

**Minutes of the Board of Directors' meeting**  
**Thursday 10 April 2025**  
**Held at Worcester Sixth Form College**

**Present:** Sheila Boniface (joined during the meeting)  
Jane Britton  
Marion Hawkins  
Craig Holden  
Ken Hopkins (Chair)  
Peter Jackson  
Rachel Salter  
Shirley Tully

**In attendance:** Sallyanne Griffiths (Chief Finance Officer)  
Andrea Marshall (Director of Quality)  
Linda Watkins (Director of Governance)  
Sean Devlin (WSFC LGB)

**1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Peter Cooper (Chief Executive Officer), Katie Jackson, Ceri Morgan and Daniel Pearce-Higgins.

**2. Opening standing items**

- I. There were no declarations of interests.
- II. Some discussion was deemed to be confidential during the meeting with a separate minute recorded.
- III. Any other business – none identified.

**3. Worcester Sixth Form College update**

The Principal appreciated the opportunity to address the Board and gave a presentation outlining both achievements and challenges at WSFC. There have been positive outcomes and improved value-added scores of students with higher attendance assisted by support implemented for students. Finances are good anticipating to pay off the phase 1 loan from the Trust. There has been steady growth in student numbers with 114 more applications for 2025/26 compared to the same period last year. The science block is an asset which enabled refurbishment of the old science space to accommodate health care students create an independent study space; these developments were possible with support from the Trust. Fire safety phase 2 works will be completed this summer including creation of four additional toilet cubicles, funded by the schools condition funding.

**Action**

Challenges include potential attendance and achievement for 167 students who have received unconditional offers, and the high retention which could impact on student outcomes. The college has 46 toilets and limited social space which impact on students' experience; solutions are being investigated. An 11-16 years school is being built in Worcester to support housing developments with the planning including a sixth form college. The Trust is already investigating options to manage the proposed sixth form. There are already high levels of competition in the county with around thirty post 16 education providers. Positive outcomes and a good reputation remain key priorities. Despite funding constraints next year the college anticipates a modest positive EBITDA.

The Chair thanked the Principal for his presentation.

#### **4. Chair's Report**

The Chair gave a specific welcome to Sean Devlin, Chair of WSFC LGB and Jane Britton. The Chair reminded Directors that he would be stepping down from the Board at the end of the academic year meaning that the Board will need to appoint a Chair and potentially a Vice Chair. The Director of Governance would formally request nominations from Directors for the roles in accordance with the governance procedures. In the event that more than one nomination is received, she would liaise with the nominees to ascertain if a secret ballot would be required. The Board will be requested to formally appoint a Chair and Vice Chair at the next meeting.

LJW

#### **5. Minutes of the last meetings, resolution and matters arising**

The Board agreed to approve the minutes and confidential minute of the meetings held on 12 December 2024, 8 February 2025 and resolution dated 14 February 2025. Matters arising had been addressed evidenced largely by the action list. There was discussion regarding the impact of the ongoing transport issues for students at HSFC which had received press coverage in the Hereford Times.

#### **6. CEO's Report**

The Trust had conducted a quality review of the sixth form at JKHS with input from six members of staff in the Trust. An independent SEND specialist has been commissioned to undertake a SEND review. The Trust is implementing strategies collaboratively to provide support to SEND students and prepare in readiness for the new Ofsted framework. A SEND Coordinator will be appointed internally to work across the Trust. In addition, a senior member of staff will be trained as an Ofsted Inspector.

The Chair commented that he had been approached by the Vice Chancellor from Derby University which he had forwarded to the CEO to address.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools bill is anticipated to have implications for sixth form colleges who will require teachers to have Qualified Teacher Status.

The CFO reminded Directors that the national pay award implemented for teaching and support staff was well received by support staff who were recognised with the same level awarded as teaching staff. The pay award is funded by the DfE in the current year meaning that there will be an increase to pay costs next year. Budget setting has commenced for 2025/26 to present a break-even budget to the Board in July for approval.

PC

The Trust has allocated schools condition funding predominantly to projects at KEVI and WSFC to address capacity issues, fire safety and the shortage of toilets.

**7. Strategic plan 2024-27 operating plan progress**

The Director of Quality presented the operating plan which had been updated with input from the team evidencing progress. Some strategic objectives have changed and are no longer relevant. Directors were reassured by progress.

**8. Finance report to February 2025**

The finance report to February 2025 had been discussed by the Finance and Resources Committee. An EBITDA of £1.8m was forecasted which is anticipated to decrease to £800k at the year-end. Catering income had increased. JKHS had significant staff agency costs due to vacancies, maternity leave and long term staff sickness, in addition to Pupil Referral Unit costs, the latter unbudgeted. The cash position is strong despite £800k of exam costs this month. The balance ratio is also strong. The CFO is a member of the SFCA's Finance and Funding Committee which is developing financial KPIs for MATs. The Trust purchased IT equipment from Dell totalling c£700k in March 2025 to avoid cost increases.

