

West Herts College Corporation Board Meeting

Wednesday 08 October 2025

Watford – D112

5pm – 7pm

MINUTES

Attendees:

Governors

Tony Breslin
Gill Worgan
Phil Berry
Charles Chidom
Laura Dawson
Wendy Donovan
Rachel Fox
Jadan Khaliq
Stuart Ord
Gary Phillips
Chris Rowe
Martin Sidders
Ash Wilson (left 6.15pm)
David York

Role:

Chair of Corporation
Principal & CEO
External Governor
Staff Governor
External Governor
External Governor
External Governor
Student Governor
External Governor
External Governor
External Governor
External Governor
Student Governor
Staff Governor

Other Attendees

Nidha Patel
Amanda Washbrook
Anne-Marie Kinsella

Role

Group Director - Finance
DP – Business Development
Governance Professional

Apologies

Chris Gentle External Governor
Chris Nicholls External Governor

Ref Agenda Item

25/01 1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

1.1. Welcome and Introduction of new governors

The Corporation welcomed 5 new governors, 3 external governors (RF; GP; CR) and 2 student governors (JK; AW). Formal introductions were made.

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 Corporation's consideration.

1.3. Declaration of pecuniary interests

It was noted that Chris Rowe was the Director of Navigate a system used by WHC Group (WHCG).

1.4. Requests for urgent business

There were no requests for urgent business.

1.5. Review Regulatory Documents for 2025-26

The Corporation are required to carry out an annual review of the regulatory documents and agree to abide by the regulations.

DECISION: The regularity documents were reviewed and agreed by the Corporation for 2025-26.

25/02 2. PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1. Approval of Minutes (09 July 2025)

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

2.2. Matters Arising and Action Log Review

There were no matters arising not on the agenda and there were no outstanding actions from the previous meeting.

Ref	Action Log	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.	Agenda item 5.1.2
6/24/6.1	It was confirmed that details about the performance of specific groups will be available routinely through reports to the Quality and Curriculum meeting and the Corporation for example, the SAR, student progress and attainment reports and the HR Annual Report.	Completed

25/03 3. STRATEGIC ITEMS

3.1. Principal's Report

In summary, the Principal's report gave details of the 2024/25 self-assessment process, the outcomes of which will shape future performance targets.

Recent changes to the leadership structure were outlined and it was noted that they align more effectively with post-merger organisational requirements, allowing focused leadership at each campus to support the growing 16–18 student population. The changes were met with a positive response and have been implemented successfully and efficiently.

Capital projects at Luton and Hemel Hempstead campuses have been revised in light of the increased number of enrolments, recommendations will come to the Corporation in the December meeting. Guy Ainsley and Richard Lewis have agreed to stay on as associate members and will join the Capital Projects Steering Group.

The Corporation were pleased to see that the AoC's recommendation of a 4% pay award matches the WHCG's current pay award given on the 01 August 2025.

The Corporation noted the new Ofsted 16-grade inspection model, replacing single-word judgements.

TEC status for Construction was granted to West Suffolk College for the East of England, and to Bedford College to lead a cross-regional response to major infrastructure projects. WHCG will assess bidding opportunities for future TECs e.g. Creative.

In response to questions from the Corporation, the Principal confirmed feedback about why WHCG's application for Construction TEC status lacked detail, although it was clear decisions made were 'place based'. Health and Social Care is not included in TEC's.

July's Annual Strategic Conversation with DfE and FE Commissioners was positive.

The Principal gave further details on the section in the report relating to behaviour. Reassuring the Corporation that WHCG is actively addressing the challenges posed by recent behavioural incidents

through a combination of actions working in collaboration with external agencies. The measures taken have been effective and WHCG remains vigilant in ensuring the students have a safe and supportive learning environment.

The report was noted.

3.2. Student/Enrolment Applications and College Reach

At the time of writing, The WHC Group has enrolled 8,150 students aged 16–18, exceeding the DfE target significantly (+600). Funding for each student is confirmed 42 days after enrolment.

In response to questions from the Corporation it was noted that some curriculum areas are at capacity. New T-level qualifications will be rolled out next year.; WHCG will maintain a watching brief over the development of V-Levels.

It was also clarified that WHCG have partnered with the University of Huddersfield to deliver teacher training qualifications. Huddersfield has a strong reputation, nationally, for this area of work with highly effective partnership models in place.

The Corporation were reassured that the learning support provision is adequate and recruitment challenges in Construction, leadership, and management roles are being managed.

The Quality and Curriculum Committee will meet on the 24 November to scrutinise the self-assessment report and discuss the new initiatives in more detail.

The report was noted.

25/04 4. QUALITY & STANDARDS

4.1. EDI Report

Inclusivity is a key priority for WHCG, and positive actions are taken to help individuals from specific groups reach their potential.

Job applications are monitored by group to ensure fair and accessible recruitment. As a Disability Confident employer, WHCG guarantees interviews to disabled applicants who meet essential criteria.

Students with specific needs receive strong support and provide exceptional support for students facing financial hardship and those with disabilities.

Teaching and learning practices are inclusive and actively promote equality and diversity.

Improvements are tracked via the Quality Improvement Action Plan and Equality and Diversity Impact Measures (EDIMs).

The Corporation were assured that legislative changes are implemented in line with best practice. Legal consultation is sought when necessary. WHCG have a dedicated HR team who ensure the executive are informed and responsive to changes in legislation and sector expectations.

