



West Thames College Further Education Corporation

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporation Strategy Day

held at 2.00 pm on Wednesday 7 May 2025
at the College

Present:	Mr S McGeoch (SM)	Chair
	Ms T Aust (TA)	CEO and Principal
	Mr S Taylor (ST)	
	Ms R Turner (RT)	
	Mr P Sullivan (PS)	
	Ms A Gray (AG)	
	Ms C Zervoudakis (CZ)	
	Mr G Casley (GC)	
	Mr M Othi (MO)	
	Mr T Hayhoe (TH)	
	Ms B Bata (BB)	
	Mr F Ahmed (FA)	
Apologies:		
	Mr A Rides (AR)	
	Ms H Abdul Hakkeem (HAH)	
In Attendance:	Mr J Bolt (JB)	Associate Member
	Ms C Ajit Singh (CAS)	Associate Member
	Ms K Frost (KF)	Head of Governance
	Ms L Stewart (LS)	Interim Executive Director
	Mr M Cooper (MC)	Executive Director
	Ms M Gajewska-Kopczyk (MGK)	Vice Principal

17/25 **Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and summarised the agenda for the day. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from HAH and AR. It was confirmed the meeting was quorate. There were no declarations of interest concerning items on the agenda.

18/25 **Approval of the Accountability Agreement**

The draft Accountability Agreement was received in advance of the meeting. The CEO explained the purpose of the Accountability Agreement. It was noted that governors needed to be satisfied that the College's activities were in line with local, regional and national need. It was agreed to circulate the Department for Education's (DfE) updated guidance about the Local Skills Duty and Accountability Agreements after the meeting.

Action: KF

Signed:

Date:.....

Governors asked about the materiality of the changes that had been included in the Accountability Agreement 2025-26. The CEO explained that the changes could relate to the scale of the programme or to the need to refocus efforts and resources in certain areas to ensure successful delivery. There was no specific guidance about the materiality of changes to be included.

Working in two groups, governors reviewed the proposed targets in the Accountability Agreement. Following their discussions, each group reported back to the Board with the following feedback:

- A question was raised about whether sustainability should be included in the College's Vision. It was agreed that this would be more appropriately addressed within the broader strategy.
- A suggestion was made to consider aiming for strong financial health rather than outstanding financial health.
- Governors discussed whether 100 was an appropriate target for Apprenticeships, given the current recruitment challenges. It was agreed that 100 remained a realistic and appropriate target.
- It was recommended that the wording of the Employer Advisory Board targets be revised to remove the word *ensure*, to make the language more realistic and measurable.

Overall, governors agreed that the proposed targets were appropriate and aligned with local needs. They recommended producing a more detailed document outlining the rationale for the changes, identifying new course provision, and setting out the anticipated impact of course changes. This document should also address associated resourcing, marketing, and facilities requirements.

Action: MGK

Governors asked about the success of the T Level Foundation Programmes. The CEO noted that, although these programmes had not been successful nationally, the College had experienced positive outcomes—particularly regarding student progression to the next stage. The College remained optimistic about the number of students expected to progress to T Levels next year.

Governors asked whether there was a clear definition of 'green skills'. The CEO explained that there were multiple definitions in circulation. The College's current approach applied green skills across the curriculum—delivered either through bespoke modules or embedded naturally within subject areas. It was noted that the College would explore developing its own working definition of green skills to guide future planning and delivery.

Action: MGK

The CEO thanked governors for their feedback which would be incorporated into the Accountability Agreement. The final version of the Accountability Agreement would be circulated to governors for approval via email prior to the submission date.

Action: TA

The Chair reported that MO had offered to support the management team and the Corporation in a facilitative role to assist with designing documents, redeveloping the dashboard and KPIs, using his expertise to support this work.

19/25 **Confidential Items**

Two confidential items were discussed.

Signed:

Date:.....

21/25 Development of the New Strategic Plan

A Draft Strategic Plan was circulated at the meeting. The Chair explained that the document had been developed following discussions held during the Corporation Strategy Day in January 2025 as well as subsequent input from the Corporation Committees. The aim was to have a final Strategic Plan approved in Spring Term 2026.

Governors worked in two groups to review the draft Strategic Plan. Following a 30-minute discussion, two members from each group rotated to the other table to share a summary of their group's key points and reflections.

Comments from the group discussions included the following:

- The Draft Strategic Plan was aspirational and had no mention of the costs involved.
- Although the College was undertaking a number of positive initiatives in terms of employer engagement, there was still more to be done. Governors challenged how the College could increase employer involvement and questioned why employers would choose to engage, given competing demands on their time. MGK said approx. 500 employers/partners were engaged with the College at varying levels and Employer Advisory Boards had been identified as a particularly effective mechanism. The College was aware of where gaps existed in employer and partnership engagement. A list of target employers was maintained and would be shared with governors on a regular basis to support strategic engagement efforts.
- There was challenge about whether the College needed to lead on curriculum innovation and development in green skills, logistics, digital, health and creative industries. Was that realistic. MGK said the College already led in a number of these areas and wanted to develop their role further in digital and green skills.
- There was a question about whether the industry placement strategy was new. MGK said it was part of T Levels and involved significantly more hours than work experience.

FA left the meeting at 5.15pm.

- Governors said they were disappointed that ESOL wasn't mentioned. It was noted that ESOL adults would be difficult to grow because of limited funding but it would be possible to grow ESOL 16-18.
 - There was a question about whether the College received enough funding for SEND to cover costs and noted it did.
 - There was a request to include the word research in the document when innovative teaching techniques were mentioned.
 - There should be a separate and more detailed Digital Strategy that lay out the priorities and would cover areas such as the curriculum, student experience, staff experience and efficiency cost saving. The College would need to invest in technology and skills. The Chair would share a document detailing case studies of how digital technology had been successfully used in FE colleges.
- Action: SM**
- There was discussion about initial thoughts for priorities from September that would include: Higher Education (Holding the position). Apprenticeships (Accelerated

Signed:

Date:.....

position). The balance between permanent and cover staff. A Digital Strategy framework. Developing partnerships. Evaluating the benefit of the student experience.

- There was a question about whether the College could share staff with neighbouring colleges, for example via use of immersive technologies or Teams. It was noted there were Human Resources implications with this.

The next steps with the development of the Strategic Plan were outlined. The Executive Team would continue to add further detail.

22/25 **Date of the Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Corporation would be held at 6pm on Wednesday 2 July 2025.

Summary of Actions

Minute No.	Action	Lead	Target Date
18/25	Circulate the Department for Education's (DfE) updated guidance about the Local Skills Duty and Accountability Agreements.	KF	June 2025
18/24i	Develop the College's working definition of green skills to guide future planning and delivery.	MGK	Dec 2025
18/24ii	Circulate the final version of the Accountability Agreement to governors for approval prior to submission.	TA	June 2025
21/25	Share a document detailing case studies of how digital technology had been successfully used in FE colleges.	SM	June 2025

Signed:

Date:.....