



West Thames College Further Education Corporation

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporation

held at 6.00pm on Wednesday 3 July 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)	
	Mr T Hayhoe (TH)	
	Mr A Rides (AR)	
	Mr M Othi (MO)	
	Ms C Zervoudakis (CZ)	
Apologies:	Ms A Colville (ACo)	
	Mr A Smith (AS)	
	Ms T Kaur (TK)	
	Mr A Alimohamed (AA)	
	Ms A Cornish (AC)	
	Mr G Casley (GC)	
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

20/24 **Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly CZ and MO who were attending their first meeting. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from ACo, AS, TK AA, GC and AC. It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

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

21/24 **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

a) **Minutes from the Last Meeting (20 March 2024)**

Minutes from the meeting of the Corporation held on 20 March 2024 (Paper 2a) were received in advance of the meeting. IT WAS DECIDED they were a true record of the meeting and they were approved.

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Date:.....

b) **Minutes from the Last Meeting (8 May 2024)**

Minutes from the meeting of the Corporation held on 8 May 2024 (Paper 2b) were received in advance of the meeting. IT WAS DECIDED they were a true record of the meeting and they were approved.

c) **Matters Arising**

The 'Summary Action List' (Paper 2c) was received in advance of the meeting and progress made towards the actions was noted.

The Partnership List 2023-24 (Paper 2cii) was received in advance of the meeting.

Governors noted only two organisations were listed for the motor vehicle industry and said this appeared to be an opportunity for growth. The CEO said it had been difficult to find engagement in that sector. AR said he would be able to support with this.

The final Accountability Agreement 2024 (Paper 2bi) was received in advance of the meeting. The Chair reported that the Accountability Agreement had initially been reviewed at the May Strategy Day, the targets had been reviewed by the CQSE Committee and the Chair had approved the final Accountability Agreement after discussion with the Chair of the CQSE Committee. The process for approval of next year's Accountability Agreement would be considered when the Chairs and Executive team met over the summer.

22/24 Risk Management

A revised Risk Register (Paper 3) was received in advance of the meeting. The Chair reported that the updated Risk Register represented the work of the Committees who had reviewed the register over the spring and summer terms.

The highest risks included Curriculum Reform/T Levels and Data Protection Compliance. Work was underway on Data Protection. Other high risks included Health and Safety, the Bank Loan and Safeguarding, although the higher scores were due to impact rather than likelihood.

Governors said it would be important to consider emerging risks at future meetings. Horizon scanning was an important aspect of risk management.

23/24 College Performance

a) **Data Dashboard**

The Corporation reviewed the KPIs in the Data Dashboard:

Attendance

Current attendance was 85.8% compared to the target of 87% and the AoC average of 84.3%.

Governors asked whether there was any correlation between the drop out rate and high attendance rates. MGK said the main cause of drop outs was refugees being moved to other locations.

Governors congratulated the College for their success in attendance.

Governors asked whether there were any actions the College had taken that had helped to improve attendance. The CEO said the following supported good attendance: A whole College attendance strategy, an attendance tool kit which was

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consistently applied, staff having a good understanding of their role in attendance and clear expectations for students.

Governors asked how the College attendance rate compared to other schools in the area. The CEO said it compared favourably. Schools had seen a decline in attendance in recent years.

Achievement

Predicted achievement was 89% although it was likely to increase once the latest assessment data was included.

Governors said Apprenticeships stood out as having lower achievement. MC said predicted achievement for apprenticeships was 60%. This compared to the national average of 57.8%.

Quality of Teaching and Learning

This year the College had raised expectations in learning walks to the Ofsted Outstanding criteria. 75% had been judged as secure. 3 were minimal. Support had been put in place for the minimal learning walks.

Governors asked if the 3 minimal learning walks were all in the same course. MGK said they were in different courses.

Governors asked how staff had reacted to the standards being raised. MGK said most understood why and wanted to provide the best possible student experience.

