

***Minutes of the Corporation meeting held on
Thursday 16 May 2024 at 09:30
Burslem Boardroom and via Microsoft Teams***

Present:	Jeremy Cartwright, Chair	In person
	Lisa Capper MBE, Principal/CEO	In person
	Rob Fisher	Remote
	Sally Garratt	Remote
	Kevin Hetherington	In person
	Bernard Kumeta	In person
	Hannah Molloy	Remote
	Jo Mountney	In person
	Tom Nadin	In person
	Ben Richards	In person
	David Rogers	Remote
	David Shufflebottom	In person
	Lisa Thomson	Remote
	Chrissy Pawliszyn, Staff Governor	In person
	Jenny Scrivens, Staff Governor	In person
	Pari Arian, Student Governor	In person
In Attendance:	Cath Brierley, Deputy Principal	In person
	Antoinette Lythgoe, Chief Financial Officer	In person
	Dave Hopley, Assistant Principal Student Experience	In person
	Nova Abela, Chief People Officer	Remote
	Kay Kavanagh, Director of Governance	In person
	Emma Brannen, Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality	In person

No.		Action
1	Welcome, introductions, and apologies for absence Apologies for absence were received from David Boughey, Steve Sawbridge and Mekdes Mideksa.	
2	Declaration of Interest in any of the items on the agenda The Chair reminded everyone present to declare any interests that they may have on agenda items to be discussed. No specific declarations, other than for paid positions, were made, and standing declarations were noted.	
3	Minutes of the meeting held on The minutes of the meetings held on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 29th February 2024 • 21st March 2024 (Governor Strategy Day notes) were approved as an accurate record.	
4	Action Progress Report The actions arising from the previous meeting were summarised in the progress report and all actions reported had either been resolved or, were due for completion at a later date.	

5 Student Voice

- **Talking Heads video**
- **Student events and activities, plus themes arising from Learner Conference/Learner Representative meetings**

Governors watched the 2 available videos before the meeting, there were no questions. Governors confirmed that the videos are beneficial and provide an insight into College life.

The Assistant Principal Student Experience provided highlights of the report including:

- The College Enrichment activities are still proving popular across both campuses. A new member of staff has joined the Learner Involvement Team and they are helping to drive enrichment activities and encourage participation.
- £1000 has been raised for the Macari Foundation, following the 'Big Sleep Out' event in partnership with Stoke City FC. This event was pertinent to the area given the city's high number of homeless people.
- The Multi-Cultural Day was a huge success – an event organised by 3 students, supported by a mentor, Steve Taylor.
- Student Council is active throughout the year at each campus with over 20 learners in attendance.
- 'The Big Tutorial' event has taken place. The College commissioned 'Loud Speaker' to deliver resilience sessions, following a high number of learners expressing that they need support with their mental health. All full-time students were invited.
- Student Union Elections take place next week, with involvement from local candidates from the Conservative, Labour, and Reform parties.
- Challenge South Africa 2025 has been launched with over applications for 24 places.
- The College is working to promote the partnership between the City and its twinned City, Erlangen, Germany. The College is in the early stages of planning a programme with a visit to Erlangen. This would include World War II history, learning some German language, and engaging with the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg (FAU) and Siemens. Keele University, Newcastle College and the sixth form are collaborating to promote the partnership.

Governors **asked** the following questions:

- What was the format of 'The Big Tutorial' and how many students attended? The event included personal storytelling, raising confidence levels, and interactive workshop sessions. Helping learners to grow team-building skills and to enhance their interview skills by learning to talk about their own experiences. Circa 2000 students attended over the week (5 sessions a day across both campuses).
- How are the outputs from the 'You said, we did' campaign communicated across College? Outputs are delivered via the screens around campus and all the student reps have a representative role to ensure that it is cascaded to students.

The request from students for a larger smoking shelter was discussed, with the Assistant Principal, Student Experience explaining some of the future challenges, given the change in legislation around the age limits for the use of cigarettes. Governors were reassured that students have a strong voice in this matter and further considerations are being taken into account for the future of the smoking shelter/smoking on College grounds.

