



**Warrington  
& Vale Royal  
College**

**MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION MEETING  
HELD ON 1 April 2025  
At the Warrington Campus**

**Present:**

Steven Broomhead	Chair
Mervyn Ward	Member
Andrew Bainbridge	Member
Ben Brady	Member
Andrew Ellams	Member
Nidi Etim	Member
Lucy Gardner	Member
Gill Hopwood-Bell	Member
Lily Jones	Student Member
Nichola Newton	Principal
Paula Rowland	Member
Caroline Rowley	Member
Anne Ryans	Member
Peter Scott	Member
Geoff Spencer	Member
Debbie Warren	Member
Marlena Wyszomierska	Student Member

**In attendance:**

Rebecca Anderson-Moss	Assistant Principal: Business Development and Growth
Michelle Seeley	Deputy Principal: Finance and Resources
Rebecca Welch	Assistant Principal: Quality and MIS
Andrew Williams	Vice Principal: Curriculum
Laura Churchill	Clerk to the Corporation

**The meeting opened at 4:02pm.**

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

*For noting: to receive any apologies for absence*

Apologies for absence were received from Sam Naylor and Kirstie Simpson.

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

*For noting: members to declare any interests in items on the agenda*

Lucy Gardner declared an interest in agenda item 10.2. The Clerk declared an interest in agenda item 11.4.

**3 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

*For resolution: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 12th December 2025*

It was **RESOLVED** that members approved the minutes of the meeting held on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2025.

#### 4 MATTERS ARISING

*For discussion: to consider progress against actions from the meeting on the 12th December 2024*

The Clerk reported to members that all actions had been closed out or were ongoing. It was reported that the decision around closing the dormant companies had not yet been concluded.

Members **CONSIDERED** progress against actions from the meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

#### 5 CHAIR'S ACTIONS

*For resolution: to approve any actions taken by the Chair on behalf of the Corporation since the last meeting*

*For resolution: to consider and if so minded, approve the action taken by the Chair to increase the college's HE fees from*

- Full Time Fees – £5,995
- Part Time Fees – £2,997 per year
- To
- Full Time Fees – £6,185 per year
- Part Time Fees – £3,092 per year

It was **RESOLVED** that members approved the action taken by the Chair to increase the HE fees.

*For resolution: to consider and if so minded, approve the appointment of Cooper Parry as the external auditors for a period of 3 years*

It was **RESOLVED** that members approved the appointment of Cooper Parry as the external auditors for a period of 3 years

*For resolution: to consider and if so minded, approve the appointment of RSM as the internal auditors for a period of 3 years*

It was **RESOLVED** that members approved the appointment of RSM as the internal auditors for a period of three years

*For resolution: to consider and if so minded, approve the action taken by the Chair to approve the gender pay gap report which had to be published on 31st March 2025*

It was **RESOLVED** that members approved the action taken by the Chair to approve the gender pay gap for publication on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

#### STRATEGIC MATTERS

##### 6.1 Cheshire and Warrington Devolution Update

*For information: to receive and note an update on the devolution for Cheshire and Warrington plans*

6.1 The Chair reported that there was a consultation currently running which was due to close within two weeks. The Principal reported that the college had responded to the consultation. The Chair explained that the devolution deal for Cheshire and Warrington involved moving power and resources from Whitehall to areas which had devolution arrangements. For Cheshire and Warrington, it was explained that the process was ongoing, and the aim was to create a mayoral combined authority by May 2026. It was discussed that the benefits to the college would mean more money for skills and infrastructure. It was reported that the 3 councils were working well together, and businesses were involved.

Q- A member asked whether there was going to be funding for the process.

R- Members heard that there was capacity building funding of £1m and that the costs of £2m to run the election were being funded by the government.

Q- A member asked whether there was a point where the principals involved would get together and if so, whether the college were prepared with the data needed.

R- Members were assured that it was at the top of college's agenda when the time was right.

6.1.2 It was explained to the Board that there had been some alarmingly low figures mentioned for adult skills which needed to be unpicked, and the college were working to address. It was agreed that £12m across Cheshire and Warrington for an adult skills fund was very worrying considering the size of adult provision across all colleges involved.

