



West Thames College Further Education Corporation

Minutes of the Corporation Strategy Day

held at 2.00pm on Wednesday 8 May 2024
at the College

Present:	Mr S McGeoch (SM)	Chair
	Ms T Aust (TA)	CEO
	Mr S Taylor (ST)	
	Ms R Turner (RT)	
	Mr P Sullivan (PS)	
	Ms A Cornish (AC)	
	Mr A Rides (AR)	
	Mr T Hayhoe (TH)	
	Mr A Barke (AB)	
Apologies:	Ms A Colville (AC)	
	Mr G Casley (GC)	
	Ms T Kaur (TK)	
	Mr A Alimohamed (AA)	
	Mr A Smith (AS)	
In Attendance:	Mr J Bolt (JB)	Associate Member
	Ms C Ajit Singh (CS)	Associate Member
	Mr B Armstrong (BA)	Associate Member
	Ms K Frost (KF)	Head of Governance
	Mr T Stevens (TS)	Executive Director
	Mr M Cooper (MC)	Executive Director
	Ms M Gajewska-Kopczyk (MGK)	Vice Principal
	Mr S Frampton MBE (SF)	Sustainability Consultant

14/24 **Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly to the students who were attending for the Sustainability session. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from AC, GC, TK, AA and AS.

There were no declarations of interest concerning items on the agenda.

It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

15/24 **Sustainability/Climate Action Plans**

College Sustainability Update

TS gave an update on the College's progress towards its sustainability objectives. The College was making steady progress and continued to follow the sustainability roadmap.

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The College had completed the emerging level on the road map and was moving well through the established level. The next steps included making further commitments and embedding sustainability into more functions of the College. There was a College wide commitment to sustainability.

Governors asked why the College hadn't yet signed the Sustainable Development Goals Accord. TS said it would be signed once all of the targets on the 'established' line had been completed.

Students present in the meeting said they would like to see more sustainability focus in the College.

Governors asked why there was a target for recycling rather than a focus on using less. For example, using crockery and cutlery and washing it up rather than disposable items. TS said there was a balance to be made between the different types of cost involved.

Sustainability Training Session

Steve Frampton MBE attended the meeting and provided a training session for governors about sustainability and climate action plans. The training included:

- WWF Carbon Footprint Calculator: Attendees were encouraged to complete the calculator to measure their own carbon footprint.
- The 5 Fs: Fashion. Food. Fuel. Flying. Finance.
- A strategic update.
- The Corporation's responsibility to produce a carbon action plan. Further guidance would be provided on the requirements which would include student engagement and sign off by the Board.
- Sustainability competitions, for example AoC Green Student of the Year award.
- 5 Cs: Culture. Curriculum. Collaboration. Co-construction. Capital Investment.
- The importance of communication.
- Recommendations included expanding the number of governors involved in sustainability and considering investing in student and staff training.

Governors asked what role the FE sector played as a lever to change at a national level. SF said the Department for Education thought the FE sector was doing a very good job with sustainability, it had been the first sector to produce a roadmap and engage with students. More could still be done, particularly with listening to students.

Governors asked why the presentation had been so limited in terms of collaboration, which could have included community, third sector partners and private sector partners. SF said he would expect employer and community collaboration to be taking place but would consider updating the presentation to make this more explicit.

16/24 Appointment of External Governors

The Chair reported that a recruitment process had been held for two new governors. The Governance, Search and Strategy Committee had appointed a Recruitment Panel that had included the Chair, the CEO, the Head of Governance and the Chairs of the Audit and CQSE Committees.

The Panel interviewed five candidates and were recommending the appointment of two governors. The Chair explained the reasons for the recommendations.

IT WAS DECIDED to appoint the following governors:

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Chrysoula Zervoudakis-Evans for a term of 4 years from 1 June 2024, to join the Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience Committee.

Manraj Othi for a term of 4 years from 1 July 2024, to join the Audit Committee.

17/24 **Accountability Statement**

The CEO gave an update about the Accountability Statement. The guidance about Accountability Statements had changed in December 2023 and now encompassed the Duty to Review. The Corporation needed to be confident that the curriculum was meeting local skills needs.

Governors reviewed progress towards the targets that had been set in the last Accountability Statement which were largely on track. Further work was needed on the targets relating to apprenticeships and Higher Education provision.

Governors asked about the progress with Low Carbon Transport Courses. MGK confirmed low carbon transport courses for 16-18 students were running and adult courses would start in September 2024.