Deep Dives

Three areas had been judged red: Business, Health and Care and Motor Vehicle and Engineering. The Deep Dives in these areas had been carried out early in the year. They had since been revisited and improvements had been seen.

Governors discussed how governance processes had an impact on the quality of education. It was noted that governors received regular reports on internal reviews, link governors were involved in the SAR process for their area and link visits provided an opportunity for governors to discuss the Quality Improvement Plans and see how curriculum areas were progressing.

Governors asked whether the two new teachers in Motor Vehicle were permanent. MGK said they were both temporary at the moment.

Governors asked how the Deep Dive grades would translate into Ofsted terms. MGK said it wouldn't be possible to compare as Ofsted looked at different areas. Ofsted expected the College to have robust quality assurance processes in place, to find the areas for improvement and to address them. This was done through the Deep Dives and self-assessment process.

Governors asked how much of the curriculum the Deep Dives covered. MGK said Deep Dives only covered a couple of courses in each area. Notice to Improve courses were always selected.

Sustainability

An update on progress towards the sustainability roadmap was given. The majority of areas on the 'Established' section had been completed. Next academic year, the College would work towards achieving the 'Leading' actions.

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In terms of energy consumption, there was still work to do to get consumption down. The solar panel project was due to start on Monday.

Governors asked what percentage of non-staff overheads were attributed to energy costs. PS said energy was almost a third of the spend on non-staff costs.

Finance

The College's financial health grade had improved to 250/300 which was an Outstanding grade. MC summarised the key variances against the budget, both favourable and adverse. The operating surplus was £500k compared to the budgeted surplus of £400k. All financial KPIs were above target and above benchmarks.

Human Resources

- Sickness absence was 4% above target compared to the sector benchmark of 2.9%. The key driver was long term absence.
- The staff ethnicity profile was broadly representative of students.
- Staff utilisation was good.
- Staff turnover was 13% compared to the target of 17% and the AoC benchmark of 18%.
- The College had recently been awarded the Good Work Standard accreditation at Excellence level.

Governors asked about the overall staff position. The CEO said there was a correlation between staff with long term absence and what was happening in the curriculum areas. Governors asked if there was a time limit on long term absence and noted there was.

Governors thanked the team for all their work.

Governors discussed the Data Dashboard, asking whether it included all of the KPIs that needed to be tracked and whether it included too much detail. The Chair said a review of the Data Dashboard would be undertaken and encouraged governors to share their views.

b) Development Plan

A 'Development Plan Update June 2024' (Paper 4b) was received in advance of the meeting.

Governors asked how objective 1.3 was green if targets hadn't been achieved. The CEO said the objective was on track to be achieved.

Governors asked whether red and amber areas received more focus than green areas. The CEO confirmed they did.

Governors asked about objective 2.1. It was clear a lot of work had been done but the targets weren't clear. The CEO said partnerships were a major theme for the College. The targets were included in the 3 Year Strategic Plan.

The CEO said governors could use the Partnership List in their Ambassadorial Role. There was great potential for governors to add value in this area.

Governors asked for link governor visits to give a higher profile to employer links and to ensure this was captured in the report from the visit. It was agreed the Governor Visit Guidance would be updated.

Action: KF/RT

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It was agreed the CQSE Committee would review the Partnership List as a Standing Item at their meetings.

Action: RT/KF

Referring to objective 3.4, *governors said* apprenticeship income was showing as red. This had been discussed at the FRCP Committee meeting. It had been re-assuring that the leadership team were monitoring this monthly which meant action could be taken.

24/24 **Executive Report**

A 'Executive Team Report July 2024' (Paper 5a) was received in advance of the meeting.

Governors asked whether there was any appetite for the West London Colleges to focus on apprenticeship challenges as a joint approach. The CEO said there had been discussion about higher level apprenticeships but otherwise the colleges all offered different apprenticeship provision. The Chair said the sense of co-operation amongst local colleges was reassuring.