Members **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** an update on the devolution for Cheshire and Warrington

## 6.2 Principal's Update

*For information: to receive and note an update from the Principal, including feedback from the Ofsted inspection*

6.2.1 The Principal reported that the college had spent time during the last half term thinking about the next steps post-Ofsted and that there was significant work ongoing in regard to quality. Members heard that in the last week, the college had received its qualification achievement rate data and that a full report would be provided to the Standards and Curriculum Committee. It was reported that the college's data was generally above benchmark but closer to benchmark for 16-18 than the college would like. It was explained that the Assistant Principal: Quality and MIS ('AP:QM') would be redeveloping the self-assessment process - to 'heat maps' - focused on quality improvement.

6.2.2 Members heard that the college were on essential spend and the budget would be covered later in the agenda. It was explained that significant work had taken place to look at the structure of the college to ensure that it was fit for the future, including opportunities for succession planning. The Principal reported that the executive team had been asked to look at the KPIs and think through the strategic aims and more would be done with the Board at the strategy day in May. It was explained that the college was considering inclusion and the need for emphasis on inclusion in line with government focus. Members heard that the investment and growth plan was being re-written currently and would be presented to the Board, however, the main emphasis at present was on the end of the year and getting students through, whilst ensuring a good financial health score.

Q- A member asked if there was any clarification on the green skills agenda because to date, the information had seemed hazy.

R- Members heard that the information was hazy, however, the college embedded green skills right across the curriculum and the college had also invested in the Green Technologies Hub. Members heard that the college were hoping the Green Skills Hub would be ready by May and from the hub, the college would deliver training in air source and ground source heat, solar PV, battery storage and associated courses. It was reported that the college were also about to submit a Skills Bootcamp bid. Members heard that the college had undertaken a project last year to upskill staff where staff had been trained to deliver courses around electric charging, solar PV and such and the college had taken on a specialist to lead on and deliver the courses. It was discussed that industry were not really driving the Green Skills agenda and were broadly treating it as a 'tomorrow problem'. It was explained to members that local social housing was where the demand was coming from for the college because they had targets to achieve, however, there were some things the college were not able to support with such as cladding. Members were assured that the college had invested carefully following feedback from the sector.

Q- A member asked if there had been any announcements about Skills Bootcamp funding going forwards?

R- Members noted that there had not been yet, however, Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington had been invited to put in a bid for bootcamps. It was explained that Enterprise Cheshire and Warrington had received £9m for the current wave, however, nobody was aware of what was coming next. Members heard that the Chancellor's statement showed significant investment to support house building and the AoC were likely to inform colleges how they could access the funds.

#### **ACTION 1 – Chair of the Board to send spring statement summary to members.**

Q- A member asked whether there was concern over the recruitment of staff to deliver high need green skills given that they might be busy in their industries.

R- Members were assured that the college had already got staff in place to deliver what the college was offering.

Q- A member asked the Principal what two things worried and excited the college at present.

R- Members were informed that money was the main concern with a lack of funding and an extra barb related to the disparity between college teachers' and school teachers' pay given both were part of the DfE. Members heard that there were opportunities around supporting SEND students and increasing inclusion which was exciting, as long as sufficient government focus was placed on making change happen.

Members **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** an update from the Principal, including feedback from the Ofsted inspection

### **6.3 College Development Plan**

*For information: to receive and note a verbal update about the college's development plan following inspection.*

6.3.1 Members were informed that strategic aim one had been changed post-Ofsted and the college were now focusing on the good to great piece. Members noted that progress had been made focusing on inspection feedback. Members were assured that the staffing position was relatively stable, however, the position changed daily. It was explained that the college were focusing on sharing best practice internally and externally and networking.

6.3.2 Members heard that there was work ongoing looking at systems and processes, and MIS and quality were working together to look at staff workload efficiency and better customer service for the admissions process, which had been a significant piece of work including the move to online enrolment. Members noted that the work initially would not save on staffing but had saved the college from having to increase the size of the team given the greater number of applications.