GAG statements and revenue allocations have been received (lagged based on Autumn 2024 enrolments). 16-19 funding will be received in September. These will be used to prepare the budget. 3% pay award will be included in the budget which will be unfunded.

There is uncertainty about maths, core maths premium and Teachers' Pension Scheme increases. The Trust must meet requirements of the Procurement Act. The F&R Committee Chair was sympathetic regarding the challenges to make plans based on the significant financial challenges and unknown factors. The CFO will prepare a realistic break-even budget for year 1 with more challenging forecasts for years 2 and 3. The budget 2025/26 and forecasts will be presented to the Board with a recommendation for approval following discussion by the F&R Committee at the next meeting.

SAG

**9. Proposed Ofsted framework and report cards**

A link had been provided to a video by Sir Martyn Oliver, Ofsted Chief Inspector, summarising the new framework. The proposed framework appears daunting to teachers which covers additional areas. A quality review at HSFC in the summer term will use the revised framework as a trial.

**10. SEND report – March 2025**

The Director of Quality had prepared the report, which was the first report, explaining that data had not been collated at this stage, but will be collected from all academies in future. There has been an increase in children with Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs) in secondary schools particularly those joining in year 7. There was discussion about destinations for SEND students noting that these have been positive previously. Staff frequently request CPD about SEND, such as supporting students with dyslexia or ADHD. A Director commented that the explanation of acronyms was appreciated. Another Director enquired if there had been an impact on children from the covid pandemic which was possible.

## **11. Summary from Committees: 20 March 2025**

The written summary from committees was discussed with Chairs highlighting key issues and items for approval.

- I. Audit and Risk Committee (including confidential minute). Marion Hawkins, Chair of the meeting, explained that TIAA's bursary compliance audit had limited assurance at JKHS which was due to new staff who are enthusiastic and had welcomed guidance and further training. Risk management remains a priority with a robust online risk register developed by the Chief Data and Information Officer for the Trust and academies. The Director of Quality reported that a new risk on litigation impact had recently been added to the risk register. The Trust is tendering for both internal and external auditors for appointment from 2025/26. The Board approved the following:
  - a. Risk management policy
  - b. IT strategy
- II. Finance and Resources Committee: The Committee Chair referred to the capital funding; each academy has a notional position with freedom to invest in resources. Previously 25% of the Schools Condition Funding was ringfenced for central projects and 75% allocated to academies. This year 50% will be retained for projects prioritised by the Trust; namely: creating dedicated study space at KEVI and addressing fire safety issues at WSFC. The HR report updated the committee on the CIPHR HR system which required replacing; this had been purchased and implemented during Covid with limited flexibility. The CFO provided a further update. Following the meeting it was recommended that the Trust defer purchasing a new HR system whilst it reviews options used by Richard Huish Trust with a potential option to buy into their payroll system with an SLA in the near future. This was supported. The Board approved the following:
  - a. Estates strategy
- III. Curriculum and Quality Committee: The Committee had a briefing on progress towards the Gatsby Standards from the Progression Coordinator, particularly how the academies are preparing students for entry tests and supporting disadvantaged students to progress. Marion Hawkins, the link to Information, Advice and Guidance, reported that she had a very informative meeting with the Progression Coordinator who is working closely with the academies. The Board approved the following:
  - a. Quality assurance policy and framework
- IV. Search & Governance Committee: no meeting.

## **12. LGB Governor appointments**

The Board approved the following appointments for 4-year terms in office

- I. WSFC LGB appointment of Alex Gwinn, (Staff Governor)
- II. The Chantry retrospective appointment of Esther Campsall as Chair of the Board from January 2025.

## **13. Items from Committees for information**

- I. Audit and Risk Committee:

- a. Risk Register
  - b. ESFA schools resource management self-assessment
- II. Finance and Resources Committee:
  - a. HR report
  - b. Staff survey
  - c. Health and safety, and estates report
- III. Curriculum and Quality Committee:
  - a. Gatsby benchmarks and audit 2025
  - b. Student performance headline data
  - c. Safeguarding report

**14. Summary from LGB meetings**

- I. The Chantry 6 February 2025
- II. WSFC 5 March 2025
- III. KEVI 19 March 2025
- IV. JKHS 27 January and 17 March 2025
- V. HSFC 27 March 2025

**15. Trust Board and Committee dates 2025/26**

Noted.

**16. Any other business**

No items.

**17. Date of Next Meeting**

MAT Governance Conference: **1 May 2025 commencing at 5.00pm** with refreshments at WSFC

Board meeting: **Thursday 10 July 2025** commencing at 6.00 pm at KEVI, Stourbridge