

Governors Present: Gill Slater (Chair)
Sheila Bratt
Paul Cumming
Phil Douce
Toby Hooper
Sean Devlin

Michael Kitcatt
Matthew Adams
Deborah Tiffany (Vice Chair)
Sheena Payne-Lunn
Emily Furniss
Peter Whyte

In Attendance: Ed Senior (Deputy Principal)
Barbara Clements (Finance Manager)
Jo Payne (PA to the Principal/Interim Clerk to the Governing Body)

1. Apologies and Appointments

Apologies: Apologies were received from Angela Davis, Iain Macleod, Richard Reece and Mike McCreedy. Sheena Payne-Lunn gave notice that she needed to leave the meeting at 7pm.

(i) Appointments

The Governing Body **approved** the appointment of Emily Furniss as a Student Governor and a member of the Quality Committee for a period of 18 months.

The Governing Body **approved** the appointment of Peter Whyte as a Student Governor and a member of the Quality Committee for a period of 7 months.

The Governing Body **approved** the appointment of Sheena Payne-Lunn as a Parent Governor and a member of the Quality Committee for a period of two years.

The Governing Body **approved** the appointment of Sheila Bratt as External Governor and a member of the Quality Committee for a period of four years.

Emily Furniss, Peter Whyte, Sheena Payne-Lunn and Sheila Bratt joined the meeting and their appointments were confirmed. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

2. Discussion with the West Midlands Regional Schools Commissioner, Christine Quinn

(Christine Quinn joined the meeting at 6.11pm)

The Chair welcomed the Regional Schools Commissioner to the meeting and asked if she would outline her role. The RSC said that she had some powers to act on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education and made decisions on whether schools become academies and determined what happened once they converted e.g. age range changes. She advised that there were eight RSC's and her region covered Herefordshire to Cheshire and Staffordshire to Shropshire.

The RSC explained that her post had existed since 2014 and she had been in post for 14 months. The Headteachers' Board consisted of 8 members; 4 were directly elected Headteachers and 4 were appointed or co-opted to the Board. The HTB assists the RSC with the consideration and scrutiny of applications. The RSC advised that previously all outstanding schools, and later good schools, could become an academy; however, the agenda of the current Secretary of State was to bring about school improvement and social mobility. There was no compunction to approve an application to academies unless the RSC and HTB were confident that the school had demonstrated the capability to bring about improvement and enhance social mobility.

In response to questions from the Chair on behalf of the Governing Body, the RSC responded that:

- She could not offer assurances of her support for Ridgeway joining Worcestershire Learning Trust as she had not seen the revised application. The application would need to outline the governance structure, the structure of the Trust and the school improvement model. She made clear that Worcestershire Learning Trust would need to be prepared to take accountability for everything related to institutions that joined it.
- Ridgeway was an unusual case as it was previously a middle school with an age range change agreed which meant that in 2020 it would have its first GCSE results and if they were a member of the Trust, the Trust would be accountable for these outcomes. Any proposal to include Ridgeway in a MAT, would need to produce a school improvement plan detailing how good GCSE outcomes would be achieved in 2020.
- Associate membership would not solve the Worcester Sixth Form College issue as it would not be allowed to convert to single academy status or to create an empty-MAT.
- She wanted Worcester Sixth Form College to become an academy, but felt that it needed to think about different ways of achieving this e.g. finding a successful local MAT or bargain hard with a SAT to get them to join the MAT. She felt that the College would bring enormous strength to a MAT which would dramatically enhance capacity in Worcestershire. She appreciated that the College was time limited to resubmit an application and she said she had raised this in the summer. She had no power over the timescales set by the Transactions Unit.
- In order for a MAT to be financially viable it would require student numbers of between 2200 and 2500.
- She had little capacity to support the College in finding a member of the MAT and it is expected that, unless an institution was a sponsor, they would find their own partners.
- A standalone academy would not now be permitted.

The Governing Body requested the following information from the RSC which she agreed to provide:

- The mechanism for the College to recover the £36,000 spent on a financial due diligence audit which it had been required to do and advised as such on the basis of setting up an empty-MAT.
- The criteria that would be used by the External Advisory Panel to assess whether a proposal offered value for money.
- Detail on when government policy changed to making it virtually impossible to convert to standalone academy status.

The Chair thanked Christine Quinn for attending the meeting.

(Christine Quinn left the meeting at 6.59pm)

The Governing Body considered how best to respond to the information provided by the Regional Schools Commissioner. It was agreed to convene a meeting of the Academy Working Group who would make a recommendation to the Governing Body at the Conference. The Governing Body felt that meeting with Robin Walker MP was now very important. The Chair thanked Governors for their contributions to the discussion with the Regional Schools Commissioner.