Governors suggested the CQSE Committee could look at the potential for higher level apprenticeships and explore whether this was something the local Colleges could work on together. It was agreed to add an agenda item to the next CQSE Committee meeting.

Action: RT/KF

Governors asked how the College was progressing with the expectation to provide more hours of English and Maths. The CEO explained that the changes would be implemented straight away. The College continued to work on recruiting sufficient staff, one strategy used was for the College to train their own staff.

Governors asked about the Journey to Outstanding and how the benefits of being Outstanding rather than Good compared to the costs required to achieve it. The CEO said every student who walked through the door was entitled to receive an outstanding learning experience. The focus on achieving an outstanding learning experience was the right thing to do for students.

Governors discussed the cost v benefit question. Both financial costs and costs to the community needed to be considered. It was important to do everything possible to make courses work financially if the benefit to the community was great. It was agreed it was important the student experience was outstanding.

Governors said Paper 7c 'Definition of an Outstanding Student Experience' was an excellent paper. It was agreed the CQSE Committee would look at how to use this paper moving forward. An item would be added to the agenda for the next Committee meeting.

Action: RT/KF

Referring to the governors Ambassadorial Role, the CEO said there were two key areas where governors could add value: the work around employer engagement and spreading word in networks that The College was top in London for achievement rates for the second year.

25/24 **Governor Training Feedback**

Notes and slides from an AoC Ofsted Masterclass training session had been received in advance of the meeting and were noted.

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26/24 Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience Committee Report

a) Committee Report

Minutes from the Committee meeting held on 12 June 2024 were received in advance of the meeting (Paper 7a). The Chair of the Committee gave a verbal report from the meeting:

- The Committee had reviewed progress towards the Development Plan in detail and in particular employer links.
- The Committee had asked how many students should be on work experience and how many were. The leadership team would provide this information by the end of the academic year.
- There had been discussion about apprenticeship targets. The Committee had asked for feedback from the apprenticeship external adviser for the next meeting which would support with considering the future strategy.
- The Journey to Outstanding had been discussed. There was a mismatch between the College being in the top 3% of Colleges nationally for achievement rates and when curriculum areas expected to reach outstanding. The committee had been reassured that curriculum areas were being supported to achieve their goal.
- A safeguarding report from the Link Governors for Safeguarding had been received. There were no concerns.

b) Summary Report from Governor Curriculum Link Visits

A 'Summary Report from Governor Curriculum Link Visits' (Paper 7b) was received in advance of the meeting. Governors were asked to follow up on the recommendations they made during their next visits.

c) Definition of an Outstanding Student Experience

A 'Definition of an Outstanding Student Experience' (Paper 7c) was received in advance of the meeting.

27/24 Finance, Resources and Capital Projects Committee Report

a) Committee Report

Minutes from the Finance, Resources and Capital Projects Committee held on 19 June 2024 were received in advance of the meeting. (Paper 8a). The Chair gave a report from the committee meeting:

- There had been robust discussion about apprenticeships and Higher Education. The apprenticeship position would be monitored.
- It had been agreed that the Committee would receive abbreviated monthly management accounts.
- There had been some uncertainty about the calculation Barclays used for the debt coverage ratio. This was being explored by the College and further information would be circulated in due course. There were no concerns as there was a comfortable amount of headroom.
- The Committee had approved a number of financial contracts and the new Procurement Policy and Strategy.
- The Committee would receive an Annual Procurement Report by the end of the month.

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- The Committee had discussed whether to reserve the Skills and Logistics Centre lease but had decided not to at this stage.

Governors asked about the issues with fee income. MC explained there had been a decline in the number of Advance Learner Loans because there was now more funding flexibility for adults and there had been issues with recruitment for Higher Education courses.

b) Latest Management Accounts

'Management Accounts Apr 24' (Paper 8b) were received in advance of the meeting.

