

West Herts College Corporation Board Meeting

Wednesday 9 October 2024

Watford (DA114)

5pm – 7pm

MINUTES

Attendees:

Governors	Role:	Other Attendees	Role
Tony Breslin	Chair of Corporation	Gary Dixon	Deputy Principal West Herts
Gill Worgan	Principal & CEO	Emma Doree	Director of Student Experience
Guy Ainsley	External Governor	Cath Gunn	Principal of Barnfield College
Zoubair Aouam	Student Governor	Sarah Knowles	Deputy Principal
Phil Berry	External Governor	Eamonn McCarroll	Director of Finance (outgoing)
Wendy Donovan	External Governor	Tammy Nuthall	Deputy Principal (Barnfield)
Mariam Hassan	Student Governor	Nidha Patel	Director of Finance (incoming)
Richard Lewis	External Governor	Anne-Marie Kinsella	Governance Professional
Chris Nicholls	External Governor	Ricardo Costa	Head of Quality (5-5.45pm)
Stuart Ord	External Governor	Julia Melson	Head of Quality & Improvement (5-5.45pm)
Martin Sidders	External Governor	Apologies	Role:
Paul Thompson	External Governor	Laura Dawson	External Governor
David York	Staff Governor	Irina Kendix	External Governor
		Jason Smith	External Governor

1/24 1. GENERAL BUSINESS

Please note: Item 4 was taken before the meeting started to allow the staff involved to leave the meeting before any Corporation Business.

1.1. Welcome to new members (start time 5.45pm)

The Chair welcomed 2 new student governors, Mariam Hassan (Hemel Hempstead) and Zoubair Aouam (Barnfield) to the Board and the new incoming Director of Finance, Nidha Patel.

1.2. Apologies for absence and quoracy

Apologies were noted and accepted, and the meeting was quorate.

All reports had been circulated in advance of the meeting for the Board's consideration.

1.3. Declaration of pecuniary interests

There were no declarations.

1.4. Requests for Urgent Business

There were no requests for urgent business.

1.5. Review of Regulatory Documents for 2024-25

DECISION: The regularity documents were noted and agreed by the Board for 2024-25.

2/24 2. PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1. Approve Minutes of previous meeting (10 July 2024)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record and approved for electronic signature.

2.2. Action from previous Corporation meeting

Ref	Summary of Actions	when
23/65/8.2.1	Governors to register their interest in joining a committee	Completed

3/24 3. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Board noted that the College's annual self-assessment is currently taking place and the final report will come to the Corporation in December for discussion. The Principal highlighted that the government will be reviewing the level 3 qualification reforms and the performance of 16–19-year-olds in English and Maths, the outcome of which should also be available in December.

The report updated the Board on further changes in the Department of Education (DfE) including the launch of Skills England, Growth and Skills Levy and the impact of devolution.

The Board asked about the teachers' pay gap with schools and it was noted that currently the DfE did not have any plans to align teachers' salaries in further education with teachers employed in schools.

However, due to an increase in student enrolment numbers the College is awarding its staff with a further 2% pay increase on top on the 2% awarded in August, this will narrow the gap for teachers employed at West Hets College.

The Board asked for further clarification on the changes to the apprenticeship levy and devolution, specifically the impact on the students and employers. It was noted that the increased flexibility in the apprenticeship levy was a useful change for everyone.

The impact of devolution may include additional work but presented both risks and opportunities for the College.

The Board was pleased with the positive feedback from the College's annual strategic conversation with the Education Skills Funding Agency and the DfE and thanked the College for all kits hard work.

The report was noted.

4/24 4. GOVERNOR DEVELOPMENT SESSION

4.1. Teaching, learning and assessment

Presentation by the Head of Quality (RC) and the Head of Quality and Improvement (JM).

(This item was taken before the meeting started to allow the JM & RC to leave the meeting before any Corporation Business).

The presentation included an update on the key findings of the 'Big Listen' undertaken by Ofsted and its impact on inspecting further education colleges. It also covered in detail the systems and processes in place at the College to ensure the quality of provision is assessed, monitored, actioned and maintained.

