

## West Herts College Corporation Board Meeting

Wednesday 12 February 2025

Barnfield College

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
Zoubair Aouam	Student Governor	Sarah Knowles	Deputy Principal
Phil Berry	External Governor	Tammy Nuthall	Deputy Principal Barnfield
Mariam Hassan	Student Governor	Nidha Patel	Director of Finance
Irina Kendix	External Governor	Amanda Washbrook	Deputy Principal
Richard Lewis	External Governor	Anne-Marie Kinsella	Governance Professional
Chris Nicholls	External Governor	Norman Jennings	Hertfordshire Futures (5pm – 6pm)
Stuart Ord	External Governor	<b>Apologies</b>	<b>Role:</b>
Martin Sidders	External Governor	Laura Dawson	External Governor
David York	Staff Governor	Wendy Donovan	External Governor

#### Ref Agenda Item

- 0** Norman Jennings, Operations Director of Hertfordshire Futures gave a presentation on the work of Hertfordshire Futures, the current political and economic landscape and the key issues and challenges in meeting their objectives.
- Hertfordshire Futures replaced the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership following the withdrawal of government funding in 2024. Hertfordshire Futures, along with many of the predecessor LEP functions, has been fully integrated into Hertfordshire County Council.
- Key priorities for Hertfordshire Futures is to accelerate employment, enterprise and innovation. Working with businesses, government, investors, education and not-for-profit organisations. Hertfordshire Futures is part of the Growth and Environment directorate of Hertfordshire County Council, which is committed to growing the economy and making a sustainable and prosperous future for Hertfordshire.

The board thanked NJ for an informative presentation. NJ left the meeting at 6pm.

- 00** The Principal of Barnfield College (CG) gave a presentation on the new Ofsted Inspection Toolkit, which was launched for consultation on the 3 February 2025. The new inspection toolkit will replace the Education Inspection Framework and will go live in November 2025 following a number of pilot inspections to test how it works in reality.
- CG gave an update on the reason the new toolkit was introduced and explained the key changes which included, 'a new report card, with 8 evaluation areas and a 5 point grading scale'.
- Ofsted has introduced a new inspection methodology, working with providers pre and during the inspection. The deep dives have been removed and inspectors will instead look at a cross section of the provision. There will also be a continued focus on workloads and staff well-being.
- The board thanked CG for her presentation.

**18/24 1. GENERAL BUSINESS**

**1.1. 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.

**1.2. Declaration of pecuniary interests**

There were no declarations.

**1.3. Requests for urgent business**

There were no requests for urgent business.

**19/24 2. PREVIOUS MEETING**

**2.1. Approve Minutes of previous meeting (4 December 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	Action	Status
14/24/5.3	The Chair of the Corporation to sign off the Annual Report and Financial Statements	Completed

**20/24 3. PRINCIPAL’S REPORT**

The report highlighted a number of updates for the Board including the recent launch of the new Ofsted inspection framework for consultation and a new Parliament Education Committee which is scrutinising key areas of work across the further education sector, the College expects the outcomes of this scrutiny within the coming months.

It was noted that the English Devolution White Paper is driving change across the structure of local authorities and strategies and plans for the implementation of Artificial Intelligence (AI) are being developed. The College gave some further clarification for governors on how AI is used in College, as a tool for teaching and learning, upskilling and potential courses on AI that may be delivered.

The College has been involved in two international visits in the last few months visiting colleges in Switzerland, in partnership with Pearsons, to review the curriculum offered and a visit from a small group of education professionals from Jordan to the Watford campus to support them with the setting up of new qualifications in Early Years, Health, Sport across schools in Jordan. In response to questions from the Board, the Principal gave a brief summary of the main differences between the education system in Switzerland compared to England.

The Principal reassured the Board that the College is responding effectively to the challenges outlined within the earlier presentation from NJ, Hertfordshire Futures. A follow-up presentation will be provided by the Executive about College work in this regard at a future Corporation meeting.

It was confirmed that retention of 16-18 students is 98% and therefore on track to achieve target.

The report was noted.

**ACTION:** Report on how the College is dealing with challenges in the current economic climate to come to the next Corporation meeting.

## 21/24 4. RESPONSIBILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

### 4.1. Health & Safety Report and Policy

The Annual Report includes details of the Health and Safety activities that have been undertaken during the last academic year (September 2023-August 2024).

The report highlighted that a new Health and Safety manager was appointed in January 2024. A comprehensive review of the College's Health and Safety management system has resulted in the implementation of a new electronic on-line system (Eco-Online) which will improve the transparency of information. The system includes modules for accident and incident reporting, audit and inspection and COSHH management.

