



WMCC Board 16 December 2020 – Minutes

(approved by Chair for publication)

			All via MS Teams	16 December 2020
	Appointed Governors			
1	Kate	Bell		Y
2	Barbara	Byrne		Y
3	Susan	Corby		Y
4	Fran	Fahey		Y
5	Neil	Garner		Y
6	June	Jarrett		Y
7	Samata	Khatoon		Y
8	Alexi	Marmot		Y
9	Chris	Percy		Y
10	Guy	Shackle	Chair of Governors	Y
11	Jon	Sibson		Y
12	Paul	Smith		Y
	Helen	Hammond	Principal: ex officio	Y
	Staff Governors			
	Amanda	Blinkhorn	Teaching Staff	Y
	Monica	Kinasiwicz	Support Staff	Y
	Student Governors			
	Romy	Brandeis		Y
	Arianna	Caracciolo		Apologies
	Officers Attending			
	Martin	Jones	Vice Principal	Y
	Maria	Rosenthal	Deputy Principal	Y
	Bill	Barker	Clerk	Y

1	<p>Chair's Welcome and Introduction:</p> <p>Guy Shackle (GS, Chair of Board) welcomed everyone to the (virtual) meeting, advising that there was a very full agenda with many items recommended from Committees for Board adoption or approval.</p> <p>The Strategy section included a paper from Helen Hammond (HH, Principal) and information about building improvement and grants made available to the College so that</p>
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	it could respond to the Covid-19 pandemic in the provision of safe on-site spaces and offer a curriculum that responds to the changing needs of adults (re-skilling, basic maths and English and employability skills).	
2	<p>Apologies for Absence: Arianna Caracciolo.</p> <p>Declarations of Interest: None, but see below re WM College governor representation on the Board of the RFSA.</p>	
3	<p>Minutes of July 2020 Meeting</p> <p><u>The minutes were agreed as a correct record.</u></p> <p><u>Matters Arising not on the current agenda:</u></p> <p>The Clerk drew the attention of the Board to the fact that in July there was, as a consequence of Ashan Akbar's stepping down from the WM College Board, a vacancy on the Board of the RFSA (Royal Female School of Art) for an appointed governor of the College. Alexi Marmot (AM) had subsequently taken up the position on the RFSA Board. Governors thanked AM for taking on this role.</p> <p>AM advised that with the Mary Ward move to Stratford now likely to be in 2022, there will arise issues about the future use of the building at Queen's Square which the RFSA owns. AM advised that she would report any conflict of interest that might arise as the future of the building is determined on the departure of Mary Ward.</p> <p><u>Chair's Action: - none since last meeting.</u></p>	
4	Strategy	
4.1	<p><u>Chair's Introductory Comments and Objectives:</u></p> <p>GS expressed his thanks to governors and staff for their huge commitment to the College during the last year. He wished to express thanks on behalf of the Governing Body to the staff of the College for their response to the pandemic and their work to keep the WM College "open and safe" for learners in both the physical and virtual environments.</p> <p>In this respect the College had risen to the challenges in much the same way as other colleges had done so as to maintain continuity of educational provision for their communities.</p> <p>GS advised that he wanted to introduce two developmental priorities /objectives for the Board in the coming period.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability (climate) of College Operations and Development • Increase Diversity of the Board so as to have representation from the full range of communities to which the College offers services. 	
4.2	<p>Principal's Report: Strategic Plan Update / Covid-19 implications / FE White Paper / Spending Review</p> <p>HH drew the attention of governors to the shift from on-site /face to face provision to virtual delivery where the course and work schemes permitted this.</p>	

HH advised that learners were enjoying on-line provision. Importantly the ALS, Open Learning Centre and Library continued to offer on-site support for learners – in the normal way but also responding to any difficulties that the pandemic might be causing for their learning and wider well-being.

The College will continue to make every effort to stay open for learners and for staff: this will be done with safety for all as the top priority and in full compliance with the guidance from Public Health England and the ESFA.

During the period since March the College's IT infrastructure and IT staff have supported the move to vastly increased working on-line and from home. This has continued and more recently on the partial return to site since September.

Learner Services (enrolment) has been available to learners throughout with greatly enhanced on-line enrolment and "chat" facilities available via the newly launched and re-branded website.