In response to questions from the Board, CG, RC & JM outlined any actions that were required to address the changes in the inspection framework, including the impact of the changes to judgements on outcomes and achievements and the use of the 'report card'.

The Board asked for further clarification on the development of the Quality Improvement Action Plan (QIAP); the training and development of staff; the frequency of lesson assessments and feedback to staff. The Board commented positively on the value of the 'Corridor Walks' which picked up students views as they left lessons and asked about how the College recognised risk areas and the response times for actioning any concerns.

The Board thanked RC and JM for a very informative presentation which they had found useful and reassuring.

RC and JM left the meeting at 5.45pm. The formal Corporation meeting then started at agenda item 1.

5/24 5. STRATEGIC OVERSIGHT

5.1. Barnfield College Capital Project Update

The Principal gave a verbal update on the Barnfield Capital Project in line with the minutes (item 7.1.3) of the last Capital Project Steering Group (CPSG) Meeting held on the 23 September.

The Board were pleased to hear about the high standards and timely progress of the project as well as the agreeable budget report. The Board members were looking forward to seeing the finished build

6/24 6. RESPONSIBILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

6.1. EDI Report & Policy

In summary, the report stated that the College complies with the Equality Act 2010. It's Equality and Diversity Policy drives equality through all its policies, practices and procedures and diversity, inclusion and equality underpins everything at the College.

The College tracks applications for job vacancies by specific group to ensure the recruitment process is accessible and fair and a 'blind hiring' approach has been adopted. The College is a Disability Confident employer and the gender and ethnicity pay gaps are monitored and both are low.

Students with specific needs and barriers to learning are well supported, including financial hardship. Inappropriate attitudes and behaviours are challenged promptly, and blind decision making has been introduced to ensure the use of stereotypes is avoided in all situations.

Teaching and learning is inclusive and proactively promotes equality and diversity. The achievement of students with EHCP's (Educational health and Care Plan) compare positively to other students.

Areas for improvement regarding student performance are identified through the College's Annual Self-Assessment process and captured within the College's Quality Improvement Action Plan and Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIMs).

The Governor for EDI, although not in attendance at the meeting had forwarded her positive comments about the systems in place to meet the requirements for EDI and congratulated the College on their hard work.

The Board expressed it's appreciation on the quality of the information in report.

In response to Governors questions, it was noted that the self-assessment report due in December will include issues that have been identified with specific groups and how the College plans to resolve them. The Board discussed in more detail the incidences of serious behaviour and asked if any trends had been identified. The College confirmed that a consistent approach is taken to all incidences and that no concerns are evident regarding emerging trends.

The systems and procedures in place for succession planning were discussed in more detail and clarified for the Board.

The Board was reassured that the College actively promote free school meals (FSM) to ensure that all those entitled to FSM find it easy to access support. The Executive also confirmed that the College works closely with its contract caterer to ensure the pricing of meal deals are in line with the FSM allocation. In addition, the College extends the FSM allocation to include the holiday periods.

The report was noted.

ACTION: Data Reports on specific groups e.g., Gender, ethnicity, disability, age etc to be broken down in future by College campus.

DECISION: The Corporation approved the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

6.2. Modern Slavery Statement

The Board was updated on the new measures introduced to strengthen the Modern Slavery Act 2015. It was highlighted that public bodies which have a budget of £36 million or more are required to publish modern slavery statements on a new digital government reporting service and their own websites, setting out how they will prevent modern slavery in their operations and supply chains.

No material changes have been made to the College's statement for 2023-24 on the basis that the content continues to be current and appropriate.

In response to Governors' questions, it was confirmed that all staff receive training in how to recognise the signs of possible slavery.

The report was noted

DECISION: The Corporation approved the Modern Slavery Statement for 2024-25.

6.3. Safeguarding Policy

The Safeguarding Policy sets out what the College will do to keep its students and employees safe. The policy has been updated to reflect new official guidance released by the Department for Education, 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' in September 2024. There are no material changes this year, some minor changes in terminology were tracked for reference.

