



BOARD OF GOVERNORS

MINUTES of a Virtual Meeting of the Board of Governors held on 8th December 2020

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 Philips	
	Dr Samer Taslaq	

In Attendance through Item 1: Ms Debbie Jackson – Executive Director Growth, Planning and Housing at Westminster City Council

WAES staff in attendance for the whole meeting:

Ms Jill Jaffray – Head of Resources

Ms Alison Muggridge – Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Quality

Ms Jane Hadsel – Clerk to the Governing Body

5.00 pm: Meeting started.

MINUTES

40/20 APOLOGIES / DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

1. **Chairman’s welcome:** The Chairman welcomed to the meeting Debbie Jackson who had been appointed last summer as the Executive Director Growth, Planning and Housing at Westminster City Council. Her portfolio includes oversight of WAES and line management of the Principal and Head of Service.
2. **Apologies for absence:** Apologies and reasons for absences had been sent before the meeting from: Ellie Botti, Richard Frost, Deen Fahmy and Matt Noble.
The Board accepted their apologies for absence.
3. **Declarations of Governors’ Interests for this meeting:** None.
4. **WAES and Westminster City Council**
 - 4.1 The Governors and the Executive Board briefly introduced themselves; and the Chairman invited Ms Jackson to introduce herself. Ms Jackson explained she had recently been involved-with the GLA skills team working on the Mayor’s priority to deliver good growth for London. She had worked for City Hall since 2009, also at Westminster and Lambeth Councils and with numerous private and third sectors in developing local enterprise and professional networks for the GLA.

- 4.2 Ms Jackson offered her reflections on WAES and City Council; it was evident that WAES operated at arms' length from the Council and as an ACL service, it functioned like a FE college in respect to funders and recruitment of learners. She said she recognised that there was work to do from the Council's side to better understand WAES; for example, as evidenced in the WAES staff survey (summary in Item 5 to this meeting). She and the Principal had started meeting regularly last summer; they had agreed that they would jointly sign off a monthly briefing about WAES to the Cabinet Member. (This action was picked up under the Principal's Report, Item 3 to this meeting.) She said the Council had welcomed the recent positive visit report by Ofsted, especially as it had acknowledged WEAS's proactive response to the impact of Covid-19 on the Service. In respect to WAES' future accommodation, she said she understood that WAES would want to influence this; and for her to better understand the context, she would be conducting a "deep dive" exercise shortly into the Church Street masterplan.
- Discussion
- 4.3 Communications: Governors raised a number of points related to communications with the Council and about how to better promote WAES both within the Council and externally to Westminster residents and businesses. (In particular the fall out of the pandemic highlighted the need for people to have access to leisure and work related distance learning some of which was free) Ms Jackson said that she and the Principal had included this topic in their discussions; and that the Cabinet Member was also receptive. She said that a new WCC Executive Director of Communications at the Council was to start work shortly. However, given the scale the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's services, there was a limited amount of attention possible at this point outside matters of immediate Covid-19 urgencies. She and the Principal would keep the Board informed of progress about communications.
- 4.4 Accommodation: Governors asked that consideration be given in the accommodation brief for WEAS' future presence not just in the Church Street area but also to recognise that WAES' current presence in the south of the Borough (albeit much smaller than at Lisson Grove) has demonstrated the Service's successful reach to different cohorts of learners. Governors welcomed the approach which Ms Jackson indicated which would be to start with the needs of and the opportunities for the Service rather than starting with an available space. Furthermore, the post Covid property scene might provide a wide scope of opportunities as both the Council and property owners adjusted to change.
- 4.5 The Chairman and Principal thanked Ms Jackson for coming to the Board meeting to share her initial thoughts about WAES's future; and asked her to return at a mutually acceptable time. Ms Jackson replied she would welcome that.

41/20 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

1. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17TH NOVEMBER 2020**
Report Item 2.1.
The Board approved the Minutes.
2. **DECISION WHETHER MEETINGS CONTINUE TO MEET VIRTUALLY NEXT TERM**
The Board had decided last term to meet virtually via TEAMS through Term 1 this year and to review this at the December Board meeting.
The Board agreed to continue with virtual Governors' meetings for Term 2.
(*Schedule of meeting dates as previously agreed are at the end of these Minutes.)

ACTION: Keep meetings format under review for Term 3. Leads: Principal / Chairman / Clerk

3. **Matters Arising not on the agenda or in reports to this meeting on 8th December 2020**

The Principal suggested that matters arising be deferred to next term; and that matters would be reported back to Committee / or the Board as appropriate. This was agreed.

