


**Minutes of the Corporation Board meeting held on Friday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2022 at 8.30am in the Burslem Boardroom and via Microsoft Teams**

Present:	Jeremy Cartwright, Chair (in person) David Boughey, Governor (in person) Sue Blake, Governor (via Teams) David Rogers, Governor (in person) Tom Nadin, Governor (via Teams) – from 9am Steve Sawbridge, Governor (via Teams) Rob Fisher, Governor (via Teams) – from 9.15am Jo Mountney, Governor (in person) Nikki Brady, Governor (via Teams) Lisa Capper, Principal and CEO (in person) Dave Hopley, Business Support Staff Governor (in person)		
In Attendance:	Maxine Bagshaw, Clerk to the Corporation (via Teams) Antoinette Lythgoe, Chief Financial Officer (via Teams) Nova Abela, Chief HR Officer (via Teams) Clair Parry, External Auditor, RSM (via Teams)- for item 5		
<b>Min. No.</b>		<b>Action By Whom</b>	<b>Action By When</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>		
	The Chair reminded everyone again to declare any interests that they may have on matters to be discussed. Standing declarations were noted.		
<b>2</b>	<b>WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b>		
	Apologies for absence were received from Andy McKay, Lyndsey Cherry, Sibgha Amin, Todd Abel-White, Shannon Mansfield and Paula Hastie-Roberts.		
<b>3</b>	<b>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17TH FEBRUARY 2022</b>		
	The minutes were reviewed and it was agreed that they were an accurate record of discussions.		

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	<p>AGREED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 17<sup>th</sup> February 2022.</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>		
<b>4</b>	<b>ACTION PROGRESS REPORT</b>		
	<p>The Action Progress report was presented to the Board and the Principal highlighted two of the actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Line 5 – the Principal said that this is a legacy action from last year which asked how the College strategies come together. She advised that the Board has sight of all of the strategies and the KPI dashboard in the October meeting but a slide is now provided which shows how the KPIs and strategies are linked and overlap</li> <li>• Line 4 – the Principal said that this was also an outstanding action from the previous academic year where the Board had asked to understand more about the Covid impact and the response from young people. She said that, as time has moved on, it was agreed at the last meeting that the College/Board should look at how young people feel now, post-Covid, and their response about hope for the future. Provided in the papers in an anthology of poetry, which includes poems about being in lockdown. Also, following the February Board meeting, the learners wrote letters to themselves as if they were 5 years on, giving themselves advice in a post-Covid world. In addition, the Assistant Principal Academic Partnerships and Standards has pulled together some research, as well as a commentary around the two pieces of work previously mentioned and research in the public domain from Ofsted and the DfE and also research from the work the Assistant Principal Academic Partnerships and Standards did as part of his masters, which is provided as an overview paper. The last document provided is the College’s position statement on remote delivery and Covid, which will be given to Ofsted as it talks about the impact the College has had and how the College is taking forward lessons learned through to blended learning. The Principal advised that her plan is to publish the letters, with the learner’s permission, and potentially use as a social media campaign around hope for the future, as well as getting some posters printed for the English area to show reasons for writing as part of the curriculum, so the documents presented will be actively used. One Governor said that the documents presented paint a picture of the College, particularly around the enrichment programme, and addresses some of the comments raised in the survey in relation to why a learner should choose Stoke on Trent College. He said</li> </ul>		

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	<p>that it was a good pastoral piece. The Principal added that this reflects the ethos of the College and the way the College is working with learners around barriers and issues they are facing. She said that over 60% of learners have got more than one disadvantage or barrier to learning, so this presents a strong story and would be used sensitively in any marketing campaign.</p> <p>AGREED: The Board were happy to note the content of the update provided and the substantial reports and literacy work provided which gave insight to the work of the College.</p>		
<b>5</b>	<b>2020/21 ANNUAL ACCOUNTS</b>		
	<p>The Chief Financial Officer introduced this item and advised that there are 8 different items for the Board to review, many of which the Board has seen before.</p> <p><u>PWC/ESFA Funding Audit Management letter</u></p> <p>The Chief Financial Officer said that this has been received; however, it is still in draft form and the College is currently waiting for the final form to be issued. She said that, after all the work and considerable effort on everyone's part, there is a funding clawback of £233 in total; however, she said that this masks some of the areas in Apprenticeships where the College could have done better and the area of particular focus is off the job recording. The Chief Financial Officer said that there are three recommendations in the management letter and they all relate to off the job training; they are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The College should have a more robust plan for how off the job takes place</li> <li>• The College should have a more specific and clear commitment statement</li> <li>• Where apprentices complete or withdraw and the off the job evidence isn't as clear as it should be, the College could contact the ESFA and pay back the funds</li> </ul> <p>The Chief Financial Officer said that the College knows and is taking actions in relation to this, which has been noted in the response. She said that there is a minor item in relation to Provider Data Self-Assessment Toolkit (PDSATs) but the College is looking at PDSATs all the time. She said that, overall, this is a good result for the College; however, it is important for the College not to be complacent; therefore, in order to test out some of the improvements and remedial work that has been put in place, an internal audit of the Apprenticeship provision will be taking place in June 2022, which will be carried out by ICCA. The Chair commented that it is highly likely that the College will get a repeat audit from the ESFA. The Chief Financial Officer confirmed this and said it will probably take place in the autumn.</p>		

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Reservation of Rights letter

The Chief Financial Officer said that Lloyds bank alerted the College in March that they had been testing the covenants and the College could have been in breach as at October 2021 and January 2022. The reason the bank is saying that the College has breached its covenants is due to the bank using the College's July Management Accounts for the covenant breach testing, whereas the College used the audited Financial Statements, albeit they hadn't been signed off. The Chief Financial Officer said that if the July Management Accounts are used then the College breaches its covenants; however, if the Financial Statements are used, the College doesn't breach its covenants. She said that there was dialogue with the bank saying that the Financial Statements will demonstrate that the College has not breached its covenants and to bear with the College until they are signed off; however, as the College couldn't get any finalisation dates from the ESFA or PWC, Lloyds bank issued the letter within days of conclusion of the audit.

The Chief Financial Officer said that she has spoken to Trudy Hughes at Lloyds bank who advises that the College has breached its leverage covenant which relates to making sure the College's gross debt is not greater than 3.5 times the College's EBITDA. She added that from January 2023 this goes down to 3 times the EBITDA. She said that this covenant in other years has not been an issue but due to difficulties, particularly with energy costs this year, it has been difficult not to breach the leverage covenant. The Chief Financial Officer said that, rather than continue to have discussions with Lloyds about whether they should use the audited Financial Statements or the July Management Accounts, the College is working with the bank in a positive way. The Chief Financial Officer said that Trudy' view was that the College has managed its financial position better than most in the past two years, as the College has not breached any covenants, whereas a number of her other clients have done already and she anticipates many of her clients with breach, going forward, due to the energy crisis; therefore, Trudy said that she would waive the covenant breaches for this period and temporarily amend the covenant, moving forward, to ensure the College doesn't breach them on the clear understanding that the College manages its position and costs. The Chief Financial Officer said that Trudy has taken comfort that the College has secured an energy deal with the City Council, so the College knows what its energy costs are likely to be going forward, which many other providers won't.