The Library and Open Learning Centre have been available for learners, with the ALS and Digital Learning Services (DLS) staff available to help learners. 250 Chrome books have been loaned to learners.

Further support for learners has been provided through an increased volume of work associated with "employability": generalist courses at WM College offering gateways to more specific professional courses either at the College or elsewhere. This emphasis has seen a greater degree of 1:1 sessions, a job club and help with job applications.

The iWork (HR and Payroll) system has been deployed with the November and December payrolls now run on this platform, and with staff able to access increasing functions through the "kiosk" (self-serve) facilities.

The GLA had allocated an additional sum of up to £165k for employability provision; but the conditions associated with this grant currently permitted only 10% for non-accredited provision. HH advised that future discussion with the GLA might secure a further grant release for non-accredited provision. This grant and "contribution" potential was not included in the management accounts.

The College has engaged two full time apprentices in the Learner Services Team, and is now also offering work placements to start in March for an Art Technician and an Administration (data) Assistant as part of the "Kickstart" scheme.

The Kickstart scheme provides funding to create new job placements for 16 – 24 year olds on universal credit who are at risk of long term unemployment.

The Knowledge Quarter has led on this scheme and with support from Camden Council is providing 60 placements across Camden.

External links and partnerships continue to work constructively with Camden Council, and the Knowledge Quarter as well as with the Principals of other IALs and their invited guests from eg: AoC, GLA and ESFA.

The National Skills Fund much publicised since the Prime Minister's announcement at Exeter College means that a range of qualification bearing courses will be available to learners at level 3 from April 2021. The portfolio of courses is heavily biased towards manufacture, construction and engineering, but also includes Child and Social Care at level 3. These courses will be free at the point of delivery removing the need for learners to take out loans for fees. This was welcomed by governors who had in prior years heard

	<p>that the fees /associated loan had proved to be a barrier to learners' access to these courses.</p> <p>The "Colleges of the Future" (Independent Commission) report had been published in a final version and contained many positive messages about the impact of colleges as advocates of learning and opportunity for their communities. There was, however, a worrying emphasis placed on inter-college "planning networks" - whilst this may encourage partnership arrangements between colleges, it would not be welcomed as a notice of another round of the "area review" process of 2015-2019.</p> <p><u>GLA rates 2021 /22:</u> The GLA will be allocating an increase on funding rates of c£250k for formula funded provision. This will mean that the cost of provision is more adequately provided for in the contract sum earned per learner.</p> <p>Governors asked questions about how learners were able to access help with mental health issues (through the ALS service and their networks for onward referrals), and about links with Job Centre Plus (strengthening links with JCP now having an on-site presence in the Café).</p> <p>In bringing this section to a close HH advised that the College was well placed to offer steps back into education for adults who may be or may become unemployed as a result of the economic impact of the pandemic. This offer includes courses in English language or ESOL, mathematics, and digital skills complemented by specific "employability" provision: eg CV writing, job application workshops.</p> <p>One of the staff governors reminded the Board that the College was not awarding the AoC's recommended 1% cost of living pay increase and that this development had not been well received by College staff.</p>	
<p>4.2A</p>	<p>Learner Data 2020/21</p> <p>Maria Rosenthal (MR, Deputy Principal) introduced this item about the autumn 2020 enrolments in comparison with the 2019 levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolments were down by 22% in comparison with the same time last year • Classroom, IT suite, and workshop spaces on site now had Covid number restrictions • The number of on-line enrolments had increased • The College was planning to expand summer school provision in 2021. <p>There remained an over-riding question about the GLA's arrangements for end of year reconciliation (formula funded contract value vs actual delivery) and possible "clawback" of funding.</p> <p>Governors asked how the autumn term enrolment data compared with that of other IALs. HH advised that WM College was in a better position than IALs that had a lesser percentage of learners who live rather than work in the area and with fewer learners entitled to fee remission - and so more reliant on learner fee income and income from full cost provision</p>	
<p>4.3</p>	<p>Building Projects: Update, Outlook and post-Covid Strategy</p> <p><u>Martin Jones (MJ, Vice Principal) advised the Committee:</u></p>	