(Sheena Payne-Lunn left the meeting at 7.04pm).

3. Opening Standing Items

- (i) Michael Kitcatt declared that he was a governor at a partner high school, Bishop Perowne. Gill Slater declared that she were employed by a stakeholder, the University of Worcester. Jo Payne and Sheena Payne-Lunn declared that they were sisters-in-law. Paul Cumming declared that he was a governor at a partner high school, The Chantry.
- (ii) Those parts of the agenda, which referred to individual students or members of staff, sensitive contracts or issues, were identified as confidential to the Governing Body. The Chair advised that there was a confidential matter that would be raised at the end of the meeting and that staff, student and parent governors would need to withdraw from the meeting at that stage.
- (iii) The Chair raised the Support Staff pay increase which had been nationally agreed. It was confirmed that a 1% increase backdated to 1st September 2017 had been factored into the budget and raised at the Resources Committee. There would be an additional increase for those support staff on the lowest pay points. The Governing Body **approved** the pay increase for support staff in line with what had been recommended nationally.

4. Minutes

- (i) 27th September 2017
The minutes of the meeting were noted and approved as an accurate record. The Principal reported that a video about the cafeteria will shortly be on the website.
- (ii) Confidential Minute
The Confidential minute was noted and approved as an accurate record.

5. Academisation

- (i) Minutes of the Academy Working Group
The minutes of the Academy Working Group were received and the contents noted.

6. Stakeholder Voice

The Governing Body considered the numerous reports from recent link visits. The following feedback was noted:

- Sean Devlin commented that the Open Evening had been very impressive with good interactions between staff, students and visitors.
- Toby Hooper reported that it was clear from his learning walk with the Head of Science that the department was proactively addressing the issues that had been identified. He added that the Law syllabus was very challenging. A Performing Arts Academy rehearsal had been very impressive.
- Deborah Tiffany reflected on attendance at Moderation and also on a learning walk with the Head of English, Languages and Media Arts during which she visited the Ambition Programme which was excellent.

The Chair thanked governors for their feedback and encouraged others to schedule visits in the New Year.

7. Quality Assurance

(i) Quality Committee minutes: 15.11.17

The Chair of the Quality Committee presented the minutes and the following points were raised:

- The Committee had focused on exam results, a number of Quality Improvement Plans and the strategies identified by departments to being about improvement.
- The proposed grade of good in relation to Outcomes for Learners was scrutinised and agreed after some discussion.
- Governors had fallen short of some of their targets, however, it was noted that academisation discussions had diverted the attention of Committee meetings and taken up significantly more time of governors meaning that they had been less available for link visits.

The information was noted. Governor targets for 2017-18 were **approved**. The full Self-Assessment Report would be presented to the next Quality Committee who would make a recommendation to the Governing Body for approval. The draft SAR would be sent to Ofsted as required in the interim period.

The Deputy Principal circulated the Quality and Development Plan for 2017-18 to the Governing Body for consideration. He referred to the numerical targets that had been set and outlined the subjects where intervention and support was happening. Mindset themes were emphasised in relation to teaching and learning and strategies for improvement.

The Governing Body **noted** the contents of the Quality and Development Plan.

(ii) Audit Committee minutes: 29.11.17

a) Annual Risk Management Report

The Deputy Principal presented the Annual Risk Management Report which was **approved** by the Governing Body.

b) Draft Audit Findings Report

The Governing Body received the draft Audit Findings Report and the contents noted. The Finance Manager explained that the College had paid three years' worth of local government pension scheme contributions upfront to make a saving and in the accounts this had been spread across three years. RSM advised that the full amount needed to be reflected in last year's accounts which would have meant a deficit. To ensure that the bank covenants were not breached, the Finance Manager confirmed that Paul Oxtoby had advised on a suitable way to treat the pension payment to avoid a deficit and the Finance Manager was in the process of making these changes. She agreed to confirm whether this would be reflected in the final report.

c) Audit Committee minutes: 29.11.17

The minutes of the Audit Committee were received and the main points noted. The Governing Body **approved** the reappointment of ICCA to undertake the Learner Numbers Audit for 2017-18.

8. Finance and Resources

(i) Resources Committee minutes: 22.11.17

a) Annual Report and Accounts 2016-17

The Finance Manager reported that the delay in academising had meant that the audit had been undertaken later than usual and this had a knock on effect on the accounts being finalised. She confirmed that the management accounts would not change from those received by the Governing Body and the statutory accounts would be amended further to the point raised by the auditors about the treatment of pension contributions. The Finance Manager confirmed that the Annual Report and Accounts needed to be approved, signed and submitted by the end of December.

