

**MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING
HELD ON 8 DECEMBER 2022 AT 4.30PM - BRIDGEND BOARDROOM AND VIA GOOGLE MEET**

PRESENT:

Jeff Greenidge - Chair
Judith Evans - Vice-Chair
Emma Adamson
Trish D'Souza
Lisa Dobbs - Staff Governor
Marion Evans - Staff Governor - *joined at 5.30pm*
Hayden Llewellyn
Ruby Llewelyn - Student Governor
Claire Marshall
Joshua O'Sullivan Woodward - Student Governor
Joanne Oak
Simon Pirotte - Principal
Satwant Pryce - *joined at 5.35pm*

IN ATTENDANCE

Joe Baldwin - Vice Principal (Learner Journey, Systems and Inclusive Practice)
Viv Buckley - Deputy Principal
Nicola Eyre - Clerk
Andrew Gibbs - Vice-Principal (Resources)
Cath Luff - Head of HR - *left after agenda item 8 (College Policies)*
Jon Nottingham - Active Wellbeing Lead (supporting the Student Governors)
Carys Swain - Head of Welsh - *left after agenda item 6 (Principal's Update)*

4.30-5.00pm - Governing Body visit to Weston House

The meeting opened at 5.00pm

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair formally welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Julia Longville and Dawn Lewis-Whelan.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON 27 OCTOBER 2022

The minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 27 October 2022 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING

4.1 Action Tracker

There were five actions on the Action Tracker - one green, three amber and one ongoing action.

The Governing Body noted that all items are on track for completion and that the number of open actions has been reduced.

5. WELSH LANGUAGE ANNUAL REPORT

The Head of Welsh presented the following information:

- The Welsh Language Standards Compliance Report for 2021/22 has to be published on the website by 31 January 2023.
- There has been a significant increase in the capacity of the Welsh team. Three new members of staff have been employed, funded by Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, leading to an increase in the use of Welsh in priority areas and across the College.
- The College has worked with internal and external stakeholders to increase the opportunities for learners and staff.
- Bespoke training has been given to all leaders and managers on the Welsh Language Standards.
- Short, medium term and long term (3, 5 and 10 year) operational action plans have been introduced.
- The College's commitment to the Welsh language is that: *"Everyone has the right to communicate and receive services from Bridgend College in Welsh and we are committed to providing that opportunity for our learners, employees and visitors"*.
- There are four areas of compliance within the Welsh Language Standards - Service Delivery, Policy Making, Operational and Record Keeping.
- All staff are being asked to update their Welsh proficiency on the iTrent system (HR system) using the updated language competency framework so that the most current staff data is held.
- The 2021 census data shows that there has been a decline in the number of Welsh speakers over the past ten years - 538,000 in the 2021 census compared with 562,000 in the 2011 census.
- In Bridgend, 9.7% of the population speak Welsh (approximately 13,000 out of 134,500 residents); this has dropped by 0.5% since the 2011 census.
- There are four Welsh-medium primary schools out of a total of 48 and only one Welsh-medium secondary school in the Bridgend County Borough. During the pandemic, some children were withdrawn from Welsh-medium schools because their parents/carers were unable to support them with online learning.
- There has been a decline in the overall number of Welsh speakers since the introduction of the Welsh Language Commissioner which is very disappointing given the considerable investment made.
- The College ran events for the Welsh Language Rights Day on 7 December and a video has been made of learners and staff explaining the opportunities available to them to use Welsh. [Clerk's note - the link to the video was circulated on email after the meeting as it wouldn't play at the meeting]

- A Welsh Language Student Ambassador scheme is in place.

A member questioned whether the College's experience with the Welsh Language Commissioner has been supportive or whether it is a compliance-based role. It was explained that initially it felt that it was all about compliance but that there has been a definite shift to a more supportive role. The College does its own checks and measures to monitor compliance and also the Internal Audit function is used. It was noted that the next internal audit on the use of Welsh language at the College is taking place in March 2023.

Another member queried what happens with the report after it's been published online. It was explained that the Welsh Language Commissioner doesn't comment on it, however, the Commissioner does produce a thematic annual report.

The discussion concluded with a member commenting that the approach to Welsh proficiency in recruitment and the current re-profiling of staff is commendable.

The Chair thanked the Head of Welsh and said that it is excellent to see the Welsh language being embedded at the College.

6. PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE

The Principal updated the members on the following:

- Staff briefings have been held in the past couple of weeks to make all staff aware of the upcoming challenges facing the College.
- The new Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board for the Commission for Tertiary Education & Research (CTER) had been announced on the same day that the meeting took place - Julie Lydon and David Sweeney respectively; both of these people have Higher Education backgrounds. The implications of CTER for governance will become more apparent when the more detailed phase is entered. This will be an exciting opportunity for the sector and the Principal stressed the importance of getting the culture right.
- The Governing Body noted that Rhian Edwards, Deputy Director for the Further Education and Apprenticeships Division (Welsh Government) and Geoff Hicks, Head of Post-16 Funding (Welsh Government) will be attending the March Governing Body meeting.
- The Welsh Government (WG) has commissioned a review on vocational qualifications due to the issues in the Childcare and Health & Social Care qualifications. This is being led by Sharron Lusher, former Principal of Pembrokeshire College. Due to the problems with these qualifications, the number of learners studying for these qualifications at the College has decreased by about a half compared with the previous year and this is at a time when the sector needs extra staff. BCBC has acknowledged that there is a crisis in the Childcare and Health & Social Care sector. It was noted that there are also issues with the new Construction qualifications.
- The WG has started to consult with the sector on the future funding challenges as it is currently over-funding the sector by [redacted]. This will be a theme for discussion at Governing Body meetings throughout 2022/23 as financial cuts are putting pressure on the services that the College can provide. The Governing Body's role of determining the character and mission will be key in these discussions.

- Since 2019/20, there has been a move towards more learners studying ‘academic’ subjects in Wales:
 - 2019/20 - Academic = 16.65%, Vocational = 83.35%
 - 2020/21 - Academic = 18.12%, Vocational = 81.88%
 - 2021/22 - Academic = 21.06%, Vocational = 78.94%
 It is unclear whether this trend will continue.
- Work is ongoing on the Anti-Racist Action Plan and governors are invited to the meeting taking place on 20 December to discuss this further.
- The feedback from the pop-up shop in the town centre (leased until March 2023) has been really positive.
- The College won the Outstanding Training Provider of the Year (Large) Award at the Chartered Management Institute’s recent awards ceremony.

An in-depth discussion took place on the issues with the Childcare and Health & Social Care qualifications and the pressures that these are putting on learners and staff. The main concerns are around the entry requirements and the course content being too academic. One of the staff governors who is employed as the Day Nursery Manager at the College said that it is extremely difficult to employ new staff and that job adverts are not attracting any applications. The other staff governor is a lecturer in the Care and Childhood Studies curriculum area and she emphasised the enormous amount of pressure on staff to get learners through the new qualifications as many learners do not cope well under exam conditions. The Principal stated that the sector is lobbying Qualifications Wales to pause the current reform of qualifications and that the Minister is aware of the issues as there is the risk to the reputation of vocational qualifications in Wales.

The Governing Body noted the update.

Carys Swain (Head of Welsh) left the meeting.

7. TEACHING AND LEARNING UPDATE

The Deputy Principal presented the following information to the Governing Body:

- The predicted successful completion rate for main qualifications for 2021/22 is [redacted] (closing date for claiming qualifications is 15 December). This is [redacted] on 2020/21 and [redacted] on 2019/20. [redacted]. The members noted that the detailed curriculum outcomes had been scrutinised at the November Curriculum & Quality meeting (see minute 15.1) and also internally by the Standards Committee.
- Curriculum areas were restructured for the start of the 2022/23 academic year. Every Head of Curriculum (four in total) is supported by two Curriculum Managers and two Deputy Curriculum Managers. There are three Curriculum Managers and three Deputy Curriculum Managers in STEM due to the complexities within this curriculum area.
- The Deputy Curriculum Manager role is new this academic year and already benefits are starting to be felt across the College.
- Two of the Heads of Curriculum have recently secured appointments onto the Senior Leadership Teams at other colleges and therefore, the opportunity is being taken to pause and reflect on the current curriculum management structure. There is unlikely to be ‘like for like’ replacements.

- [redacted]
- The biggest challenge at the moment is student engagement and it is evident that staff and learners are still recovering from the impact of the pandemic.
- BCBC has issued a statement saying the pupil behaviour in schools is an increasing concern and is becoming more problematic. This is also evident in the College.
- Attendance for 2021/22 was [redacted] which is below the desired level. This compares with 86% in the school sector in Bridgend.
- Insights from the sector show that the pandemic has negatively impacted learner behaviour and there have been increases in anxiety levels, loss of social skills, lack of learner engagement and poor mental health.
- In the 2021/22 exit survey, learners' satisfaction had fallen the most for the following two questions:

[redacted]

Further investigations have been made with students on the responses in the survey and the main areas of concern are on buses, in communal areas and in the refectories. Staff are echoing these concerns and are also citing the issues with the difficult qualifications already discussed. The College is adapting to these challenges and this will be a focus for the Professional Learning Day being held at the end of term. The importance of consistent behaviour patterns and positive relationships was stressed.