The Chief Financial Officer said that she was disappointed as the College tests the covenants rigorously every month, so this was a surprise when the bank said that the College was in breach; however, it is better for the College to move forward

constructively. She said that the thing that made the difference was the release of the cash sweep provision and winning the AEB business case. She said that the July Management Accounts didn't anticipate that the College would win the business case, as the College was being prudent; however, the Financial Statements demonstrate that the College did win the business case. The Chief Financial Officer said that this is the College's current position and that she will be able to update the Transformation, Finance & Resources Committee with more information at the June meeting.

The Chair asked, in terms of having a waiver, is this something that is held on record and could be used as evidence in the future. The Chief Financial Officer said that this is definitely a warning and the College needs to manage its financial position but each year is quite different. She said that no-one anticipated Covid or the energy crisis, so it depends on the circumstances at the time. She said that if an issue is outside of the College's control, then the banks tend to understand; however, if the issue is within the College's control such as management of costs and delivery of income, then the bank may take a different view. The Principal said that the key issue around the October and January breaches is that the bank was using the July Management Accounts, not the Financial Statements – if they had the Financial Statements, then this wouldn't have happened. The reason the bank didn't have the Financial Statements was due to the management of Apprenticeship funding and compliance, so it is the College's fault; however, there is a clear reason that is being actively managed and there is a clear rationale on how this is being managed. The Principal added that the College also has the benefit of being able to open up the conversation about the April and July covenant due to the energy costs spiralling and recruitment post-Covid not being where it was budgeted for, as the recruitment on Apprenticeships and adult hasn't been where it needs to be nor was it in previous years. The Chair commented that it is significant that the relationship with the bank has been good all through and Trudy has been a consistent individual, which has been helpful. Another Governor commented that finalising the agreement with the council to get a joint energy supply is important, if not critical, to keeping the right side of the line. He asked where the College has got to with this. The Chief Financial Officer said that the energy supply is in place with the council, she is just pressing them for the documentation. She said that the College has sent things back electronically to say that the College agrees and the supplies have switched but the College is just waiting to see a contract. She added that it is not just the energy costs that are a concern, she said that the College needs to make sure it delivers its income and there are still some income risks post-Covid for this year, so the College is driving hard to make sure

it delivers on the income targets too.

Financial Statements / Letters of Representation / Regularity Audit Self-Assessment Questionnaires

The Chief Financial Officer said that the Financial Statements are the same as previously presented to Board, apart from a couple of mentions in relation to the Reservation of Rights letter. She said that the same applies to the Letters of Representation and that there are no non-standard clauses in the Letters of Representation, every is as expected. This is the same for the regularity audit, both for the standard regularity and the Covid statements.

Audit findings document

Clair Parry from RSM directed the Board to her report and highlighted the following items:

- Page 3 contains the Executive Summary and RSM will be issuing an unmodified Financial Statements and regularity opinion
- Page 4 summaries the output in terms of what RSM have found in their work with two potential misstatements. The one that effects profits was in relation to RSM's work on funding, which is consistent with what the ESFA funding audit found in terms of apprentices off the job training. She said that the actual error RSM found was only £2300 and the way RSM project it made it an unadjusted error judgemental of 76, which is still not material and a very broad-brush projection. The ESFA in their audit extended their testing and did more than RSM, so their error is more precise.
- In terms of disclosures, Clair said that RSM liaise with the College and went through some disclosures and amendments in the accounts, which were put through.
- In terms of findings, there were control points coming out of the work relating to funding work. Clair took the opportunity to remind the Board that this changed last year and was brought in for the first time by the changes in ACOP last year. She said that this is a new set of work that RSM did use funding specialists for. She said that the control points are consistent with the ESFA funding audit.
- In terms of risks identified at the planning stage and output, there was nothing that came out of the following: journals testing, estimates, non-routine contractions, pension scheme. The income testing did find an error, which was extrapolated and it was deemed material. She said that the delay in signing off the accounts was due to RSM holding off to make sure that the ESFA, in their funding audit, didn't find a material error that would need adjusting in the accounts.
- Reviewed going concern position, forecast and

	<p>disclosures. As previously mentioned, the bank recently notified the College of a breach and the disclosures were amended in the accounts to take account of those post year-end breaches but with the waivers and support from the bank in place, it was concluded that the going concern basis is still appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some work done on staff costs and capital – nothing to report on this.</li> <li>• Recommendations on page 9 through to 12, most of which relate to funding. Clair said that management have acknowledged and have already started putting in place the actions relating to those recommendations. Only a couple of recommendations didn't relate to funding – one on some fixed asset capitalisation which was not in line with policy, which was only £2300 and the second in relation to old creditors which RSM recommends resolution.</li> </ul> <p>(Clair Parry left the meeting)</p> <p><u>Annual Report from the Audit Committee</u></p> <p>The Chief Financial Officer said that this has already been presented to Board and is unchanged.</p> <p>The Chief Financial Officer requested approval of the Financial Statements, the Letters of Representation and all other documents as presented. The Board were happy to approve. The Board took the opportunity to thank the Chief Financial Officer for her work on this.</p> <p>AGREED: to note the content of the update provided and to approve the Financial Statements, Letters of Representation, Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaires and the Annual Report from the Audit Committee as presented.</p>		
<b>6</b>	<b>STUDENT VOICE</b>		
	<p>The Executive Director of Student and Digital Services presented his report and advised that this is presented to the Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee, as well as the Board as an update on Learner Voice and enrichment activity, including levels of participation and noting in the report the College winning the national award in recognition of the peer mentor scheme, which is crucial in supporting learners with their mental health and wellbeing.</p> <p>The Executive Director of Student and Digital Services highlighted a few points from his report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Learner Support Co-ordinator and one of the Student Governors have been doing targeted work with the teams looking at where enrichment participation is</li> </ul>		

