



had not been completed. The board were happy for this action to be moved and presented at the next corporation meeting with the finance accounts of the next quarter.

**ACTION: Share the 5-year capital plan with the Board**

CFO

It was noted that all other actions had been completed and were closed.

5.

**Classroom Based Student Achievement 2021/22**

**5.1** DCEO presented this section highlighting that this is a position paper outlining classroom-based learning in 2021-2022. It was stated that this paper examines all qualifications except for Apprenticeships, GCSEs, and A-Levels, this was because the position of Activate Learning and their data in those areas were made clear at the most recent meeting. Therefore, it was noted that this paper focuses on all other courses i.e., BTEC, City and Guilford, etc.

**5.2** DCEO explained that we have dropped to 78.7% for overall achievement rates for all age groups, we were forecasted for 77.5%. Difference in 4.4% on pass rates lower than 2018/19 and 3.1% on retention in 2018/19. It was noted that we were comparing to 2018/19 rather than more recent years data as the last two years had a huge shift/change due to the COVID pandemic. This is the first time this cohort would have ever sat exams as they would not have done this in GCSEs or any other BTEC/A level exams due to COVID. DCEO stated we did not have a national picture yet to compare to.

However, AOC benchmark data was released which compared our Maths and English grades to the sector. Overall, for GCSEs, Grades 9-4 were at 29% in contrast to the sector of 25% in GCSE maths we are lower with 13% grades 9-4 with the sector of 15%. Only context we have next to the sector. DCEO explained how they have consulted with delivery managers in different faculties about the causes behind this and there are many different potential reasons, to mitigate this the following actions are being taken:

**5.3** Firstly, connect a college week which focuses on equipping students to normal classroom learning – had a significant impact on student behaviour and professional standards. Second, to improve quality and teaching development, activate has made changes to its leadership. Cat Marin is currently a member of the quality and teaching development team, and one of our directors, Paul Emblem, who is highly skilled in this field, is working with Ann Haig Smith in apprenticeships. It was explained by the DCEO that we have fifteen faculty managers who are new in role and where appropriate we are now using wrap around coaching support and linking to a buddy system for training and development.

**5.4** There remains a large volume of vacancies all around and specifically for learning support assistant positions. Inevitably, this is related to issues with increased cost of living and low pay for their positions, means it is even more difficult, this is a huge issue, as these positions are essential for the learning process for students.

**5.5** Other areas bar teaching development and training:

We looked at reasons for staff absence last year, and the biggest factor was mental health, which resulted in five hundred days of lost time in 2021 and 2500 days the year before. This is the most important subject to address.

Curriculum delivery – it is clear we need to provide exam practice and technique. We have started addressing this with a system called Markbook which allows us to monitor progress throughout the year. On top of this we will be implementing more mocks and exam centred teaching.

Regarding our Maths, which as mentioned above is lower than the sector, we have stated there will be an organisational focus on GCSE Maths. If a concept or learning was missed the building concept was not there to build them up onto the next level, so there is a need in Maths particularly to support students more and have targeted intervention in catch up learning.

Our data analyst showed when students completed five hundred questions or more online, they achieved a grade better than if they did not. We have used our data and made sure we have targeted this in a correct way.

**5.6** Apprenticeships. Achievement rate in September was 50% and it is now 49.3%. Breakdown is a split between standards of six hundred enrolments (48.6%) and framework of 143 enrolments (53.2%). All enrolments are apprenticeship standard, this includes skills, management, behaviour, and framework – a series of qualifications which were each achieved. To note there is a significant shift in landscape of qualifications for example, BTEC qualifications are now exam based, there is now a shift to T Levels which are also exam-based courses. We need to focus on exam technique for students. 6

**5.7** Student Governor highlighted their concern around page 18 motivation rewards which will be given to students of 100% attendance, there is concerns about how this will affect disabled people as attendance rewards can be discriminatory, it is important this reward and scheme is in line with the Equality Act.

