

Governors Present: Gill Slater
Matthew Adams
Rubia Amin
Emma Bridges
Paul Cumming
Sean Devlin
Alex Gwinn

Sam Lifford (*joined at 6pm*)
Sheena Payne-Lunn
Wendy Pickess
Ed Senior
Cherry Yau

In Attendance: Ruth Scotson (Deputy Principal)
Jo Payne (Clerk to the Local Governing Body)
Sallyanne Griffiths (Heart of Mercia Chief Finance Officer)

1. Apologies

Cathy Scott-Burt, Phil Douce and Abigail Stephenson.

Ed Senior and Paul Cumming gave notice that they needed to leave the meeting at 6.30pm. The agenda was re-ordered accordingly.

2. Opening Standing Items

(i) Gill Slater declared that whilst not a Trustee, she attended MAT Board meetings.

Sheena Payne-Lunn declared an interest in the confidential minute.

(ii) Those parts of the agenda, which referred to individual students or members of staff were identified as confidential to the Local Governing Body.

(iii) Proposed changes to the Pay Policy and general approach around pay progression for teaching staff was identified as urgent and would be raised under item 6 'Finance and Resources'.

3. Minutes

(i) Minutes of the meeting on 10th June 2020

The minutes of the meeting were **agreed** as an accurate record and the action points updated.

(ii) Confidential Minute of the meeting on 10th June 2020

The confidential minute of the meeting was **agreed** as an accurate record by those who were eligible to view.

4. Strategic and Governance

(i) Principal's Update Report

The Principal presented his report and the following key points were noted:

- The numerous U-turns in relation to exam results caused huge problems with appeals causing a significant amount of work. The Deputy Principal had ensured that departments had robust procedures in place for determining centre assessment grades and only three errors were identified. One of these errors would not have resulted in the student achieving a higher grade, however, two appeals were made to the exam board on the basis of administrative error. One student subsequently had their grade increased and the other appeal was pending;

- Where there were no grounds for appeal but students or their parents felt they were subject to bias or discrimination, the complaints policy was followed with potential for an appeal to governors. One family had lodged a complaint with the exam board but the outcome of this had not been received;
- Students were complying with the need to wear masks in corridors and other common areas. They were also acting responsibly by not coming into College if they felt they had any symptoms although it was proving difficult to access tests. It was challenging to ensure that physical distancing was being maintained outside and the Hall and Gym were being used for overspill with students instructed to return to classrooms at break and lunch times when the weather was poor;
- The response from the County Council was positive in terms of possible support for autumn term exams although it was preferable to use College facilities where possible as permission was needed for exam boards to administer exams at another location. The most students enrolled for any one exam was 7 and it was likely that the rebate from the summer series would cover the cost of autumn term entries;
- Although very early, enrolment was positive although comparators with previous years' data was not necessarily entirely accurate due to the change of application system. There was cautious optimism that student numbers would increase by approximately 25 to 30 more than the funded number for this year (1374);
- Transport was a particular concern as it was uncertain until the very start of term which services would operate. The Student Finance Officer worked tremendously hard and all services were operational with at least the same, if not better, service for students. The new Redditch service was funded by the local authority and a business case needed to be prepared as the service was only confirmed until October half-term in the first instance.

In response to questions the Principal reported that:

- The College were given 20 testing kits but the instructions were that these were only to be used where an individual faced an extreme obstacle. Staff, as key workers, should be given priority in terms of testing but this was not happening so consideration could be given to issuing one of the tests held centrally if it meant absence might be prolonged;
- Where students were well but self-isolating due to a family member showing symptoms, teachers were organising for work to be sent home with lesson materials added to Teams. Whilst the expectation was that the College should deliver a full education, it was not possible for staff to teach and support remote learning. The change to the timetable did mean that if tighter restrictions were introduced, it would be possible for groups to be split so that students were in for two lessons in College and staff had a day to support remote learning;
- It was not clear what the tipping point might be in terms of a move to blended delivery until a case had been confirmed and advice received from the local health protection team/Worcestershire LORT;
- Travel arrangements, as they were confirmed, were shared with applicants, returning students and parents as well as promoted as part of the scheduled publicity activities about financial support available towards travelling to College;
- If staff had anxieties about returning or had underlying health issues, the Principal met with these staff and risk assessment were completed and additional measures put in place as required;
- The Digital Learning Co-ordinator had been delivering training and staff were using opportunities to ensure that students were using Teams to access resources;
- A number of students were displaying high level anxiety which was being managed by the pastoral and safeguarding teams.

The Local Governing Body **noted** the update and the College risk assessment and operational plan. They thanked the Principal and Deputy Principal for their leadership in extremely difficult circumstances.

(ii) Clerk's Update Report

The Clerk presented her update reported that:

- Governors' had a responsibility to oversee recovery and two documents had been produced to enable monitoring;
- A summary of the responses from the annual training questionnaire was used to produce a draft training programme for the current academic year.