The Chair asked for feedback from the student governors:

Ruby Llewellyn - Ruby said that she felt that people bounce off each other's energy and thought that everyone should just be nice. Ruby commented that her course is great and that her tutor is amazing and uplifting which has a really positive impact, however, she said that the greatest impact and influence comes from her peers.

Joshua O'Sullivan-Woodward - Joshua said that there are brilliant teachers on the Countryside courses but he knows his brother has not had such a positive experience on another course.

The Deputy Principal added that some curriculum areas are performing very well with excellent achievements and have very few issues with attendance or behaviour. However, the picture is very polarised as some curriculum areas are under-performing in achievements, attendance and behaviour.

The Chair of the Curriculum & Quality (C&Q) Committee commented that the points raised above had been discussed thoroughly in the recent committee meeting and added that Work-Based Learning (WBL) had been similarly affected by the issues in Childcare and Health & Social Care sector. [redacted]

The Chair thanked the Deputy Principal for the candour in the presentation and felt assured that measures are being put in place to address the concerns.

The Governing Body noted the update.

8. COLLEGE POLICIES

8.1 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

The Head of HR gave an overview of the policy.

The Governing Body approved the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

8.2 Health & Wellbeing Policy

The Head of HR gave an overview of the policy.

The Governing Body approved the Health & Wellbeing Policy.

8.3 Financial Regulations

The Vice-Principal (Resources) explained that minimal changes had been made to the Financial Regulations and this was just a cyclical review.

The Governing Body approved the Financial Regulations.

Cath Luff (Head of HR) left the meeting

9. SAFEGUARDING ANNUAL REPORT

The Vice-Principal (Learner Journey, Systems and Inclusive Practice) updated the Governing Body on the following:

- There have been changes to the ways that the College monitors and records safeguarding due to the systems providers being acquired by new owners.
- Estyn was very praiseworthy of the College's systems and controls around safeguarding.

The Chair had posed the question of how the College can turn the statement within the Estyn report of "Nearly all" to "All" staff knowing what to do if they have a safeguarding concern prior to the meeting. The Vice-Principal had researched this and concluded that Estyn will never say "All".

- In March 2022, the WG had published a minor update to the 'Keeping Learners Safe' guidance. The College has updated its Safeguarding Policy to include these changes.
- In November 2022, new national safeguarding training, learning and development standards were launched in Wales as part of the National Safeguarding Week.
- There were [redacted] individual occurrences of safeguarding during 2021/22 affecting [redacted] learners.
- Nearly all curriculum areas saw an increase in the number of safeguarding cases [redacted].
- There is an acute level of need for safeguarding and wellbeing support. In 2021/22, additional WG funding was received to help learners and the increase in the number of cases correlates with the increased support available.
- The hot spots remain the same as in the previous year - mental wellbeing, attendance and personal relationships.
- The number of referrals to external agencies has increased considerably over the past three years - [redacted].

A member questioned what are the plans for the remainder of 2022/23 for safeguarding/wellbeing as the festivals and fairs have been very successful. The Vice-Principal explained that the additional WG funding in 2021/22 allowed for more activities e.g. the Winter of Wellbeing and working with external agencies. The next planned event is the Summer Wellbeing Festival that will take place before the exam season.

Another member commented that there is some terminology within the report that may not be clearly defined or understood and suggested that the College shares their interpretation of the terminology to avoid any ambiguity.

Within the report was a pie chart showing safeguarding cases by type. There were over 30 different types of cases and one of the members commented that it is very busy and not clear to understand. A request was made to re-categorise these cases into broader categories so that it becomes more meaningful (**ACTION - JB**).

The members noted the report.

10. GOVERNANCE MATTERS

The Governing Body NOTED the contents of the Governance Matters report.

11. STATUTORY ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR 2021/22

The Vice-Principal (Resources) presented PwC's Audit Findings Report which showed that there were no findings to report. The threat of the qualified opinion that was discussed as an 'Any Other Business' at the October meeting has now gone and a clean audit opinion has been issued.

The Governing Body's attention was drawn to Consolidated Income & Expenditure Statement on page 18 of the Financial Statements as the reported loss for the year is £3.5 million whereas a small surplus has been reported throughout the year. This is due to the FRS 102 pension scheme accounting adjustment of £3.9 million.

