

**MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING
HELD ON 11 FEBRUARY 2021 AT 4.30PM - Via Google Meet**

PRESENT:

Mr P Croke (Chair)
Mr D J Finch
Dr B Calvert
Ms T D'Souza
Mrs S Davies - Staff Governor
Dr J Graystone
Mr K Halabuda - Staff Governor
Mrs K Lewis
Mr T Lewis - Student Governor
Mr H Llewellyn - *joined at 4.40pm*
Mrs J Longville
Ms A Morgan
Mrs J Oak
Ms S Parkhouse - Student Governor
Mr S Pirotte - Principal
Mrs S Pryce
Cllr Dr C Smith - *joined at 5.05pm*

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr J Baldwin (JB) Assistant Principal Learner Journey
Ms V Buckley (VB) - Deputy Principal
Mrs N Eyre (NE) - Clerk
Mr A Gibbs (AG) - Vice-Principal
Mrs S Gunnarsson - Student Wellbeing and Safeguarding Manager
Mrs C Swain - Learner Service and Welsh Language Manager - *left after agenda item 7*

The meeting commenced at 4.35pm

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked the members to ratify the appointments of Mr J Greenidge and Mrs D Lewis-Whelan onto the Governing Body and Audit and Resource Planning Committees respectively. The approval of the two appointments had been made via email after the interviews had taken place with the Search & Governance Committee.

The Chair then gave a special welcome to Mr J Greenidge and Mrs D Lewis-Whelan.

Apologies for absence were noted from Mrs S Morgan (Director of People).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Ms T D'Souza declared an interest in the Any Other Business item that members had been made aware of prior to the meeting as the company that she is employed by provided advice on this matter.

No other declarations were made.

3. MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON 1 DECEMBER 2020

The minutes of the Governing Body Meeting held on 1 December 2020 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON 10 DECEMBER 2020

The minutes of the Governing Body Meeting held on 10 December 2020 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

5. MATTERS ARISING

5.1 Action Tracker

Action 1 - (Governor training) - a small number of governors have yet to complete the mandatory governor training.

Action 2 ("Differences Made" section to be added to the Governing Body Activity Report) - this will be included in the 2020/21 Activity Report.

Action 3 (Consideration of adding Penybont Sixth Form College as a separate risk on the Risk Register) - a revised Risk Register will be presented at the next Audit Committee meeting on 25 February 2021.

Action 4 (Engage ToR - amendments needed for changes agreed to the directorship of Engage) - the Engage Board approved the amended Terms of Reference at its meeting held on 9 February and a copy will be presented at the Resource Planning Committee meeting being held on 11 March.

The members noted the actions.

6. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT (INCLUDING COVID-19 UPDATE)

The Principal informed the Governing Body of the following:

- COVID is continuing to dominate everything.
- A very small number of learners will return on site after half term in a COVID-secure way. Further details on this were given in the Curriculum Update agenda item (item 10).
- Three layer face coverings must be worn in all indoor areas.

- Priority is being given to learners who require a licence to practice.
- Vocational learners do not have the certainty that GCSE and A Level students have about how their grades will be awarded.
- Local trade unions are very supportive.
- The financial support from the Welsh Government (WG) to deal with the demands of the pandemic has been fantastic but there is uncertainty with funding for the 2021/22 academic year onwards.
- Discussions are taking place with Valleys to Coast and Bridgend County Borough Council on partnership working.
- There have been a number of achievements since the last meeting:
 - Steve Jones, Careers Manager, has been shortlisted for Career Manager of the Year in the UK Career Development Awards.
 - The College has won the Beacon Award for Mental Health and Wellbeing which is excellent recognition for the work being undertaken in this area. The Chair, on behalf of the members, congratulated the College on achieving this award, especially in these difficult times.

The Chair opened the discussion to the members.

The Vice-Chair further added his congratulations and reminded the members that as he is retiring in October, a member will need to be appointed as the governor responsible for safeguarding; this is a legal requirement. The Vice-Chair stated that he would like to have a handover period and invited any members who are interested to get in touch with the Clerk about this.

The Vice-Chair also enquired whether members could join the sessions planned for the Quality and CPD days. The Clerk is to make the necessary arrangements (**ACTION** - NE).