25/05 5. FINANCE & RESOURCES

5.1. **Finance Report** (confidential item)
Please see part 2 – confidential minutes

25/06 6. GOVERNANCE & COMPLIANCE

6.1. Corporation Membership

6.1.1 Feedback on Corporation Away Day

The Corporation discussed the benefits of the Away Day on the 21 June 2025 and agreed that it was beneficial and should be an annual occurrence.

There were no formal minutes of the meeting, but the notes could be found on the Corporations meeting platform.

6.1.2 Corporation Business Plan for 2025-26

DECISION: The Corporation agreed the Business Plan for 2025-26

6.1.3 Committee Chair's & membership

DECISION: The Corporation agreed the membership and chairs of committees as follows:

- Quality and Curriculum: Chris Nicholls (Chair); Phil Berry; Laura Dawson (2 vacancies)
- Audit – Stuart Ord (Chair), Martin Sidders; Wendy Donovan (2 vacancies)
- Search & Governance – Phil Berry (Chair) Tony Breslin; Gill Worgan (no vacancies)

6.1.4 Designated Safeguarding & EDI Governor

DECISION: The Corporation agreed the designated Safeguarding and EDI Governor – Laura Dawson

6.2. Feedback from Search & Governance Committee

6.2.1 Committee recommendations for approval

DECISION: The Corporation approved the following recommendations from the Search and Governance Committee:

- Search & Governance Committee Terms of Reference
- Extension to Phil Berry's term of office from 15 April 2025 – 31 July 2025
- Role Descriptions for Corporation Members
- Governor Recruitment Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy

6.2.2 Search & Governance Minutes

The minutes were noted

6.3. Policy Approvals

6.3.1 EDI Policy

DECISION: The Corporation approved the EDI policy

6.3.2 Safeguarding Policy

Laura Dawson, Safeguarding and EDI designated governor reported positively on the processes and procedures in place at WHCG to safeguard students. She said there is a high degree of granularity and understanding, especially for children in care. LD drew the Corporation's attention to their responsibilities in section 9 of the policy.

ACTION: Executive to give an update at the next meeting on a new regulatory requirement introduced by the Office for Students (OfS) regarding Harassment and Sexual Misconduct (E6). Which came into force on 1 August 2025 and applies to all higher education providers registered with the OfS.

ACTION: LD to conduct a Learning Walk on the 21st October at Hemel Hempstead. Verbal report to be given at the next meeting

DECISION: The Corporation approved the Safeguarding Policy

6.15pm - AsW left the meeting as prearranged.

6.3.3 Modern Slavery Statement

The Corporation was assured that WHCG is aware of and actively monitors recruitment practices, including those involving subcontractors, regarding modern slavery.

The Executive also confirmed that students are educated about their rights and the necessary precautions. This is embedded within the Bravura project, which focuses on students' personal development, enrichment, and preparation for long-term pathways.

DECISION: The Corporation approved the Modern Slavery Statement

6.4. Self-Assessment Report

The Corporation reviewed the self-assessment report and discussed the process.

The Corporation agreed that the one-to-one meetings had been highly beneficial and expressed a strong preference for continuing them, even in years when an external board review is undertaken.

The Skills Matrix was reviewed, and it was noted that the Board demonstrates a broad and diverse range of expertise. Areas identified as weaker but not insignificant, were generic, such as legal knowledge and IT. The Search and Governance Committee said that the Skills Matrix is a guiding tool when agreeing the scope for the recruitment of new governors.

DECISION:

- The Corporation approved the Self-Assessment Report for 2024–25.
- The Corporation delegated responsibility for arranging the external board review to the Search & Governance Committee.

6.5. Learning Walks

The Chair encouraged all governors, in particular the new members to participate in learning walks. Saying that learning walks provide governors with an opportunity to familiarise themselves with each site; engage with staff and students and observe the colleges in action.

It was highlighted that learning walks are informal and flexible and require the member to give brief verbal feedback at the subsequent Corporation meeting.

It was also noted that learning walks are not intended to add significant workload but to enrich governors' understanding of the WHCG.

Governors were asked to contact the Governance Professional to arrange any learning walk to ensure alignment with meeting schedules and availability.

25/07 7. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

25/08 8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - Wed 10 December 2025, 5pm, Watford.

Meeting closed: 6.40pm

Minutes approved by the Corporation on the 10 December 2025

Ref	Summary of Actions	when
06/25/6.3.2	Executive to give an update at the next meeting on a new regulatory requirement introduced by the Office for Students (OfS) regarding Harassment and Sexual Misconduct (E6). Which came into force on 1 August 2025 and applies to all higher education providers registered with the OfS.	10 Dec 25
06/25/6.3.2	LD to conduct a Learning Walk on the 21 st October at Hemel Hempstead. Verbal report to be given at the next meeting	10 Dec 25

Ref	Summary of Decisions
01/25/105	The regularity documents were reviewed and agreed by the Corporation for 2025-26.
06/25/6.2.1	The Corporation agreed the membership and chairs of committees as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality and Curriculum: Chris Nicholls (Chair); Phil Berry; Laura Dawson (2 vacancies) • Audit – Stuart Ord (Chair), Martin Sidders; Wendy Donovan (2 vacancies) • Search & Governance – Phil Berry (Chair) Tony Breslin; Gill Worgan (no vacancies)
06/25/6.3.1	The Corporation approved the EDI policy
06/25/6.3.2	The Corporation approved the Safeguarding Policy