The Governing **agreed** that a Chair's Action should be used to ensure that the Annual Report and Accounts were approved and signed.

b) Student Council Accounts 2016-17

The Governing Body **approved** the Student Council Accounts for 2016-17.

c) Resources Committee minutes: 22.11.17

The Chair presented the minutes of the Resources Committee meeting and the following points were raised:

- Significantly cheaper insurance cover had been agreed;
- The new outsourced payroll system continued to be problematic and the offer of a rebate had been declined on the basis that it was not felt to be sufficient.

The Committee **noted** the information provided.

The Principal referred to the proposed changes to the Grievance Procedure and outlined additional comments that had been made by the Worcestershire UNISON representative. The Governing Body considered the comments and proposed changes and the Grievance Procedure was **approved** subject to removal of the following sentence under point 4.4: '*There must be good reason given to the immediate line manager or other appropriate member of staff, for rejection of mediation if the complainant then wishes to raise the matter formally.*'

d) ESFA Chief Executive and Accounting Officer Letter

The Governing Body received the letter and noted the contents. The Principal agreed to produce a list of things in place under each heading as an assurance to governors. Different areas would be monitored by the Resources and Audit Committees.

(ii) Finance

The Finance Manager presented her report and the latest accounts and advised that the forecasted deficit for this year is £228,000 and she outlined the contributing factors. With student numbers down this year, there would be a decrease in funding next year in addition to this and contingency plans were needed to ensure that there is not a deficit next year.

The Principal advised that the College was strongly considering not entering students for AS level exams which would save in the region of £90,000. There was some discussion about how this would be managed in terms of maintaining the attraction of being able to study four subjects in the first year and the fact that students would be enrolled on a two year A Level programme where progression criteria would not be applied to progress to the second year, but an internal mock would assist in monitoring progress.

The Principal reported that 80% of the College's expenditure was on staffing, but it was hoped that investigating other sources of income, and reducing the curriculum offer slightly whilst maintaining the attraction of the breadth of subjects on offer, would facilitate other means of making savings.

The Governing Body **noted** the information provided.

(Sheila Bratt left the meeting at 7.55pm).

(iii) Property Update

The Principal reported that due to financial constraints there were no planned works at the moment, although it was noted that the vast majority of classroom refurbishments had been completed.

The Principal advised that an application to the Condition Improvement Fund would be submitted for a proposed indoor fitness facility. If this application was unsuccessful, the Finance Manager was investigating the possibility of zero cost buildings which might be an alternative cost neutral way of funding the facility.

Governors **noted** the information provided.

9. Closing Standing Items

- (i) Chair's Action: The Governing Body **noted** the use of the Chair's action in relation to agreeing insurance cover with a new provider for a three year term.
- (ii) Health and Safety: None.
- (iii) Risk Management: No additional risk management issues were identified.
- (iv) Impact: The Governing Body agreed that their discussions with the Regional Schools Commissioner ensured that the best interests of students were being considered.

(Emily Furniss, Peter Whyte and Barbara Clements left the meeting at 8.07pm).

- (v) Any Urgent Business: A confidential matter was raised.
- (vi) Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, 21st March at 5.30pm (Conference on Saturday 3/2/18)

The meeting closed at 8.11p.m.

Signed:
Gill Slater (Chair)

Date:

GB ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM MEETING ON 13th DECEMBER 2017

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check
GB/13.12.17/2	Provide clarification on the points raised by the GB.	CQ	ASAP	
GB/13.12.17/2	Schedule meeting of AWG early in 2018.	JJP	ASAP	
GB/13.12.17/7(i)	Present SAR to QC meeting in Spring term.	EYS	14.02.18	
GB/13.12.17/8(i)a	Chair's action to be used to sign off statutory accounts.	BJC/GS	December 2017	
GB/13.12.17/8(i)d	Produce list of assurances under headings in ESFA Chief Executive letter for RC and AC.	MWK	28.02.18	

ACTION POINTS BROUGHT FORWARD

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check
GB/27.09.17/3(ii)	Programme for Learning Walks to be produced based on governor availability.	JJP	Ongoing*	
GB/5.4.17/3	Identify another MAT regarding roles and possibility of mentoring	MWK	Summer 2017	
GB/5.4.17/7(ii)	Cafeteria video on website	MWK	May 2017	

* Denotes amended dates.