ACTIONS: Track reporting back on matters arising next term. Leads: Principal / Clerk

3.1 Minute 32/20 SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2019-20

ACTION: Assistant Principal Curriculum and Quality to add to the text that Governors had undertaken training in 2019-20 (including specifically, the on-line module, Advancing Equality and Diversity 2020, which was the same training module staff had been asked to complete).

RESOLUTION: Governors approved the SAR 2019-20. They agreed that they did not need to see it again before the final version was uploaded; the final version would also be put on the Governors Portal for the Governors' reference.

Leads: Assistant Principal / Clerk.

3.2 Minute 34/20 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN / and KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS 2020-21

ACTION: Governors and Executive Board accepted Jordan Philips' offer to proof the final versions of the SAR and QIP.

Leads: Assistant Principal / JP (AP would email JP the documents).

3.3 Minute 37/20 COMPLAINTS Termly report

ACTION: Principal and Head of Service said she would check the ethnicity data for one of the complainants to ensure there was no error.

42/20 REPORT OF THE PRINCIPAL AND HEAD OF SERVICE

Reports Item 3. and Appendix Item 3.1.

Lead: Principal and Head of Service

1. WCC Strategic Review Action Plan for WAES: Governors welcomed the Cabinet Member's approval of the Action Plan.
2. Discussion about Appendix 1: Governors were reminded that the Memorandum of Understanding included both the Instrument of Government and the Financial Scheme of Delegation. These had been initially reviewed internally at WAES last spring. In respect to timing, it was agreed this would be progressed with the Board (a subgroup of Chair, Vice-Chair, Principal and Clerk).
The Chairman advised the meeting that the Board should take a view about the proportion of the total membership of WCC nominees; and that the subgroup of the Board would report back to the Board.
There would be a brief overview of the main points (suggestions for changes and reasons in support) by the Principal to the Cabinet Member.
3. Accommodation brief: The Board agreed with the steer in the Appendix.
They recognised that the impact of Covid-19 on the Council's property portfolio could have a bearing on WAES's future accommodation. The Principal would keep the Board informed.
5. The Head of Resources commented that due to heating problems at Lisson Grove, they had brought in portable heaters in the week before this meeting in order to hold classes at an acceptable temperature. Governors discussed the scope of the issue and agreed that this was properly a Health & Safety concern.

Lorraine Dean left the meeting at 6.00 pm part way in Minute 42/20 to attend a WCC meeting.

6. Governors agreed that they also wanted to better understand what the scope of the refurbishment of the other part of the Council's services in the shared Lisson Grove building had been in view of the fact that WAES' ability to run classes has been increasingly impacted by the wear and tear in the heating and air handling systems leading to persist leaks and breakdowns. Governors concluded that it was broadly understood that maintaining Covid secure workspaces was dependent on appropriate functioning of ventilation and heating.

ACTIONS:

- Appendix 1 Actions agreed. Leads: Principal / Chairman / Clerk.
- WAES briefing note to WCC Cabinet Member planned later this term (as signed off by Principal and Exec Dir GPH) would be circulated to Governors. Lead: Principal and Head of Service

43/20 DASHBOARD

Report Item 4. Report by Assistant Principal, Business Support Services
Lead: Principal and Head of Service

1. The Report noted that retention at 94% was good; and attendance at 85% while below the target of 90% was good given the circumstances of the 65% face-to-face delivery and 35% online delivery.
2. The KPIs on income showed more detail in the number of strands than before which illustrated more clearly where income lines were impacted by Covid 19 and also where WAES had secured other funding pots.
3. Governors agreed that the reporting of the dashboard introduced last year under the direction of the Assistant Principal, Business and Support Services had been a welcome addition to the strategic focus of the Board meetings.

44/20 STAFFING UPDATE

Report Item 5.
Lead: Head of Resources

1. The Report said that significant staff recruitment had been successfully managed; and asked that the new organisation diagram be circulated to Governors for information; this was noted as being especially useful to Governors when making Governors engagement visits to be able to place a particular class within the structure and know in advance the names of the staff in that provision.

ACTION: Updated WAES organisation chart to be circulated to Governors.

Leads: Director of Resources / Clerk.

2. In reference to the summary in the Report about the staff survey, the Head of Resources confirmed that there was more detail for the first time this year; and that WAES teams were working on Action Plans to address issues raised.
3. The Principal said that she was keen for all WAES staff to have access to the WCC staff communication portal called the Wire.
Governors agreed stating that as WCC employees' staff should not be denied access to the same information and benefits as those working in other areas of the Council. This had been a long running issue of concern.