6.3.2 Members were informed that conversations around the curriculum in regards to strategic aim 2 had taken place focusing on addressing the NEET problem, the direction for SEND and the course offer. It was agreed that there were lots of opportunities around SEND and the college needed to ensure it was well placed to grasp them.

Q- A member asked whether the government changes to benefits changed the college's strategic focus at all given that there was clearly going to be drive to get people in to work or back in to work.

R- Members were assured that there was a significant focus on destinations, these being key at all levels. It was reported that the college was focused around widening its view with transition in and out being equally as important as what the college was doing whilst students were at the college. It was explained that Warrington Skills Partnership brought employers and the college together to ensure a match with training and job opportunities. Members expressed disappointment that the Skills England report had no focus on employers having to raise their game. Members heard that supported internships were key for the college.

Members **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** an update on the college's development plan following inspection.

#### **6.4 Risk Management**

*For information: to receive and note an update on the college's key risks*

6.4.1 The Deputy Principal: Finance and Resources ('DP:FR') explained that all committees had contributed to the risk register and the most severe risk was a cyber attack. Members were pleased to note that since the publication of the papers, the college had received Cyber Essentials certification. Members were alerted to the concerns around risk 4 and maintaining a good financial health score. It was discussed that the board knew from previous meetings that the financial health score was only just predicted to be good and if there was a slight dip, there was a risk the college could fall into requires improvement which was not a good position to be in. It was reported that there had been a focused discussion at the Finance and Resources Committee meeting and based on the financial information presented to the meeting, the Committee had proposed that the likelihood of the risk be increased from possible to probable, which meant that the risk still resided in severe but had stepped up in terms of concern.

Q- A member asked in light of the Cyber Essentials accreditation whether the cyber risk would reduce.

R- Members were informed that the college would consider the cyber risk because achieving Cyber Essentials was a mitigating action, however, it was still a significant concern. A member commented that outside the sector in PLCs, cyber attacks were still the number one concern.

#### **ACTION 2 – Review the cyber risk in light of the Cyber Essentials certification.**

Members **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** an update on the college's key risks

## STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM MATTERS

### 7.1 Chair's Update

*For information: to receive and note an update from the Chair of the Standards and Curriculum Committee on the work of the Committee*

7.1.1 Members heard that the Committee met on the 12<sup>th</sup> March and had spent time looking at the KPIs and members heard that the college was doing well on retention and student satisfaction survey results. It was explained that in the meeting, a member had commented that it was important to always consider room utilisation alongside room frequency for a more useful and contextual look at room use, because room utilisation always looked low across the sector.

C- A member commented that it was important the college considered room utilisation to ensure that the college were doing everything possible to ensure best use of the assets.

**ACTION 3 – DP:FR to look at room utilisation to see whether any further improvements can be made.**

Comment was made that the college had made some strategic decisions, such as the off-timetable Wednesday afternoons for CPD which negatively impacted room utilisation.

7.1.2 Members heard that the college were focused on moving from good to great but noting that there were three areas which might be grade 3 at end of academic year: engineering, plumbing and motor vehicle.

7.1.3 Members were informed that the Committee had had an extensive discussion around enhanced support and acknowledged that whilst the process undoubtedly worked well, given that 13 areas were in enhanced support, whether there was a risk that managers were not enabled to do their jobs because of the additional support provided.

**ACTION 4 – AP:QM and VP:C to discuss enhanced support and whether there is any risk that managers are not doing their jobs because of the success of enhanced support.**

7.1.4 It was reported that the safeguarding papers presented highlighted that the highest numbers of safeguarding referrals as previously came from level 1 16-18 year old learners. It was reported that discussions were ongoing about having in-house speech and language support. Members noted that the Board would receive a more detailed presentation around SEND at a future strategy event.

7.1.5 The Chair commented that time keeping in the meeting was problematic and asked line managers to support presenters with ensuring their presentations were kept to time.

**ACTION 5 – Line managers to communicate with paper presenters to ensure timings for Board meetings were adhered to.**

Members **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** an update from the Chair of the Standards and Curriculum Committee on the work of the Committee.