	<p>lower, trying to find out the reasons why and then putting on targeted sessions with groups to try and improve this. Examples provided in the report presented. The Executive Director of Student and Digital Services said that this has led to much increased participation in optional enrichment programme activities that the College operates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In terms of Learner Voice, the College has continued to retain a very active Student Council and decision making body throughout the academic year. The last Learner Voice of the year is taking place on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> May</li> <li>• Forming a Learner Voice group on Stoke on Trent College Goes Green, which is the College’s campaign around sustainability and looking at where learners can lead on projects and events. The Challenge Stoke programme, which has been focussed on homelessness in the City, will now be focussed on climate change and action. The Executive Director of Student and Digital Services said that a couple of concerns were raised by students during a meeting yesterday where learners would like the College to tackle the use of single use plastics and recycling in general, as well as making sure the College’s waste disposal is ethical and not contributing to issues such as landfill.</li> <li>• Student Union elections next week. There are three students standing for the position of Student Union President, one student each for the Vice President for Caudon and Burslem and 12 students standing for 6 positions for Officers on the Executive Committee. The Executive Director of Student and Digital Services said that there are a lot of students who are returning to the College next year wanting to be part of the Committee which leads the Student Union. He advised that he would let the Board know about the Student President result, as this individual will join the Corporation Board as an elected member, then in the autumn term the College has an open application process for the other Student Governor position.</li> <li>• Provided in the papers is an update on ‘you said, we did’ so Governors can see the progress that is being made in terms of what students have asked for.</li> </ul> <p>The Executive Director of Student and Digital Services said that the video presented focusses on the next steps and future careers of the students.</p> <p>Following the video, the Chair commented on the Safeguarding paper included within the Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee section and the reference to 2-3 students with very complex issues. He commented that he was worried that the Board might be getting a biased picture. He asked if there was a</p>		
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	<p>way of getting to see the other side. The Executive Director of Student and Digital Services said that he could provide the Board with case studies of some of the work mentors and the counselling team have been doing with young people at the College. The Chair said that it would be good to have case studies for the Board to review. The Executive Director of Student and Digital Services added that knife crime is an issue in the area and is one of the reasons the Knife Angel came to the City. As part of this, there was a lot of tutorial activity which was pushed out to the students and a number of students went to see the Knife Angel. He said that through induction, the use of Behaviour Support Officers, random screenings, engaging PCSOs and drug dogs etc the College is emphasising the point with students that the College is a safe space and there are certain things that you can't do or bring into the College. This is also added to by having tough disciplinary sanctions if people breach any of the aforementioned.</p> <p>AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.</p>	Executive Director of Student and Digital Services	July 2022
<b>7</b>	<b>PRINCIPAL/CEO'S REPORT INCLUDING STAFF SURVEY</b>		
	<p>The Principal introduced her presentation and following key matters were noted:</p> <p><u>Highlights since the last meeting</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The ESFA annual conversation with the ESFA and a representative from the FE Commissioner office took place on Monday and went well. Both the Chair and the Principal reflected on how strategic the meeting was and the Principal said that she thought they went away with a sense of where the College is at, the College's future direction and where the risks are and how these are being managed. The Principal advised the Board there is a letter that will be published following this meeting, which is shared with the Minister, which directly summarises the outcomes of the strategic conversation. She added that there is a new FE Commissioner representative who attended who doesn't know the College and had the QIP from early 2021/22 which was replaced with smarter QIP and she has been invited back to visit. She is also new to the FE Commissioners office. They are a leader from FE and they are informally attached to the College.</li> <li>• The College has achieved funding audit closure with a positive outcome.</li> <li>• The College has achieved a stable interim management team and is building on capacity. The Principal said that this is not the same as permanent management but the College is operating satisfactorily with this.</li> <li>• Management coaching and Mayvin – the Principal said</li> </ul>		

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that the College has continued with the approach around one team doing Mayvin coaching with the next tier down in order to build a coherent team across the College, including corporate services, HR and delivery teams. The Executive Director of Student and Digital Services said that this was a good opportunity to bring the team together in a different format and allow for some strategic thinking outside of the operational space. The Principal added that a different company has been sourced to carry out some insight work and work around being an effective senior postholder team for the Chief Financial Officer, Chief HR Officer and the new Deputy Principal and building one team approach among senior postholders. The senior postholders have signed up to this.

- Preparing for Ofsted full inspection – bottom up approach to the QIP. The Principal said that this gets stronger every week and the feedback has been good / positive
- T Level bids capital submitted for Construction and Health.
- Launched Digital and Creative Hub with the LEP and some VIPs, which was a positive event.
- Second place for peer mentor scheme at the National Association Student Services event
- Two new providers for Tuition scheme focussed on maths and English and workplace skills. The Principal said that this was to give some outside engagement / energy, with the focus not just on maths and English but preparation for work, which will help with delivery and brings something new into the College.

#### Strategic partnerships and collaborations

The Principal said that the majority of this was discussed at the Governor away day. She said that the ones presented today are more formalised, with agreement/Board memberships or events taking place; however, there are more relationships and collaborations going on, particularly around employers. She advised that the College is working with a careers and enterprise company on a STEM campaign, as well as getting a better relationship with AAT again around how the College can work with their parents and learners and how they will use the College's facilities. She provided the Board with an update in relation to her conversation with Newcastle and Stafford College's Group about the Institute of Technology who advised that the College is a partner 'in waiting' due to the College not having a good Ofsted rating. She added that she has also had a meeting with Staffordshire University about partnerships in relation to HE and Teacher Education.

Policy context

The Principal assured the Board that the College is on top of this. She said that some of the policies will bring issues to the College but there are also some opportunities.

Challenges:

- Context of high deprivation
- Post Covid impact – attendance, CAGs/TAGs, mental health, NEETs up for year 12 age range, not knowns 6.6% (up from 3%), 0.1 to 1 job employment factor adults and young people. The Principal said that the NEETs problem had got bigger in Stoke on Trent and it is known that there are lost children who aren't in employment, education or training. She said that there is some money from the City this summer to do some investigation into this and some transition work in order to try and engage young people that the City has identified.
- Challenge with capacity for business development. The Principal said that the College doesn't have the capacity for bid writing after taking out the senior post last year. She said that the bid writing is happening at Executive level and the College needs to look at the affordability of this and whether some freelance bid writers could be engaged to help with this.

Opportunities:

- The City currently doesn't have an Adult Skills and Employment Strategy; consequently, the Principal has been asked to develop one on a working group; however, she said that, with shared prosperity and multiple projects announced, there is a question as to how the City will 'divvy' up the money.
- The College could deliver Adult Skills for the City in a more strategic way. The Principal said that the College is working with the funding agency and range of partners on how to do this. She said that the Deputy Principal role is critical in delivering this.
- Developed first draft business plan for developing high needs work. The Principal said that the City has upped the College's numbers and the numbers can up again once the College had started on this.

Initiatives and policy-led the College can go for:

- Prison education CFO
- Strategic Development Fund and Institute of Technology partnership CEO
- Multiply CEO
- Tuition fund CEO
- Skills Act – accountability measures Adult – coming 2<sup>nd</sup>

