

**MINUTES OF CORPORATION MEETING HELD ON 23RD OCTOBER 2025
PART ONE**

Members:

Paul Averis
 Andrew Chiduku
 Adam Comery
 Barbara Van Der Eecken
 Precious Itota
 Sasha James
 Mary Mahoney
 Edward Ng
 Tony Sadla
 Jat Sharma
 Nelson Tanyanyiwa
 Helen Troalen
 Graham Ward
 David Wheeler

In Attendance:

Rachel Jones, Assistant Principal MIS (minutes 1 to 71)
 Kirsti Lord, Deputy Principal Curriculum, Innovation & Student Success
 Jacky Leek, Interim Director of Finance
 Lesley Venables, Head of Governance
 Charlotte Wood (minutes 62 to 71)

	APOLOGIES	
1	Apologies for absence were received from Charlotte Bosworth, Heather Lodge, Yolanda Ndlovu, Stuart Pedley-Smith and Maria Turnbull-Kemp.	
	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
2	There were no declarations of interest in any specific agenda items.	
	MINUTES	
3	Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 th July 2025 (Parts 1 and 2) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair	
	MATTERS ARISING	
4	Governors received a progress report on the actions identified at the previous meeting and the Corporation noted that the majority of these had been completed or were in train. In relation to minute 29 the Deputy Principal reported that a proposal on the future of the College’s A Level provision would be submitted to the next meeting of the Learning & Quality Committee.	
	LINK GOVERNOR ACTIVITIES	
5	Governors reported on recent link activities as follows: Edward Ng – met with the IDoF, the AP Adults & WBL and the Director of Adults to discuss adult funding and delivery. High demand, but limited resources and highlighted the need for the ALC. Mary Mahoney – worked on HE Strategy with the Aps Quality and Adults & WBL, with further updates to be added once the post-16 White Paper was published. Barbara Van Der Eecken – met with apprenticeship team to discuss the year-end outturn and targets for 2025/2026. Noted that leadership and performance have strengthened but staffing shortages in some curriculum areas. David Wheeler – a) Green Lane with DP. Visible signs of employer engagement and staff changes were embedding well; b) CCM with the Director of Apprenticeships and AP Adults & WBL – noted improvement in success rates for apprenticeships, previous estates issues had been resolved and partnerships appeared to be stronger; c) Careers Fair; d) MIS	

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY		
6	The Head of Governance presented a revised Whistleblowing Policy. The previous version had been simplified in terms of the process to be used and was now more user-friendly. Governors were advised that the draft Policy had been reviewed by the College's solicitors to ensure that it met the latest legislative and regulatory requirements.	
7	Resolved – That, subject to some minor amendments, the draft Whistleblowing Policy be approved	
EXECUTIVE REPORT		
8	Governors received for information a report from the Executive Team on current issues and sector developments.	
9	Recruitment for 16-18s was currently 4,400 compared to the allocation of 4,205, further withdrawals meant that this would reduce slightly. Management was confident that the College could apply for in-year growth (threshold 4306) which would offset under-recruitment of T-Level students. Apprenticeships enrolments were on target and adult provision was ahead of the same period in 2024/2025, which was still £0.5m under the Adult Skills Fund target but would be made up throughout the year. A total of 273 high needs students had been enrolled compared to the target of 230 and staff were working with the Local Authority to secure additional funding to provide support in line with EHCPs (c.£250k).	
10	There had been a significant increase in the number of 16-18 students enrolling who were required to resit their GCSE English or maths (totalling 2,000 and 1800 respectively). Staffing shortages and the need to re-timetable these classes due to changes in the student profile and entry qualifications had caused difficulties but had now been resolved. Plans were being developed to accommodate the increased number of examination entries.	
11	The Principal reported that the AP Adults & WBL would be moving to the local authority as Head of Skills in the New Year and that the Council would benefit from his skills and experience. Councils would be increasingly place-based institutions under new Devolution proposals, with combined authorities becoming more like an agency for channelling provision. Consideration was being given to the future allocation of the AP's responsibilities within the management structure.	JS/LV
12	It was agreed that JN should be invited to the February governor training event to set out the Council's strategy on skills.	
13	A new FE Commissioner had been appointed recently, together with a number of Deputies. The DfE had established Regional Intervention Teams to support colleges and there would be a continuing focus on monitoring financial metrics and requirements on governors to ensure that colleges met local needs.	
14	Ministerial responsibility for adult skills had been transferred to the Department for Work & Pensions rather than the DfE, to provide a more cohesive approach. A high priority on the Government's agenda was the proportion of young people classified as NEET, together with destinations and student outcomes.	
	Nationally, UCU had submitted a 10% pay claim, compared to the recommendation of the Association of Colleges of 4%. A sizeable cohort of colleges (including Walsall) had been targeted for a strike action ballot, the	

