

**The College of West Anglia
Minutes of
The Chairs' Meeting
7 September 2022
8.30 am
Remote Meeting – Microsoft Teams**

Present	Chris Ashman	Governor (Chair)
	Ray Harding	Governor
	Sally Mitton	Governor
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal)
	Gill Rejzl	Governor
	Hein van den Wildenberg	Governor
Attending	Stephen Halls	Clerk to the Corporation

Sam Fletcher had given her apologies in advance of the meeting; the Clerk had arranged that Chris Ashman would chair the meeting.

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting following the summer break, and especially to Ray Harding who had joined this committee following his appointment as Chair of the Audit Committee in May 2022.

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Sam Fletcher. The Principal advised that he would need to leave the meeting at 9.30 am to attend a priority meeting with the Department for Education.

2 Declaration of Interests

No interests were declared.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 18 May 2022

The minutes of the meeting on 18 May 2022 were agreed as being an accurate record.

4 Matters Arising

There were no outstanding matters arising from previous meetings.

Gill Rejzl joined the meeting at 8.33 am

5 Principal's Update

The Principal provided updates on several matters:

- a) Academic Year 2022/23 – the Principal considered there to have been a vibrant start to the new academic year; SMT members had been present on all campuses on the first

day of term to welcome new students and to meet with staff. Student behaviour had been good. There had been no issues or concerns raised regarding Covid.

- b) During admin week, prior to the start of term, staff had engaged in a number of training events, including a session titled “When the adults change” which related to the engagement and interaction between staff and students, and exemplifying aspects of good behaviour.
- c) Enrolment Numbers for the new academic year were still to be finalised as a number of students, although on campus, were still to complete the enrolment process. The Principal was aiming for a 3% increase in Study Programme numbers on the previous year.
- d) A full staff meeting took place via Zoom on Wednesday 31 August 2022. During the meeting the Principal emphasised the need for staff to focus on the retention of students and the cost implications when a student left the college early. The session had been recorded for the benefit of staff who were unable to attend. The recording would be shared with governors in due course. **ACTION-PRINCIPAL**
- e) 2021/22 A Level Results – these were considered to be respectable but disappointing with grades A-C at 65%; performance had been lower in past years but more recently they had been as high as 75%-80%. Due to promotion, where the previous post-holder had decided to move on, a new programme manager was now in place to oversee A levels.
- f) 2021/22 GCSE Results – nationally, results had been poor, and the college’s results were considered to be mixed. English was above benchmark but maths performance, (an ongoing issue), had been disappointing and would need further attention and analysis.
- g) 2021/22 T Level Results – Childcare results were very good and better than the national average with 6 x A’s and 3 x B’s. However, Health & Social Care had been concerningly poor nationally and was now under extreme scrutiny, with students achieving generally only grades of D, E and ungraded; (CWA performance was similarly lower than expected). Various issues had caused this poor performance, such as an examination paper that included questions not relating to the syllabus. The Principal would be attending a meeting with the Department for Education that morning, 7 September 2022, to discuss the situation.
- h) The Board of the Queen Elizabeth hospital held a meeting on the King’s Lynn campus on Tuesday 6 September 2022. The visit by the Board included a tour of the School of Nursing Studies facility. Positive feedback had been received on the new study centre.
- i) Energy costs were currently a major concern for the 2021/22 budget. The current energy contract would expire in October 2022 and so the college would be exposed to much higher energy costs of around £250k impacting on the finances; at present there had been no indication from the government if there would be any financial assistance to help colleges or businesses. College management would be investigating ways to save energy across the campuses. The Principal was keen to manage the overall budget and had asked budget holders to withhold spending where possible.
- j) Staff Changes: Richard Bradley, Head of Faculty for Business, Humanities, Science & Computing retired in August 2022 and had been replaced by Scott Leadley, programme manager (Sport) and staff governor. Julie Howlett had recently joined the college as Head of HR, replacing Nicky Rowland who retired in August 2022. Rachel West had taken over as programme manager for A Levels and Chloe Miles, former CWA student, had replaced Wendy Watson as the SMT PA, following Wendy’s retirement in July 2022.