	<p>Practical Completion on the Mixed Mode Heating and Ventilation Project had been agreed in November 2020 and that the Building Management System (BMS) was operating, thereby enabling configuration and control by “zone” rather than on a whole building basis.</p> <p>This news was welcomed by governors who expressed thanks and congratulations to all involved for their patience and perseverance with this project.</p> <p><u>Other grants had become available and secured by the College:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Covid Response Fund - £50k for revenue and capital. Being used for additional Chrome books to be made available to learners, temporary staff resource to support learners with digital access and staff training to strengthen confidence in the production of remote/digital materials and expertise in their delivery. 2. Covid Emergency Response (Capital) £185k with no match funding requirement. Being used to cover cost of capital Covid-19 adjustments including protective screens, cameras for classrooms for blended learning, Covid-19 signage etc. plus creation of pods for teachers preparing digital materials and hosting delivery of online classes. 3. College Condition £234k: requires 25% match. This will be used to upgrade the external disabled lift access and for re-decoration of classrooms and circulation areas so as to present the College accommodation as additionally welcoming visually as well as being more comfortable in consequence of the improvements to heating and ventilation. This grant needs to be spent by end March 2021. 4. GLA WMC Plus: contract for 33% grant support (1 part GLA: 2 parts College) for the OLC, Library and Maurice Hall now signed; claim for Open Learning Centre phase now submitted. Library and Maurice Hall works proposed in contract for 2022 and 2023. <p>AM commented that the re-decoration of rooms and re-presentation of notice boards and the information on them was particularly welcome news, representing another step, alongside the commissioning of the BMS, towards the full value of the investment in the Heating and Ventilation Project becoming apparent to learners and to staff.</p>	
<p>5</p>	<p>Quality College Self-Assessment Report 2019/20 (SAR)</p> <p>Jon Sibson (JS, Chair of the CQSC) introduced this item. The CQSC had considered the SAR report in detail at its meeting a week ago, hearing and interrogating the evidence to support the grade judgements for curriculum and service /operational areas. He advised that the Committee was recommending the SAR for adoption and invited MR to comment further and to highlight the main outcomes.</p> <p>MR commented that overall achievement was down from the from the 2018/19 levels for both non-accredited and accredited provision The Committee had considered the many factors that had contributed to this, some of which were outside of the College’s control,</p>	

	<p>and others of which were primarily attributable to the adverse operating – Covid-19 – conditions.</p> <p>In Summary;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24% decrease in enrolments, • 17% decrease in learner numbers with fewer learners coming to the College for the first time • Overall Achievement on non- accredited course dropped by 1% • Retention on accredited courses at 91%. • Pass rate on accredited provision were 14% lower at 81% • Overall Achievement on accredited courses fell to 74%. <p>("overall achievement" - previously referred to as "success" is a calculated percentage – 'retention rate' x 'pass rate' of retained learners = overall achievement)</p> <p><u>Overall (whole College) Judgements 2019-20 / Education Inspection Framework (EIF)</u></p> <p><u>Areas:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall Effectiveness of Provision: grade 2 • Quality of Education: grade 2 • Behaviour and Attitudes: grade 1 • Personal Development: grade 1 • Leadership and Management: grade 1 <p>Leadership and Management was the only area where the Committee was endorsing a between year change of grade, from a 2 in 2018/19 to a grade 1 for 2019/20.</p> <p>MR and JS advised that the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for the 2021 calendar year would be based on the SAR areas for improvement: and in particular the actions being taken to address the variability of retention and achievement by ethnicity, and the actions being taken to improve "destinations" data. The QIP would be considered at the Spring meeting of the CQSC.</p> <p>The Board welcomed and adopted the SAR 2019/20.</p>
6	Governance:
6.1	<p>Update on Board and Committee Membership /Chairs</p> <p>GS advised that after 12 years of service Kate Bell would be stepping down as Vice-Chair at the end of the calendar year and from the Board at the end of the Spring term 2021. He expressed thanks for her enormous and sustained contribution as Vice-Chair and as Chair of the Audit Committee over her period of service.</p> <p>He proposed that Barbara Byrne and Jon Sibson become Vice-Chairs of the Board from January 01 2021. This was agreed.</p> <p>He proposed that Susan Corby should become a member of the Remuneration Committee from 01 January 2021 This was agreed.</p> <p>He also advised that Chris Percy was stepping down from the Board and thanked Chris for his commitment to the College and for his continuing willingness to help with learner progression and destination tracking.</p>