**5.8** Additionally, we should keep in mind those with mental health issues, who may struggle to attend, this reward may alienate them. DCEO agreed that this is a matter we need to keep in mind. Governors saw this process as a positive as it can highlight unique styles of teaching which work for students and are more interesting and captivating.

A Governor wanted to know how each of the activate colleges are faring, as they questioned whether the needs and focuses for each college would be different. DCEO said there is extraordinarily slight difference between campuses (4% variations roughly).

**5.9** DCEO provided detail of the poor delivering quality teaching section of the report and how this is being addressed currently. DCEO noted in the reports finding, they have looked at teachers on performance management and professional development, which has meant teachers have been able to improve. More teachers

are using the ALF function, this allows teaching training, development, teachers collaborating with each other and more faculty manager support, these areas have led to increase improvement and development.

**5.10** Where aspects have not improved:

We have had a turnover of staff leave the organisation and thus it has been a mix with performance management, with professional training to improve standards. One way we have addressed this was mentioned by the CEO, this is an award for teaching staff. for teachers which are showing strong alignment to the learning philosophy, this allows for when we have an upside, we can be riggours with poor side of performance. We will not accept mediocrity, but we must remember because certain staff are almost impossible to replace in the present climate, it is about developing employees. It involves taking what you currently have and enhancing, improving, and developing.

CEO mentioned many interventions such as quality of the classroom experience workshop, improvement of environment and the keen sense of feeling safe, many students have expressed how much safer they feel on our campuses. These are not a panacea or a silver bullet, but it is helping us improve in different areas. Furtherly, attendance has always been a challenge but since COVID this has intensified, but this year has been much better in a behaviour and attendance.

**5.11** A Governor wanted to understand the apprenticeships stats, as they stated either goal post moved, or we missed it this year which means there's situations now of apprenticeships which timed out, but students are still studying them.

Therefore, can we expect a bounce back in future stats?

DCEO explained how this was raised in a different meeting. Explaining that those apprenticeships will achieve in first quarter therefore will impact us positively in the current year but when we look at current year, the same cohort those achievements after the first quarter i.e. in May, June and July, we'll make sure those don't count in achievers, therefore when we are tracking throughout the year the knock on effect of last quarter will move into the following year.

It was noted that if we did 'like for like' it will be the exact same data and there are more learners to achieve next year but we will not count may June July of this year till next year.

**5.12** Chair asked for clarification on whether this new year we will be encouraging students to do end year assessment, so they are included in the year they are in. DCEO said we will encourage them to achieve early however those in May-July will not be able to achieve because they need to be in their gateway for a period.

CEO explained that there is no current data regarding the above matter, however, whilst we wait for such data to be released, what we will do is try to achieve our best. The CEO explained that this will be a combination of finishing learners earlier than they did last year, improving quality of learning and teaching then some of the learners will role forward because of the timing of end term assessment and timing etc. CEO mentioned that with this in mind we should move AE Limited board to a monthly basis, to understand this more and allow to report back in detail to the corporation. Essentially allowing to produce a report to outline progress against apprenticeships.

**ACTION: Move AE Board Meetings to Monthly**

**5.13** PO asked that with all the data how confidence does DCEO feel that everything is valid, sound and we will see an improvement. DCEO noted that there needs to be trust – its critical for our RAG rating process which, up to now, has proven to be extremely trustworthy, consists of three processes and looks at where students are and what they need do next to progress. We need to use Markbook rigorously, so we can see where students are, progress and if any are falling apart, why that might be, if we can address it early which this system should highlight, we can solve it efficiently CEO explained that the team looked at data and biases and we accept there is an optimism bias in our financial and forecasting data, we need to be rigorous and stay aware and try to improve forecasting – we hope with DCEO report you can see it is a stripped more honest version report, with less optimism, more realism to allow us address all areas.

***The Board thereafter took a brief break before moving on to the meeting's section of finances.***

6.