45/20 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Report Item 6. Report by Assistant Principal, Business Support Services
Lead: Principal and Head of Service

1. Governors discussed the detail in the Report about The Learner Voice, and noted that while the initial number of participants was relatively small before the March lockdown, this was a very positive step; and furthermore the perseverance to hold virtual learners' forums in the summer term had highlighted issues of access to appropriate and affordable technology for learners.
2. Governors discussed with the Head of Resources how WAES was planning to review job specifications and the recruitment process in general to make the process more inclusive and to reach more diverse potential staff. Governors asked for a report back. It was suggested that a Governor lead / link might be productive; and Jordan Philips volunteered to explore what this might involve.

ACTION: Principal to discuss with Jordan Philips (with Head of Resources and Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Quality).

46/20 SAFEGUARDING POLICY- ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20 and UPDATE 2020-21

Report Item 7. Report from the Head of Learner Development
Lead: Assistant Principal, Curriculum and Quality

1. The Report provided a review of Safeguarding matters from 2019-20; it listed who was in the WAES Safeguarding team and how referrals were made and processed. There was a brief summary of Safeguarding cases in 2019-20, which mostly involved domestic abuse and self-harm issues and a small number of Risk Register cases. The Report reflected what had worked well by considering the impact seen and in a broader context how WAES had responded to Covid-19 in respect to safeguarding. There was a checklist of proposed actions for improvement this year.

Discussion
2. Related to the Report's summary of Staff Training, a Governor asked what kind of support there was for the Safeguarding Team, given additional pressure this year in the context of Covid-19. The Assistant Principal said that she had observed good, informal peer support; and also, that the Safeguarding team had set up their own WhatsApp forum. The Assistant Principal said that they wanted to explore further whether counselling might be appropriate and welcome for staff.
3. The Report advised the Board that no updates to the Safeguarding Policy were required for this year 2020-21, noting that the policy had been amended during lockdown last year with the addition of a bereavement procedure. The Assistant Principal asked that the Board approve the continued use of the Policy for this academic year.

RESOLUTION

The Board received the Annual Safeguarding Report 2019-20 and approved the Safeguarding Policy for continued use this academic year 2020-21.

47/20 GOVERNOR ENGAGEMENT

The Chairman invited Governors' oral feedback from their virtual attendance in the Governor Engagement programme this term, noting that some Governors had made arrangements for later this term or early next term.

1. The first two report backs were about the series of virtual learning walks where a Governor was accompanied by a Head of Department or the Head of Quality Improvement after

which there was a remote discussion between the Head and the Governor. The Principal reported that Jordan Philips' feedback from his GCSE English class virtual visit had been appreciated by staff; and they would look at his suggestion.

2. The Principal orally reported on behalf of Ellie Bottie who had attended virtually a GCSE Maths class, which she said she found both interesting and enjoyable and that also she had a good feedback session afterwards about the teaching techniques and the learner engagement she had observed. She had commented that joining an online class felt easier in some respects than physically walking into a classroom where it was more obvious you were an 'outsider'.
3. Carolyn Keen reported that she had attended virtually the online training for those learners who had volunteered to be group reps for their courses.

ACTION: Governors who were not able to attend to date were invited to contact Ms Judi Morgan as there were still engagement activities available. Leads: Governors

48/20 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

1. The Chairman called Governors' attention to the annual Tatchbrook Street Christmas Market on Saturday 12 December from 10 am – 4 pm where WAES will be selling a variety of learners' goods in ceramics and floristry.

49/20 BOARD COMMUNICATIONS

1. The Board agreed they wanted to express their admiration and thanks to staff for their leadership and support for both learners and each other in the very challenging circumstances and impact of Covid-19 on the Service. The Principal responded that staff know that the Governing Body has been very supportive, and they appreciated this support.

50/20 CONFIDENTIALITY of proceedings of this meeting

1. The Board agreed that no confidential business was reported or discussed at this meeting.

Meeting closed: 7.00 pm.

SCHEDULE OF BOARD AND COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2020-21

Term 2 Virtual meetings at 5.00 pm

Resources Committee Tuesday 9 February

Performance Review Committee Tuesday 9 March

Board of Governors Tuesday 30 March

Term 3 (Virtual meetings at 5 pm or in-person to be confirmed at 30/3/2021 Board)

Resources Committee Tuesday 4 May

Performance Review Committee Tuesday 15 June

Board of Governors Tuesday 13 July