

12 December 2024 at 4.30pm

STEAM Academy Conference Room and via Google Meet



Mae'r ddogfen hon ar gael yn Gymraeg / This document is available in Welsh

PRESENT:

Emma Adamson - Chair

Viv Buckley - Principal/CEO

Donna Ali

Joe Castle

Charlize Cosker - Student Governor

Ceri Dixon

Marion Evans - Staff Governor

Ben Fisher - Student Governor

Hayden Llewellyn- *joined at 4.47pm*

Claire Marshall - *joined at 5.13pm*

Noah Murray - Student Governor

Lloyd Powell

Helen Verity

IN ATTENDANCE

Joe Baldwin - Deputy Principal (Learner Journey, Systems and Inclusive Practice)

Nicola Eyre - Clerk

Andrew Gibbs - Deputy Principal (Resources)

Catrin Sullivan - Director of Curriculum

The meeting opened at 4.30pm

Generative AI (Google Gemini) was used to help draft these minutes.

1. CHAIR'S WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair gave a special welcome to Noah Murray (Student Governor) at his first Governing Body meeting. Noah introduced himself to the Governing Body - Noah is a second year Level 3 Mechanical Engineering student.

Apologies for absence were noted from:

- Governing Body members - Lisa Dobbs (Staff Governor), Judith Evans, Jo Oak, Dawn Lewis-Whelan, Stephne Puddy and Shelley Wyatt-Williams.
- SLT - Gemma Carr-Evans (Director of Curriculum), Matt Rees (Vice Principal - WBL and Commercial Activity) and Hayley Thomas (Vice Principal - Curriculum & Quality).

As this meeting would have been Dawn Lewis-Whelan's meeting, the Clerk was asked to write to Dawn thanking her for her service (**ACTION - NE**).

The Chair thanked the members and SLT for attending the very enjoyable Governing Body Christmas meal held in Bwyty 31 the previous week. The Chair praised the Catering and Hospitality learners for the quality of the meal and service and the Creative Arts learners for their outstanding performances.

Scott Morgan, Director of Data and Digital Architecture, was welcomed to the meeting and congratulated on his recent appointment as Director of Data and Digital Infrastructure and member of the SLT.

Ben Fisher and Joe Castle agreed to give feedback in the Values Checker at the end of the meeting.

The Chair informed the members that Claire Marshall would be late joining the meeting and that Ceri Dixon needed to leave at 6pm.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

PRESENTATION - AI - Scott Morgan, Director of Data and Digital Architecture

The Governing Body received a presentation on AI and how it has developed since the introduction of ChatGPT in November/December 2022:

- Timeline:
 - July 2023 - the College received Trailblazer funding to develop an AI-assisted student app.
 - September 2024 - app launched replacing the existing student portal
 - November 2024 - a second project on "Effective and Ethical Use of AI" commenced (working in conjunction with Cardiff and Vale College) with the aim of producing resources for FE and the wider sector (awarding bodies and WBL). Three College staff are working on this project.
- Staff training:
 - There are self-directed online training modules as well as face-to-face training sessions. Over [REDACTED] staff have attended and completed these modules and sessions.
 - All staff received a presentation on AI in the July 2024 Professional Learning Day and [REDACTED] curriculum staff recently attended a TeachMeet as part of the Quality Day which focussed on the use of AI and their experiences with learners.

4.47pm - Hayden Llewellyn joined the meeting

- The student app which was co-created with learners has been very successful. It receives over 2,000 hits a day and there are plans to develop this further with input from the Student Digital Ambassadors. There has been a lot of external interest in this and the College is considering ways in which to share this sustainably.
- Scott had attended a Taith-funded trip to Stanford University in California's Silicon Valley last month. He explained that even the top technology companies don't know the future of AI but they were impressed with the Welsh Government's (WG) commitment to investing in this area.
- This is a very fast-paced technology and it is predicted that it will change education as we currently know it. The large technology companies are investing billions into its development.

The members were invited to ask questions or give comments.

One member asked about beta-testing of the student app and it was explained that the learners involved in the development and testing of the app tended to be those enrolled on digital-type courses.

A member questioned whether there is the opportunity to develop a similar app for staff. This was confirmed but the timing has yet to be determined.

Another member informed the Governing Body that he'd recently attended WG training on AI run by ex-military intelligence personnel and offered to share details of this with the College (**ACTION - NE**).