### 7.2 Key Performance Indicators ('KPIs')

*For information: to receive and note progress against the KPIs*

7.2.1 The Assistant Principal: Quality and MIS ('AP:QM') reported to the Board that retention, and projections for achievement were on target, however, 16-18 apprenticeship achievement was a concern and had been the thing in inspection which prevented apprenticeships from being outstanding. Members noted that the college set its own tailored learning KPI and wanted to attract significant numbers from disadvantaged wards, however, the college were not meeting the numbers it aspired to. It was reported that for destinations, there were two different measures and one was much more positive for the college than the other. Members were assured that overall, the college was in a good position and that maths had improved significantly although English had remained static.

Members **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** progress against the KPIs

### 7.3 Curriculum Review

*For discussion: to receive and note the curriculum review paper and any teaching and learning areas of concern*

7.3.1 The Vice Principal: Curriculum ('VP:C') explained to the Board that the college were making good progress with maths although the change of awarding body had impacted English if looking at year on year comparisons. It was explained that the college was still considering the strategy for November resits because it took significant energy from both students and staff with sometimes minimal payback. In respect of areas in enhanced support, the VP:C reported that areas moved in and out during the year and the college did not believe the process detracted from the work done by curriculum managers but instead, supported them rather than standing back and watching them struggle. It was explained that sometimes being in enhanced support was just about supporting new managers rather than concerns about an area's performance.

Members **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the curriculum review paper and any teaching and learning areas of concern

### 7.4 Safeguarding, Prevent and Vulnerable Learners

*For discussion: to consider and note the termly report*

7.4.1 Members noted that safeguarding referrals were up by 21% compared to the same time last year. Members also heard that there were changes to Prevent and the direction of travel for Ofsted. Members were assured that the college were focused on ensuring students got the right support at the right time to enable them to get to the next step.

Q- A member questioned why there were 11 attempted suicides reported but only 2 external referrals.

**ACTION 6– Director Safeguarding to provide response to the question why there were 11 attempted suicides reported but only 2 external referrals.**

Comment was made that if the attempted suicides happened outside college, for example if a student ended up in A and E, they would do the referral.

Q- A member asked in regards to the increases in safeguarding and welfare referrals whether there was research concluding whether the problems were getting worse or whether the services and support and identification of problems was improving.

R- Members were informed that there were more learners so therefore there were more referrals. It was explained that the NHS were also seeing significant increases but that students did have confidence in the support available also.

It was discussed that there was a lack of clarity about whether the problem was getting worse or whether the sector was getting better at identifying the problems. It was discussed that where there was no additional funding, the college had to consider how it was going to be able to offer support which was a key concern. Members were assured that staff were doing more and more training which meant they were better able to support students. It was reported that in the NHS, the amount of referrals had plateaued slightly in the past 12 months, however, the Director of Children's Services was reporting dramatic increases.

Q- A member asked what it felt like to be a student at the college and how students felt like they were supported.

R- Members were informed that Ofsted had graded the college outstanding for personal development and all responses to the student satisfaction survey were in the top quartile, quartile A.

Members **CONSIDERED** and **NOTED** the termly report

### 7.5 EDI Annual Report

*For resolution: to consider and if so minded, approve the college's EDI annual report*

7.5.1 Members were reminded that the EDI report was presented annually to the Standards and Curriculum Committee and that there were no significant changes from the previous year in terms of demographics of the learners. It was explained that the college did have some large male sector areas and a large ESOL provision where lots of BAME students were enrolled. Members were pleased to note that the college was considered locally as the 'go to' for ESOL delivery and the college was the provider of choice for many with an EHCP. It was explained to members that the college were situated in the middle of a disadvantaged ward. Members noted that the work around EDI 'special interest groups' continued and one group focused on destinations was currently under review.

It was **RESOLVED** that members approved the college's EDI annual report

### 7.6 SEND Report

*For discussion: to receive and note a SEND update report*

7.6.1 Members heard that there were 155 learners at the college with education health care plans and 92 with high needs. It was explained that the college had recently run a skills bootcamp for Learning Facilitators to upskill them to take intervention work in literacy, speech and language and a post-16 phonics programme to improve reading age.