The Assistant Principal Student Experience left the meeting (09:45)

6 Principal/CEO's Report

The Principal & CEO provided the highlights of the report, confirming that it remains a busy time for the College.

The annual conversation with ESFA at the end of April was positive with excellent feedback on areas of good practice. Both the Chair and the Vice-Chair attended the conversation and the follow-up letter from the ESFA is expected to be positive.

The College has 1989 students currently, plus some 14-16 home schooled learners. The College has continued to recruit throughout the year. Current applications are up by over 320 for 2024/25. An Open Day is being held this Saturday, and 'find your feet' events are taking place for students who are due to join us in September.

As a gesture from the College, College branded socks have been sent to students taking their GCSEs in the local area, to wish them good luck with their exams, and include some exam advice.

Adult performance in-year is strong. It has been more challenging this year than last however, the College are hoping for 97% by 31st July.

Apprenticeship's income has, for the first time, met budget target of £2.2m; however, although data has rapidly improved, work continues on quality to ensure a consistent good performance across all standards. Some legacy issues around achievement remain.

Retention of students (16-18) is good. We are now working on raising achievement. Maths GCSE exams are taking place, with over 600 students sitting today.

The curriculum planning process has now closed, with a strong vision on line of sight to work or higher education and the positioning of the offer in the landscape. A final presentation has been shared with the Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee Chair and discussed at CQS. There are some significant changes to curriculum due to qualification reforms and in meeting skills needs with new courses and higher-level skills at Levels 3 and 4, such as the planning for the Skills Hubs and the College work with the Institute of Technology, both of which reflect growth. There is a future concept to look at introducing a Level 3 Academy provision, to attract 16-18yr olds at Level 3.

Work continues with NEETS. The Preferred Futures Youth Collective achieved the Kings award, with some College students presenting at the awards.

The new Leading Teachers group was launched on CPD day where the College has become a corporate partner to SET (Society for Education and Training) and the ETF (Education and Training Foundation). Teachers are benefitting from membership of SET which provides them with advanced CPD opportunities, networking and resources and will enable them to help lead the Quality Strategy across the College, by enabling and encouraging them to carry out peer monitoring and open-door teaching.

Study Programme allocation increased by £2.1m largely due to increased funded places and a change in how ESFA recognises the delivery of English and maths and T Levels. Governors **noted** challenges around the capping of the Level 3 free courses.

A pulse survey is live for staff on work/life balance. This will enable the College to consider workload and work/life balance views of staff.

The Digital Strategy has been shared with governors. The strategy shows Employer, Learner and Staff journeys. There is a high budget for the Digital Strategy which will be incorporated over the next 3 years budgets. A new AI Policy is in place and staff are being upskilled for AI. An AI podcast has been made, which will be launched shortly. The College has a positive view on AI, to educate and learn and seize the opportunity.

The College continues to sustain an improved reputation. The Principal & CEO highlighted:

- Students (including a student governor) interviewed 5 members of staff, which will be developed into a final recording to celebrate women in the workplace.
- The Hammersley Restaurant was awarded the AA Rosette and silver accreditation (The restaurant is due to be upgraded with a new reception area and toilet facilities).
- Young Engineer of the Year Build Programme and competition at the Burslem campus sponsored by KMF and employers with 13 schools.
- Hosted the World Craft City delegation for a student showcase in the Digital and Creative Hub and dinner in the Hammersley Restaurant
- An alumni campaign is underway to encourage past students to share their progression stories. A Facebook page is also gaining popularity with previous students (moderated)
- 'Regeneration Brainery' has had a positive impact (an immersive workshop where young people from diverse backgrounds can spend time with and learn from leaders in the built environment sector).
- The College now has a formal partnership with Staffordshire University, which will enable project-based approaches.
- Duchess China will be presenting the awards at the Student Celebration event in June 2024.

A governor **advised** of their experience in using AI to analyse free-text entries on student satisfaction surveys. Governors **noted** the benefit of using AI to summarise the responses, and the overall increased use of AI.