The Director of Curriculum explained that in the Learner Voice meetings held this month, the feedback on the app was very positive. She said that she was very pleased that the College had listened to and acted on the learner voice from previous meetings as this is something that had been requested. A special thanks was given to everyone involved in its development.

The student governors commented that they regularly use the app and some suggestions were given as to how it could be enhanced further.

The Chair commented that it is worth noting that even the large technology companies are uncertain about how AI will develop and that it will be interesting to watch how this technology matures.

A question was asked about whether any research/measurement has been undertaken internally on the impact of AI on staff time and whether this is freeing up any time. The Director of Data and Digital Architecture explained that it is anticipated that Student Services should see a noticeable difference when the EMA (Education Maintenance Allowance) functionality in the app is launched as a lot of their queries relate to this. [EMA is the weekly payment of £40 to help cover the costs of attending education but there are minimum attendance levels required in order to receive it]

A question was asked about incentivising learners in order to ensure engagement and it was explained that several methods are being used. The examples of digital badges and winning a chromebook for naming the student app were given. A discussion was also held about the gamification of learning and whether this is something that could be considered.

A discussion about the use of other languages in the app was held. It was noted that users can select their preferred language on first use and that the chatbot responds in the language in which the question was asked.

The Chair thanked the Director of Data and Digital Architecture for his presentation and he left the meeting at 5.12pm.

3. MINUTES OF THE GOVERNING BODY MEETING HELD ON 17 OCTOBER 2024

The minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 17 October 2024 were confirmed as an accurate record.

5.13pm - Claire Marshall joined the meeting

4. MATTERS ARISING

4.1 Action Tracker

There were three actions on the Action Tracker:

Action 1 (COMPLETED) - the support that the Governing Body can provide to the College on the Cardiff Capital Region (CCR) Memorandum of Understanding - it was explained that the Principal is now a Board member of CCR representing the five South East Wales colleges. The Principal also explained that the colleges who have signed up to USW's Strategic Alliance have agreed that they'll work collaboratively in providing higher apprenticeships rather than in competition. The example of Bridgend College and Cardiff and Vale College being the only two providers for the Construction industry was given.

Action 2 (ONGOING) - the longer term strategy for Bevan College. This was discussed in Part B of the meeting.

Action 3 (COMPLETED) - Outline Planning Application - [REDACTED]

4.2 Outline Planning Application

No further update as the consultation was deferred.

5. PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE

The Principal highlighted the following from her report:

- Student enrolment - numbers are 111% of the funding target (96% in 2023/24). The Principal highlighted that the WG had informed Principals that there would be no extra funding to support this over-delivery in the current year but the funding level for future years would be uplifted. However, within 24 hours of submitting her Governing Body report, the WG made an announcement that £10m was being allocated to the FE sector to support this; Bridgend College's allocation being approximately [REDACTED]. The Principal explained that this volatile funding situation makes internal messaging very challenging.
- Pay Award - the 5.5% nationally agreed pay award is being made in the December payroll. A special note of thanks was given to the Payroll Team to process this in December, a month where the payroll has to be processed much earlier due to the holiday shutdown.
- Adult Community Learning - this funding is now being provided directly to the College rather than to BCBC [REDACTED] as they have been unable to deliver it fully in previous years. This recurring funding stream is important as it is used to upskill adults in the local community.
- QAA Publications - two lecturers have written case studies on the impact of professional development for their recent publication.
- Partnership Agreement with the Open University (OU) - this agreement allows staff and learners to access the OU's OpenLearn resources. This is something bespoke to Bridgend college and has big potential for the town centre campus.
- Review of the regulatory environment - ColegauCymru are undertaking a review of the regulatory environment following the formation of Medr which will involve all colleges in Wales. It was noted that FE has a lot more regulation than other post-16 providers.
- Social Partnerships - there are currently no formal agreements with the trade unions (TU). Consideration is being given to strengthening and documenting these partnerships. Two colleges have formal social partnership agreements which includes the invitation of a TU representative to every Governing Body meeting. It was agreed that this would be discussed at the next meeting (**ACTION - NE**).

The Chair thanked the Principal for her update and also highlighted the town centre groundbreaking ceremony and the meeting with the Future Generations Commissioner for Wales. The Chair asked that the Governing Body's thanks and congratulations be passed on to everyone involved in all of the above work.

Ceri Dixon offered to provide her knowledge and expertise for the work on social partnerships.