Another member stated that he is interested in the impact that COVID has had on achievements and whether there are any particular groups that have been impacted more.

The Principal was congratulated for being awarded an OBE in the New Year's Honours List. All members agreed that this is a fantastic achievement.

A question was raised about the number of positive cases amongst staff and students included in the report as it appeared high. The Principal commented that it is believed that the vast majority of these cases are a result of community transmission. It was requested that the Principal discusses the number of cases at the next Principals meeting to gain some comparisons with other colleges (**ACTION** - SP). A member suggested that evidence needs to be gathered on the effectiveness of measures and whether cases are transmitted on site. The Principal stated that the guidance is very clear - two metre social distancing **must** be maintained at all times by all staff and by all learners. There is no compromising on this.

The issue of whether Weston House is operating was raised. It was confirmed that there are 15 learners on site, 12 of which are residential. Some parents and carers have kept learners home so numbers are lower than usual. Smaller bubbles within Weston House have been created.

The Governing Body NOTED the update.

7. WELSH LANGUAGE ANNUAL REPORT

Mrs Carys Swain, Learner Services and Welsh Language Manager, gave a presentation to the Governing Body on the use of the Welsh language at the College. Mrs Swain reported that the pandemic has had very little impact on the use of Welsh language at the College. The learners are at the heart of everything the College does and every effort goes into supporting those learners who wish to use the Welsh language. Approximately 10% of enrolments every September are from learners who have attended a Welsh medium secondary school.

The third annual report that has been sent to the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office was noted.

5.05 - Cllr Dr C Smith joined the meeting.

A member queried whether any of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) are Welsh speakers and it was confirmed that Elizabeth Evans, Director of Curriculum and Quality is a fluent Welsh speaker. The Deputy Principal is also learning Welsh. Mrs Swain added that the support she receives from the Assistant Principal (Learner Journey) as her direct line manager and all of the SLT is fantastic.

Another member requested that the translation of Governing Body minutes into Welsh is included in next year's annual report to the Welsh Language Commissioner's Office to show the Governing Body's commitment to the Welsh language (**ACTION** - CS).

The Chair queried the challenges that having 10% of learners from Welsh language medium secondary schools presents. Mrs Swain stated that approximately 74% of homes where children attend Welsh medium schools have no other Welsh speakers at home, therefore, a conscious effort has to be made to engage with these learners when they progress to College. The pandemic is making this a bigger challenge. Mrs Swain added that there are 66 staff who are fluent Welsh speakers and opportunities are created for them to converse in Welsh.

The Principal stated that one of the challenges is that the 150-200 Welsh speaking learners that enrol every year are on different courses and different campuses. It is easier where there are clusters of learners in one area. The perceived unfairness in The WG funding to support the Welsh Language was raised as the College receives £30k whereas Grwp Llandrillo Menai which is based in a Welsh speaking area receives £2million.

One of the staff governors stated that he's starting on the Community College course to learn Welsh in March.

One member commented that the annual report was excellent and how the Welsh language provides three benefits:

1. Economic opportunity
2. Diversity and inclusion

3. Diversity of thought - people that speak different languages tend also to think differently.

The members noted the report and update.

8. GOVERNANCE MATTERS

The Clerk referred the members to the minutes of the Search & Governance Committee meeting held on 26 January 2021 (agenda item 14) as the following items were discussed and recommended for approval or noting.

Items recommended for approval

1. Appointment of Governing Body members - Mrs Dawn Lewis-Whelan and Mr Jeff Greenidge - this was dealt with under agenda item 1 (see above).
2. Appointment of member for a second term of office - the Governing Body approved the appointment of Mr H Llewellyn for a second term of office as a Governing Body member and Chair of the Audit Committee from August 2021 to August 2025.
3. Appointment of Vice-Chair from October 2021 - the Chair re-opened the expressions of interests for the role of Vice-Chair and requested that expressions of interest and nominations are sent to the Clerk by 26 February.
4. Co-option of Mr J Finch onto the Audit Committee from October 2021 - the Governing Body approved the co-option of Mr J Finch back onto the Audit Committee in October 2021 to fulfil the requirement to have a member with recent and relevant financial experience whilst the Search & Governance Committee find a replacement. Mr Finch will then stand down when a suitable person has been co-opted. Members were requested to let the Clerk know if they know of a suitable person to be considered for co-option.
5. Terms of Reference (ToR) - the amended Terms of Reference for the Search & Governance, Resource Planning and Selection Committee were approved by the Governing Body.
6. Translation of committee minutes and confidential items - the Governing Body discussed the Welsh Language Manager's recommendation that only Governing Body minutes are translated going forward as these are the only documents that are made publicly available. The Governing Body approved the recommendation and resolved that only Governing Body minutes will be translated into Welsh from now on. All agendas and committee minutes are to be made available in Welsh on request.