	<p>The memberships, Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Committees (CQSC, FPDC and AC) as presented in the paper prepared by the Clerk were agreed.</p> <p>Schedule of Dates – Spring and Summer Terms</p> <p>This schedule was agreed: in the Spring term the Remuneration Committee would meet on 20 January and there was a date of 24 February assigned for a strategy session (this to be reviewed in the light of Covid related conditions pertaining at the time).</p> <p>The dates for the additional meetings in the Spring term and the dates for the Summer term as proposed in the paper prepared by the Clerk were agreed.</p>	
<p>6.2</p>	<p>Annual Report on Risk Management and Policy</p> <p>MJ introduced this item: he advised that the Annual Report had been considered in detail at the Audit Committee at the end of November and was recommended by the AC for adoption by the Board.</p> <p>The Risk Management Policy and the full Risk Register had been reviewed by the Audit Committee and both were recommended for approval. The Risk Register had been updated so that the Covid-19 related risks were no longer presented as a separate additional risk as they had been in 2019/20, but were disaggregated into their constituent parts and added to the corresponding pre-existing risk on the register.</p> <p>This approach was welcomed as it helped to disseminate responsibility for the management of Covid risk to the managers best placed to do this, and in consequence to the committee of the Governing Body best placed to monitor the impact of the controls in place.</p> <p>The Annual Report on Risk Management was adopted and the Risk Management Policy and the Risk Register were approved by the Board.</p>	
<p>6.3</p>	<p>Annual Report and Opinion of Audit Committee</p> <p>Paul Smith (PS, Chair of the Audit Committee) introduced this Report and Opinion. He advised governors that the AC had met at the end of November and had reviewed reports and “opinions” presented by the IAS (Scrutton Bland) and by the External Audit (Buzzacott) providers.</p> <p>These had informed the detailed report and “opinion” of the Audit Committee which had been prepared by the Clerk. The Committee recommended that the requirement for the Board to submit a “going concern” judgement valid for a 12 month period from the signing of the accounts to be given additional emphasis and this was now incorporated within the Report.</p> <p>PS advised the Board that the AC considered that:</p> <p>The Committee had been effective in the conduct of its business and in the execution of its responsibilities in respect of its terms of reference of the ESFA’s P16 Audit Code of Practice.</p> <p>The AC was recommending that the Report and Opinion of the Audit Committee was received by the Board:</p>	

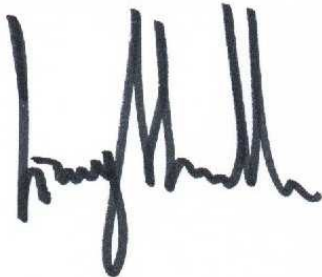
	<p>The Report and Opinion</p> <p>The Opinion of the Committee is that there are in place adequate and effective procedures governing the Corporation’s assurance arrangements, framework of governance, risk management and control processes for the effective and efficient use of resources, solvency, and the safeguarding of assets.</p> <p>PS thanked the members of the Committee and College staff who had worked to achieve robust controls, risk management and governance arrangements that had provided the evidence for the positive opinions of audit providers.</p> <p>The Report and Opinion of the AC were welcomed and adopted by the Board.</p>	
<p>6.4</p>	<p>Board Self-Assessment</p> <p>BB_Clerk introduced this item: he invited the Board to self-assess as “good” and cited the evidence below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two Strategy Sessions - October 2019 and February 2020 • Migration to on-line meetings (1 meeting missed) • Chairs’ Group established and endorsed by Board in July 2020 • All other meetings per schedule • Governors’ Links – visits and virtual attendance at PRBs • Governor Recruitment: two governors appointed • Building Improvements - Practical Completion • College History and “Fellows” - seminar and on-going work • Opinions of AC, IAS and External Auditors <p>Governors agreed the self-assessment grade as “good”.</p> <p><u>Governors noted that work towards a self-assessment of “outstanding” would require:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The participation of a greater number of governors in the link scheme • That procedures are reviewed and specific effort is made so that the diversity of the Board becomes more reflective of the local communities for which the College provides services. 	
<p>7</p>	<p>Financial Performance and Monitoring</p>	
<p>7.1</p>	<p><u>Management Accounts to 31 July 2020</u></p> <p>MJ advised that these were primarily for information as the outcomes are reported in detail in the financial statements and will be commented on later in the meeting. At this stage he simply wished to draw the attention of the Board to the more favourable outcome of £40k deficit than had been provided for in the budget for 2019/20 (£273k deficit) and more favourable than predicted in reports throughout the year (up to £473k deficit). There were three main reasons for this variance against in-year forecast:</p> <p>Staff Costs for teaching departments c £120k</p>	