	<p>consultation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• T Levels and Higher Technicals CFO CEO</li> </ul> <p><u>Recruitment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Study programme – 1700 budget minimum (rounded from 1669, including business case of 69). Target up from 1526 funded pre-pandemic</li> <li>• Adult – c7000 aims as budget minimum. Public funded (c2500 learners) steady state based on allocation</li> <li>• High Needs 65 budget minimum. Up from 57 – further opportunity for growth</li> <li>• Apprenticeship starts 265 up from 219 in 2020/21 with 661 cohort.</li> </ul> <p>Issues around marketing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issue 1 – Marketing capacity is/was very poor with no college management and leadership position in post at area or senior team level following changes last year – plan in place to rectify</li> <li>• Issue 2 – establish regular standard reporting on recruitment for all cohorts</li> </ul> <p>The Principal said that the College still has a way to go on study programme numbers, as there is still around 900 study programme learners yet to recruit to get to the minimum budget. She said that this is significant but the College is 200 ahead of last year. She added that the College needs to get its market share back up and the issues in Marketing are hampering this, so this is the focus now.</p> <p>One Governor challenged the study programme numbers and asked what the College is currently funded for study programme numbers, as if the College is increasing study programme numbers, is the College able to sustain this financially. The Principal said that the College has got a business case in with the ESFA at the moment and the minimum budget is very close to allocation; however, the College can increase class sizes to grow, and go for funded growth at year end and for 16-18 traineeships, and the College can grow in 16-18 traineeships once it has exhausted study programme allocation. She said that the College is a lot clearer on targets than it was in the past and this is being managed against the College’s allocation and budget so that there is a minimum in the budget and an aspirational target for recruitment that can be managed through a growth piece. The Governor asked what the College is funded for on the lagged funding model and is this growth outside of this. Principal pointed to the slide pack which shows the year on year numbers and allocations. The Principal said that the allocation is 1600 and there is also a business case, which will take the College to c.1700 and this is what is put in as a</p>		
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<p>minimum budget target and anything above this can be funded through growth if the College gets to a certain threshold; however, if the College exhausts allocation, the College can get as much growth as it would like on 16-18 Traineeships, which is also helpful mid-year as those programmes don't have to be full programmes. The Principal said that the funding is not as good but it gives the College an opportunity to engage young people in order to get them work ready and join the College the following year for a full programme. One member of the Board asked, in terms of the financial piece, what is the model for values of courses increasing. He asked if there is something that links to inflation so the College gets more next year for delivering some courses it hasn't this year. The Principal said that, with study programmes, the funding has increased for the next academic year but this came with a 'stinger' of having to delivery 40 more hours per learner, so instead of 540 hours, it has gone up to 580 hours. The College looked at where it is already delivering 40 more hours and this has been formalised and made part of the established programme, rather than additional. The Principal said that the College is also using a blended approach by using digital, which has been done through lockdown, so that students can build up their hours on their timetabled programme by self-study using digital, practicing skills etc. She added that the College is also making sure enrichment and work placements are explicitly timetabled to the right levels and maximising programme hours around qualifications. She informed the Board that AEB funding is different – different sizes of programme that the College can get different funding for; however, the College's allocation is its allocation and it can be delivered how the College likes. She added that the College can get growth in adult too and, in terms of Apprenticeships, there is more delineation around what each apprentice draws down from funding – some Standards in Apprenticeships can be worth £20k, whereas other ones are only worth £4k depending on the complexity of the Standard and what is involved. What the College has to do is ensure that it has the right Apprenticeship programme for the right employer for the right learners. The Principal said that the College can look strategically about doing more high value Apprenticeships but the reason they earn more is that they are more complex and there is more to deliver. One Governor said that he would like to see this unpicked more and would like a further conversation with the Chief Financial Officer and Principal to look into this more outside of the meeting.</p> <p>The Principal said that the College needs to be recruiting on study programmes and there is a lot to do between now and the start of the next academic year. She said that the GCSE piece is different this year due to learners sitting exams – last year there were TAGs, which meant more learners stayed in school, as there were slightly improved grades for the type of learner</p>	<p>Steve Sawbridge / Chief Financial Officer / Principal</p>	<p>June 2022</p>
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that is being recruited at Stoke on Trent College, which had a potential impact on the College's recruitment. This year, the learners may not get the grades as good as they would like and exams are a block for some students who attend the College; consequently, footfall may change due to the change in approach to GCSEs this year. Staff will be out at all schools on GCSE results day.

In terms of the tables presented, the Principal said that she had been very careful to ensure the target for Apprenticeships was not 'overegged' as per last year, so for the Apprenticeships funding for 2022/23 this has only been put at £1.8 million, not £2.8 million, which was originally planned and was overambitious. The adult allocation table presented is steady.

### Performance

#### 16-18

- Retention 91.4% overall (+5% 2020/21) and just above 2018/19 national rate
- Attendance 84% overall, which is in line with 2020/21 but below target; however, the gap between vocational and English/maths halved to 6%
- GCSE English (2020/21 108, 22% TAG, 25% NR) predicted 21%
- GCSE maths (2020/21 148, 26% TAG, 17% NR) predicted 18%
- Impact of two years of disrupted education – seeing this in exam anxiety
- 2 out of 3 of the College's cohort require English/maths (GFEC average 48%)

#### 19+

- Retention 96.8% overall (+2% 2020/21) and above 2018/19 national rate
- Attendance 84% overall, which is just below 2020/21; however, English and maths attendance has increased by 2%
- GCSE English (2020/21 48, 74% NR 46%) predicted 51%
- GCSE maths (2020/21 69, 70% NR 38%) predicted 38%

#### High Needs

- Retention 98.2% overall (+1% 2020/21)
- Attendance 86% overall with English/maths within 2% of vocational

The Principal said that GCSE English and maths is an important part of the offer. She said that the College has not had a Head of English, maths and ESOL, it has been looked after by the Assistant Principal Academic Partnerships and Standards

through the academic year. GCSE English was on TAG last year and this year the College is predicted 21% - the national rate pre-Covid was 25%. The Principal said that, given the fact that 54% of young people come to the College without English or maths and 43% come without both, the College is not far from the national rate. With regards to GCSE maths, the Principal said that the predictions have been made by the team. In adult, there is a dip in predicted, so the team is trying to understand why this is compared to last year. The Principal said that engagement and attendance in adult has been challenging this year due to Covid. High needs is going well and attendance is holding at around 84%; although there have been some attendance peaks and troughs, it is a positive story overall.

#### Estates and capital

The Principal informed the Board that the DfE are very happy with the proposals and felt they were in line with ambition. The hope is to get these over the line as soon as possible. Care needs to be taken on the maths funding and financials around this due to the current state of play and also inflation, costs of supplies etc.

#### Action May / June 2022

- Ramp up adult provision for the last 8 weeks of term so that the College can get to 97% threshold – this is currently a risk. The Principal said that this has been started too late in the year, and with the economic situation and availability of low paid low skilled work, it has been very hard to get adults to do courses. She said that marketing was also very limited as stated earlier, so reach has been an issue.
- The recruitment campaign for learners is ongoing
- Get capital over the line, await/plan T Level and SDF
- Set budget and start Financial and Business Development Strategy for the next 3-5 years
- Appoint Deputy Principal, Director of Marketing and PR and in-house designer, Head of STEM, Head of maths and English, Head of IT
- Apprenticeships
- Develop Tuition fund year 3 and catch up programme for next year, which is a significant piece of work and needs to be done now.
- Ofsted journey ongoing
- Continuing with culture and engagement piece

#### Top risks and issues

Existing risks:

- Ofsted

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Financial pressures including Covid impact and impact on adult 97% threshold, Apprenticeships plan</li> <li>• Capacity – Deputy Principal, Business development / commercial and Marketing</li> </ul> <p>Near future risks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learner recruitment</li> <li>• Second Apprenticeships audit</li> <li>• Capital projects</li> <li>• Covenants and PMO KPIs</li> </ul> <p>It was noted by the Board that capacity is an issue at the College, especially after changes last year. One Governor asked if it is difficult to attract candidates to positions. The Principal said that the College has not put out a huge number of vacancies due to managing finances but, for the few vacancies, it is hard to attract to roles. She said that there is a real concern in FE in general around this and pay and there are current discussions around pay award for FE colleges. In terms of the Director of Marketing and PR role, the College is trying to market this but the worry is that the College won't recruit and this is the same for the Head of English and maths, as these roles are difficult to recruit to and the jobs come at a premium.</p> <p><u>Staff Survey</u></p> <p>The Chief HR Officer introduced her presentation and advised that this is an update in terms of staff engagement, with a focus around the staff survey. She said that the key was that the College was establishing a baseline for new leadership from 2022.</p> <p>Measure of Staff Engagement: The Chief HR Officer provided a summary of the measures of staff engagement over the recent past, which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff Satisfaction Survey – April 2020</li> <li>• Check Ins Pulse Survey – April 2021 – Board had oversight of in regard to both staff and management</li> <li>• Pulse Survey – March 2022 – focussed around the early engagement of new senior staff</li> <li>• Staff Satisfaction Survey – April 2022 – run on a bi-annual basis</li> <li>• #Bettertogether Balance Scorecard</li> </ul> <p>Pulse Survey on early engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive measures across all aspects that the College was focussing on</li> <li>• Over 80% measure of positive introduction and start of new Principal/CEO</li> <li>• 78% positive measures in terms of vision and ethos piece, emphasising clear communication and</li> </ul>		
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	<p>engagement of team</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In terms of short to medium term focus, 85% positive measures with regards to understanding across the team</li> </ul> <p>Context of 2022 Full Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey completed shortly after the Principal's appointment to post</li> <li>• Potential for some reactions to be reflective of the interruptions/changes in leadership that were made in the last year, specifically the departure of the Deputy Principal after a short time in post.</li> <li>• Challenging times with FEC intervention and level of scrutiny impacting all levels of the organisation</li> <li>• Ofsted inspection, which is due and the whole organisation is on a level of alert for this.</li> <li>• Pay policy is an ongoing issue for the College and sector and financial pressures, which are having an impact on people's lives at the moment. The Chief HR Officer said that the College has committed to the first phase of implementation of the Pay policy, which was over two phases – second phase happening in October 2022, so some staff have not been impacted by this as of yet.</li> </ul> <p>The 2022 Survey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online survey available to all staff, hosted by the College</li> <li>• Available for staff to complete over a 10-day period</li> <li>• Reflective of and consistent with 2020 survey format in order to have a comparison</li> <li>• 6 categories and question format with response options, along with free text response options</li> <li>• 238 responses – just over 55% engaging in this, which is down on the previous survey, which was over 75% engagement.</li> <li>• Table provides detail in terms of engagement in categories of post and percentages.</li> <li>• Higher proportion of support staff engaged in survey but also shows that the survey was reflective of the main staff base across the organisation</li> <li>• In terms of responses by location, the Chief HR Officer said that she hadn't looked at the split between campus – Cauldon has a higher proportion of staff, so there is potentially a 50/50 split in terms of reflecting views across both campuses.</li> </ul> <p><u>Summary findings – Leadership and Management:</u></p> <p>Green rated and areas of improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaders provide clear messaging of the College's strategy, mission and goals</li> <li>• Managers and teams are committed to and empowered to making improvements</li> </ul>		
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidence about future prospects of the College</li> </ul> <p>Red rated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Management of change, consult staff on change</li> </ul> <p>The Chief HR Officer said that, in terms of context, the College has had a disrupted time over the last couple of years, as well as with more recent changes. In terms of management of change, the disruption and interim measures, whilst necessary, hasn't landed well or made sense to the staff. She said that the College is in a position to make a step forward in responding to staff concerns around this.</p> <p><u>Summary findings – Internal Communications</u></p> <p>Green rated and areas of improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular communication from senior leadership team to staff</li> <li>• Staff are briefed about major issues</li> <li>• Information needed to operate/do the job</li> </ul> <p>The Chief HR Officer said that, whilst this is good, there are some further improvements the College can make around this, which has already been identified. She said that it is good the College is getting a positive response to this but the College is not complacent and knows where more can be done.</p> <p>Amber rated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My manager responds appropriately when I raise issues</li> </ul> <p>The Chief HR Officer said that this is more of a local level line manager response as there are some legacy issues such as making sure there is clarity of roles and a sense of structure. The College needs to look at how it can provide clarity to managers in their role in the communication process.</p> <p><u>Summary findings – Support and Encouragement</u></p> <p>Green rated and areas of improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Views are treated with respect</li> <li>• Encouraged to try new things</li> </ul> <p>The Chief HR Officer said that the cultural piece is really starting to show through in the survey in terms of behaviours and ideas coming forward from staff, which is very positive.</p> <p>Amber rated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I can talk to my managers about issues</li> <li>• College supports and promotes EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion)</li> </ul>		
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<p>The Chief HR Officer said that there is some unpicking to do around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and the promotion and embedding of this, so this will be a focus, moving forward.</p> <p><u>Summary findings – Teamworking and Team Performance Review</u></p> <p>Green rated and areas of improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None – this remains a good area for the College – there is no decline in this area</li> </ul> <p>Amber rated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team working, team meetings, effective actions to problems as a team, tensions being dealt with effectively, planning and discussing</li> </ul> <p>The Chief HR Officer said that interdepartmental working is where the College needs to put some focus. She said that there is potentially some confusion in terms of structural interim arrangements that have been in place for the later part of last year that have had an impact. This is an area of focus for the College.</p> <p><u>Summary findings – Customer Care and Responsiveness</u></p> <p>Green rated and areas of improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguarding is effective</li> <li>• Team SOTC has a good reputation – low scores c30%</li> </ul> <p>Amber rated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being responsive to community needs</li> </ul> <p>The Chief HR Officer said that it is good to see, through the staff survey, that it is reflective of other measures the College has in place in relation to Safeguarding being effective and in terms of the College’s good reputation. She said that this is starting to have an impact in terms of reputational improvement. Whilst not a significant difference from the last survey, there are some good ratings and there is an area to pick up in terms of the response to community needs.</p> <p><u>Summary findings – College Specific Statements</u></p> <p>Green rated and areas of improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommend this a good place to work</li> <li>• Live by our values and we are authentic</li> </ul> <p>Amber rated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work life balance</li> <li>• Considerate of welfare of staff</li> <li>• Support for staff when there are issues</li> </ul>		
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The Chief HR Officer said that the cultural values piece is showing through in the survey in terms of authenticity and being aligned with the College values. The survey identified some ambers in relation to welfare, work life balance and support for staff. She said that, whilst this is something the College does well, there is further improvement that can be made with regards to supporting staff.

Summary findings – free text option:

The Chief HR Officer said that these are categorised into key themes. She said that the free text was focused on what the College could do to improve and these results show consistency with the data and those areas that have required intervention and focus.

Conclusions and Summary:

- The new Principal/CEO has had an impact on the vision and mission, as well as on communications and engagement. The changes made have been noticeable to staff.
- Potential reaction to dramatic changes to leadership – Principal/CEO and Deputy Principal leaving at the same point and after a short tenure for the latter. Leaders and managers across the College are focused on moving on the conversation forward and not dwelling on the past, creating a new narrative. Whilst the survey might reflect some of the reactions, the College is already changing the narrative and an impact is being seen.
- FEC scrutiny and Ofsted pressure which is impacting all levels of the organisation. The Chief HR Officer said that the senior team have an awareness of this and it is about how this is managed by leaders and how the College supports staff through this process.
- Pay issue connected to perceived market value and workload. The Chief HR Officer said that, whilst the College has set out a new Pay Strategy and Policy, it is a specific issue for the College based on legacy issue, as the College has been held back in terms of the pay piece and financial interventions.