7. Combined Self-Assessment Questionnaire - the Governing Body approved the combined questionnaire recommended for approval by the Search & Governance Committee. The Clerk and Chair also explained that they'd like members to have one-to-one interviews with the Chair or Vice-Chair this year to discuss individual performance as it had been some time since they were last carried out. The Chair-Elect stated that she would like to be involved in this process. The Clerk is to make the necessary arrangements (**ACTION** - NE).

Items for noting

1. Feedback from the AoC Governance Conference - Mrs S Pryce and Mrs J Longville had attended the conference on behalf of the Governing Body and Mrs Pryce had provided detailed notes to the members. The overall feedback was that it feels like the Governing Body is doing well and ahead of many other colleges. The Chair of the Audit Committee added that he'd noted the comments regarding audit and commented that he thought that they were thought provoking.
The Principal thanked the two members for attending and said that it is comforting to know that the Governing Body is doing well. He further commented on the journey that the Governing Body has been on and how it has improved considerably over time. The calibre of the members appointed is exceptional and the College does not have any difficulty recruiting onto the Governing Body. The members provide a high level of challenge and support and this is really appreciated.
The importance of the different kinds of diversity on the Governing Body was stressed - not just the nine protected characteristics but the diversity of thought and knowledge. It was also highlighted that colleges are anchor institutions in society as they teach learners values and citizenship as well as skills for the workplace.
The Chair thanked the two members for attending and for the very helpful notes. The risk appetite between stability and change was raised as this will be very relevant for the Governing Body and College coming out of the pandemic.
2. Succession planning - vacancies on the Audit, Remuneration and Search & Governance and Selection committees - the Search & Governance Committee will consider these when the upcoming vacancy for the role of Vice-Chair has been filled as this will impact on the make-up of the committees.
3. Update on the Additional Learning Needs system - the Governing Body noted the update on the phased implementation of the ALN system from September 2021 and the letter received from the Minister for Education.

The members noted the information.

9. COLLEGE POLICY MANAGEMENT

The Vice-Principal gave credit and thanked Mrs L Morgan, PA to the SLT, for the work she had undertaken on policy management.

The Vice-Principal provided the following information:

- The internal auditors had been commissioned to help with this project.
- The number of policies has been streamlined down to 47.
- A tiered approach has been recommended for approval by the Search & Governance Committee (minutes referred to in agenda item 14.1). Any policies approved at SLT level would be included in the Principal's Report at the next Governing Body meeting.
- There is subjectivity in the determination of the level of sign-off. The SLT has reviewed and approved the list and the same modelling is used by Coleg Gwent.

Some of the members stated in the chat function that this seemed a pragmatic approach. Another member stated that she's happy to approve the proposed delegation list as she reviewed it in detail herself and came to the same conclusions. However, she questioned whether there should be a criteria in the future to avoid the reliance on intuition and this would provide a better audit trail.

A further comment was added that 47 is still a large number of policies and questioned whether these could be streamlined more.

RESOLVED: The Governing Body approved the College policy delegation list with the proviso that any further consideration of policy delegation is based on an agreed criteria rather than intuition (**ACTION** - NE/AG).

10. CURRICULUM UPDATE

The Deputy Principal gave a presentation about the curriculum based on three elements:

1. Where were we?
2. Where are we now?
3. Where are we going?

1. Where were we?

Before the pandemic hit in March 2020, the targets in the Self Evaluation Report for 2019/20 were xx% [redacted] for Main qualifications and xx% [redacted] for All qualifications. The 2020-25 Strategic Plan has set both targets at 90%.

