



Westminster Adult Education Service
219 Lisson Grove, London NW8 8LW
BOARD OF GOVERNORS Virtual meeting

MINUTES of a Special Meeting of the Board of Governors held on 18th June 2020

This was a special meeting held under the Instrument of Government's provision (10.3) whereby the Chairman may direct that there are urgent matters for consideration; and that the agenda may be sent with less than the usual seven days' notice. Governors were alerted to this meeting on 23rd May 2020; and that it would be a virtual meeting

5.00 pm: meeting started.

Members present:
 (*Absent)

	Name	Post
	Ms Carolyn Keen	Chairman
	Mr Richard Frost	Vice-Chairman
	Ms Arinola Edeh	Principal and Head of Service
	Ms Ellie Botti	
	Ms Maysie Brown	
	Councillor Lorraine Dean	
	Mr Deen Fahmy	
	Councillor Matt Noble	
	Mr Tomasz Patzer	
	Mr Jordan Phillips	
*	Dr Samer Taslaq	

In Attendance: Mr George Sabaratnam- Finance Manager
 Ms Jane Button - Assistant Principal, Business Support Services
 Ms Alison Muggridge - Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Quality
 Ms Jill Jaffray - Head of Resources
 Ms Jane Hadsel - Clerk to the Governing Body

MINUTES

11/20 CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTIONS

1. Introductions: The Chairman welcomed Governors and the Executive Board joined by the Finance Manager to the virtual meeting (via TEAMS). She confirmed that due to the financial and service delivery impact of the Covid 19 Pandemic, this special meeting had been called to approve a revised budget, as advised by the Resources Committee last month.
 The Principal clarified the procedure in TEAMS whereby Governors could ask to speak by using the raise hand icon on the screen; this was agreed.
2. Apologies for absence: Samer Taslaq.
3. **WAES Protocol for holding Virtual WAES Governors' meetings**
 Item Report 1.3
 Lead: Clerk

 The policy was approved.

4. Declarations of Governors' Interests to this meeting.
None.

12/20 BUDGET 2020-2021

Reports Item 3., Appendix A

Leads: Principal & Head of Service and Finance Manager

1. The proposal in the Report was that the Service could achieve the break-even budget target only by drawing down the projected deficit amount from reserves, which stood at £2.349m as of 01/04/20, the start of the WCC / WAES financial year. The draw on reserves would be capped at £550K.

The Report tracked the financial pressures from Covid19 on WAES; and outlined the main reasons for additional funds, arising from principally cancellation of all practical fee-paying classes in the summer term and additional costs for health & safety of learners and staff to prepare for easing of restrictions for a return to sites.

Governors noted the trail of discussions with WCC set out in the Appendix whereby the Council had made its position clear that it would not consider emergency funding to WAES in view of the fact that WAES has reserves.

2. **Governors' discussion and questions:**

- Q.1 What was the reason for the decision not to charge learners fees for Term 1 next year; or not to charge even reduced fees, for example, say 20%?

Response by Principal: WAES had been informed that the GLA would waive fees for courses Level 2 and below anyway. It seemed sensible to anticipate this approach; and also to go beyond that because WAES does not know how learners will react to the 'new normal' next term. The challenge to recruit next term and next year will be harder than before; and therefore, the Service had decided to remove at least the cost barrier for the Term 1 next year.

- Q.2 Does WAES know what learners might think about the offer of no fees for Term 1?

Response by Assistant Principal Curriculum & Quality: In WAES' on-line learner forums this term, there has been a common perception by learners that digital learning was cheaper for WAES than face-to-face learning; whereas digital courses were not cheaper in the main but in some respects were costlier.

- Q.3 Is the fee income line the one posing the biggest risk; or might there be further significant risks; and does the scenario presented of a gradual return to 'normal' preclude flexibility for other scenarios?

Response by Principal and Finance Manager: The expectation of a gradual return to 'normal' with additional measures for smaller class sizes and distancing was the central scenario, which at this point the GLA and ESFA (Greater London Authority and Education and Skills Funding Agency) were projecting.

WAES was also pursuing other projects to boost WAES' offer; the Principal reported that WAES had been successful in the recent ESOL Integration Fund funding (from the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government). Further work was in the pipeline to join with other LAs in central London to look for efficiencies.

Q.4 Do all WAES staff now working remotely have the IT they need?

Response by Principal: Some staff had to use their own IT equipment at home. The budget has a provision for WAES to supply the resources needed for remote working for approximately 50 affected staff. Governors noted that WAES has a responsibility for health and safety while staff work remotely; staff might also require equipment such as suitable tables and chairs.

Lorraine Dean joined the meeting (5.30 pm).

Q.5. Given that some of WAES' services are dependent on the Council, e.g. security and cleaning; is the Executive Board satisfied about the costs WAES was being asked to pay for these services while the sites are closed (excluding the nursery) and in the future?

Response by Principal: WAES will have to pick up some of these costs; some services will be needed for exams scheduled on site in June - July.

Q 6. The Board concluded by thanking the Executive Board and extending thanks to the WAES staff both for having managed resources over the past few years to build up reserves and for their responses since the lockdown to position the Service as well as it has done at this point.

RESOLUTION: The budget for 2020-21 was approved.

13/20 WAES RESERVES POLICY

Report Item 4.

Leads: Principal & Head of Service and Finance Manager

1. The Report set out the key principles of the policy which was to protect WAES' activities by providing some financial buffer and to generate additional funds for future improvements. An indicative distribution of funds across key categories was suggested. The policy would be reviewed at the time of budget approval next year.

2. **Governors' discussion and questions:**

Q.1 The Board has just authorised a significant draw on the reserves; what is the strategy for building up the reserves?

Response by Finance Manager: To date, the strategy has been to find efficiencies in-year largely from full fee courses and from a variety of other small income lines over and above GLA and ESFA funding expenditure; the intention is to continue this approach.

Response by Assistant Principal, Business and Services: We (in common with the sector) do not yet understand what the impact will be from Covid19. WAES was trialling new recruitment approaches.

Response by Principal: WAES will be successful if the break-even budget is achieved next year after taking into account the draw upon the reserves.

RESOLUTION: The Board adopted the Reserves Policy.

- Q.2. Will WAES have conversations with the Council in the light of the impact of coronavirus to look at where WAES stands in the proposed Church Street developments?

Response by the Principal: A whole Council approach is needed to position WAES in the future development.

ACTION: Discussions with WCC (Cabinet member/ officers) about WAES' position in the proposed Church Street redevelopment.
Lead: Principal & HoS liaise with Chair, Vice-Chair and Board as / when timely.

14/20 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

1. The Chairman reminded Governors of the Board self-assessment virtual meeting on 23rd June 2020; and asked Governors to review the questionnaire so that they would be better prepared to complete it after the meeting.
3. The Chairman reminded Governors that they had received invitations to WAES' virtual events celebrating the end of year in Fashion, Make-up and Hair, Art Exhibition and Learner Awards; and she encouraged Governors to attend, if they can, to show their support for learners and staff at this especially challenging time.

ACTIONS: Governors attend self-assessment meeting and end of year events.

15/20 CONFIDENTIALITY

There were no confidential papers or discussions at the meeting.

16/20 BOARD COMMUNICATIONS

1. The Board asked that the Principal inform staff of the approved budget and the implications for WAES as soon as practical.

ACTION: Communicate Board's approval of budget to staff. Lead: Principal & HoS.

2. The Chairman drew Governors' attention to the staff Wellbeing newsletters alongside the regular e-news as a way for Governors to learn more about how staff are managing at present.

5.50 pm: meeting closed.