7 QIP 2023/2024

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality joined the meeting (10:15)

43 success measures have been agreed across the 9 QIP priorities. In Term 2, 5 have been RAG rated green, 25 amber and 1 red. 12 have not yet been RAG rated as the measure is not yet available at this point in the academic year.

Retention:

Retention has been a challenge given the increase in the number of students. 7 of the 13 at-risk 16-18 courses, and 2 of the 5 at-risk Adult courses identified on the QIP have R08 retention above the KPI of 90%, which gives assurance that the processes in place to improve retention are having a positive impact. 16-18 Level 3 retention is above KPI at 91.1%.

A significant amount of monitoring of all learners at risk of withdrawal via reviews of at-risk registers and impact measures is taking place. Assessment CPD and staff support has been a focus to ensure effective capturing of learner attainment and progress towards achievement.

A targeted enrichment programme is in place for groups of vulnerable learners, including targeted enhancement activities such as 8Billion ideas and A-Dapt.

Governors **noted** that overall retention includes maths and English, so some learners could be counted more than once.

Attendance:

Attendance is currently at 88% and is a national issue. Attendance is being influenced by strategies to retain our most at-risk/poorly attending learners.

A gap has re-opened between English & maths (78.8%) and Vocational (84.2%) and is being monitored. It is attributable to the increased number of high-risk learners requiring GCSE re-sits.

Various interventions are in place to improve attendance, including:

- Attendance board in place
- 1-2-1 with learners
- Free Pizza & Popcorn
- Alton Towers tickets
- Amazon vouchers

Apprenticeships:

The Apprenticeship performance to date shows good progress being made. Achievement is currently 52%, against a KPI of 63%, and is on target for achievement. The focus remains on legacy areas.

At-risk courses have high support and targeted CPD is resulting in improvements in the quality of teaching, learning, and assessment in these areas.

The breadth of employers and organisations supporting High Needs work placements has expanded to 10, with the aim to increase this to 15.

The Chair asked for clarification on where retention is improved, as it negatively impacts attendance (for High Needs learners). The Principal and CEO explained that data comparisons show that the College has disproportional High Needs than other colleges. It is an area of higher deprivation with a more diverse population. Most learners are L1/L2. The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality added that progression for learners can be evidenced, and learners develop independence and resilience.

The Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality left the meeting (10:30)

8 Data Dashboard Report

Governors agreed that much of the content of the report had been covered in item 7.

There were no questions.

9 Accountability Statement

The Principal and CEO explained that following the Governor Strategy Days in 2023, a Skills Statement and Accountability Statement were produced. This year, the requirement has reduced the need for two separate documents, and only an Accountability Statement is required in June 2024, which will include the local skills needs.

Governors **noted** the progress made against the 2023/24 Accountability Statement and the further progress to be confirmed once learner results are known for 2023/24.

The Accountability Statement for 2024/25, is based on 5 priorities:

1. Excellence in TLA: To increase T Levels and Level 3. Embedding digital strategy and AI
2. Sectors and Skills: Build on HNC and HTQs, Higher Apprentices to develop strong higher-level skills cohorts. Launch 2 Skills Hubs and develop towards a Hub in Advanced Manufacturing. Levelling Up Advanced Green Skills Hub bid for and implement if awarded
3. Partnerships: Continue to maintain and build partnerships
4. People: Investors in Diversity Award. Recruitment and retention, and pay strategy
5. Finance and sustainability: Deliver financial strategy. Complete capital transformation fund and new estate strategy in place. Good financial health and reduce scrutiny on RF Deal or preferably conclude RF Deal early

The Deputy Principal provided an overview of the Skills Needs (local and national).

Future 'local skills needs' include:

- The DFE is in dialogue with the College discussing the future need for training in the West and East Midlands due to the development of new nuclear technologies as a platform for regional economic growth
- Energy distribution as part of LSIF
- Housebuilding continues to grow in the City
- A new £42.6m diagnostic health centre is to be built in Hanley
- Ceramic Valley Enterprise Zone will help to create up to 9,000 new jobs alongside the A500
- The College is a partner to IoT for higher level skills in engineering and manufacturing

How well have we done?