The December 2020 data freeze showed that the Main qualifications were xx% and xx% for All qualifications (x% and xx% behind target respectively) [redacted]. However, the potential is that overall Main qualifications could become xx% (x% behind target) and All qualifications could become xx% (x% behind target) [redacted] if all of the learners that are able to, given the restrictions, actually complete their qualifications. This is a fantastic achievement with the complexities that the pandemic has presented.

The learner exit survey has the following highlights:

- 98% of learners said staff are friendly and helpful
- 96% of learners said that they liked going to College
- 98% of learners would recommend their course to a friend.

2. Where are we now?

Term 1:

There are only 188 learners in the Adapt/Delay category from 2019/20 that have yet to complete their qualification (112 part-time and 76 full-time). This was 1,204 in June 2020 so significant progress has been made and this is a testament to the staff involved.

For full-time courses, 60% of lessons are synchronous (member of staff present) and 40% are non-synchronous.

By November 2020, 50% of courses had an element of on campus provision.

A new core skills system was introduced.

Term 2:

Provision went 100% online, except for essential and pre-booked exams.

The curriculum team has reviewed every course and categorised them into four tiers:

- Tier 1 - **1 day on site** required to complete an assessment **AND** course must be licence to practice **OR** learner can only complete an assessment with access to specialist equipment on a College campus.
- Tier 2 - **More than 1 day on site** required to complete an assessment **AND** course must be licence to practice **OR** learner can only complete an assessment with access to specialist equipment on a college campus
- Tier 3 - Students can complete assessments at home, but they are compromised assessments due to the environment. Access to workshops would greatly enhance the student experience and ability to complete assessments
- Tier 4 - Vocational skill is currently prohibited under Welsh Government restrictions **OR** vocational skill cannot be undertaken at 2m social distance **OR** no specialist equipment required to successfully complete assessments.

Learners in tier 1 are being invited on site now to complete their one day of work.

After half-term, learners in tier 2 are being invited on site to complete their course, however, this involves changes to staffing, resourcing and timetabling. Learners are being asked to provide their own transport to access this provision.

Learners in tiers 3 and 4 will remain online after half-term and the College is lobbying for change. Entry level and Level 1 learners are being provided with study from home packs as their engagement is lower than for the higher level courses.

The number of learners in each tiers is as follows:

- Tier 1 - 341

- Tier 2 - 1,071 (83 Vulnerable learners, 518 full-time FE, 142 part-time FE, 132 WBL, HE 140 and Care and Childhood Studies 56)
- Tiers 3&4 - 4,088

Vocational learners do not have the certainty that GCSE and A Level learners currently have. GCSE and A Level learners know that they will have a centre-determined grade whereas many vocational learners do not know how and whether they will be able to complete their qualifications this year.

The Deputy Principal stressed that the aim is to complete as many learners as possible prior to a new intake in September 2021.

3. Where are we going?

The opening of the STEAM Academy and Landbased Centre in September 2021 is going to change the face of vocational education. This alongside the den01, Cyfleoedd, Heat Academy initiatives in a truly inclusive environment will help the College achieve its goal of being extraordinary. However, the issue of 5,500 learners in the above four tiers having to complete their qualifications in 2020/21 has to be addressed prior to achieving this goal.

The Chair thanked the Deputy Principal for her presentation and a very in-depth discussion took place. The following points and issues were raised:

- Whether any adaptations had been made to qualifications by the regulators. The Deputy Principal explained that there have been some but not many. The issue in Health & Social Care was given as there are now two years of learners who have yet to undertake work placements which are essential for achieving the qualification. There is only one qualification that can be studied in Wales in this curriculum area and the regulator is not making any adjustments to the qualification. There are also plans to recruit for September 2021 as this is where the biggest need for the skill-set is.
The Principal gave a wider context to this issue and explained that despite education being devolved in Wales, the 40+ awarding bodies used by the College are regulated by Ofqual in England. There has been disappointment expressed in the sector that Qualifications Wales have not been more active in trying to help the FE sector in Wales during this pandemic.
The Principal added that there is also the danger that the learner experience is now secondary to them achieving their qualification which is having an impact on staff morale as staff have such high standards and expectations of their learners.
- The impact of the pandemic on vulnerable learners and what equality, diversity and inclusivity measures the College is using to minimise the impact. The Principal explained that the College, when made aware of issues, is reacting and introducing mitigation measures.
- The effectiveness of the sector voice and the creativity in providing creative solutions. The Deputy Principal explained that the College has introduced virtual environments and online placements but these will never be the same as the real environment or placement.