MC reported that there were no concerns with the cashflow forecast and there was projected compliance with the bank loan covenants.

c) College Budget 2024-25 and Financial Forecast

The proposed '2024-25 College Budget and 2025-26 College Financial Forecast' (Paper 8c) was received in advance of the meeting.

Governors asked about the worst-case analysis and which line items might be impacted if Further Education funding was changed by a new Government. MC said there were too many unknowns at this stage. Risks in the budget included the growth assumptions for Apprenticeships and the Nursery.

Governors said they were comfortable with the budget and the contingencies that had been built in although there was more uncertainty for the future. Receiving monthly management accounts would enable the leadership team to identify issues early and make necessary adjustments.

IT WAS DECIDED to:

- Approve the operating revenue budget for 2024-25 delivering an operating surplus of £150k
- Approve the financial plan for 2025-26 delivering an operating surplus of £100k
- Approve a College-funded capital expenditure programme for 2024-25 of £700k in total.
- Give delegated authority to the Chair and Vice Chair to both approve any technical revisions if required by 31 July in view of any material late changes arising, including late funding notification changes from the funding bodies.

The approval was contingent on agreeing the covenant calculation with Barclays and complying with it.

d) Subcontracting Arrangements and Policy 2024-25

The proposed 'Subcontracting Arrangements and Policy 2024-24' (Paper 8d) was received in advance of the meeting. IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Subcontracting Policy.

IT WAS DECIDED to approve the following Subcontracting Arrangements:

- To the Gurdwara the delivery of Adult Skills Fund (ASF) provision up to a maximum aggregate value of £20,000; and
- To Brentford FC Community Sports Trust the co-delivery of non-qualification activities on its Level 2 and Level 3 BTEC Diploma in Sport programmes with an approximate subcontract value of £160,000.

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e) **Reserves Policy**

The draft 'Reserves Policy (Paper 8e) was received in advance of the meeting. The policy had been reviewed by the FRCP Committee, who were recommending approval to the Corporation. IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Reserves Policy.

f) **Health and Safety Policy**

The draft 'Health and Safety Policy (Paper 8f) was received in advance of the meeting. The policy had been reviewed by the FRCP Committee, who were recommending approval to the Corporation. IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Health and Safety Policy

g) **Letter to Accounting Officers**

A letter to Accounting Officers dated 20 March 2024 was received in advance of the meeting and was noted.

h) **Gas and Electricity Contract**

TE gave an update on the renewal of the gas and electricity contracts. A tender process would be started. As the contracts were due for renewal before the next meeting of the Corporation, IT WAS DECIDED to delegate authority for approving the spend to the Chair, who would take advice from the Chair of the FRCP Committee.

28/24 **Audit Committee Report**

a) **Report from Committee**

Minutes from the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 26 June 2024 (Paper 9a) had been received in advance of the meeting. The Chair of the Committee gave a verbal update from the meeting.

- The Committee had reviewed the reports from the Cyber Security and Risk Management internal audits. Both had received good gradings and there were no concerns. The Committee had expressed disappointment that the Internal Auditor hadn't tried to attack the system. The auditors had confirmed that student access was very limited and controlled.
- The Committee had discussed the performance of the auditors. Concerns had been raised that the Internal Auditors had only been carrying out audits virtually. As a result of the concerns being raised, 50% of the internal audits next academic year would be held on site.
- The Committee had received a report from a Follow Up review. It was reassuring that recommendations had been implemented.

The Committee had discussed the connections of the College with local big employers, such as Heathrow, and whether there was a risk that the other organisations could be hacked via as relationship with the College. The Internal Auditors had provided assurance that this was unlikely as both the College and other organisations had systems in place.