The Local Governing Body noted the contents of the update report and **approved** the training programme for 2020-21.

(iii) COVID Recovery Planning & (iv) Online delivery of teaching, learning and assessment

The Clerk outlined that Governors' had a responsibility to monitor the College's COVID recovery with a focus on teaching and learning in terms of how students were being supported to catch-up and also preparedness for any period of closure or partial closure when remote learning might, once again, be required.

The Local Governing Body **agreed** that the review documents were a suitable means by which they could monitor and challenge and **noted** the comments. Updates would be presented to each meeting of the Local Governing Body through the course of the academic year.

(v) Marketing Annual Report

The Clerk, in her capacity as Marketing Co-ordinator, presented the annual marketing report and the following was noted:

- Collaboration with a multimedia company had increased the College's bank of videos which had been a target. Use of recorded videos would need to continue with a shift to virtual Open Events for the autumn term;
- The College was unable to hold its May Open Event but numbers at autumn and spring term events were similar to the previous year;
- Direct mailing continued to be a key way to communicate with year 11 students and their parents;
- Communication with applicants was crucial over the lockdown and summer periods with some not having been able to attend an Open Event, an interview or Induction. All applicants were sent a 'Welcome to Worcester Sixth Form College' booklet and regular emails were shared aimed at preparing them for sixth form study which included reference to bridging tasks and Teams training;
- A schedule of communications summary detailed the emails and social media campaigns that had been run over the summer with analytics, where possible, to show how successful these had been;
- The Growth Strategy had been updated to reflect the priorities for this year.

The Local Governing Body **noted** the content of the annual report and the updated Growth Strategy.

5. Quality

(i) Exam Results Data

The Deputy Principal presented some Six Dimensions data and the following points were made:

- It was anticipated that results would be in line with a three year average, however, on results day it was clear that this was not the case. Centre assessment grades were better and more consistent with a three year average. Staff in areas which felt that they had made significant improvements felt that basing centre assessment grades on previous years was harsh but appreciated the need to follow this approach on the whole;

- The approach to centre assessment grades for Applied courses varied by subject with some having to submit a grade for each unit. On results day the results for Criminology saw 37 grades downgraded which was difficult to understand given that this was the first cohort to be entered by the College.

The Local Governing Body **noted** the exams data and the role of the SFCA in lobbying the government in the aftermath of the results being published.

(ii) Subject Improvement Reviews Update

The Deputy Principal presented the update report on Subject Improvement Reviews and commented that it was a shame that lockdown meant that the process could not be completed as planned. In some subject areas, Senior Leaders were satisfied that 2019 results were an anomaly due to the AS level legacy or change of exam board, for example, and were confident that outcomes would have improved. In other areas, however, Senior Leaders were not satisfied that all of the improvement actions would have been implemented or that outcomes would have improved to the required degree. A smaller quality team would oversee the improvement review process this year and the Deputy Principal would provide more detail for scrutiny to the Curriculum and Quality Committee.

The Local Governing Body **noted** the contents of the report.

(iii) Quality and Development Plan

The Clerk advised that the draft Quality and Development Plan would be updated and monitored at each meeting. The Deputy Principal advised that workshops would be targeted at students requiring additional support with catch-up. The Teaching and Learning Group were identifying strategies to assist with this. It was commented that ensuring that students attend workshops once they had been identified was crucial if they were to be successful.

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

6. Finance and Resources

(i) Chief Finance Officer's Update

The Chief Finance Officer presented her update report and the following points were noted:

- The audit of the accounts would take place on 28th September;
- The College's end of year position was £170,000 ahead of the budgeted deficit of £276,000. The improved position was due to the second instalment of both the pay award and pension contribution funding. At the time of setting the budget this was due to end in March 2020 but was subsequently extended;
- Income generation was less than anticipated due to the loss of adult learning fees, decrease in cafeteria income due to lockdown and restricted service on reopening and also the loss of income from lettings;
- Payroll costs were as expected (surplus £47,000). Recruitment of an agency teacher appeared in non-pay costs;
- The pay award for support staff had been nationally agreed although teaching staff negotiations were ongoing. The assumptions in the budget mirror last year's agreement;
- Now that the College was fully operational, consideration was being given to external structures that would offer additional outdoor covered areas which would require additional capital expenditure of £100,000 - £150,000.

In response to questions the Chief Finance Officer and Principal said:

- The College intended to review department capitation;
- The current actual financial health score suggested the College was outstanding. This was because the College scored well in its adjusted current ratio and borrowing as a percentage of income. The forecast of a Good score overall was more realistic;
- In theory, with a full-time member of staff at College having ½ block for support and enrichment, their workload was comparable to that of a Hereford Sixth Form College teacher. There was some 'slack' at HSFC this year, but there was convergence to a similar point across the college.

The Local Governing Body **noted** the contents of the update and thanked the Chief Finance Officer.

(The Chief Finance Officer left at 5.47pm).