- The Chair commented that he is a Board member of ColegauCymru. ColegauCymru is very concerned about the relationship with Qualifications Wales.
- One of the student governors commented that the College has been fantastic with its support. Key skills have improved greatly as more time has been spent on these as they are more adaptable to online delivery.
- The issue of whether the College is noticing any gap between the most disadvantaged students compared with those less disadvantaged and whether any steps have been taken to minimise this was questioned. The member stressed that this is crucial to the College as it is one of its core values and asked how confident would the College be if it was asked if it is doing all that it can.
The Deputy Principal stated that when matters have been brought to the attention of the College, immediate action is taken. Examples such as the recording of lessons to allow learners to access them at a time convenient to them, live lessons being put on in the evenings or at different times to accommodate the learners and a small number of vulnerable students have been on site were given. The College encourages communications with learners and will always strive to provide solutions to issues raised by learners. However, overall it is reactive as every learners' needs are different. It was also acknowledged that staff have needed to be adaptable and for some staff, this has also suited them e.g. for caring responsibilities.
The Principal added that the College would always like to do more but this has to be balanced against demands on staff who have been managing the volatility that this crisis has brought for a long time. The Principal once again praised the staff for their wonderful positivity.
- The need to publicise the way the College has responded to the demands of the pandemic needs to be shared. The Deputy Principal explained that these are included in student communications and on the student portal. Also, every Monday morning, learners receive a tutorial notice which covers all relevant information for the week.

The Chair concluded the discussion by stating that the College will need time to reflect on the pandemic at the appropriate time.

11. FINANCIAL UPDATE

The Vice-Principal opened the item by stating that the WG has provided excellent financial support during the pandemic, both for the losses suffered by the College and to support the learners both in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

In 2020/21, there has been £million [redacted] of additional funding and there is a hope that this amount will increase before the end of the academic year. In addition, the WG has notified the College this week that there will be an above inflation increase for 2021/22. The impact of this needs to be worked through by the Finance team and the Resource Planning Committee (RPC) will be given further details in its March meeting.

The members noted the update.

12. CAMPUS DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

The Vice-Principal gave a brief update on the status and timelines for the STEAM Academy and Landbased Centre. There were no significant changes to those reported at the December meeting.

6.30pm - Dr B Calvert left the meeting

- The contingency of £xxxk [redacted] is still considered enough for the stage that the project is at and there is the potential that this might increase with some VAT efficiencies on the Landbased Centre.
- The £xxxk [redacted] threat notified to the Governing Body in December has been resolved.
- A revised bid to bring forward the bid from Band C to Band B funding under the WG's 21st Century Schools and Colleges programme for the town centre campus is being drawn up. Mrs S Pryce in her capacity as Chair of RPC attended the options appraisal workshop with the SLT the day before this meeting. However, the success of this bid depends on surplus funds from other projects being available.

The members noted the update.

13. CORPORATE KPIS

The Vice-Principal explained that there has not been a lot of movement in the KPIS since the last meeting as it is between financial forecasts. The Vice-Principal explained that it is hopeful that the surplus as a percentage of turnover will improve in the February forecast.

The Chair commented that the College is dealing with significant uncertainty.

The Governing Body noted the update.

14. COMMITTEE MINUTES:

14.1 SEARCH & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE - 26 JANUARY 2021 (UNCONFIRMED)

The Members **RECEIVED** the minutes.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (AOB)

Ms T D'Souza declared an interest as her colleagues at Capital Law had advised on this matter.

The Clerk had distributed information ahead of the meeting with regard to a resolution requested by the Land Registry for the connection of the gas supply to the STEAM Academy. The Vice-Principal apologised for including this as an AOB but that it was purely due to timing.

RESOLVED: The members approved the resolution for the connection of the gas supply for the STEAM Academy.

DEBRIEF

- The meeting was very purposeful.
- Great discussions and presentations.
- It was very important that the time was spent on the curriculum update.
- A very good meeting with a mix of strategic and operational issues discussed.
- One member commented that he'd welcome a discussion on vocational qualifications in Wales and England and the role of Qualifications Wales (**ACTION - NE**).

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting closed at 6.40pm.