

West Herts College Corporation Board Meeting

Wednesday 09 July 2025

Watford

5pm – 7pm

MINUTES

Attendees:

Governors	Role:	Other Attendees	Role
Tony Breslin	Chair of Corporation	Cath Gunn	Principal of Barnfield College
Gill Worgan	Principal & CEO	Sarah Knowles (not 8.1)	Deputy Principal
Guy Ainsley	External Governor	Amanda Washbrook	Deputy Principal
Zoubair Aouam	Student Governor	Nidha Patel (not 8.1)	Director of Finance
Phil Berry (not 8.1)	External Governor	Kylie White	Director of HR
Charles Chidom	Staff Governor	Anne-Marie Kinsella	Governance Professional
Laura Dawson	External Governor		
Wendy Donovan	External Governor		
Mariam Hassan	Student Governor		
Richard Lewis	External Governor	Apologies	Role:
Martin Sidders	External Governor	Chris Nicholls	External Governor
David York	Staff Governor	Stuart Ord	External Governor

Ref Agenda Item

47/24 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

As board members of Together Training, Sarah Knowles (SK) Phil Berry (PB) and Nidha Patel (NP) left the meeting for the voting section of item 8.1.

1.3. Requests for urgent business

The Director of Finance (DoF) to update the Corporation on the closure of Together Training Ltd.

48/24 2. PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1. Approve Minutes of previous meeting (21 May 2025)

Pending the deletion of an erroneous sentence, 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

There were no matters arising not on the agenda.

Ref	Summary of Actions	when
39/24/5.1	The Chair of Corporation to sign the Accountability Statement	Completed
39/24/5.2	TB and PB to sign, seal and execute the documents.	Completed
39/24/5.2	Governance Professional to provide separate copy of signed minutes for the DfE/Solicitor confirming the decisions made at this meeting.	Copy attached at 2.1.2

49/24 3. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The report showed good progress against the key performance indicators. Final outcomes will be reported to the Curriculum and Quality sub-committee through the Annual Self-Assessment report. The Corporation noted and congratulated the College on the improvement in English and Maths achievements.

The recent spending review confirmed that funding will be provided for the increase in 16- to 18-year-olds enrolling at the College and the Industrial Strategy may have a positive financial impact to the College's two capital projects that remain outstanding.

The Executive was asked to outline the benefits of being a Technical Excellence College (TEC) and the impact for students and the College. The Corporation were assured that the College had adequate resources to deliver the expectations of a TEC and wished the College success with its application.

The Executive confirmed that they are actively promoting the Free Meals scheme (FSM) to ensure students can easily access any entitlements, following the widening of FSM eligibility. It was confirmed that school pupils in receipt of FSM were automatically eligible for the entitlement when joining a college. The Corporation acknowledged the hard work of the Student Support team to familiarise themselves with students to ensure they received any entitlements they are due.

The Corporation were pleased to see that a full review of job-specific pay to current market rates had been conducted and agreed that as a result some adjustments were required to ensure the College remained competitive in the job market. These adjustments were outlined in the report. It was also noted that a pay award to staff, which is in line with schoolteachers, would be paid to all employees for 2025-26.

The report was noted.

50/24 4. STRATEGIC AIMS

4.1. Strategic Measures of Success

The report showed the progress the College is making against agreed measures of success included within the Strategic Plan 2023-2026. The progress was rag rated.

Most measures are on track, a small number are presenting some challenges which are being managed. The report detailed the reasons underpinning the progress judgements and the subsequent actions planned in the Quality Improvement Action Plan 2025/26.

The Corporation were happy with the report and the progress being made against the strategic plan. Further discussions took place on the plans for Industry Upskilling.

The report was noted.

51/24 5. RESPONSIBILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY

5.1. Human Resources Report

The report included information on staffing, processes, and policies. It provided assurance to the Corporation that a robust and legally compliant system was in place to recruit, induct, train, develop, monitor performance, and ensure the well-being of staff. The report outlined the benefits of being an employee of West Herts College, including the competitive salaries, flexible working, and retirement savings pension schemes.

The HR Director further highlighted the positive impact of the targeted retention scheme and reported that staff turnover is below national average and there is a low sickness absence rate. The training and development and well-being programmes were also considered a positive contribution to the low turnover rate, both of which are well received by staff.

The reduction in staff numbers was clarified by the executive. The College are moving through the post-merger exercise which has led to areas being amalgamated and the reclassification of roles.

The Corporation were assured that the flexible working times did not mean a loss of face-to-face teaching and usually occurred during holidays. The performance management system is working effectively as well as the probationary periods.

Staff surveys were effective and are being reviewed continually to ensure as much feedback is received as possible. The Corporation considered 72% of staff completing a staff survey as high.

The report was noted.

5.2. **Finance Report** (confidential item)

Please see separate minutes – part 2

52/24 **6. REGULARITY COMPLIANCE**

6.1. **Budget 2025-26** (confidential item)

Please see separate minutes – part 2

6.2. **Corporate Risk Register**

The risk register was reviewed in detail by the Audit Committee at its meeting on the 24 June 2025.

All recent updates were detailed in the Risk Register in red text so that it is clear where there have been developments and changes.