The Safeguarding Governor (LD) despite being unable to attend this meeting forwarded an update on her recent visit to the College. LD confirmed that through her visits to the College she has observed excellent provision of support for learners with disabilities. LD reminded governors that they should be aware of the contents of Keeping Children Safe in Education, as it is updated regularly. LD also reported that she had attended a recent safeguarding conference which was very informative. The key themes included issues around gender violence, misogyny and mental health including suicide. Trauma informed approaches are being adopted and West Herts is very much on top of these issues. Polly Harrow, Assistant Principal Kirklees, has been appointed as a champion for FE by DfE and the current feeling is there is a very much more open and transparent relationship between DfE and FE, with AOC in a pivotal role. The Board asked if the College had seen any increase in radicalisation given the current international conflicts. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) reported that the College had increased training in radicalisation in view of the conflicts, but these incidences are still very low, and the main safeguarding issues relate to mental health matters

The report was noted.

DECISION: The Corporation approved the Safeguarding Policy for 2024-26.

6.4. Finance Report (confidential item) (Please see separate minutes – part 2)

The report was noted.

7/24 7. BOARD & ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

7.1. Feedback from Committees

7.1.1. Search & Governance Committee

The Chair for the Search and Governance Committee (RL) updated the Corporation on the status of the Corporation membership and the plans for recruitment in the next year with an external recruitment agency. RL also outlined the minor changes to the Governor Recruitment Policy.

The Search & Governance Minutes were noted.

DECISION: The Corporation approved the Terms of Reference for the Search and Governance Committee.

DECISION: The Corporation approved the Governor Recruitment Policy

7.1.2. **Quality & Curriculum Committee**

The Chair for the Quality and Curriculum Committee (CN) updated the Corporation on what was discussed at this committee's inaugural meeting on the 24 September. CN explained that the purpose of this committee was to provide assurance to the Board that the quality of provision at the College is good, particularly in the light of the many changes currently being undertaken by the government.

The Quality & Curriculum Minutes were noted.

DECISION: The Corporation approved the Terms of Reference for the Quality and Curriculum Committee

DECISION: The Corporation approved the Training & Development Policy

7.1.3. **CPSG** (Capital Project Steering Group)

The Chair of CPSG (GA) concurred with the Principal's update in item 5. GA noted that this working group was now winding down and the College and Corporation should start thinking about phase 3 of the project. The various options for phase 3 were discussed briefly and tabled until more information was available.

The CPSG Minutes were noted.

DECISION: The Corporation approved the Terms of Reference for the CPSG

7.2. **Feedback from Learning Walks**

Three Governors had undertaken learning walks since the last meeting.

LD said her learning walk involved students who required additional support and reported that the quality of the teaching, support and engagement was exemplary.

MS received positive feedback from students on the teaching and the resources, MS found the structure of lessons interesting, the students motivated, and attendance good.

PB said he found the feedback from students reassuring. PB spoke with students in English and Maths lessons and reported on their frustrations at not getting the grades in these subjects at school but said they appeared motivated and keen during the lesson.

Students when asked how they felt about College reported that the induction process was 'smooth'. The standard of equipment was 'amazing', and the College atmosphere was 'vibrant'.

7.3. **Update on External Review Action Plan**

The Board reviewed the actions in the plan and were happy with the progress made to date.

It was confirmed that this would be a standing agenda item.

8/24 8 URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business

9/24 9 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 4 December 2024

Meeting closed: 18.55

Minutes approved by the Corporation on 4 December 2024

Ref	Summary of Actions	when
6/24/6.1	Data Reports on specific groups e.g., Gender, ethnicity, disability, age etc to be broken down by College campus for the next EDI Report.	October 25

Ref	Summary of Decisions
1/24/1.5	The regularity documents were noted and agreed by the Board for 2024-25.
6/24/6.1	The Corporation approved the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
6/24/6.2	The Corporation approved the Modern Slavery Statement for 2024-25
6/24/6.3	The Corporation approved the Safeguarding Policy for 2024-26.
7/24/7.1.1	The Corporation approved the Terms of Reference for the Search and Governance
7/24/7.1.1	The Corporation approved the Governor Recruitment Policy
7/24/7.2.1	The Corporation approved the Terms of Reference for the Quality and Curriculum Committee
7/24/7.2.1	The Corporation approved the Training & Development Policy
7/24/7.3.1	The Corporation approved the Terms of Reference for the CPSG