	<p>Non-Staff Costs (Corporate and Business) c £100k Depreciation (date of practical completion on H&V project after year-end and so no in-year charge) c £211k</p> <p>There was a c £600k loss on the investments (portfolio and property).</p>	
7.2	<p><u>Management Accounts 31 October 2020</u></p> <p>MJ advised that these accounts were for the first 3 months of the current year (from 01 August – 31 October 2020) and were presented so that governors were fully informed when asked to come to a view about the “going concern” judgement later in the meeting.</p> <p>He reminded governors that the budget 2020/21 agreed in July 2020 was for a deficit of £188k but that now it was anticipated that it could rise to over £300k primarily as a consequence of a revised estimate of fee income (down £100k) reflecting fewer enrolments and a greater number of learners entitled to fee remission.</p> <p>He also informed the Board that the GLA additional “employability” funding was not included in the forecast (see minute 4.2 above: Principal’s Report)</p> <p>The greatest risk was that HM Treasury / EFSA / GLA were not yet confirming arrangements for 2020/21 year-end funding reconciliation (contract delivery (volume) vs contract funding). In contrast as part of the recent Spending Review the Chancellor had confirmed that the Teachers’ Pension Grant would be continued for a year from 31 March 2021 which meant that an element of risk to colleges’ financial health was removed for the current year.</p> <p>Governors welcomed this update whilst recognising that a second year of deficit, though understandable in the current circumstances was not a sustainable trend for long-term viability.</p>	
7.3	<p><u>Cashflow to July 2022 and Commentary</u></p> <p>MJ advised the Board that the ESFA had required a cashflow return for the period to July 2022 and that the College’s return had been scrutinised and endorsed by the FPDC.</p> <p>The Cashflow did not include any “GLA Employability” monies: nor did it include a recent decision of the GLA to increase the rate of funding for formula funded provision from 01 August 2021 by 10%. (c £250k for 2021/22).</p> <p>The cashflow demonstrated that the College remained solvent (cash at bank) throughout the period. Governors noted that the monies in the investment portfolio representing unrestricted reserves could be sold to augment cash, though this was not predicted to be necessary at any stage in the period to July 2022. This cashflow and “reserve” option to sell investments should assist governors in concluding that the College continues as a “going concern” for at least 12 months from the date of the meeting and the signing of the 2019/20 accounts.</p> <p>Governors welcomed this opportunity to review the cashflow, and a number of governors from the FPDC commented further that they fully supported an affirmative “going concern” judgement.</p>	
8	<p>Financial Outturn 2019/20 - Audit and Financial Statements</p>	