The report included a comparison between the risks reported to the Corporation on the 4 December 2024 and a summary of the high-level Risks compared to those reported to Corporation on the 12 February 2025.

The risk register was noted.

6.3. **Sub-contractors Fees & Charges Policy**

Each year the DfE requires the College to approve its Subcontractor (Supply Chain) Fees and Charges Policy. This relates to the College's use of subcontractors to deliver teaching and learning provision. The policy for 2025–26 has been updated to replace the reference to ESFA with DfE. No other changes are proposed.

The report also included details on its progress of the subcontracting reduction plan from 2022-23 to 2025-26. The Corporation were assured that the College's subcontracting activity for 2025-26 at 4% is well within the DfE's requirement that no more than 25% of a funding stream is subcontracted.

The report was noted.

DECISION: The Corporation approved the Subcontractor (Supply Chain) Fees & Charges Policy 2025-26.

53/24 **7. BOARD & ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

7.1. **Feedback from Committees:**

7.1.1. **Search & Governance Minutes** (12 May 2025)

The Search & Governance Minutes were noted.

7.1.2. **Recommendations to appoint new governor.**

The Chair of the S&G Committee gave a verbal update on the interview process and the recommended appointments of four new governors.

The Corporation expressed initial concerns regarding a potential conflict of interest which was discussed in detail. The recommendation for the appointment of this candidate was made by the panel before they had knowledge of the conflict.

The Corporation agreed that the benefits of appointing this candidate outweighed the conflict. It was agreed that on any occasion where this conflict might arise the governor in question would be asked to leave the meeting as a precaution.

The Corporation queried the time capacity for some candidates and were assured by the Search and Governance Committee that this did not present an issue at this time, but attendance is monitored by the Governance Professional.

DECISION: Pending the outcome of all regulatory checks, the Corporation approved the appointment of the new governors listed below and agreed their terms of office will commence on the 8 October 2025.

- i. Rachel Fox
- ii. Christopher Gentle
- iii. Gary Phillips
- iv. Christopher Rowe

7.1.3. **Audit Committee Minutes** (24 June 2025)

7.1.3.1. **Recommendations to approve.**

The Audit Committee minutes were noted.

The Chair of the Committee had sent his apologies for this meeting. Another member of the committee gave a verbal update on the meeting and highlighted the areas that were scrutinised before making its recommendations.

The Audit Committee Minutes were noted.

DECISION:

- i. The Corporation approved Internal Audit Plan 2025-26.
- ii. The Corporation approved the External Audit Strategy 2025,
- iii. The Corporation approved the Audit Fee
- iv. The Corporation approved the signing of the engagement letter.

7.1.4. **Quality & Curriculum Minutes** (13 May 2025)

The minutes of the Quality & Curriculum Committee was noted. A verbal update of the meeting was given at the last Corporation meeting on the 21 May 2025.

The Quality & Curriculum Minutes were noted.

7.2. **Update on Corporation membership.**

With the appointment of 4 new governors in October, the Corporation has no vacancies.

The Corporation thanked Richard Lewis (RL) and Guy Ainsley (GA) for all their hard work over the last 8 years, their term of office ends of the 13 July 2025. The Corporation also thanked RL and GA for agreeing to remain as associate members of the Capital Projects Steering Group (CPSG) due to their experience and expertise, their continued involvement would ensure continuity.

The Corporation also thanked Zoubair Aouam (ZA) and Mariam Hassan (MH) for their contributions as student governors over the past year. ZA and MH term of office ends on the 10 July. Elections will be held in September for these posts.

ACTION: New members for the Audit Committee, the Quality and Curriculum Committee and a Chair of the Search & Governance Committee were required. Governors were asked to express any interest to the Governance professional before 08 October 2025.

DECISION: The Corporation agreed that GA and RL will stay on as Associate Members of the Capital Projects Steering Group

7.3. Learning Walks

There had been no learning walks since the last meeting.

54/24 8. URGENT BUSINESS

8.1. Closure of Together Training (confidential item)

Please see separate minutes – part 2

55/24 9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Wednesday 08 October 2025, 5pm, Watford

Meeting closed: 6.30pm

Minutes approved by the Corporation on the 08 October 2025

Ref	Summary of Actions	when
53/24/7.2	New members for the Audit Committee, the Quality and Curriculum Committee and a Chair of the Search & Governance Committee were required. Governors were asked to express any interest to the Governance professional before 08 October 2025.	08 Oct 25

Ref	Summary of Decisions
52/24/6.3	The Corporation approved the Subcontractor (Supply Chain) Fees & Charges Policy 2025-26.
53/24/7.1.1.1	The Corporation approved the appointment of the new governors listed below and agreed their terms of office will commence on the 8 October 2025. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Rachel Fox ii. Christopher Gentle iii. Gary Phillips iv. Christopher Rowe
53/24/7.1.1.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. The Corporation approved Internal Audit Plan 2025-26. ii. The Corporation approved the External Audit Strategy 2025, iii. The Corporation approved the Audit Fee iv. The Corporation approved the signing of the engagement letter.
53/24/7.2	The Corporation agreed that GA and RL will stay on as Associate Members of the Capital Projects Steering Group