The Governing Body approved/authorised the following:

- The Audit Findings Report issued by PwC
- The Letter of Representation (to be signed by the Chair)
- Bridgend College's Report and Financial Statements
- Engage Training Wales Ltd's Financial Statements
- Engage Training Wales Ltd's Letter of Support (to be signed by the Chair)
- The Audit Committee's Annual Report for 2021/22
- The Internal Audit Annual Report for 2021/22

The Chair of the Audit Committee, on behalf of the External and Internal Auditors, thanked the Vice-Principal (Resources) and the Finance Manager for all their hard work and efforts over the past year. The Vice-Principal (Resources) added that he'd personally like to thank the Finance Manager and his team for getting a clean audit report, especially at a time when staffing levels within the team were lower than their normal levels.

12. MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS 2022/23 INCLUDING KPIS

[Redacted]

The Governing Body noted the update.

13. CAMPUS DEVELOPMENTS

Town Centre Campus

The Vice-Principal (Resources) explained that there hasn't been a lot of change since the last meeting and that the demolition of the site remains the key concern.

It was noted that BCBC has extended South Wales Police's final departure date to 8 January 2023. The implications of this were discussed in detail at the Resource Planning Committee meeting held on 24 November.

The Governing Body noted that the funding of the town centre campus will be one of the main discussion items post-Christmas. The WG has approved the Outline Business Case which means that the money has been allocated to the project.

The planning application has been submitted to BCBC and the tender process is due to commence on 12 December with tenders to be returned by 3 March 2023. Two out of the six contractors on the SEWSCAPS framework have indicated that they will decline to tender.

The Governing Body approved the Chair of the Resource Planning Committee (RPC) representing them at the quality review day on 8 March 2023 and the interview day on 20 March 2023. The Chair of RPC had performed the same role for the awarding of the STEAM Academy contract.

Other projects

Lynwood Farm - the sale has now been completed and the College now owns this land.

Sustainable Garden (Pencoed) - the project is due for completion in the Spring when the weather is warmer as certain elements can't be completed during the winter months.

Local Development Plan - this will be discussed in the new year.

The Governing Body noted the update.

14. CORPORATE KPIS

The Governing Body noted the Corporate KPIS and were reminded that curriculum KPIS are monitored by the C&Q Committee and financial KPIS are monitored by the RPC.

15. COMMITTEE MINUTES

15.1 CURRICULUM & QUALITY - 17 NOVEMBER 2022

The Governing Body RECEIVED the unconfirmed minutes.

The Chair of this committee confirmed that the issues discussed above regarding the Childcare and Health & Social Care qualifications were also discussed in detail at the C&Q Committee meeting. The Chair of the committee said that there are also issues in this sector affecting apprenticeships and that measures are in place to limit this impact for 2022/23.

The Chair of this committee commented on the excellent reports given by the Heads of Curriculum at the meeting and that overall the new curriculum structure is working well. The Chair of this committee thanked the two student governors for their incredible input and said that this information is invaluable for the College. The Chair of the Governing Body echoed this sentiment.

15.2 JOINT AUDIT AND RESOURCE PLANNING - 24 NOVEMBER 2022

The Governing Body RECEIVED the unconfirmed minutes.

The Chair of the Audit Committee said that everything discussed and recommended for approval at the joint meeting was covered in this meeting.

15.3 RESOURCE PLANNING - 24 NOVEMBER 2022

The Governing Body RECEIVED the unconfirmed minutes.

The Chair of RPC informed the members that the committee had spent time discussing the College's budget and the campus developments. The Chair of RPC added that the metrics need to be reconsidered as the world has changed as a result of Brexit and COVID.

A discussion took place about Estyn suspending inspections in the FE sector as they are unable to make judgements due to a lack of benchmarking information.

A further discussion took place about maintaining morale amongst staff when they had been on an upwards trajectory before the pandemic, and despite working very hard during and post-pandemic, the trajectory is now going in the opposite direction. The member commented that governors appreciate how difficult this must be as staff have such high expectations and this is not being seen in learner achievements in all areas. The Principal thanked the member for this observation and commented that the importance of this statement cannot be under-estimated.

The Chair concluded the discussion by saying that assurances had been given throughout the meeting that the SLT and management team have control over these issues and are taking measures to address them. A note of thanks was given to all staff for continuing to work hard during these challenging times and that the Governing Body is aware of the pressures that they're facing.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Principal, on behalf of the Governing Body, wished the Deputy Principal a very happy birthday.

This would have been Julia Longville's last Governing Body meeting but she was unable to attend and had sent her apologies.

VALUES CHECKER

The Chair commented that the discussions had been very transparent and honest.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and the meeting closed at 7.00pm.