7.6.2 Members noted that the government had published that a potential investment of £740m was being made available to mainstream providers to create specialist spaces which was an exciting opportunity for the college. It was reported that the new inspection framework was still under consultation, however, SEND was mentioned in every category and more time would be spent at future meetings discussing the matter.

Q- A member asked whether there was any clarification in regards to education providers taking more on more responsibility as the holders of EHCPs.

R- Members were informed that there was no clarity, however, there was a higher expectation to take on students with SEND in mainstream provision.

Q- A member asked whether the in-house speech and language therapy support was based on funding coming.



R- Members heard that the in-house support had been mentioned in inspection but was part of the bigger funding picture. It was explained that there was a shortage of speech and language specialists, however, the benefit of the bootcamp was that some training had been provided so that support could be developed in class.

Members **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** a SEND update report

### **7.7 Student Satisfaction Report**

*For consideration: to receive and consider the findings from the student satisfaction survey*

7.7.1 It was agreed that the student satisfaction survey report was a very positive report.

Members **RECEIVED** and **CONSIDERED** the findings from the student satisfaction survey

### **7.8 HE Update**

*For information: to receive and note a HE update, including Office for Students*

7.8.1 It was explained that the college were going through mid-year programme reviews at the present time.

Members **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** a HE update, including Office for Students

## **FINANCE AND RESOURCES MATTERS**

### **8.1 Chair's Update**

**For information: to receive and note an update from the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee on the work of the Committee**

8.1 The Chair of the Committee reported that the Committee had met twice and the fact that two meetings had taken place demonstrated the concern about the college's financial health. It was explained that the college had been unable to put together a revised budget at the usual time in November based on the lack of communication and certainty from the Department for Education. It was reported that the Committee had looked at the risk register at the start and end of the meeting so that the papers could be considered before arriving at a decision regarding the risk around the financial health score and whether the likelihood should be raised. It was communicated that the in-year funding was at a lower than desired rate at only 2/3 of previous years. Members noted that there was some T- level clawback following under-recruitment. It was explained that the national insurance increase was not going to be fully covered because the decision had been made to base it on an income formula rather than directly related to staff. On the upside, members heard that the college's pension scheme contributions had been reduced with a small positive impact this year and larger effect next year of £100k, but it was not sufficient to offset the bad news.

8.2 It was reported to the Board that the decision had been taken not to re-cast the budget because it was too late in the year and required significant staff time and therefore the Finance and Resources Committee had decided to focus on the period 6 forecast (the end of January) as the baseline and reforecast every month in the management accounts. It was reported that the Committee had asked the reports to the Board to specifically focus on the elements of the finances which would impact the financial health score and ability to meet covenants. It was explained that profitability was a problem and solvency because the college were running off the back-end of projects without new cash coming in.

8.3 It was reported to members that the college's bus service was not being funded to the same extent to make savings in future years and that there was no scope for a pay award.

Members noted that given the decrease in the volume of projects, the Projects Manager had been tasked to look at efficiency improvements undertaking a systems and process review. It was discussed that funding was unlikely to improve significantly and therefore the only way to improve the college's position was through self-help and looking at internal efficiency because the college would not be able to focus on growth whilst having to count every penny. The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee commented that the Committee had decided to increase the likelihood of the risk to probable rather than possible for maintaining good financial health given that there was a 40-60% chance of falling below good financial health. Members were assured that any dip in the financial health score would be short term and the college would bounce back immediately and therefore if the incident did occur, a mitigating commentary would be sent to the FE Commissioner for consideration, however, if the financial health score decreased, there would be significant negative impact. In respect of the debt covenants, members heard that the college did breach one last year, however, the bank had been notified in a timely manner and the process had been well managed. It was explained that debt covenants would be looked at for the current year and conversations held as necessary.