6. SAFEGUARDING

The Deputy Principal (Future Generations) presented the Safeguarding Report

[REDACTED]

The Chair thanked the Deputy Principal (Future Generations) for the update and commented that the Board felt assured by this information.

7. GOVERNANCE MATTERS

Matters for ratification

Appointments

- The Governing Body RATIFIED the appointment of Noah Murray as a Student Governor onto the Governing Body and Curriculum & Quality Committee for the 2024/25 academic year; this had been approved electronically.
- The Governing Body APPROVED the appointment of Tomos Owen onto the Governing Body and Resource Planning Committee for a four-year term; this had been approved electronically. The effective date of appointment is to be confirmed when the regulatory checks have been completed.

It was noted that this was the first time that a Student Governor (Ben Fisher) had formed part of the Search & Governance Committee panel and how this brought a new dimension to the interview process. Ben said that he found the process very interesting and that it has given him great insight. Helen Verity explained that it was the first time that she has recommended a person and how she felt it was important to involve learners in the process as they are the ones directly affected by the decision on the candidate's suitability. Helen commented that she had enjoyed the experience.

Matters for approval

- [REDACTED]

Matters for noting

ColegauCymru Training - Cymraeg 2050

- The Governing Body NOTED the training that had been held and the Student Governors said that they have or are actively using the Welsh language.

A short comfort break was held

8. STATUTORY ANNUAL ACCOUNTS FOR 2023/24

The Governing Body was asked to approve/authorise the following:

- Bridgend College's Audit Completion Report (ACR) issued by Mazars (External Auditors)
- The Letter of Representation
- Bridgend College's Report and Financial Statements
- Engage Training Wales Ltd's Audit Completion Report (ACR) issued by Mazars
- Engage Training Wales Ltd's Financial Statements
- Engage Training Wales Ltd's Letter of Support
- The Audit Committee's Annual Report for 2023/24
- The Internal Audit Annual Report for 2023/24

The Deputy Principal (Resources) explained that both ACRs had been presented at the Joint Audit and Resource Planning Committee (RPC) meeting and no issues were raised. It was noted that an unqualified audit opinion had been given for Bridgend College and Engage Training and there were no significant findings to report. The Governing Body's attention was drawn to the unadjusted audit difference of **[REDACTED]** which was in relation to the bad debt provision for this amount owing from BCBC. Mazars felt that this is likely to be fully recoverable but the College's policy is to always provide for any aged debt, regardless of the third party.

The Deputy Principal (Resources) also explained how the Letter of Representation gave assurances to Mazars, especially in confirming the going concern basis when preparing the Financial Statement (the College's ability to meet its liabilities as they fall due over the next 12 months).

The Governing Body noted that the 'operating' financial position reported on page 4 of Bridgend College's Financial Statements as this is what is reported on throughout the year to RPC and the Governing Body before any accounting adjustments.

The Clerk explained how the Audit Committee's Annual Report and the Internal Audit Annual Report feeds into the external audit process.

The Governing Body APPROVED the following:

- Bridgend College's Audit Completion Report (ACR) issued by Mazars
- The Letter of Representation
- Bridgend College's Report and Financial Statements
- Engage Training Wales Ltd's Audit Completion Report (ACR) issued by Mazars
- Engage Training Wales Ltd's Financial Statements
- Engage Training Wales Ltd's Letter of Support
- The Audit Committee's Annual Report for 2023/24
- The Internal Audit Annual Report for 2023/24

6.00pm - Ceri Dixon left the meeting

The Chair of the Audit Committee thanked all of the staff involved in the audit for such an excellent result this year.

9. **MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS 2024/25, NOVEMBER FORECAST AND KPIs**

It was noted that the Resource Planning Committee had reviewed the Management Accounts and November Forecast/KPIs in detail and had recommended them for approval.

The Deputy Principal (Resources) provided the following update:

- The original deficit position of (£1,133k) excluding the Change Management funding had improved significantly to a deficit of (£264k).
- The reasons for the movement were explained. The main movements were due to the WG funding the teachers' pension costs and the realisation of pay savings from the changes made to staffing structures last year.
- It is hopeful that there will be a further improvement in the position by the next meeting.
- The volatile nature of WG funding is helpful operationally but makes financial forecasting and planning very difficult.
- Overall, the financial position feels more positive this year.