Considerations and commitment to action:

- Culture of one team, building teams, empowered teams and individuals. This has already been identified in terms of interdepartmental working and had good feedback in terms of the top down approach and communication which is having an impact. The focus is on interdepartmental ways of working and empowerment of teams.
- Move away from reactive short term and focus on bigger prize and sustainable success and growth.

- Pay and reward – further opportunity to progress with pay and reward. The implementation of the Pay Policy is underway and the second phase of this will take place in October 2022. The College acknowledges that this is not a job done and is just the beginning
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion – promotion and embedding into culture.
- Internal communication – multi-faceted approach to reach all groups of staff.
- Reputation improvement and management – the College is making inroads already.
- Staff wellbeing – something to focus on more in terms of thinking about the ongoing impact of, in particular, the pandemic and how the College can support staff. Working on a strategy and programme around staff wellbeing and how to communicate this to staff.

The Chief HR Officer moved on to discuss the detailed behind the summary presented. She said that, in terms of measures applied, there is a lot of green rating, which is positive, and there is minimal red, which paints a picture of a relatively positive engagement and progress being made across all areas of strategy and areas of focus. The reputational piece is a key focus for the College – what is the College communicating as its offer and being the first choice for.

The Chair of the Board said that he was concerned about the overall engagement rate which is 55% down from around 70% in the previous survey. One Governor said that, in terms of the measures, are these the same measures that the College has always used or were they agreed pre or post the survey. The Chief HR Officer said that the College has taken a consistent approach with regards to those measures, using the same measures as the previous survey. In terms of green and ambers, the College has factored in where staff disagree or strongly disagree into the measures. She said that, at this point in time, it was felt it was not appropriate to change from the previous measures and to continue to measure the survey in this way. Moving forward, the College might look to change the measures in future but, due to the changes the College has experience in terms of turnover and new leadership, it was important to keep consistency. The Chief HR Officer added that the College is over the 50% mark, although it is lower than the previous survey engagement. She said that, when speaking to colleagues in other colleges and other sectors, the feedback is that this is acceptable and good measure of response when it comes to staff surveys. The Principal added that, when the last survey was done, there was a real push on it, with a lot of campaigning; however, none of this was done for this survey. The survey was opened for two weeks and extended for approximately two more days. The survey was intended as a

<p>baseline for the new leadership so that the feedback can be reviewed without being pushed too much. In addition, directly proceeding this, the College ran the Pulse survey for a week, which got a similar level of response and showed the information about communication, vision, direction of the College. Also, the week before this, the Quality team put out a survey for Ofsted questions, as the College wanted to see what would come back in case Ofsted inspected. Consequently, there were a few surveys going out albeit for different things; therefore, there was a question about whether the staff survey is sent out now as a baseline so that the senior team could see the impact of the changes being brought in, in terms of the vision, and this was the choice that was made. The Principal said that a decision was made not to tear up the old questions and start again, and get continuity. The Principal added that she is also used to doing surveys against a benchmark/industry norm, as well as measuring against the last survey. This has not been done due to costs; however, for the next survey, a discussion will take place with regards to whether the College would like to go for a standardised national benchmarking piece or stick with the current survey. The Principal commented that she was disappointed with the 54% return rate but none of the normal activities were done and the senior team know, from anecdotal feedback from communications, that not everyone reads their emails, so not every member of staff sees the communications or can get to a staff briefing – this will be built into a new communication strategy with different facets included. She said that it was useful to see some of the feedback, so that the College can build on this as a baseline under new leadership, as if the College has waited another 6 months, there wouldn't have been any intelligence gathered. The Board commented that the College needs to make sure the next survey is more widely responded to.</p> <p>The Chair said that, thinking back to the previous survey, there is much more positive feedback about the strategic understanding and top-level decision making. One Governor asked about the response rate and whether the drop was consistent across the staffing areas, as support staff seems low. He said that this will have impacted on the results provided. He said that, when talking about change, the College will get a different view from support staff compared to management. He asked if this was a significant shift from previous years. The Chief HR Officer said that she did not have this data to hand but would have a look into this. The Principal said that the College will do some other Pulse surveys, before the next staff survey, with some particular cohorts and particular questions to make sure the senior team are checking in. One Governor said that the most important thing is to respond and action – getting each manager to own each departmental action and make sure it is followed through. The Chief HR Officer added that the pay</p>		
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	<p>piece should not be underestimated, as this is still a big issue in the College.</p> <p>The Chair asked for the Chief HR Officer to share a list of the free text answers with the Board so that Governors can get a sense of it.</p> <p>AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.</p> <p>(Rob Fisher left the meeting)</p>	Chief HR Officer	June 2022
<b>8</b>	<b>INTERNAL AUDIT SERVICE – APPOINTMENT RECOMMENDATION</b>		
	<p>The Audit Committee Chair introduced this item and advised that tender requests had gone out to 12 firms; however, only three responded and out of those three only two were interviewed, one of which was ICCA, the College’s existing Internal Auditors. Each member on the interview panel scored the two Internal Audit firms and each member put ICCA at the top; therefore, the recommendation to Board is that ICCA should remain the College’s Internal Auditors for the next three years.</p> <p>AGREED: to approve the re-appointment of ICCA for a 3-year contract commencing in 2022/23</p> <p>(Tom Nadin and Nikki Brady left the meeting)</p>		
<b>9</b>	<b>COLLEGE PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKING</b>		
	<p>The Principal introduced this item and advised that this was in response to an action noted at a meeting last year. She said that two MIDES reports have been pulled together and have previously been presented to the Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee for review. She informed the Board that the MIDES report compares the College to other colleges in the region and nationally. The College’s profile is learners who come in with less skills, particularly in English and maths. She advised the Board that, when the College keeps its students, it does well with them in terms of progression; however, retention is a red flag. Some of the retention issues are explained i.e. if a learner is doing English and maths and they aren’t retained, then this is three hits on the retention data instead of just one, which is why retention is depressed. The Principal added that this year in particular there has been an exodus after the first round of recruitment.</p> <p>The Principal said that the report was interesting in terms of how the College looks against other colleges. The College’s profile is much more focused on lower level skills i.e. Level 1</p>		

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	<p>and 2. She said that this information will be helpful for Ofsted when there are no national rates due to TAGs/CAGs over the last couple of years. She said that this gives the College some rationale and supports the College's work on progression and how well the College is doing in terms of teaching and learning.</p> <p>AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.</p>		
<b>10</b>	<b>SUSTAINABILITY – PROGRESS UPDATE AND REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>		
	<p>The Chief Financial Officer introduced this item and advised that the College has made some good progress in terms of sustainability and the paper provided highlights just a small proportion of things that the College has been doing.</p> <p>Progress to date is as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learner Sustainability group established – second session this week with presentation going to all staff re Gathering on Sustainability project</li> <li>• Support Services and Curriculum Sustainability groups setup</li> <li>• Competition for learners on naming our overall Sustainability project – June 2022</li> <li>• Visit from Stella Hall from the Thrift Festival who met with learners, staff and the Steering Group member – May 2022. The Chief Financial Officer said that, when Stella talked to the Steering Group, Richard Buxton from the Stoke on Trent bid joined the conversation. Richard is running a Better World Festival in Stoke in the summer, which some learners are joining.</li> <li>• Creative Industry Hub engaged in and presenting at Sustainability Festival in Stoke in July</li> <li>• New technologies showcase for visit by Treasury including green technologies – May 2022</li> <li>• First all staff gathering on Sustainability where working groups and learners feedback and examples of embedded curriculum – June 2022</li> <li>• Energy contract moved to District Heat Network</li> </ul> <p>The Chief Financial Officer said that the College was trying to make this as inclusive as possible and trying to build this up using learners and staff so that everyone is engaged, which will take time.</p> <p>In terms of the AoC Climate Action Roadmap, there are various categories for emerging colleges. The College has set targets and some actions have been completed. She said that survey fatigue has already been mentioned, so the College may need to re-think the staff survey for views on sustainability, which will be discussed at the next Executive Board meeting.</p>		