- Savoy trust for £200K for a patisserie kitchen
- Advanced Construction Centre for Digitalisation of Construction
- Partnership work
- Reputation with employers

The Principal and CEO asked the governors to consider if the Accountability Statement priorities for 2024/25 were positioned correctly. Governors confirmed that they wouldn't expect huge changes year-on-year, but acknowledged the changes for 2024/25 against the local skills need and developing Digital/AI needs.

Governors **approved** the priorities for the 2024/25 statement and **agreed** for the final version to be circulated via email ahead of submission to the ESFA/DfE on 30th June 2024.

10 Management Accounts – March 2024

The College has a forecast outturn of £1.3m and good financial health. Last year the College obtained outstanding financial health. This is unlikely this year due to the timing of the cash payments and the creditor position of capital projects.

All KPIs remain at green except for 'Adjusted Current Ratio' which remains at amber, due to the timing of the cash payments and creditor position of capital projects.

There is a cash balance in the bank of circa £5.9m as of the end of March, but this will reduce due to capital activity. It is likely to be at its lowest in January 2025, which will be circa 25/26 cash days in hand. A governor **questioned** if the requirement to have 25/26 cash days could be breached. The Chief Financial Officer explained that it is a benchmark that is used and will be managed carefully. It is unlikely to be breached.

There were no further questions.

11 Budget Timetable and Assumptions

It was confirmed that the best interests of learners and staff will be at the forefront of budget decision making.

There were no questions on the paper.

12 Risk Management

Risk Register and discussion on Risk Appetite Statement

The Chief Financial Officer provided an overview of the changes to the Risk Register.

R022: This is a new risk, resulting from the request from governors following the Strategy Day discussion around risk. This is a low risk.

R015: The College's financial position is robust and sustainable. It is therefore proposed to update:

- Residual Impact to be reduced from 5 to 4

- Residual Likelihood to be reduced from 3 to 2
- Target Risk to be reduced to 8

R017: Given the release of the new College Financial Handbook, following the ONS reclassification, and the College's compliance with the handbook, it is proposed that the Board consider a lowering of the risk and it is kept on the risk register by changing:

- Residual Impact to be reduced from 5 to 3
- Target Risk to be reduced to 6

Governors agreed with the above changes to the risk register. There were no questions. **Action:** The Director of Governance is to update the Risk Register with the changes to R015 and R017.

Director of
Governance

The Risk Appetite Statement has been updated at the request of governors.

13 Chairs Reports

a) Transformation, Finance and Resources Committee

b) Skills & Apprenticeships T&FG

c) Curriculum, Quality and Standards Committee

The Chair of the Curriculum, Quality, and Standards (CQ&S) Committee asked governors to note that the Skills and Apprenticeships Task & Finish Group would be merged back into the CQ&S committee.

There were no questions as most of the content had been covered during the meeting.

14 EBS (Stoke) Ltd – Chair's Report

The Chair of the EBS Board was absent to provide an update.

15 Draft Calendar of Governors Meetings 2024/2025 (and Cycle of business)

The Director of Governance presented the draft meeting schedule for 2024/25 and invited feedback from governors. A final meeting schedule will be presented at the July Corporation Board meeting.

16 Governor Link Feedback

3 Link Governor sessions had taken place, and the feedback was noted.

17 Review of Meeting

Governors thanked the Management Team for their reports, acknowledging the amount of work currently being undertaken at the college.

Governors would like to spend more time on the Principal and CEO's report at future meetings. This was noted by the Chair and the Director of Governance.

18 Any other items of urgent business

There were no other items of business.

19 Date and time of next meeting

Thursday 11th July 2024 at 09:30

Staff and Student Governors left the meeting. 11:00

20- Confidential Items

22 *See confidential minutes*

There being no further business, the meeting finished at 12:35