## Finance

### **6.1** Verbal Update re Pay from CFO.

The CFO reminded us that there was no paper in the pack and continued to give a verbal update

The next step is for the board to set up a group who will collaborate with himself and the financial team to review the financial position for the organisation in respect of a pay review. CFO was stated that in summer there was a budget for an allowance of 2.5%. Concerns were made that it would not be enough and with the added recent factor of the cost-of-living crisis, worsened economic condition, as well as competitive nature of the employment market, a 2.5% increase would not suffice. The CFO noted that when we look at marketplace, we also look at sector, union expectations, requests and some of the settlements made in sector to avoid industrial action.

Group executive has worked with Gary and the team to review all options

The CFO explained the scenario we're working up with tries to meet some of these demands, pay issues and address some lowest pay roles which are vital, but inevitably it is likely to cost more than the budget.

**6.2** Our ask is to create a subgroup of the board to look at financial factors and budget, and financial impact of a reward and how we would address it. Chair agreed with this, with DM, as chair of audit. It was agreed that we will take it offline to discuss who will be part of the group. Governors agreed and highlighted the importance of this and how we do not want to lose any additional staff.

**6.3** A governor suggested to look at other strategies that goes beyond financial benefits, such as bigger holidays, discounts etc. CEO welcomed this notion but said fundamentally we need to be careful; we are behind other educational boards now and we need to catch up and address Activates staff pay issues.

**6.4** It was agreed that a Governor's task and finish group with delegated authority will be created, therefore it can be dealt with quickly, but also to highlight that we are not asking the board to approve pay reward as that is the CEO responsibility, it is for the board to accept the consequences and impact of the pay award, additionally, whether or not the board can delegate the budget to a task and finish group or if we need to bring it back to an extraordinary group.

7

All governors agreed they were happy for task and finish group that will report back to an extraordinary meeting of the full corporation

## CEO Report - Balanced Scorecard Strategic KPI Summary

**7.1** CEO provided a verbal report for this section.

CEO explained that the risk register is a subset of the audit and risk, but it is looking at strategic issues and risk, one relates to Oxford City and the other relates to travel around city i.e., Zero emissions and Parking costs – there is Potential for development – which will be in next meeting.

**7.2** One Governor asked about the digital education team and how exactly this will be creating a career pathway to develop learning process. CEO explained that the team have developed an assessment tool which assesses' digital competencies. Once completed it will show what needs to be developed and then will tailor their results to a sector.

It is a digital skills assessment tool, which is very personalised.

**7.3** All governors said it was a good paper, a suggestion was made about whether we need to be more explicit about diversity and inclusion. CEO agreed and stated it will be explored in next iteration with safeguarding and the effectiveness, issues, and risks.

**7.4** Another governor noted about estate strategy how they would like to draw out some actions and focus on this element so it can be addressed. CEO clarified next month will focus on infrastructure, the estate and finances thus will focus on this. DM noted that he wanted to get involved with this if possible.

**7.5** A Governor questioned and asked clarity about risk registry regards Saudi Arabia bond, as it was given low probability and high impact. The CFO stated the bond is in contract with 4 Saudi colleges which stopped in August 2020, but a call was made against bond to cover charges, which we disputed. There is a 1.7 – 1.8 million bond. The bond expired in august, and we have in writing from board of excellence that this bond has been covered and no longer outstanding. We now are putting pressure on Lloyds to cancel this bond. The risk is low, the beneficiary of the bond has no rights on that they can say the bond can be settled, risk is that if tax authority draws out the bond which is outside the contract of the bond, this happens in Saudi sometimes.

**7.6** A Governor explained that governors should take responsibility of risk strategies and we should in the future allocate this to governors to deal with this. It was explained that governors need more time allocated to this section and it was agreed this will put as the first item on the agenda.

8.

## Link Governor Update

**8.1** The Board received a verbal report from KS. It was explained that this report will not come through for 9 months on whole stakeholder front there has been a prominent level of engagement. Some changes in approach from organisation, particularly as addressed there has been a loss of work in the team. There has however, been more work with other stakeholders. Additionally, discussion was made around the employer list, which allow governors to be aware of who Activate are working with, this was seen as a positive as it will help them identify names, allow for involvement, communication and more rapports/connections between Governors and Stakeholders.