<p>15</p> <p>16</p>	<p>outcome of which was due in the next few days and any action was likely to take place in January or February. Governors were reminded that it was important that any potential pay award approved by the Corporation was affordable and that all factors needed to be taken into consideration.</p> <p>Governors were advised that the implementation of a number of new College systems was on track. One potential risk had been identified on sickness absence of key staff, which would slow progress. This would be resolved by the engagement of additional interim support. A governor commented that they had seen evidence of the data transfer taking place between systems during a link visit.</p> <p>The Government had now published the Post-16 White Paper on Curriculum Reform and an initial assessment by management had identified both risks and opportunities. The content would be discussed in greater detail at the next Learning & Quality Committee meeting, The Lifelong Learning Entitlement would have a far more significant impact on higher education institutions as opposed to the FE sector. These developments highlighted the need for the College to have closer links with secondary schools, particularly in light of the ability for students to undertake a blend of V Level and A Level provision.</p>	
SEARCH & GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE		
<p>17</p> <p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20</p>	<p>The Head of Governance presented the unconfirmed minutes of the Search & Governance Committee meeting held on 22nd September 2025, together with a number of documents that had been discussed and recommended for approval by the Corporation.</p> <p>A summary of the outcomes of the Performance Review Process for 2024/2025 had been received, along with an action plan to address any areas for improvement and progress would be monitored by the Committee. Highlights included the modernisation of the governance framework and the new committee structure, greater engagement in shaping the corporate plan and the high level of support and challenge of management. Areas for improvement were: greater diversity of the Corporation’s membership, particularly age and gender balance, succession planning, student voice initiatives, further familiarisation with fellow governors and external inputs to strategic events</p> <p>Governors had discussed the Annual Governance Report for 2024/2025. At 76% the overall level of attendance was only just above the identified target of 75% and it had been agreed that this would be increased to 80% in 2025/2026. Although individual attendance was lower than in previous years, there were extenuating reasons for this such as one governor taking a temporary leave of absence.</p> <p>A governor expressed concern that, due to the small number of Corporation meetings, one absence during the year could mean that they would not achieve the target attendance level. The Head of Governance acknowledged that governors were volunteers and had other commitments but pointed out that the target of 80% was relatively low compared to the sector average (81.8%). Through forward planning and monitoring the target could be achieved and governors could attend online if this was more convenient. The timings of committee meetings would be kept under review to maximise attendance levels.</p>	<p>Cttee Chairs/LV</p>

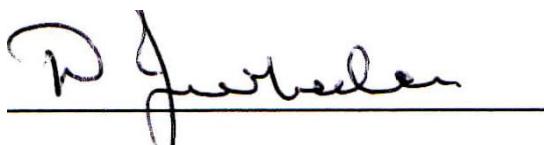
21	There were currently no vacancies on the Corporation with several appointments made in year in the categories of external, staff and students. Succession planning would be vital over the next 18 months as the terms of office of several external governors would expire. It had been agreed that proposals to address this will be brought to the February Committee meeting.	
22	The report also included a summary of the Corporation’s EDIB profile and training undertaken in 2024/2025. Governors would be asked shortly to complete updated training on Safeguarding and the Prevent Duty.	All governors
23	Revised Schedules of Committee Memberships and Link Governorships had been recommended for approval. Further amendments to the latter were suggested and it was agreed that the Chair and the Head of Governance would finalise arrangements with individual governors. Role Descriptions for a number of link governorships had been drafted to provide a greater level of structure.	
24	The Search & Governance Committee’s Terms of Reference had been reviewed and updated.	
25	In accordance with the requirement in the Articles of Government, proposals for the Reclassification of Confidential Minutes for 2024/2025 were received. The Committee had also discussed and approved its own Performance Self-Assessment for 2024/2025.	
26	<p>Resolved – That the following items be approved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Action plan for Performance Review Process 2 Revised Schedule of Committee Memberships 3 Link Governorships and Role Descriptions 4 Search & Governance Committee Terms of Reference 5 Reclassification of Confidential Minutes 	
AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE		
27	The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee presented the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 25 th September 2025.	
28	The Committee had received the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2024/2025 and noted that out of the 5 areas covered, 3 had been classified as providing a ‘substantial’ level of assurance. Visits in relation to the current Internal Audit Plan had not yet commenced.	
29	An audit report on the College’s sub-contracting provision had been received. It was noted that systems had been tightened in response to previous recommendations made on Funding Assurance issues and that the implementation of a new tracking and monitoring system was progressing in line with the identified schedule.	
30	The Committee had recommended approval of the draft Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire which was an annual requirement under the Post-16 Audit Code of Practice.	