8.4 Members were assured that there was scrutiny over every line of expenditure, with only the DP:FR or VP:C signing off spend. Members discussed whether a high bar should be set for efficiencies for example, £1m. It was agreed that the college needed to make painful decisions now to avoid painful decisions later. Members agreed that carrying an additional 201 learners without funding was not acceptable.

## 8.2 Emerging Budget

*For discussion: to receive and discuss the emerging budget 2025/26*

*It was agreed that the item would be taken as part II and covered at the end of the meeting.*

Members **RECEIVED** and **DISCUSSED** the emerging budget 25/26

## 8.3 Estates Update

*For resolution: to consider and if so minded, approve the proposal to progress with internal reconfiguration of E block classrooms/salons, subject to DfE capital allocation*

8.3.1 Members heard that the estates strategy was being deferred. It was reported that a recent announcement had been made that the college would be receiving a £1.1m capital allocation for spend on the college's buildings based on the results of the conditions survey which would feed into the estates strategy.

8.3.2 Members heard that a proposal had been taken to the Finance and Resources Committee about a creation of space in E block for 5 additional teaching spaces at an estimated cost of £100k which the Committee had approved subject to DfE funding, which had now been received.

Q- A member asked whether the £1.1m capital allocation was pleasing.

R- Members heard that it was better than the college were expecting, however, the guidance needed to be studied and digested, however, there were some positives such as the use of money for cabling.

Q- Following student feedback, a member asked for confirmation that the teaching rooms for ESOL had external windows.

R- Members heard that most rooms had external windows, however, a few had light created through an internal corridor.

Q- A member asked whether the capital investment negatively impacted income and expenditure.

R- Members heard that it was capitalised on the balance sheet and then released to income and expenditure periodically, and therefore matched the useful life of the project and was offset by depreciation.

It was **RESOLVED** that members approved the proposal to progress with internal reconfiguration of E block classrooms/salons.

#### 8.4 Estates Strategy

*To note that the estates strategy has been deferred until later in the year as a result of uncertainty around external factors.*

#### 8.5 Review of employer engagement and growth

*For discussion: to receive and note a report on employer engagement and growth*

8.5 The Assistant Principal: Business Development and Growth ('AP:BG') reported to the Board that business development and growth was a constantly moving picture. It was explained that apprenticeship recruitment was down across Warrington by 62% which was concerning. Members were assured that since the paper had been written, the position had picked up slightly and actions were in place to maximise where the college were getting demand. It was reported that at the present time, the college were still down on the growth target set and were not likely to meet it, however, the carry in for apprenticeships meant that the overall income would be met. Members were informed that new business was a mixed picture with a real impact of the national insurance and minimum wage increases being seen across business. Members noted, however, that the college had secured income through additional contracts such as the skills bootcamps and some full cost provision with United Utilities for example.

8.6 Members agreed that it was disappointing news that Cheshire West and Chester were not extending the UK SPF contract despite the fact that the college delivered a successful contract out of Winsford and exceeded all targets. It was explained that the college were waiting to hear from Warrington Borough Council about the work force development project. It was explained that the college were in talks with a number of employers and were awaiting employers to quantify the amount of work with the college. Conversation was held in regards to the national picture which was very difficult with employers being financially stretched. It was explained that the college had been reliant on securing funding through additional contracts to support employers and the reduction in those contracts would significantly impact.

8.7 Members were pleased to hear about the successful employer events in Winsford and the engineering and science business breakfast which had been well attended, showcasing the facilities and building the science network to promote the lab tech skills bootcamp.

8.8 It was reported to members that the college were working closely with Telford College who were keen to learn about how the college worked with employers and the business centre model.

Q – A member asked what the tangible benefits of sharing best practice were.

R- Members heard that Telford College had good links with their NHS trusts and were thriving in terms of health whereas the college predominantly worked with social care and therefore it was a mutually beneficial relationship. It was explained that it was the early days of the partnership, however, the colleges were looking to forge curriculum links in the future.

Q – A member asked why there had been a reduction in the number of apprentices.

R- Members heard that the reasons were financial and companies were struggling to take on apprentices because of the national insurance and minimum wage increases and therefore the college were looking to shift their focus to levy payers.