LSIP– KS indicated that this is a messy situation for Activate, because they are having to deal with two bodies. Thames Valley Chamber, who take LSIP for Oxfordshire, Berkshire, and enterprise M3 which covers Hampshire and Surrey.

This has its own problems in its own enterprise's entries, having to pick up a part of area which was previously held by Coast to Capital LEP, which means a whole host of series of events including a separate event for Surrey. KS is trying to attend as many of these as possible to get activate involved. In addition, all the SDF bids were successful.

KS noted that with all the organisational changes within the different authorities, it is hard to fit in everything into this short piece and when you layer on economic changes, the implications of cost-of-living etc, KS has noted that there are many webinars and online materials referencing these implications and is now very concerned about what the future may bring.

9. **Use of Corporation Seal**

**9.1** The following use of the Corporation Seal was approved by the Board. Waingels Deed of Surrender by Waingels Academies Trust on 07 September 2022, for the surrender of premises at Waingels College in Reading.

10 **Safeguarding Update**

**10.1** ET provided the safeguarding update. It was stated that riggours audit of safeguarding has been done to allow the Safeguarding team to understand priority areas.

**10.2** Results signified three significant areas that need to be actioned and improved,

**10.3** First, getting a consistent lockdown strategy will help us be prepared and know what to do. Second, is attendance policy and adding more rigour about students missing during the day and extended periods of absence. Safeguarding need to know the process.

Third, Examining preventative measures.

**10.4** Head of Campuses for learner voice are holding focus groups with a student safety theme, they are looking at meeting with minority groups I.e., LGBT+ groups, and single-sex groups, etc. It was also mentioned that they also need to ask questions that are really probing and use the results of those questions to inform our next step in safeguarding training. Safeguarding will report these to GET for a wider action plan going forward.

The board were informed that in relation to the safeguarding report, the main issue of concern is mental health. The Safeguarding team have been looking at external persons to in turn create a fully resourced supported group.

There is also training and pathways in place to make sure there is teams who inform students how to act, and what to do in occasion of any incidents.

**10.5** ET noted that, Property and Environment (Estates) and Heads of Campus are going through their campuses and looking at anything that would identify anything which would prevent a lockdown, with this we can then implement ways to improve. As of result we are going to hold three lockdown drills in all campuses.

**MINUTE  
NO.**

**ACTION**

**10.6** The board accepted this was a good report and requested we have several students in each campus can contextualise the numbers and highlighted the importance that governors know about what is happening in local areas with reference to safeguarding.

11 **For Approval Only: Policies and Minutes**

Compliments Comments Complaints Policy.  
Family Friendly Policy.  
Student Fees Policy.  
Subcontractor Delivery Policy.  
Student Behaviour Policy.  
S&G meeting Minutes.

All policies and the Search and Governance minutes were approved by the board.

12 **Any Other Business**

**12.1** CEO mentioned that some of his team, alongside MW and JC had a meeting about how they will conduct external affairs with legislators, policy makers, funders etc. Their perspective was that it was productive gaining insight from governors in expertise in this field. This is john's new role really which is policy and key strategic growth. Apart of that is connecting with national players to draw down the ability to fund pilot programmes as well influence future policy. The CEO said it was good to get his insight from engagement of government to build this new capability.  
Clerk provided a reminder of upcoming events on Nov 24<sup>th</sup> which is South Central IOT launch at BBL and the importance of Boardeffect which has updates, new material and any support needed going forward.

**The meeting closed at 19:05**

**SUMMARY OF ACTIONS**

	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>DEADLINE</b>	<b>RESPONSIBLE</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Budget 2022/23, Capital Plan</b> Share the 5-year capital plan with the Board.	<b>13/12/2022</b>	<b>CFO</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Move AE Board Meeting to Monthly</b>	<b>25/10/2022</b>	<b>Clerk</b>