

**The College of West Anglia  
Minutes of  
The Chairs' Meeting  
8 September 2021  
8.30 am  
Remote Meeting – Microsoft Teams**

<b>Present</b>	Andrew Cave	Governor (Chair)
	Chris Ashman	Governor
	Sharon Cambridge	Governor
	Sam Fletcher	Governor
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal)
	Gill Rejzl	Governor
<b>Attending</b>	Stephen Halls	Clerk to the Corporation

---

*Sam Fletcher would be late for the meeting; The Clerk had arranged beforehand that Andrew Cave would Chair the meeting.*

**1 Apologies**

Sam Fletcher had advised that she would be late for the meeting. Chris Ashman had advised that he would need to leave the meeting early.

**2 Declaration of Interests**

No interests were declared.

**3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 16 June 2021**

The minutes of the meeting of 16 June 2021 were agreed as being an accurate record.

**4 Matters Arising**

There were no outstanding matters arising from previous meetings. The Chair asked the Principal to provide an update regarding the Head of Finance position in his update report.

**5 Principal's Update**

The Principal provided updates on several matters:

- a) Business Self-Assessment Reviews – The Principal thanked those governors who attended the business self-assessment reviews the previous week. The exercise had been useful and had provided a number of positive actions for the corporate services team on how best to support teaching departments and the College. The review confirmed there was a strong requirement to introduce a combined HR/Payroll/finance software system. Now with all reviews completed, teaching and support, the Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality was compiling the College's overall SAR document ready for final moderation.

- b) FE Commissioner Visit – this took place on 7 July 2021 and was led by Frances Wadsworth. The meeting was very positive. The report from the Commissioner would be included in the papers at the next Board meeting (13 October 2021). The College was now no longer under the scrutiny of the FE Commissioner and early intervention monitoring by the ESFA had also been removed.
- c) Finances – the Principal was awaiting early indications from the Finance department on the out-turn position for 2020/21. No surprises were expected, and the out-turn was expected to be similar to that forecast in the May 2021 management accounts.
- d) Applewood Nursery - Ofsted had given a “Good” grading to the nursery following its inspection in August. The draft report had been received the previous week and made good reading although it was still to be published. Two recommendations had been made, one of which was regarding the language skills of some of the staff employed and how this may not set a good example to children. Increased marketing would be engaged to help boost the numbers of children attending the nursery. It was noted that parents had supported the nursery throughout the last couple of years.
- e) School of Nursing Studies - The handover of the new facility was now expected to be in November 2021. Delays had been caused by the late identification of piling work being required, and then further difficulties in engaging a piling contractor. There had been a significant increase in project costs, which would need to be covered from the capital budget. The NMC, notified of the plans for the new school in April 2021, would still not be able to visit the College to inspect the facility until it had been completed, even though the validation was through ARU, and no validation visit date had yet been set.

*The next discussion was deemed “Confidential.”*

- f) A Level Results – these were slightly down, marginally, on the previous year; the grading process had been robust and there was no indication of any grade inflation. There has been no challenge on the College’s grading process. Direction for the next exam sitting is still to be decided by the Department for Education.
- g) Functional Skills – there were mixed results, but better than had previously been anticipated, particularly those at Level 2. Comparisons with previous years, and other colleges, would be difficult. More details would be provided for the PR&Q Committee at its meeting on 22 September 2021.
- h) GCSE Results – results were good and slightly improved on the previous year.
- i) Staff Meeting (31/8/21) – 2 main concerns were noted from the questions and comments received during the meeting: support staff job evaluation and Covid. The meeting was followed by a barbecue on each of the campuses which, due to the weather being damp and cold, was not as successful and enjoyable as it perhaps might have been.
- j) Covid – Since Monday (6/9/21) one lecturer at Cambridge and a plumbing apprentice at King’s Lynn had tested positive for Covid. Mixed guidance was now causing confusion and clarification had been requested. There was some anxiety being noticed within both staff and students. On-site testing for students had been re-introduced at the start of the term. 34 students had refused the test, and this would be followed up to understand the concerns and issues. The Principal would encourage all staff to get fully vaccinated. From October, the College would be concerned with any staff member unable to work due to having Covid and who had not been vaccinated.
- k) Head of Finance – Ginny Grace was currently working on the year-end accounts and the support staff job evaluation prior to her leaving the College on Friday 17 September 2021. The Principal was meeting regularly with the Head of HR and Vice Principal