(ii) Property Strategy

The Principal outlined proposed changes to the Property Strategy to include works that had been completed over the summer including the refurbished Student Services and a new workspace for MIS. It was noted that the College was investigating additional outdoor facilities to provide better social space in response to COVID and the need to maintain physical distancing.

The Local Governing Body **approved** changes to the Property Strategy as outlined.

Pay Policy

The Principal explained that whilst the proposed changes to the Pay Policy were minor, the approach to authorising pay progression was different. Teaching staff who were eligible for progression previously had to meet all aspects of the balanced scorecard which included a percentage calculation in relation to student outcomes. This had involved a lot of effort and created upset amongst staff for little benefit. In addition, as there were no externally verified exam results in the summer, a different approach was needed for this year.

The new approach proposed followed the Teaching Staff Conditions of Service Handbook and TU Reps were being consulted. It assumes that teaching staff have met the professional standards and a recommendation would be made by the Head of Department with the Principal then approving pay progression. There would still be an appeals process if it were felt that the member of staff had not met the required standards or had not made progress towards meeting any targets set as part of the PDR process. The Principal noted that four members of teaching staff were eligible for pay progression this year with more becoming eligible next academic year.

The Local Governing Body **endorsed** the approach and **agreed** changes to the Pay Policy as outlined. Governors asked that the Principal meet with eligible staff to outline how their pay progression would be determined.

7. Stakeholder Voice

Link visit feedback reports were presented as follows:

- The Clerk advised that Phil Douce visited College shortly after June re-opening and was satisfied with the COVID security measures in place;
- Sean Devlin, in his role as designated safeguarding governor, met with the College's Designated Safeguarding Lead and confirmed that he was extremely satisfied with the safeguarding arrangements in place;

- Sheena Payne-Lunn accessed the Teams training aimed at ensuring new students were familiar with this platform. She found it to be helpful and intuitive without assuming prior knowledge.

The Chair thanked governors for their link visit reports and the contents were **noted**. Governors were encouraged to continue to arrange link visits via the Clerk.

8. Policy Reviews

(i) Student Union Constitution and Code of Practice

The Local Governing Body **approved** the policy with the proposed minor amendments.

(ii) Governors Handbook 2020-21

The Local Governing Body **approved** the Governors' Handbook with the amendments as outlined by the Clerk.

(iii) Management of the College Policy

The Local Governing Body **approved** the policy with the proposed minor amendments.

(iv) Quality Assurance Policy

The Deputy Principal explained that changes to quality assurance processes were proposed which required discussion and agreement with union representatives given the 'deep dive' aspect of some learning walks.

The Local Governing Body **agreed** to delegate authority to the Curriculum and Quality Committee to consider and approve proposed changes to the Quality Assurance policy at its next meeting.

Freedom of Speech Policy

The Local Governing Body **approved** the Freedom of Speech policy with the proposed minor amendments.

9. Closing Standing Items

(i) Chair's Action

The Clerk reported that the Chair was asked to approve a Service Level Agreement with Worcestershire Children First's Safeguarding Team. The agreement needed to be in place to ensure that services could be in place and accessible from 1st September 2020.

The Local Governing Body **noted** the use of the Chair's action.

(ii) Health and Safety

It was noted that thorough consideration of the College's risk assessment and operational plan and monitoring of COVID security measures was a means of ensuring that health and safety arrangements were appropriate. One of the staff governors commented that the one-way system on the main staircase was frequently disregarded by students and asked whether additional signage could be put in place.

(iii) Risk Management

The Clerk explained that the Executive Principal had asked that the College review its risk register to reflect that of Hereford Sixth Form College. This was to ensure a consistent approach across the Colleges. The draft document was shared with governors and feedback invited.

The Local Governing Body **noted** the new documentation with further monitoring to take place at committee level. Scrutiny of the College's risk assessment and a review of start of term arrangements demonstrated Governors had considered risk management particularly associated with COVID-19.

(iv) Impact

Governors' noted that their consideration of start of term arrangements, in particular COVID security, and the ongoing monitoring of COVID recovery and teaching, learning and assessment would ensure the wellbeing of staff and students and enable the College to deliver a return to 'full education'.

(v) Any Urgent Business: No additional items were raised.

(vi) Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday, 25th November 2020 at 5.30pm.

The meeting closed at 7.12 p.m.

Signed:

Gill Slater (Chair)

Date:

LGB ACTION POINTS ARISING FROM MEETING ON 16TH SEPTEMBER 2020

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check
LGB/16.09.20/6	Meet with teachers eligible for pay progression to outline the newly approved approach.	EYS	October 2020	
LGB/16.09.20/9(ii)	Consider whether additional signage to reinforce the one way system on the main staircase can be implemented.	EYS	ASAP	

ACTION POINTS BROUGHT FORWARD

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check

ACTION POINTS COMPLETED

Report Reference	Action Point	Person Responsible	Completion	Check
LGB/10.06.20/10	Share hints and tips for use of Teams with governors.	JJP	July 2020	✓

* Denotes amended action point.