Q- A member asked whether Cheshire West and Chester gave feedback about ceasing the contract with the college.

R- Members heard that the council were focusing on provision to support those who were NEET and economically inactive. It was explained that local authorities had reduced SPF allocations but it was still disappointing as work the college had done had been impactful and had received excellent feedback.

Members **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** a report on employer engagement and growth

### **8.6 Financial Performance**

*For information: to receive and note the February Management Accounts*

8.6.1 It was reported that for period 7, the college had made progress with pay expenditure and had modelled through the national insurance impact and had again reviewed every post and removed every area where the posts were non-essential. It was reported that the college were on essential spend only for non-pay and the college were currently £500k away from where it needed to be at the year end.

Members **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the February management accounts

## **AUDIT MATTERS**

### **9.1 Chair's Update**

*For information: to receive and note an update from the Chair of the Audit Committee on the work of the Committee*

- 9.1.1 It was reported that the Committee were pleased to note that there were no concerns regarding health and safety and members were assured that the fire brigade had carried out familiarisation visits to both the Warrington and Winsford sites. Questions were raised around knife crime at the meeting and members were assured that the college had bleed kits on both campuses and significant work was undertaken to educate students about knife crime, such as guest speakers and having the knife arch in college.
- 9.1.2 The Chair of the Committee reported that the members had asked for an update at the meeting about the college's progress with obtaining Cyber Essentials which was now mandated as a condition of funding and had to be achieved in the 24/25 academic year. The Director of IT assured members that good progress was being made and the college were doing a trial run at accreditation prior to the formal process in April and members noted that since the meeting of the Committee, Cyber Essentials had now been achieved. Members noted that the college were now using BoxPhish for staff training which was making training much more effective and frequent. Cyber security remained the highest risk on the college's risk register.
- 9.1.3 The Committee were pleased to receive the clean audit report for business centre income recognition and the Committee also received the health and safety framework report where reasonable assurance had been given with 1 medium and 4 low priority actions.

- 9.1.4 Considerable time was spent in the meeting discussing the ESFA bursary audit report where an unsatisfactory assurance had been given with a adjustment of roll forward £65k – more rolled forward 16-19 learners. The Committee were assured that the college had changed processes as necessary and therefore similar errors would not occur again.
- 9.1.5 The Committee recommended to the Board the appointment of the auditors, RSM for internal audit and Hacker Young for external audit following interviews conducted by a panel, including Committee member Anne Ryans.
- 9.2 In previous meetings, disappointment had been expressed over progress with internal audit actions, however, significant work had now been done.

### **9.2 Audit Reports to flag to the Board (internal and other)**

*For discussion: to receive and note any internal audit reports where the Board's attention is required*

Members **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** internal audit reports whether the Board's attention was required

### **9.3 Internal Audit Tracking Document**

*For information: to receive and note progress against internal audit actions*

Members **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** progress against internal audit actions

### **9.4 RSM Further Education Benchmarking Report**

*For information: to receive and note the RSM benchmarking report*

Members **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** the RSM benchmarking report

### **9.6 Annual Fraud Risk Assessment**

*For discussion: to receive and discuss the Annual Fraud Risk Assessment*

Members **RECEIVED** and **DISCUSSED** the annual fraud risk assessment

## **SEARCH AND GOVERNANCE MATTERS**

### **10.1 Chair's Update**

*For information: to receive and note an update from the Chair of the Search and Governance Committee on the work of the Committee*

- The Committee agreed that to relieve the pressure on some of the meetings, an additional Standards meeting and Audit meeting would be held in the autumn term, which would facilitate earlier approval of the risk register and development plan and SAR. The Committee heard that all cycles of business were being looked at alongside the work borne out of the follow up of the external review work led by Chris Jones, where significant work was also taking place to improve the papers presented to the Board.
- The Committee were pleased to note that the majority of the work to replace Mervyn Ward as Chair and all of the various roles he held was almost complete and that a vacancy was live for a new Board member.