31	Confidential discussions had taken place regarding the assessment of the performance of both the Internal and External Auditors in 2024/2025.	
32	Resolved – That the Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire for 2024/2025 be approved	
RESOURCES COMMITTEE		
33	The Chair of the Resources Committee presented a summary of the first meeting held on 25 th September 2025.	
34	The Committee had recommended approval of the draft Terms of Reference by the Corporation.	
35	A report on Estates & Facilities had been received, which highlighted key issues in the current term. The College had contracted with the Combined Authority to maximise funding opportunities for decarbonising the estate. Recruitment was underway for a dedicated Sustainability lead role. Governors had noted evidence of a good level of savings from new energy contracts.	
36	Safety barriers had been installed at the Wisemore Campus, with plans to replicate this at Green Lane and The Hub.	
37	Information had been received on how the DfE capital funding would be spent, partly based on the outcomes of recent condition surveys. There would be a total of c.£8.06m of planned investment between 2025/26 and 2029/30 across estates, ICT and the curriculum, using a combination of DfE grants, College contributions and potential Salix financing for decarbonisation.	
38	SMART response training and live multi-agency exercise were due to take place in November.	
39	The Committee received a detailed report on Health and Safety issues, which included a significant reduction in accidents (21 in 2024/2025 compared to 76 in 2023/2024), improved reporting mechanisms and the introduction of a clear desk policy. A revised Health & Safety Policy was recommended for approval by the Corporation.	
40	Management had provided an update on progress with the implementation of key College systems (Employer Responsive, MIS and HR/Payroll), all of which were on track.	
41	The Committee received a report on cyber-security issues, which included the national environment, the education sector and College-specific information. Following recent incidents that had been featured widely in the media and some affecting educational establishments locally, management was currently preparing a plan to address any possible suspension of College systems, including having paper versions of lesson plans. A live exercise would be undertaken by experts (JISC) over the next half-term to assess the level of readiness and to identify any gaps.	
42	A governor asked about the level of assurance on the College's current cyber-security framework. The Principal responded that it was important to be realistic and measured against the potential costs. It was impossible to give a 100% guarantee regardless of the measures in place but governors noted that cyber-security would be featured on both the internal and external audit plans	

<p>43</p> <p>44</p> <p>45</p>	<p>in 2025/2026. Staff were aware of the risks and regular, tailored training was undertaken. The Committee had discussed the need for an updated Business Continuity Plan and it had been agreed that mock exercises would be conducted through the year, with a focus on cyber-security issues.</p> <p>In response to questions about cyber-security insurance, the Interim Director of Finance reported that the College’s current level of cover was for £1m and included ‘user-error’. It was agreed that this policy would be reviewed by the Chair of the Committee and the Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee as a further assurance to the Corporation.</p> <p>The Principal commented that a contingency plan was being developed to ensure that examinations would not be interrupted by a cyber-attack.</p> <p>Under Part 2 of the agenda the Committee received a detailed report on the Adult Learning Centre and Support Learning Centre.</p> <p>Resolved – That the following items be approved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Terms of Reference for the Resources Committee 2 Health & Safety Policy 2025/2026 	<p>GW/HT</p>
<p>FINANCE COMMITTEE</p>		
<p>46</p> <p>47</p> <p>48</p> <p>49</p> <p>50</p> <p>51</p> <p>52</p> <p>53</p>	<p>The Vice-Chair of the Finance Committee presented the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 7th October 2025.</p> <p>The management accounts to 31st July 2025 indicated that the College had an overall deficit of £1992k, which was a positive variance of £636K against the forecast of £2628k. This improved outturn position was partly due to better than anticipated performance on apprenticeship programmes and a smaller amount required for redundancy payments.</p> <p>The financial health rating was ‘Good’ and there was an adjusted EBITDA of 3.27%. Cash balances were £12.5m and net assets were £57.4m.</p> <p>A provision of £180k had been included in the budget in relation to any potential clawback of apprenticeship funding for 2023/2024 and a further £58k for 2024/2025.</p> <p>The College’s £12.5m cash holdings included a £2m capital grant from the DfE. A total of £2.17m had been invested in assets and teaching provision during 2024/2025 (such as a new CCTV system and security barriers).</p> <p>Expectations in relation to a possible pay award had been debated, with a number of factors highlighted for discussion by the Corporation under Part 2 of the agenda.</p> <p>The movement in the College’s pension fund calculations had been noted and the Committee had received a suitable level of assurance regarding the current surplus. Under the existing accounting conventions the £19m LGPS asset would not be recognised in the financial statements, but the Corporation were advised of the assumptions associated with this.</p> <p>The Committee had been informed of the increase in the 16-18 funding rate for 2025/2026, which was in addition to the approved budget.</p>	