A member asked whether any further information is available about the apprenticeship budget as the WG's Budget announced this week only includes one line on this. The Principal explained that the apprenticeship budget is being maintained but this does not allow any growth for new starters and, in real terms, this will have an impact. A discussion was held about the cost implications of the NI changes from April (increase in employers' contributions from 13.8% and 15% and the lowering of the threshold from £9,100 to £5,000) and how the WG Budget will be voted on in March and therefore, the next three months will be a period of huge uncertainty.

The decline in HE learner numbers was also noted.

The financial KPIs were noted.

A discussion was held about the many external variables in financial planning and how the College is managing what it can control very well. The Principal added that the SLT and managers undertook a significant amount of work in the last academic year on the operational budget and now they are having to work hard to try to achieve this.

10. RISK REGISTER REVIEW

The Risk Register was presented for its twice yearly review. The Audit Committee had scrutinised it in detail in its last meeting and the following recommendations were made:

- Risk 1 - Learner Numbers - the residual risk is reduced from 'High' to 'Medium' (likelihood from 4 to 2 but impact remains at 5). This is due to the learner numbers being 111% of target.
- Risk 8 - Weston House funding - this risk is deleted as Bevan College has been established and is being run as a separate entity with its own Board and Risk Register.
- Risk 9 - Town Centre Campus - the residual risk remains 'High' (likelihood increased from 4 to 5 but impact remains at 5). This is due to the risks with the project timeline and costs. It was explained that this is likely to be reduced when the MSCP is demolished.
- Risk 13 - WBL Contract - the residual risk is reduced from 'High' to 'Medium' (likelihood from 4 to 3 but impact remains at 4). This is due to the ongoing work in WBL and commercial activity.

The Governing Body APPROVED the revised Risk Register.

11. TOWN CENTRE CAMPUS UPDATE

Town Centre

The Deputy Principal explained that there is very little new information to report at this time. It was noted that scaffolding has been erected on the MSCP and that there is a possibility that this will be demolished by February/March time rather than the April timeline that had been previously advised.

A discussion was held about the formal variation bid that will be submitted to the WG in January/February when there is more certainty about the increased costs. It was agreed that part of this bid should include an amount for a contingency.

A video of drone footage was played which showed the progress made on the site to date.

The Director of Curriculum informed the Governing Body that learners and staff have been to visit the site and that there will be further engagement opportunities for them after Christmas. It was noted that community benefit is a key requirement of the WG funding of the project.

As part of the papers, the Governing Body had received a copy of the November Contractors Report and the presentation given to the Welsh Government about the delays and cost overruns of the project.

- [REDACTED]

12. CORPORATE KPIs AND BALANCED SCORECARD

The Governing Body NOTED the update. It was suggested that some of the metrics could be revised to be more meaningful. The example of the target number of student withdrawals was cited as this was a number rather than a percentage which is not the best measure when learner numbers fluctuate every year.

13. COMMITTEE MINUTES

13.1 Resource Planning - 3 October 2024

The Governing Body RECEIVED the minutes of the Resource Planning Committee meeting held on 3 October 2024.

13.2 Audit Committee - 15 October 2024

The Governing Body RECEIVED the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 15 October 2024.

13.3 Curriculum & Quality - 14 November 2024

The Governing Body RECEIVED the minutes of the Curriculum & Quality Committee meeting held on 14 November 2024.

13.4 Joint Audit and Resource Planning - 28 November 2024

The Governing Body RECEIVED the minutes of the Joint Audit and Resource Planning Committee meeting held on 28 November 2024.

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Deputy Principal (Resources) informed the Governing Body that BCBC had formally expressed an interest in buying the Cowbridge Road campus on the day of the meeting. It was explained that this would be the College's preferred option and emphasised that BCBC would need to meet the College's timelines.

The Principal informed the Governing Body that BCBC had advised the College on the same day that funding for post-16 transport is being cut from September 2025. The Principal expressed her concern about the impact that this and other cost-saving measures will have on learners. The Chair echoed this and commented that this is a major concern across Wales.

15. VALUES CHECKER

Joe Castle and Ben Fisher provided feedback about the meeting:

- The amount of work being undertaken is vast.
- The way the papers are written and the manner in which the meeting is conducted is very inclusive which allows all members to engage.
- Having Student Governors at the meeting is "incredible".

The Chair thanked everyone for attending. Part A of the meeting closed at 6.39pm

The student governors left the meeting.