	<p>BB (Chair of the FPDC) introduced this item advising that the Accounts had been scrutinised by the FPDC and were recommended for approval.</p> <p>PS (Chair of Audit Committee) advised that the documents to be considered as part of this agenda item had also been reviewed by the Audit Committee - there were no matters of concern arising from the audit of the Accounts (unqualified /true and fair) for 2019/20 to bring to the attention of the Board.</p> <p>The FPDC and the AC had both reviewed the post audit report from Buzzacott which drew the attention of the Board to the calculated assessment of financial health as “requires improvement”.</p>	
	<p><u>Fraud Questionnaire</u></p> <p>This was approved by the Board. No reports of fraud had come to the attention of managers or governors in the period to the meeting of the Board.</p>	
	<p><u>Regularity Self-Assessment</u></p> <p>MJ advised that the Regularity Self-Assessment had been presented at both the Audit Committee and the FPDC, and that it included responses to additional Covid-19 related disclosure requirements required by the ESFA.</p> <p>Governors approved this Regularity Self-Assessment.</p>	
	<p><u>Post Audit Management Report (Buzzacott)</u></p> <p>MJ advised that this report had been considered at both the Audit Committee and the FPDC at their meetings in the weeks leading up to this meeting of the Board.</p> <p>Buzzacott has determined that the accounts are “true and fair” and that the opinion they intend to issue will be unqualified. But the assessment of Financial Health is that the College “requires improvement”</p> <p>MJ advised that the cash at the bank had reduced as planned in consequence of payments for the Heating and Ventilation capital project. The investment portfolio was not included in the calculation of “current assets” and that this should be considered in the Board’s consideration of the fact that the current ratio had fallen to less than 1:1 (0.9:1 vs 2.07:1 at July 2019).</p> <p>The Board welcomed the information that the calculation of financial health did not include the College’s investment portfolio as “current assets” and that they were not therefore included in the calculation of current ratio.</p>	
	<p><u>Going Concern Judgement.</u></p> <p>Governors endorsed the view of the FPDC that the College was a “Going Concern.”</p> <p>However, governors also expressed the view that operational deficits were not sustainable for any extended period, and that the current ratio should not remain at such a low level for any continuing period of time.</p>	

	<p>Governors wanted to see a return to more sustainable financial outcomes from operational activities and a rebalancing of the current ratio whilst recognising the speed with which this could be accomplished would depend on Covid-19 developments outside the control of the College.</p>	
	<p>Letter of Representations.</p> <p>This was not yet released by Buzzacott but was not anticipated to include any non standard declarations. Governors welcomed this and agreed that it could be signed on their behalf so long as it remained limited to the normal (standard) clauses (assurances about functions and controls that Buzzacott could not assess independently).</p>	
	<p><u>Report and Financial Statements 2019/20:</u></p> <p>GS invited BB to introduce this item and to advise the Board of the recommendation of the FPDC.</p> <p>BB advised the Board that the FPDC was recommending approval of the Financial Statements. She referred to the discussion earlier on the agenda of the management accounts to July 2020 and to the discussion at the FPDC and earlier by the Board as part of this agenda.</p> <p>The intention of Buzzacott (external auditors) was to issue an unqualified opinion that the accounts provided a “true and fair” view of the College’s financial outturn for 2019/20 and its impact on the Balance Sheet.</p> <p>MJ advised that the Trustees’ Report would be updated and circulated for comment/ approval within the next week: he also advised that the changes would be minor and should not be unexpected.</p> <p>The Report and Financial Statements to July 31 2020 were agreed with all sections agreed for signing by the Chair and the Accounting Officer.</p>	
9	Committee Reports	
9.1	<p>Report from Audit Committee</p> <p>PS drew the attention of the Board to the IAS Plan for the 2020/21 year advising that this had been revised to take account of audits not undertaken in 2019/20 and in consequence combining audit areas where possible into audits with a greater range.</p> <p>The Committee would benefit from additional membership. Other matters had been discussed earlier by the Board.</p>	
9.2	<p>Report from FPD Committee</p> <p>BB advised the main items had been discussed earlier by the Board.</p>	
9.3	<p>Report from CQS Committee</p> <p>JS advised that the main item for discussion had been the SAR.</p> <p>The other business concerned the Annual Report on Safeguarding and the Policy Review- these were both adopted by the Committee. He advised that the Policy had been revised to include guidance for both staff and learners about on-line safety.</p>	

	<p>He advised that in relation to both the SAR and the College’s safeguarding procedures the QIP would include actions to enlarge the employability portfolio of courses, and measures to improve inclusivity (de-colonisation of content, actions to address the unevenness of retention and achievement across all ethnic groups).</p> <p>The governors’ link arrangements had continued to work well and that attendance at the PRBs had been increased by their being on-line. However, the scheme could be further strengthened by more frequent visits and by a greater number of governors taking part.</p>	
10	<p>Future Meetings: Board: 31 March 2021, 14 July 2021</p>	



Signed: _ _ _

Date: 10th February 2021

For Publication “Chair’s authorisation”