement on Study Programmes from 78% in 2017-18 to 87% in 2018-19 to 94% in 2019-20 and a further 6% point improvement in the proportion of Level 3 students achieving high grades at 57% (up from 51% in 2018-19 and 47% in 2017-18).
- Teaching, learning and assessment is particularly strong in terms of planning for learning, meeting needs, progress and engendering positive behaviours and attitudes. Teachers are adept at motivating our students to work hard and reach their full potential. Students embrace the high expectations presented to them and as a result, develop a repertoire of valuable skills (including advanced practical skills) which they can apply in further study and employment.
- Staff and students from a diverse catchment area (over 20 different languages are spoken by our students), benefit from a culture of safety, respect, hard work and enjoyment that permeates throughout the College. High expectations of students, integral to the 'Our College Expects' campaign, lead them to developing positive behaviours and conduct. This is reflected in their attendance, their study skills and the pride they take in their achievements. As a result of this our students enjoy their time at College and progress to further study or employment.
- Our well designed curriculum provides our students with the opportunities to develop and discover their interests and talents in their chosen industry sector, working with a wide range of employers. This is coupled with a highly effective tutorial programme which enables our students to develop their wider skills including resilience, confidence, independence and their physical and mental health.
- Leaders have a clear and ambitious vision for providing a high quality and inclusive education for all. Diligent leadership and management supported by rigorous governance, have driven forward continuous year on year improvements resulting in substantial progress in all areas. Challenging and ambitious targets have been set, with students' learning at their heart, resulting in a high quality learning experience for our students.

Areas Requiring Improvement

- Continued strategic focus on apprenticeships following the significant improvements made in 2019-20 to the quality of this provision. Timely apprenticeship achievement increased from 49% in 2018-19 to 63% in 2019-20 (30 leavers) against a National Rate of 66%. Overall apprenticeship achievement increased from 51% in 2018-19 to 70% in 2019-20 (59 leavers) against a National Rate of 67%. However, the impact of COVID-19 has resulted in the need to broaden and reposition the College's apprenticeship offer. This will strongly align the provision to economic recovery growth areas and local skills needs whilst supporting sustained improvements in outcomes.
- Further improvements in specific aspects of assessment practice will ensure a greater majority of all students achieve their full potential. This will be secured in 2020-21 through rigorous monitoring of management information accompanied by targeted support for students and professional development for teachers.

- During Terms 1 & 2 of 2019-20 a high proportion of students benefitted from purposeful work-related learning, including external and extended work and industry experience pre March 2020, but activity was thereafter greatly hindered by the coronavirus situation. Building on some excellent examples in areas of our provision, for example, Creative Industries, we will be exploring ways in which our use of blended learning can strengthen our students' exposure to and experience the world of work and virtual work experience.

Following the recommendation from the Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the College Self Assessment Report 2019/20.

9. REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE 2019/20

The 'Review of Governance 2019/20' was received (Paper 8). The Corporation has agreed to undertake an annual review of governance for the proceeding academic year, with the final review report to be published in the autumn term covering following the same timescale for the College's self assessment process.

The Corporation has agreed the following framework for the annual review of governance:

- *To conduct a review of current performance against a number of governance good practice indicators outlined by the FE Commissioner (Published May 2019).*
- *Review of current performance against a number of agreed governance KPIs*
- *Skills analysis audit conducted on current governors*
- *Chair to hold one-to-one review meetings with each governor*
- *Each Governor to be asked to review the Chair's Performance by completing a questionnaire - completed questionnaires to be evaluated by the Vice Chair and the evaluation to be made available to the Corporation*
- *Succession planning*
- *Action planning arising from the Review.*

The review for 2019/20 commenced in the summer term, starting with conducting one-to-one review meetings between each governor and the Chair, and then for each governor to conduct a review of the performance of the Chair. The outcomes from these two components of the review framework was made available to the July meeting of the Corporation.

The remaining components of the review framework were completed in the autumn term, including action planning to address any areas of development identified through each of the review components.

The key section of the review report was the 'Governance Action Plan 2020/21' with particular focus on succession planning for governors, the Chair, and the Clerk. The Governance & Search Committee is tasked for monitoring the implementation of the action plan.

