

# Minutes of the Corporation Meeting

Held Wednesday 20 March 2024

**Present** Joanne Chilton (*Chair*), Jacquie Carman (*Principal*), Shabir Chagan, Sarah Dawson, Stuart Fisher, Andy Hanson, Ian Hughes, Tiffany Harvey-Pallent, Raj Joshi, Gail Rothnie, Joanne Rouse, Lee Smart, Mark Sterling, Anna Sutton, Kate Taylor

**In attendance** Joanne Williams (*Deputy Principal*)  
Andrew Woodford (*Vice Principal and Chief Finance Officer*)  
Craig Tucker (*Assistant Principal Quality and Standards*)  
Rob Lawson (*National Leader in Governance*)  
Jennifer Sunter (*Clerk to the Corporation*)

<b>1</b>		<b>Apologies</b>
		Apologies were received from Alison Jarrett, Aisha Benachour, Helene Jones and Chloe Naughton.
<b>2</b>		<b>Declarations of Interest</b>
		Under 10a, 10b and 10c of the Instrument of Government, Kate Taylor declared her interest as an employee of the West Midlands Combined Authority regarding agenda items 4, the Principal's Report, section on the WMCA update, and 5.2, Accountability Agreement and the WMCA Skills Strategy. Kate Taylor would take no part in discussions for those items and would withdraw as required by members at the meeting under the Principal's Report.
<b>3</b>		<b>Minutes</b>
	3.1	<b>Minutes of the Corporation Meetings held</b>
	a	<b>12 December 2023</b>
	b	<b>18 January 2024</b>
	c	<b>26 January 2024</b>
		The minutes of the Corporation Meetings held 12 December 2023, 18 January 2024 and 26 January 2024 were approved as a correct record following corrections to attendance as noted.
	3.1b	<b>Actions and Matters Arising</b>
		No matters arising were raised and the Clerk outlined the status of each action ongoing or listed for address at the current meeting. These included: Under the Corporation Meeting 13 December 2022 Item 6.3a, Equality and Diversity Annual Report. Greater understanding of the impact of staff diversity in relation to student diversity remained ongoing as part of the overarching review and reporting of Equality and Diversity. Recent reports to Corporation were December 2023 and Personnel Committee February 24. A report on the Single Equality Scheme was also provided under the current meeting agenda. The action was closed.  Under the Corporation Meeting 29 March 2023 4.1c Principal's Report; Work in relation to being trauma informed around wellbeing and protection was highlighted through reporting to the Personnel Committee. The action was closed.  Under the Corporation Meeting 19 October 2023

	<p>5.3a Apprenticeships Current Position; The apprenticeships deep dive had been undertaken with a governor participating. The action was closed.</p> <p>5.5a Annual Plan and Targets 2023/2024; Development of the monthly data report to chairs remained ongoing. Members noted the challenges in recruiting a data analyst and that this remained necessary to support capacity to move forward.</p> <p>8.3a New Code of Governance for FE; The College had volunteered to provide feedback to the AoC, which would be at a later date, when the code was more embedded. The item remained ongoing.</p> <p>Under the Corporation Meeting 12 December 2023 Nothing noted.</p> <p>Under Corporation Meeting 26 January 2024 3a Themes for discussion – Marketing; Governors were asked to engage with College posts through their chosen platform. This item was closed.</p> <p>3c Themes for discussion – Curriculum; The Students Curriculum and Quality Committee had received an update regarding new qualifications and this was provided as an item on Corporation agendas. The item was closed.</p> <p>3d Themes for discussion – Digital; The risks and costs of managing rapid digital developments were considered by the Audit Committee and addressed in part by capital update. The Item was closed acknowledging the ongoing monitoring through risk reports.</p>
4	<b>Strategic</b>
4.1	<b>Principal’s Report</b>
	<p>Jacque Carman provided a detailed report for governors covering key areas of focus.</p> <p>The importance of positional leadership and impact was emphasised in the work of the Principal and sector colleagues highlighting concerns and issues arising from educational reform. Several very positive College visits had been hosted around national Colleges’ Week for ‘Celebrating and Influencing’ and the Principal had attended a Downing Street reception with sector colleagues.</p> <p>Members also noted that the College would look to support students in understanding their right to vote by holding a husting in the run up to the next general election.</p> <p>Jacque Carman provided headlines concerning funding.</p> <p>The Government budget review had provided no changes for the sector, with no remission on VAT and high targets for the College in delivery of T Levels would be at risk of in year claw back.</p> <p>The increased minimum hours for English and Maths delivery would impact the sector. Governors discussed how the College was addressing this. It was noted that the College already delivered at a high level and could deliver the additional hours online. Governors asked about quality assurance and also noted that recalibration of hours was supported by the CEFFS review.</p> <p>It was further noted that while the Government had assured another year of funding for the Teachers’ Pension Scheme there remained uncertainty beyond this. Governors asked about contingency plans and noted that if support was withdrawn, full costs would fall to the College and the budget would be recalibrated.</p> <p>Governors noted the positive outcome of the annual DfE Strategic Conversation. The Chair noted that the DfE/ESFA wished to use the College as a case study regarding capital loans and support.</p>