Governors asked what was meant by the term Higher Education. The CEO said some full time students progressed from Level 3 courses to an HNC or HND course. The College offered franchised Higher Education courses working with partner universities in delivering a qualification. There were also short flexible Level 4 qualifications.

Governors asked whether offering Higher Education was a good use of resources. The CEO said Higher Education courses provided a progression route for students however the courses needed to be financially viable and provide a positive student experience. The Colleges in West London were exploring what could be done collectively to improve the Higher Education provision locally. Governors said it was important to provide progression routes for students and during a recent High Needs training session an example had been given of a student who had progressed to University following completion of a Level 4 course at College.

Governors asked what impact the Employer Advisory Boards had this academic year. MGK gave some examples that included providing input into the curriculum and feeding into the LSIF project. There had been impact in every area of the curriculum.

Governors asked how important sustainability was for employers. MGK said it varied on the type of employer but gave an example of a construction employer who regarded sustainability as important.

The CEO proposed the following additions to the Accountability Statement for 2024-2025:

- Growth in SEND including an Independence Hub and Employability Hub to start in September 2025.
- New provision as a result of LSIF in Health and Care, Film, Creative and Digital Arts and Logistics. Employers had been engaged in the development of this.
- Apprenticeships change: Growth in digital, logistics, construction.
- Higher Education provision: Opportunities with Life Long Learning and work through the local Further and Higher Education Group.
- Sustainability.
- Wider skills builder framework.

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Governors asked how good the fit was, were there any issues with what students wanted to do and what external factors said the College should be delivering. The CEO said there was sometimes a gap between what students wanted to do and what employers needed. In particular, with logistics but this was partly due to the significant lack of understanding about what opportunities existed and the potential careers paths for students. A lot of work was underway to provide students with appropriate Careers advice and guidance.

Governors asked whether the College signposted students to other local colleges if the course they wanted to do wasn't offered. The CEO confirmed that the College did and would provide students with as many progression and employment opportunities as possible.

Governors asked what the College could do differently to grow apprenticeships. MC said the target would be redefined and then monitored. The approach would be more targeted in terms of employers and the standards the College was working with.

Governors asked why ESOL wasn't included. The CEO said ESOL was a core part of the curriculum offer.

IT WAS AGREED that the proposed additions to the Accountability Statement for 2024-25 were the right direction of travel for the College. The Accountability Statement would be updated and then reviewed by the Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience Committee for final sign off.

18/24 **Strategic Plan**

The CEO gave an update on progress towards the current Strategic Plan which was largely on track. The only area of concern was Apprenticeships.

The CEO reported that the College had been informed that it had the highest achievement rates of any London College for the second year running and was 6th out of all Colleges. Governors congratulated the College on this achievement.

The Chair explained that next academic year, the College would need to start developing the next 3 Year Strategic Plan. To begin that process the Chair asked governors a number of questions and discussed their responses in small groups.

Question 1: What areas could the College consider pushing further into? Answers from groups included:

- The Heathrow relationship.
- SEND which was a growing area.
- IT – AI and Virtual Reality – where would the College position itself.
- Student and staff wellbeing.
- Future of sport relationships and non sport elements of working in sport.
- The Green agenda.
- Carbon literacy.
- Customer care. People skills. The importance of personal, transferable skills.

Question 2: In preparing the strategic plan next year, what topics does the College need to guard against? What might make it difficult? What is on the horizon? Answers included:

- AI.

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- Change of Government.
- Qualification reforms.
- Increase in NEET numbers.
- Direct competition from schools/HE.
- The pace of curriculum change.
- Demographic changes.
- Visas and HE and how that impacts FE.
- Fast moving technology – how to keep staff and students up to date. .

Question 3: Are there any big decisions governors think the College needs to address? What are the major decisions. What needs to be framed going into the strategic plan? Answers included:

- Is anyone looking at merging with us?
- The future of collaboration in West London.
- A credit transfer progression structure.
- A potential West London Strategic Alliance.
- One West London accountability agreement.
- How local authorities work together and what impact there is on the College.
- Plans in terms of growth.
- The issue of falling numbers at schools and the impact on the College.
- How to capitalise on being the best College in West London.
- Spreading ourselves too thinly.
- Take over an existing apprenticeship company.
- AI.
- Opportunities with adult education.
- Skills and logistics centre and whether it is big enough.
- The College context and the student population.
- Review of the values and principles and whether anything needs to change.

19/24 Date of the Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting of the Corporation was Wednesday 3 July 2024.

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