The College Health and Safety Policy is due for its annual review and approval. There are no proposed changes since its last review.

The Board thanked the College for an informative report and noted the positive trends in staff absence and illness. Further clarification was given by the College on the reporting system, which the Board agreed, appeared robust.

The report was noted.

**DECISION:** The Health & Safety Policy was approved by the Corporation.

### 4.2. Finance Report

*Confidential item, please see separate minutes (part 2).*

## 22/24 5. GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES & REVIEW

### 5.1. Feedback from Committees:

#### 5.1.1. Quality & Curriculum Minutes (28 January 2025)

The Chair of the Quality and Curriculum Committee gave a brief summary of the committee meeting, including a positive update on the improved achievement rates of ESOL learners since the last Committee meeting in September, that BTecs would no longer be defunded, and that the College is maintaining a comprehensive resource to ensure students access good quality work placements and Industry Placements.

It was noted that this year the College had seen an increase in learners with EHCPs (Education Health and Care Plans) and the College are providing excellent support for these learners.

Progress in English and Maths was discussed and although this remains a challenging area, the college has introduced new initiatives such as Stepping Stone qualifications which are having a positive impact on the confidence levels of students studying the subjects due to more positive qualification outcomes. The Committee had scrutinised the self-assessment report and the quality action plan and were happy with the judgments. The Executive will consider introducing mechanisms to ensure the Committee is able to routinely review the College's performance against the agreed targets. .

The Quality and Curriculum Committee minutes were noted.

#### 5.1.2. Search & Governance (10 February 2025)

The Chair of the Search & Governance Committee gave a brief summary of the meeting, the minutes would be available at the next meeting. The Committee discussed and confirmed the Board's

membership and noted that from the end of the academic year there would be 4 vacancies. Plans were already in place to recruit, and it was hoped that interviews would take place in May 2025. The Corporation's External Review Action Plan is on track, although it was noted that more benchmarking data in reports could be developed, while also recognising that this data does not always recognise variances across the sector, and it is difficult to compare like for like.

## 5.2. Update on Corporation Membership

### 5.2.1. Chris Nicholls – term of office ends 03 March 2025

Chris will have completed 3 terms of office in March and is eligible for reappointment for a fourth term, however Chris wishes to stand down but has kindly agreed to extend his post until the 31 July in order to complete a full year as Chair of the new Quality and Curriculum Committee and handover to his successor.

**DECISION:** The Corporation agreed to an extension of CN's terms of office to 31 July 2025.

### 5.2.2. Appointment of new vice-chair

Following the resignation of Jason Smith, a new vice-chair needed to be appointed.

**DECISION:** On recommendation from the Search & Governance Committee, the Corporation appointed Phil Berry as the Vice-Chair of the Corporation.

## 5.3. Board Evaluation & Feedback Procedure

On recommendation from the Search & Governance Committee, the Board were asked to approve the procedure for gathering and evaluating feedback from the Board which will form part of the overall self-assessment process of governance at West Herts College. Some typos and errors in the text were highlighted and would be amended.

**DECISION:** The Corporation approved the Board Evaluation and Feedback Procedure.

## 5.4. Learning Walks

The Chair attended a learning walk at Barnfield College. He noted what a valuable experience it had been to see the variety of students in College and the different specialisms the College provided.

## 5.5. Use of Corporation Seal

The Chair has signed/used the Corporation Seal on 4 documents since the last meeting. The documents were outlined in the report.

**DECISION:** The Corporation approved the use of the College seal on all documents.

## 23/24 6. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business

## 24/24 7. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 02 April 2025, 5pm – online meeting on TEAMS

---

**Meeting closed: 7pm**

**Minutes approved by the Corporation on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2025**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Summary of Actions</b>	<b>when</b>
20/24/3	Report on how the College is dealing with challenges in the current economic climate to come to the next Corporation meeting.	TBC

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Summary of Decisions</b>
21/24/4	The Health & Safety Policy was approved by the Corporation.
22/24/5.2.1	The Corporation agreed to an extension of CN's terms of office to 31 July 2025.
22/24/5.2.2	On recommendation from the Search & Governance Committee, the Corporation appointed Phil Berry as the Vice-Chair of the Corporation.
22/24/5.3	The Corporation approved the Board Evaluation and Feedback Procedure.
22/24/5.5	The Corporation approved the use of the College seal on all documents since the last meeting.