Following the recommendation from the Governance & Search Committee, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the College Self Assessment

10. Audit Committee Annual Report & Financial Statements Year-Ended 31 July 2020

The Corporation received for approval the Annual Report 2019/20 from the Audit Committee that has to be considered before approval of the Financial Statements (Paper 9). The Annual Report from the Audit Committee confirmed the following annual opinion from the Committee for the attention of the Corporation and Accounting Officer (the Principal):

The Audit Committee, through review of auditors' reports and discussion with auditors and college managers, has arrived at the opinion that West Thames College has adequate and effective assurance frameworks, framework of governance, risk management and control processes for the effective use of resources, solvency of the institution and the safeguarding of its assets.

The Committee is satisfied with the financial reporting of West Thames College and the performance of the internal and financial statement & regularity auditors.

The Audit Committee considers that the Corporation's responsibilities have been satisfactorily discharged and recommends this report to the Corporation.

It was **RESOLVED** to note the annual opinion and to accept the Annual Report from the Audit Committee,

The Corporation received approval the Financial Statements Year Ended 31 July 2020 (Paper 10). It was confirmed this was the final draft of the Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2020.

The accounts on page 22 record a deficit for the year of £341k (2018-19: £876k). After taking out FRS adjustments of £772k for pension service and interest costs, the operating result for the year was a surplus of £431k (2018-19: £151k).

Governors noted their key responsibility on assessing the College's going concern, and the following was agreed for inclusion in the commentary on page 7 in the Financial Statements:

The College expects arrangements in the sector to continue to be challenging going forward, not least because of increased uncertainty caused by COVID-19 which will continue to have an adverse impact on some income lines, including tuition fees, nursery fees and income from other commercial activities. The College has built up reserves and had net current assets of £1,837k at 31 July 2020 so is well-positioned to manage this. In addition, the College has in place a cost reduction plan for 2020-21 and has a good track record of being able to realise cost savings to mitigate income reductions. In 2019-20, the College received financial support of £36k through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme but does not expect to require any additional, similar financial support ongoing.

The Corporation undertakes regular review and monitoring of student numbers data and timely management accounts which include the current cash position, future cash flow projections, the College budgets and regularly updated forecasts, including financial returns submitted to the ESFA. Bank covenants in place with Barclays are monitored regularly and the Corporation considers that these are not expected to be breached in the foreseeable future.

After making appropriate enquiries and taking into account factors likely to affect its future development and performance, the Corporation considers that the College has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason it continues to adopt the going concern basis in preparing the financial statements.

Following the recommendation from the Audit Committee, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2020; and to authorise the Chair and Principal to sign the Report and Financial Statements on behalf of the Corporation.

COMMITTEE REPORTING

11. **Report from the Curriculum, Quality & Standards Committee**
The report and minutes from the Committee covering the meeting held 18 November 2020 (Paper 11) were received and **NOTED**.
12. **Report from the Finance, Resources and Capital Projects Committee**
The report and minutes from the Committee covering the meeting held 25 November 2020 (Paper 12) were received and **NOTED**.

Also received for information purposes was the 'Human Resources Annual Report 2019/20' (Paper 13) that was subject to review by the Committee.
13. **Report from the Audit Committee**
The report and minutes from the Committee covering the meeting held 02 December 2020 (Paper 14) were received and **NOTED**.
14. **Report from the Governance & Search Committee**
The report and minutes from the Committee covering the meeting held 03 December 2020 (Paper 15) were received and **NOTED**.
15. **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS**
There was no other urgent business previously notified to either the Chair or Clerk.
16. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**
Wednesday 24 March 2021 @ 1800

Signed: _____

Date: _____ -

SUMMARY ACTION LIST

Ref & Date	Action	Review
11 - 8/7/20 meeting	To task the Strategic & Business Committee, in conjunction with the Executive, to undertake further development work on the Strategic Risk Register for the Corporation to consider at a later date	24/3/21
9 - 14/10/20 meeting	Principal's PA to organise the visit schedule for governor link visits	24/3/21
7(ii) - 16/12/20 meeting	To hold a governor strategic planning meeting in March (date to be confirmed) and to use this meeting to receive strategic updates from the Executive, including outcomes from the curriculum planning process, and to commence governor input on the strategic direction of the college post 2021.	24/3/21
7(ii) - 16/12/20 meeting	Outcomes from the strategic planning process, culminating in the Strategic Plan 2021-2024, to be put to the July 2021 Corporation meeting for approval	7/7/21