	<p>The Chief Financial Officer advised that the Sustainability Steering Group met on Monday and the interim Vice Principal gave some feedback with regards to what will be done in terms of the curriculum, which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating a Canvas area to drop resources into it such as fun facts, definitions etc</li> <li>• Review what the College already has and what is already being delivered in terms of sustainability in all curriculum areas</li> <li>• Build some CPD sessions in for CPD week in August</li> <li>• Update Schemes of Work and have a 4<sup>th</sup> functional skill – in addition to English, maths and digital</li> </ul> <p>In terms of the Support Services Group, they had good ideas on how to reduce plastic, review the College’s food offer making sure that it is still in line with what learners and staff want and the Executive Director of Student and Digital Services gave an update in terms of the Challenge Sustainability for next year.</p> <p>The Chief Financial Officer then moved on to discuss the Sustainability Steering Groups Terms of Reference and the action from the last Board meeting in relation to making them more exciting and ambitious. This has now been done and the Terms of Reference have been taken to the Sustainability Steering Group on Monday and everyone seemed happy with them.</p> <p>One Governor said that, considering where the College started, good progress has been made. He said that the key to it is engaging students. He added that it was good to see the College has used the AoC roadmap and assessed progress against it and using this as an action plan. Another Governor said that she liked the idea of sustainability becoming the 4<sup>th</sup> functional skill. The Chief Financial Officer advised that the Curriculum Sustainability working group came up with this idea – she said that this is a real team effort.</p> <p>AGREED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) to note the content of the update provided</li> <li>b) to approve the Terms of Reference for the Sustainability Steering Group</li> </ol>		
<b>11</b>	<b>CHAIRS REPORT – AUDIT COMMITTEE</b>		
	<p>The Audit Committee Chair directed the Board to his presentation and advised that there is nothing of significant to report. He advised that the Audit Committee have put in shorter, informal sessions to keep up to speed with things that are developing, such as the College’s Financial Statements. He said that the Audit Committee have been looking at concern in</p>		

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	<p>relation to the delay in finalising the Financial Statements, as well as the position in relation to Apprenticeships. He confirmed that the Internal Auditors will be looking at these concerns in order to give ongoing comfort that the College is on top of these problems and they are not going to resurface.</p> <p>The Audit Committee are continuing on the refinement of managing risk and the Board Assurance Framework. The sort of risks that are emerging are with regards to if the College gets the capital funding bids, does the College have the management capacity to deliver projects under time pressure. The Audit Committee Chair said that this is something that the Board should be thinking about, as the College could find itself under pressure to complete a lot of things very quickly. Another risk is inflation and particularly inflation on utilities, which is already having an effect on the College; however, some of this has been relieved due to the agreement with the City Council. The Audit Committee Chair added that inflation brings with it other problems, such as the pressure on staff and staff looking for higher paid jobs. If the College is not able to keep them on board, then it will be hard to recruit to empty positions, moving forward.</p> <p>AGREED: to note the content of the update provided</p>		
<b>12</b>	<b>CHAIRS REPORT – TRANSFORMATION, FINANCE &amp; RESOURCES COMMITTEE</b>		
	<p>The Chair of the Transformation, Finance &amp; Resources Committee directed the Board to his presentation and highlighted the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In terms of the Apprenticeship provision, at the time of the Committee meeting, the College was looking at £50k shortfall on planned activity, so this remains a risk</li> <li>• AEB allocation is a risk. The Principal expanded on this by saying that the work was planned but not all of it was delivered. She said that, looking back historically, there has always been a period where there has been a push on activity but the difference this year is Covid, employment status, low skilled jobs etc, which is making it harder to recruit; however, there is no space to take on any more bricklayers or learners onto the carpentry courses; therefore, the College is thinking about opening the Burslem campus on a Wednesday evening for 8 weeks. The Principal said that this would cost a little but the College doesn't physically have the space to offer more courses without incurring more cost. She said that this should be flagged as a risk due to how close the end of year is.</li> </ul> <p>The Committee Chair advised that there were a few items that</p>		

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required Board approval, these are as follows:

- Subcontracting report – it was noted that the same subcontracts have been used by the College for a while i.e. Steelworks, NSEG and Learning Curve.
- The Principal directed the Board to an additional paper requesting approval of proposed new subcontracting activity to extend the reach for adults and to support the partnership with NSEG. She said that the contract had been increased for Learning Curve in order to enable the College to get to 97% threshold on AEB. One Governor asked where the College was at in terms of AEB. The Principal said that, from last week’s report, there was still £200k to be planned. The Chief Financial Officer said that, when the senior team go the report last week, if everything that had been planned was delivered, then the College would just get over to 99% of AEB, which gives a degree of comfort; however, it appears that some of the College’s particular activities such as Skills for Jobs and some ESOL provision is not coming in/hasn’t come in in the way that was hoped in the last month, so it will be tight. She said that the College has taken the decision, subject to Board approval, to increase the contract with Learning Curve. She said that the team all recognise what needs to be done and the College must get to 97%. She agreed that this does need to be flagged as a risk and lots of effort is being put in to make sure the College gets over the threshold. The Committee Chair asked if the subcontracts have capacity to deliver this. The Principal advised that Learning Curve are national and deliver distance learning outside of the College’s catchment area, which is the rationale as they will draw more learners into the College. The Principal said that the College does have its own distance learning package but that the College doesn’t have the same focus that Learning Curve have.
- Fees Policy 2022/23 – Committee recommends that the Board approve the Fees Policy 2022/23 as presented. The Board agreed to approve.

In terms of risk and issues, the Committee Chair commented that the Board knows where the College is with the ESFA audits and it will be interesting to receive the outcome of the interim Apprenticeship audit taking place next month. A concern was noted around the capacity in College to be able to do the upcoming work and a potential covenant breach is something that Governors need to keep an eye on. The Principal added that the rising cost of supplies, as well as energy costs needs to be noted, as this will impact on the capital bid proposals as the College will still need to work within the budgets set.