Governors asked about the quality of the internal auditors and whether the Committee was recommending a move to a different organisation. ST said he couldn't see how an internal audit could be effective if it was completed from so far away however the Committee wasn't recommending a change at this point. It was something that would be considered at the end of the 3 year contract. MC confirmed that the Audit

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Committee reviewed the auditors' performance annually. This year a questionnaire had been sent out to members of the Audit Committee and lead members of staff. Apart from the concern about remote audits, the feedback for both internal and external auditors had been positive.

b) **Risk Management Policy**

The 'Risk Management Policy' (Paper 9b) was received in advance of the meeting. The Audit Committee had reviewed the Risk Management Policy and were recommending it for approval. IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Risk Management Policy.

29/24 **Governance, Search and Strategy Committee Report**

a) **Report from the Committee**

Minutes from the meeting of the Governance, Search and Strategy Committee held on 22 May 2024 (Paper 10a) had been received in advance of the meeting.

The Chair of the Committee gave a verbal update:

- The Committee had discussed the development of the next 3 Year Strategic Plan. The Executive Team and Committee Chairs would be meeting over the summer which would include a discussion about the process to be used.
- Progress towards the Governance Action Plan had been reviewed.
- Relevant risks to the Committee had been considered.

b) **Election of the Chair and Vice Chairs**

IT WAS DECIDED to re-appoint SM as Chair of the Corporation for the period 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025.

IT WAS DECIDED to re-appoint RT and PS as Vice Chairs of the Corporation for the period 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025.

c) **Appointment of Associate Members**

IT WAS DECIDED to appoint Charanjit Ajit Singh as an Associate Member for the period 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025.

IT WAS DECIDED to appoint John Bolt as an Associate Member for the period 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025.

d) **Committee Membership**

A list of the proposed Committee Chairs and Committee Membership for 2024-25 was received in advance of the meeting. (Paper 10d). IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Committee Chairs and Membership for 2024-25.

e) **Scheme of Delegation and Committee Terms of Reference**

The 'Scheme of Delegation and Committee Terms of Reference for 2023-24' (Paper 10e) was received in advance of the meeting.

IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Scheme of Delegation and Committee Terms of Reference 2024-25.

f) **Standing Orders**

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The draft 'Standing Orders 2024-25' (Paper 10f) was received in advance of the meeting. IT WAS DECICED to approve the Standing Orders 2024-25.

30/24 **Policy Schedule**

The College's 'Policy Schedule' (Paper 11) was received in advance of the meeting. IT WAS DECIDED to continue with the delegated authorities as listed on the Policy Schedule.

31/24 **Any Other Business**

MC reported that Ambitious about Autism had received confirmation from the ESFA that the provision provided by the College is deemed to be a subcontracting agreement. To comply with the ESFA funding rules, they had drafted a new Collaboration Agreement which would replace the existing Partnership Agreement. Alongside the new agreement, Ambitious about Autism had requested the College revise the existing lease agreements to provide an additional classroom and extend the term of leases for both Ambitious College and The Rise to run until 31 July 2037.

In accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, the grant of a leasehold or tenancy agreement would need to be approved by the Corporation. Further information would be circulated in due course.

Governors asked whether the lease of an additional classroom would impact on the College's core provision and noted that it wouldn't.

IT WAS DECIDED to delegate authority for approving the leasehold or tenancy agreement to the Chair, who would take advice from the Chair of the FRCP Committee.

32/24 **Date of the Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting of the Corporation was Wednesday 9 October 2024.

Summary of Actions

No.	Action	Lead	Target Date
7/24i	Consider whether to rename the T Level Risk 'Curriculum Reform'.	CQSE	Nov 24
23/24	Update the Governor Visits Guidance to give a higher profile to employer links.	KF/RT	Sept 24
23/24	Add a review of the Partnership List as a standing item for meetings of the CQSE Committee.	KF/RT	Sept 24
24/24	Add a review of the potential for higher level apprenticeships to the agenda for the next CQSE Committee meeting.	KF/RT	Sept 24
24/24	Add an item to the agenda of the next CQSE Committee Meeting to review how to use the 'Definition of an Outstanding Student Experience' moving forward.	KF/RT	Sept 24

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