- k) Carers Federation Award – the college had recently received an award from the Carers Federation in recognition of the work carried out by Student Services in supporting students who care for members of their family or friends.
- l) Ofsted Inspection – under an initiative to speed up the rate of inspections in order to provide a quicker assessment of how well education was recovering from the pandemic, all colleges would be re-inspected by the summer 2025. The inspection itself remained broadly unchanged but would include a focus for colleges to demonstrate how well they understood and met the skills needs for employers. The notice period given by Ofsted in advance of an inspection had been extended from 2 days to 5 days, in order to provide additional time for inspectors to book interview sessions with employers. The view from Kerry Heathcote, Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality, following the college's area performance reviews was that the college was not securely 'good' in all areas as would have been liked, and that weak areas would need immediate focus and attention.
- m) Pay Award – *Confidential item under Paragraph 17 (2) (d) of the Instrument of Government*
- n) School of Nursing Studies – *Confidential item under Paragraph 17 (2) (d) of the Instrument of Government*

Governors asked how the college's A level performance reflected against other providers. The Principal advised that overall the performance was slightly below the GFE average. Locally, the college had performed well against schools in recent years, but this had now dipped; interruptions caused by Covid and its effect on staff attendance had been a factor noting particularly that the A level Chemistry course had suffered with staffing issues.

Confidential item under Paragraph 17 (2) (d) of the Instrument of Government

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Governors asked for an update on the Office of National Statistics (ONS) college classification review, the result of which was due at the end of September 2022. The Principal advised that it was highly probable that a change in the classification for colleges would go ahead. Once announced, the Finance & General Purposes Committee would need to review the implications of the changes and any effects this may have on the budget. The change may affect the college's abilities to borrow funding for projects and to make and retain surpluses.

Governors noted implications of an Ofsted inspection and the need for management to focus on the weaker teaching areas within the college. With regard to engagement with employers this may prove difficult in obtaining accurate labour market information and also to evidence how effective the college was in engaging with those employers. The Principal noted a meeting he had the previous day with EMSI. (EMSI provides its customers with detailed labour market information and insight). The Principal noted the anticipated changes in how colleges would be expected to collaborate with local authorities, particularly as they may change to mayoral authorities in time, and also the respective Chambers of Commerce who would be engaged to review skills needs in local areas, shape Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) and liaise with education and training providers.

Confidential item under Paragraph 17 (2) (d) of the Instrument of Government

Governors commented on the positive start to the year but were mindful of 2 immediate concerns for the college: Ofsted and budget control. Governors asked what management were proposing to do to ensure maximum retention of all students at the start of the term. The Principal advised that student retention had been highlighted in the recent full staff meeting; the Vice Principals would continue to focus on this throughout the term; managers

had received a briefing over the summer period regarding budget control, the need to minimise expenditure and to achieve and even exceed income targets; discussions would continue within the College Leadership Team (CLT) when it meets for its first meeting of the term the following week (13 September 2022).

6 Update from Committee Chairs

There were no updates from the committee chairs.

7 Feedback from AoC Network Meetings

The Clerk explained that the AoC had begun to provide committee chairs' network meetings for Finance & Audit and also Performance Review & Quality, with meetings having been held in the summer term. Additionally, the AoC also offered network meetings for chairs of corporations.

There were no updates from the recent meetings.

The Principal advised that Amanda Winnick had recently been appointed as the new AoC Area Director for the eastern region, replacing Hilary Clifford who had retired.

The Principal had signed a joint-letter along with many college principals, prepared by the AoC, to the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, Kwasi Kwarteng, regarding the impact on colleges caused by inflation and energy price increases.

8 Committee Performance, Terms of Reference & Future Business Agenda Plan

The committee reviewed the committee review proforma as prepared by the Clerk and concluded that it provided a fair and accurate summary of the Committee's performance during the past year, with no changes to the report necessary.

The Terms of Reference were considered with no changes proposed.

The proposed future business agenda plan was reviewed.

The report was noted.

9 Any Other Business

Hein van den Wildenberg noted that the last set of Management Accounts published had been for April 2022 and was concerned that no other information had been issued since. The Principal advised that he had met with the Vice Principal Corporate Services the previous day (6 September 2022) and that there was an expectation that provisional figures for the 2021/22 year would be available for the Finance & General Purposes Committee to review at its next meeting on 28 September 2022 and that all future monthly management accounts would be published by the 15th day of the following month.

David Pomfret left the meeting at 9.30 am

10 Chair's items for briefing to the Corporation

- Positive start to the 2022/23 academic year.
- Retention of students was a focus for the college, both for the benefit of the student and the college finances. This would be followed up within the PR&Q Committee.
- Timeliness of management accounts information was now expected to improve with the commencement of the new Head of Finance.
- T Level Health & Social Care performance was a concern; the slight decline in A level performance was disappointing; Maths remained a concern.
- Detailed information regarding the destinations of students needed to be confirmed.
- Ofsted inspection was likely within the next 2 years and its new focus for the college to demonstrate how well it understood and met the skills needs for employers.
- Budget pressure concerns regarding pay, income streams and energy costs.

11 Date and time of next meeting

Wednesday, 8 February 2023 at 8.30 am.

The meeting closed at 9.38 am