- The Committee considered those who were nearing completion of their first four year term and the Committee recommended for approval by the Board the reappointment of Lucy Gardner for a further 4 year term of office. The Committee had criteria to use when considering reappointments including attendance, governor input and impact, feedback from the senior team and the such like.
- The Committee considered one of the outstanding actions from the governance development plan around hearing stakeholder voice, in particular, employer voice. It was agreed that the working lunches being facilitated by the Chair 2/3 times during the academic year would help to address this action. The Board were asked to consider whether there were any further opportunities they would like to explore in regards to this.
- The Committee discussed the new guidance in regards to the accountability statement and noted that the deadline for submission had not been amended from 30<sup>th</sup> June, and therefore the college's accountability statement would need to be approved by the Board at the strategy morning in May. In accordance with the statutory guidance, the Board would be due its next external review of governance in 25/26.

## 10.2 Member Appointments

*For resolution: to consider and if so minded, approve Lucy Gardner's appointment for a second four year term of office, as recommended by the Search and Governance Committee*

It was **RESOLVED** that members approved the appointment of Lucy Gardner for a further 4 year term of office.

## 10.3 Governance Development Plan

*For information: to receive and note an update on progress against actions in the governance development plan*

The Clerk reported that the governance development plan contained within the papers showed the closing position for 23/24 and the current position for 24/25. It was explained that the key areas of focus were: hearing stakeholder voice, particularly employers

Members **RECEIVED** and **NOTED** an update on progress against actions in the governance development plan

## 11 SENIOR STAFF SALARY MATTERS

11.1 The Chair of the Committee informed the Board that there had been changes to Committee membership and there was now a newly constructed remuneration Committee, however, the Chair of the Board was a member and had been previously so there was continuity.

11.2 It was explained that there were proposed amendments to the Senior Postholders' Remuneration Policy which were listed at the front report and were pertaining to the communications process for clarity. Members heard that the key issue from the meeting in light of the funding uncertainty and the subsequent lack of clarity about a pay award for staff was that the Committee had decided to reconvene the meeting once there was more clarity and as a consequence, there was no pay recommendation for senior staff. The Board noted

that the Committee did consider the performance of the Principal; DP:FR and Clerk and all were excellent.

### **11.1 Senior Postholders' Remuneration Report**

*For resolution: to consider and if so minded, approve the Senior Postholders' Remuneration Report for 2023/24, as per the requirements of the AoC Senior Staff Remuneration Code*

It was **RESOLVED** that members approved the Senior Postholders' Remuneration Report for 23/24

### **11.2 Senior Postholders' Pay Policy**

*For resolution: to consider and if so minded, approve the amendments to the Senior Postholders' Pay Policy, as recommended by the Senior Staff Salaries Committee*

It was **RESOLVED** that members approved the amendments to the Senior Postholders' Pay Policy

### **11.3 Senior Postholders' Pay**

*For information: Members are asked to note that any decisions around senior postholders' pay has been deferred until the position for all staff is known for 24/25*

11.3 Members noted that the decision around senior pay had been deferred until the position for all staff was known.

### **11.4 Roles Designated as Senior Postholder**

*For resolution: to consider and if so minded, approve the redesignation of the Clerk's role as a Senior Postholder, with effect from 2nd April 2025, as recommended by the Senior Staff Salaries Committee*

### **Laura Churchill left the meeting at 6:06pm**

It was **RESOLVED** that members approved the redesignation of the Clerk's role as a senior postholder with effect from 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2025.

It was **RESOLVED** that members approved the redesignation of the Clerk's role as a senior postholder with effect from 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2025.

### **Laura Churchill re-joined the meeting at 6:08pm.**

## **12 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

*For discussion: to consider any items of other business*

Sincere thanks were expressed to Mervyn Ward having tendered his notice. The Chair and CEO acknowledged the incredible contribution which Mr Ward had made and his outstanding commitment.

## **13 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

*To note that the next meeting of the Corporation will be held on Friday 4th July at 8:30am at the Warrington Campus*

### **The meeting closed at 6:30pm.**

A part II meeting was opened to consider the emerging budget. Staff and student governors were asked to leave the meeting.

DRAFT