Corporate Services to progress the job evaluation review as staff were becoming anxious and concerned about the delay. The Vice Principal was in contact with Neil Harries, the previous Head of Finance to discuss returning to the College to work on specific ad-hoc projects. A recruitment campaign over the summer period to find a replacement for the Head of Finance had been unsuccessful and the College was now looking to work with another specialist recruitment firm. Other solutions for the management of the finance department during the interim were being considered.

*Sam Fletcher joined the meeting at 9.03 am*

- l) Staff Changes – *this item was deemed “Confidential.”*
- m) WorldSkills Competition – a number of College students had been entered into the various categories. The Principal was awaiting publication of the finalists later this month.
- n) Student Numbers – Applications in advance of the start of term were around 3% up. Now with students enrolling this week, based on the same point in time last year, numbers of new 16-19 years olds were 2% up; those returning for a further year were 4% up. The expectation currently was to out-perform last year’s numbers. There have been good numbers in Construction, Animal Care (Wisbech & Cambridge) and Dog Grooming. Numbers were currently down in Media, Photography, Childcare, Sport and Uniform Services. For Sport, the Principal was concerned about the AoC’s sponsorship of KES’s sports academy for 30 students, resulting in very close competition for the College. Equine numbers continued to decline with just less than 40 students. Equine was currently under Support to Improve intervention and so would be receiving close scrutiny over coming weeks.
- o) HE – the number of new students was down for the fifth consecutive year with only 72 students joining the University Centre (87 last year). The Principal advised that all universities were rigorously recruiting students to replace international students lost through Brexit and government imposed international visa restrictions. The College would be working hard to rejuvenate its offer and find programmes that matched local needs.
- p) National Student Survey Results – an overall satisfaction level of 75% had been achieved, this being slightly higher than the ARU result, but lower than the national average. The 75% score was also down on the overall score for the College previously. BA Psycho-social which received its own individual score achieved 70%.
- q) Wisbech NetZero Project – the FE capital bid (FE Capital Transformation Fund) to raise match funding for this project had been unsuccessful. John T Hill of the CPCA was still hoping to progress this project. Funds from FDC’s unused Growth Deal funding could possibly be utilised as match funding for a Levelling Up Fund bid. The Principal would be working on this project with Ross Renton, Principal of ARU Peterborough and the CPCA.
- r) Fenland District Council Strategic Liaison Meeting – support from FDC for this meeting group was poor, noting that the Leader and Chief Executive no longer attended this bi-annual meeting.
- s) Strategic Development Fund – both bids that included the College had been unsuccessful. Indeed, no awards had been granted to any college in the East of England. However, the Principal had been invited to subsequently put in a smaller bid for a collaborative project of £50k.

*Chris Ashman left the meeting at 9.26 am*

The Chair thanked the Principal for his update. Governors noted their appreciation for the work of the Principal and offered encouragement for the projects that were currently causing concern. The Principal commented that he was particularly keen to finalise the job evaluation process for support staff and to move forward with a new construction facility at the Wisbech Campus.

Regarding the reducing numbers of HE students, Governors agreed that the current situation was being faced by all providers. The Principal considered that there would be changes to come for the HE sector, particularly with the move to more higher technical qualifications and how funding was managed.

## **6 Update from Committee Chairs**

Audit – the Committee Chair noted the Risk Workshop due to take place the following week (15 September 2021). This would be led by Paul Goddard, internal auditor from Scrutton Bland.

With no meetings held over the summer period there were no other committee updates at this time.

## **7 Any Other Business**

There were no items of other business.

## **8 Chair's items for briefing to the Corporation**

The areas of interest for Governors would be reported by the Principal in his strategic update report to the Board on 13 October 2021.

## **9 Date and time of next meeting**

Wednesday, 9 February 2022 at 8.30 am.

**The meeting closed at 9.36 am**