



WORKERS EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION (“WEA”)
REDACTED: MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
 Thursday, 21 March 2024 by Teams videoconference

MINUTES

Present:	John Widdowson	Trustee (Chair)	JW
	Geoff Layer	Trustee (Vice Chair)	GL
	Cathy Armor	Trustee	CA
	Robin Cook	Trustee	RC
	Kevin Doyle	Trustee (Treasurer)	KD
	Malcolm Grady	Trustee	MG
	Christine Grant	Trustee	CG
	Jamey Johnson	Trustee	JJ
	Abda Khan	Trustee	AK
	Pat Kynaston	Trustee (President)	PK
	Stephanie Mason	Trustee	SM
	Karen McArdle	Trustee (Deputy President)	KM
	Lindsay Pearson	Trustee (Deputy President)	LP
	Peter Threadkell	Trustee	PT
In attendance:	Simon Parkinson	CEO/GS	SP
	Katie Easey (item 1 – 6)	Director of Education – Community Learning	KE
	Angie Evans (item 1 – 7)	Director of People & Culture	AE
	Chris Morgan (item 1 – 6)	Director of Education – Employability & Skills	CM
	Shaun Tyndall	Director of Finance & IT	ST
Observers:	Ron Hill	Stone King	RH
	Sarah Johnson	Stone King	SJ
Clerk:	Kathleen Formosa	Director of Governance & Company Secretary	KF

1. WELCOME, APOLOGIES AND QUORUM

The Chair **opened** the meeting at 10:30, welcoming members of the Board of Trustees and others in attendance.

It was **noted** that RH and SJ from Stone King were observing the meeting, as part of their work on the tri-annual review of governance effectiveness.

Apologies had been received in advance and were **accepted** from Tracey Irving.

The meeting was **confirmed** quorate and proceeded to business accordingly.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were recorded.

3. ACTIONS SINCE THE LAST MEETING

A schedule of actions taken on behalf of WEA since the previous meeting of the Board of Trustees (**Paper 001**) was noted.

4. REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE & GENERAL SECRETARY

SP reported that he had been notified as WEA's Accounting Officer of the release of the College Financial Handbook on 20 March. SP noted that a corresponding webinar had also been made available to Accounting Officers, and that a summary from this would be brought to the Board at the next available opportunity, with relevant items also added to the Finance & Capital Resources and Audit & Risk Committee agendas.

It was noted that there would be a likely change in the SORP used for annual reporting – i.e., WEA would be required to report under the FE SORP rather than the charity SORP.

SP provided an update on the dispute with NEMCA over NEMCA's decision to remove the grant funding WEA had received under previous local authority arrangements. A summary of the challenge presented to date was noted.

SP reported that WEA's communications strategy around the NEMCA decision had resulted in positive regional press coverage across television, radio and print media. It was noted that some links to this coverage had already circulated to trustees, and more would follow.

A trustee stated it was particularly positive that the coverage focused on the value of community learning generally, emphasising that it supports those who are struggling and that it is not just "learning for the sake of learning."

It was noted that a petition had also circulated, and that it had over 500 signatures from individuals in NEMCA postcodes. SP stated that WEA would continue its engagement with learners, members and supporters in the area to keep attention focused on the issue, for example at upcoming mayoral hustings.

Trustees acknowledged the general challenge presented to the Executive of working across multiple MCAs and balancing multiple priorities.

5. REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE & IT

The budget reforecast for 2023/24 (**Paper 002**) was **discussed**. It was noted that the budget reforecast had been seen and discussed by the Finance & Capital Resources Committee, and that the Audit & Risk Committee.

The general risks in the college sector – e.g., de-funding, forced mergers, etc. – were noted as likely to create sector-wide instabilities and thereby to impact WEA directly and indirectly. It was noted that the Chairs of the Education Committee and Finance & Capital Resources Committee had begun to discuss a shared reporting mechanism for the two committees.

ACTION: LP and KD to continue discussions and to seek advice from SM on models in use elsewhere.

The year-to-date financial performance (**Paper 003**) was noted.

An update on strategy (**Paper 004**) was noted.

6. EDUCATION DIRECTORS' REPORT

The education performance dashboard (**Paper 005**) was reviewed.

CM reported that new systems were enabling WEA to see real-time reporting and to get to issues sooner than had been possible previously. He stated that fundamentally, WEA was on top of its contract delivery and that performance was being tracked pro-actively.

KE stated that learners across all strands of provision should be provided a high-quality experience. WEA has been working (and will continue to work) with tutors to develop ways of assessing progress and supporting quality without burdening tutors and learners with excessive amounts of administrative work.

Efforts to make enrolment easier for learners were noted.

KE stated that with existing branches and branch provision, the aim was to strengthen branch networks and to grow branch provision. She stated that branches had been instrumental in the response to date to current enrolment challenges, and that work would continue to support branches to this end.

A learning walks proposal (**Paper 008**) was received and accepted. It was noted that the proposal had been considered and accepted by the Education Committee.

KE and CM were excused from the meeting.

7. CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

This portion of the minutes has been removed to Confidential Annex A.

8. REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT

The President's Report on matters arising from WEA Council and the annual conference (**Paper 009**) was taken as read.

PK stated her positive view of the conference, in particular that it had attracted a wider representation of Association Members than conferences in recent memory. Trustees supported this view.

9. COMMITTEE REPORTS

The summary of committee business (**Paper 010**) was taken as read.

Due to overruns elsewhere on the agenda, Chairs' reports were not taken individually.

The report on policy updates and approvals across the committees (**Paper 011**) was received and accepted.

It was noted that the Audit & Risk Committee had reviewed and now recommended trustees' approval of the Risk Management Policy. The Risk Management Policy was approved.

It was noted that the Nominations Committee had reviewed and now recommended trustees' approval of the Succession Planning Policy. The Succession Planning Policy was approved.

10. Q2 SAFEGUARDING REPORT

The safeguarding report (**Paper 012**) was taken as read.

GL reported that the safeguarding report had been reviewed in detail by the Education Committee.

GL confirmed that there were no safeguarding incidents requiring trustee attention.

11. Q2 HEALTH & SAFETY REPORT

The health and safety report (**Paper 013**) was taken as read.

RC reported that the health and safety report had been reviewed in detail by the People Committee. Members of the People Committee were pleased to learn of recent investments in the WEA estate.

RC confirmed that there were no health and safety incidents or accidents requiring trustee attention. It was noted that fire safety refresher training was being arranged for WEA staff.

12. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS & MATTERS ARISING

The minutes of the 14 December 2023 meeting of the Board of Trustees (**Paper 014**) were reviewed and approved.

The minutes of the 10 January 2024 joint meeting of the Board of Trustees and Council (**Paper 014a**) were reviewed and approved.

Matters arising from the previous meetings of the Board of Trustees (**Paper 015**) were noted.

13. Any Other Business

It was agreed that an extraordinary meeting of the Board of Trustees would be arranged for the evening of 28 March 2024 in order to continue discussion of the confidential business and to pick up any trailing matters from the current meeting.

There was no other business discussed.

The business of the meeting concluded at 13:52.

Upcoming meeting dates:

- **Thursday, May 2, 2024 - Council joint meeting & development day (NCVO, London/hybrid)**
- **Thursday, July 11, 2024 – Board of Trustees Meeting (Coram Foundation/hybrid)**

KF/kf: 2 April 2024