AGREED:

	<p>1) to note the content of the update provided,  2) approve the increase to the Learning Curve contract as presented and  3) approve the Fees Policy 2022/23 as presented</p>		
<b>13</b>	<b>CHAIRS REPORT – CURRICULUM, QUALITY &amp; STANDARDS COMMITTEE</b>		
	<p>The Committee Chair directed the Board to his presentation and highlighted a number of points including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The QIP has been revised and refocused and now clearly identifies accountability, which the previous version didn't. The new QIP is much more comprehensive and detailed. The Committee recommend to the Board the approval of the revised QIP. The Committee Chair said that he was keen to hear at the next Committee meeting how the QIP is being implemented and monitored.</li> <li>• Apprenticeships – the Committee Chair commented that all Governors are aware of the issues in Apprenticeships in terms of curriculum delivery and finance. He advised that he and other members of the Board met with the Apprenticeship team, who appeared committed but they are struggling in some areas, particularly around recruiting Assessors, Skills Coaches etc. He said that there are a couple of areas to work on including the whole relationship between the Apprenticeship delivery team and the marketing/commercial side and making sure they are effectively joined up</li> <li>• Curriculum planning process – the Committee Chair said that this is at a stage where the curriculum plan is in place for next year. He advised that the course teams, Heads of Learning and Directors have produced the plan but he was not convinced about how the delivery risk was being managed. He said that, in terms of this aspect of curriculum planning, there needs to be a better approach taken in terms of contingency. He added that how the curriculum plan relates to financial sustainability and viability needs refining and there needs to be a much more holistic approach to curriculum planning, going forward, that addresses all financial viability issues. He said that the FE Commissioner has tools/guidance on how colleges can align curriculum planning with financial viability.</li> </ul> <p>In terms of aligning the curriculum plan with financial viability, the Principal advised that the tool the FE Commissioner is putting out to colleges is 4cast, which is what the College is already using. She said that the piece attached to this around the financial strategy is on the College's to do list and is noted as one of the actions on the Principal's report in terms of being</p>		

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clear what areas the College wants to grow in and be known for, what areas the College needs to run as a general FE college such as Hair and Beauty and what things is the College not going to do due to the College's competitors already doing these. The Principal added that she did the pilot at NACRO in terms of the help the FE Commissioner is offering. She said that the College can get some help with the financial strategy but the College needs to have a curriculum strategy that links very clearly with the financial strategy in terms of where the College is going over the next 3-5 years and the College needs to think about how it will do this and then get help if needed. With regards to curriculum planning for this year, she advised that the previous Deputy Principal brought in a new spreadsheet when staff should have been using 4cast and there were conversations about contingency but the accountability culture is not there at the moment. She added that, once a new Deputy Principal is recruited, they will lead on this.

One Governor commented that, in the past, the College has struggled with closing down the end of the academic year and preparing for the next academic year. She said that the College needs to be mindful of this and aware of the problems that the College has encountered in previous years by not closing down the academic year correctly and getting staff into the right headspace and position to start in September. The Principal advised that this is on the radar and is a top priority for the College but, as there is currently no Deputy Principal in post, this is a little fragmented. The Principal added that the timing of Ofsted is a concern as, if they come in September, then this will be a risk for the College, as there will be new learners and the College will still be closing down the previous academic year, as well as kicking off a new academic year. She said that the College needs to ensure it is ahead of the game, making sure there is a strong plan in place for a September inspection and making sure the academic year is closed down correctly. The Committee Chair added that there will be a new Ofsted inspection framework in September which will focus much more on intent in terms of meeting local need. The Chair of the Board asked how many more weeks of opportunity is there for Ofsted to visit before the end of the academic year. The Principal said that they can inspect right up until the end of term. One Governor said that the start of year arrangements is where the College has fallen down in the past. He said that, from a governance perspective, there is an oversight meeting that takes place in August to look at the start of year arrangements but the College needs to avoid any complications of closing down this academic year with the starting off the new academic year. He said that this needs to be smarter than it has been in the past in order to manage the risk.

AGREED: to not the content of the update provided and approve

	the revised QIP as presented.		
<b>14</b>	<b>MEETING CHAIRS REPORT – EDUCATION BUSINESS SERVICES (STOKE) LIMITED</b>		
	<p>The Chair of Education Business Services (Stoke) Board introduced his presentation and brought the Board’s attention to one item of risk relating to the fact that there are only two Directors on the Board which, in terms of attendance, poses a problem. Discussions have taken place with regards to recruiting an additional volunteer from the Board to join EBSS or looking for an independent person to join EBSS. The Chair of the Board asked if the College is planning to continue with EBS long term. The Chief Financial Officer said that, in the short to medium term, yes as this is a company that is used to put staff contracts through, so they are on a different pension scheme etc; therefore, it would be quite involved if this need to be changed.</p> <p>AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.</p>		
<b>15</b>	<b>CHAIRS REPORT – GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE</b>		
	<p>In the absence of the Committee Chair, the Chair of the Board introduced this presentation and highlighted the main points, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two new Governors, Hannah Molloy and Julie Brereton, have been recommended to join the Board. If approved, Hannah will also join the Audit Committee and Julie will join the Transformation, Finance &amp; Resources Committee. The Board were happy to approve this recommendation.</li> <li>• Governor interest received from Kevin Hetherington, Deputy Vice Chancellor at Staffordshire University. An interview has been scheduled for the 28<sup>th</sup> June and this will likely progress.</li> <li>• The Chair commented that the Board needs to make sure a Safeguarding link Governor is appointed for when Nikki Brady leaves the Board. This is an area of focus for now.</li> <li>• The Committee is recommending the re-appoint Rob Fisher and Jo Mountney to the Board. The Board were happy to approve this recommendation.</li> </ul> <p>AGREED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) to note the content of the update provided</li> <li>2) approve the recommendation to appoint Hannah Molloy and Julie Brereton to the Board for a 4-year term office starting from today</li> <li>3) approve the recommendation to re-appoint Rob Fisher and Jo Mountney to the Board for a 4-year term of office.</li> </ol>		

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	(Jo Mountney left the meeting)		
<b>16</b>	<b>CHAIRS REPORT – CAPITAL PROJECTS COMMITTEE</b>		
	<p>The Chief Financial Officer introduced this item and advised that J Block has now sold, T Level bids have been submitted and the College has had approval in principal for the FE Transformation Capital fund. In terms of the FE Transformation Capital fund, the Chief Financial Officer said that she had a meeting with the DfE, as well as Lisa Hawes and Asif Mohammed from the ESFA in relation to this bid. She said that the meeting went well and they didn't ask any particularly different questions; however, they did challenge the size of the Colleges proposed buildings at both Burslem and Cauldon, as some of the data submitted didn't support the need. Following this meeting, the College's consultant, Matthew Hirst, re-worked the spreadsheet and put in additional rationale, which was then sent to the DfE two days later. The College has since had a request from Pravin Palmer at the DfE who asked to visit the College on Wednesday to look at both site, which was taken as a positive step. Pravin was hosted at the College on Wednesday and he advised that he would be the College's Project Director should the College be successful at getting approval. He said that he found visiting both sites very helpful, took lots of photos and said that the College's strategy made real sense and he could see the rationale behind it. The Chief Financial Officer said that the College still expects to hear the outcome by the end of this month.</p> <p>The Clerk said that the College may have to sign acceptance form/documents quickly and asked what the governance arrangements are and what the College needs from the Board. The Chief Financial Officer said that she would prefer to wait to get the approval letter first, as she wasn't sure when this would be received and then she would need to look at the terms and conditions attached to this before any recommendation is made to Board.</p> <p>AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.</p>		
<b>17</b>	<b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b>		
	There were no items of additional business.		
<b>18</b>	<b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b>		
	<p>It was confirmed that the next meeting of the Board will take place on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2022 at 8.30am.</p> <p>Meeting closed at 12.30pm</p>		

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