54	Under a confidential item governors had discussed the financial aspects of the Adult Learning Centre and Supported Learning Centre projects and had recommended their approval by the Corporation.	
55	Resolved – That revised terms of reference for the Finance Committee be approved	
LEARNING & QUALITY COMMITTEE		
56	The Chair of the Learning & Quality Committee presented a report on the meeting held on 13 th October 2025.	
57	Aligned to the Corporate Strategy and strategic priorities, a set of KPIs were confirmed (and had already been approved by the Corporation) and would be monitored by the Committee at each meeting with a dashboard under development. The targets focused on attendance, retention, achievement, progression, destinations, student satisfaction and staff upskilling	
58	Quality reviews would be taking place shortly and would be data-driven to provide a sound base of evidence for decision-making on future curriculum provision.	
59	The Committee had received information on the projected outturn for 2024/2025 against a number of key measures. Attendance had been 82% overall, which was better than anticipated but with further work to be undertaken. There had been good levels of retention (particularly for adults and apprenticeships) and achievement rates had increased compared to 2023/2024. A detailed breakdown of performance would be included in the Self-Assessment Report for 2024/2025.	
60	A total of 12% of students had been successful in attaining a grade 4 or above in English GCSE against a target of 22%. This was partly due to changes in the grade boundary, staff's unfamiliarity with the new awarding body requirements and a high staff turnover during the summer. Maths GCSE programmes had performed much better (8% increase), partly due to strong leadership. Governors had been informed that the profile of the cohort for GCSEs had changed this year, with more students enrolled at Levels 1 and 2, with fewer at Level 3.	
61	The Committee had received information on teaching, learning and assessment initiatives and had reviewed a draft of the Higher Education Strategy (a final version of which would be submitted to the November meeting for recommendation to the Corporation).	
	Charlotte Wood joined the meeting.	
SAFEGUARDING UPDATE		
62	The Head of Safeguarding presented for information the Annual Safeguarding Report for 2024/2025, an update on issues in the current year and a revised Safeguarding Policy for 2025/2026.	
63	The College had received a total of 3,944 safeguarding and wellbeing concerns, a 24.9% increase compared to the previous year, reflecting improved reporting, stronger staff awareness and the full implementation of MyConcern, rather than a decline in safety.	

64	The majority of concerns related to 16-18s (61.5%), which aligned to the College's student profile. A total of 37% of cases related to mental health and wellbeing issues, followed by financial hardship, concerning behaviours and online harm, which were symptomatic of the levels of social and economic pressures within the borough.
65	The College continued to work in partnership with a range of local agencies to support students. A governor asked whether the College had considered drop-in sessions from mental health professionals. The Head of Safeguarding reported that this had not been possible due to reduced capacity within the staff team, but that greater partnership working, including with CAHMS, was planned for Term 2.
66	Further questions were raised on whether the College's relationship with local schools was strong enough to impact on the way in which safeguarding concerns were addressed. The Head of Safeguarding reported that all Deputy Safeguarding Leads were part of borough-wide forums, but it was noted that schools do not always have sufficient capacity to follow up on information requests relating to incoming College students.
67	In the current term there had been a total of 988 concerns, 72% of which were classified as well-being interventions for students transferring from schools to the College. Mental health issues formed a significant proportion of concerns. Staff had noted that a lack of or poor attendance was an indicator of an underlying safeguarding/well-being issue. In response to comments from a governor about the ability of the College to compare or assess positive student outcomes on factors like attendance year on year, the Assistant Principal MIS reported that the new tracking system would support this type of analysis
68	Governors were advised that the College had introduced a 24/7 helpline for students and that there was an increasing complexity of mental health issues amongst learners, for which external assistance may be required.
69	A governor queried the profile of the 'unknowns' within the dataset and were advised that a further breakdown was not possible due to the data being anonymous.
70	Governors were assured that all staff had received Level 1 safeguarding training and were conversant with the content of the DfE's Keeping Children Safe in Education. The Head of Safeguarding confirmed that the current level of resourcing was sufficient and that all safeguarding staff received personal supervision from a qualified external expert.
71	Resolved – That the revised Safeguarding Policy for 2025/2026 be approved Charlotte Wood and Rachel Jones left the meeting.
DATE OF NEXT MEETING	
11 th December 2025, 4.30 p.m.	



11th December 2025