	<p>Regarding pay it was reported that the AoC negotiations had commenced, and that the College was looking at local considerations including the pay spine. More information would be considered at timely meetings in June and September 2024.</p> <p>Jacque Carman outlined that the profile of student applications was strong overall, however there was a shift with an increase in T Level and Apprenticeship applications, which carried greater risks for students and for the funding contract. Governors discussed how the College was supporting greater understanding of T Levels. Jacquie Carman reported on the open events which included Principal's talks. The College was also holding a specific Curriculum Conference for headteachers, who would then be able to cascade information to parents and students. Members discussed further that the FE landscape was less clear but that the College's focus was in providing a meaningful curriculum for all students. Members offered helpful signposting for information and materials.</p> <p>Jacque Carman explained the progress the College was making in its approach to embedding green skills into the curriculum. A number of staff had attended the Change Makers course offered by Fircroft College, which supported a new approach. Green skills would be mapped over the curriculum and promoted as part of a range of skills that employers need. The College was providing a power pack of skills including green skills to equip students.</p>
4.1a	<p>The Chair asked about further information being provided for the Corporation for assurance on fulfilling its sustainability duty. It was noted that this would be part of divisional performance reviews and that a report on phase one would be provided for the May Corporation meeting.</p>
	<p>Members discussed the current position regarding College Coaches. The outcome of surveys and modelling emphasised that the coach travel provision remained the College's unique selling point and that changes to this would impact on enrolment and culture.</p> <p>A core risk remained reputational damage to the College from residents regarding traffic congestion. Jacquie Carman reported on correspondence with local councillors and less use of Whittingham Road for coaches during mornings. While the College was keen to highlight the positive aspects it brings to the community, actions were still being pursued to help mitigate congestion at key points in the day. Members discussed the lack of progress in achieving permission for a turning circle which rested with the Secretary of State.</p>
	<p><i>Kate Taylor left the meeting.</i></p>
	<p>WMCA Update</p> <p><i>A confidential minute was taken.</i></p>
	<p><i>Kate Taylor rejoined the meeting.</i></p>
4.2	<p><b>Transformation Projects 2024/2025</b></p> <p>Governors discussed early consideration of areas for transformational projects for 2024/2025, raising questions on what constitutes a transformational project. It was noted that focus was on a holistic approach, teaching a broader range of skills, also on local deprivation. This was a step change for teaching and learning and staff development.</p> <p>Proposals would be provided for the summer Corporation meetings.</p>
4.3	<p><b>Prevent Strategy and Action Plan</b></p>

		<p>The Prevent Strategy had been redrafted considering new guidance and some staff had undergone further training. The Chair asked about delays in training and it was noted that availability of sessions had delayed this. Training would be monitored through the Personnel Committee.</p> <p>A governor asked about the Governments recent announcement on the definition of extremism and it was understood that once guidance and information was available the strategy would be revisited by the Personnel committee in the first instance.</p>
	4.3a	The Chair noted that while challenging, best practice on capturing baseline data would be sought.
		On recommendation of the Students Curriculum and Quality Committee the Corporation approved the updated Prevent Strategy.
	4.4	<b>Curriculum Strategy and Curriculum Update</b>
		<p>Members understood their duty regarding curriculum and noted the importance that the curriculum would meet local needs.</p> <p>As considered by the Students' Curriculum and Quality Committee the update was provided for assurance.</p> <p>Key areas highlighted included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital and Early Years T Levels</li> <li>• Range of level 2 and Level 3 provision</li> <li>• New HE provision</li> <li>• Alignment with key LSIP priorities</li> <li>• Requirement for Leadership and Management Offer</li> </ul> <p>The rapid pace of course changes under educational reform were noted and that this was kept under review by the Students' Curriculum and Quality Committee and the Corporation.</p> <p>The Curriculum Update was received.</p>
		The Corporation approved the Curriculum Strategy in accordance with the approval given by the Students' Curriculum and Quality Committee.
	4.5	<b>Marketing Strategy</b>
		<p>Governors noted the comprehensiveness of the Marketing Strategy and that there was scope to reconcile this with the Accountability Statement. Jacquie Carman responded that this would be the case for the new statement.</p> <p>Jacquie Carman also reported that metrics for measuring marketing impact were being introduced and incorporated into the targets monitoring report.</p>
		The Corporation approved the Marketing Strategy.
	4.6	<b>People Strategy</b>
		<p>Jacquie Carman reported that suggestions provided by the Personnel Committee had been addressed to finalise the People Strategy.</p> <p>The diagram within the strategy highlighted the tenets and focus of the strategy to support one inclusive whole College team.</p>
		The Personnel Committee had approved the People Strategy subject to management making appropriate adjustments as discussed and the Corporation endorsed this.
	5	<b>Performance</b>

5.1	<p><b>Minutes of the Students, Curriculum and Quality Committee held 6 March 2024 - Committee Chair's Overview.</b></p>
	<p>The Chair of the Students, Curriculum and Quality Committee summarised that the meeting had addressed a very comprehensive set of data which pleasingly had incorporated the first iteration of value added vocational course data.</p> <p>The Committee members were keen to see the mock exam, assessment point data ahead of their summer meeting.</p> <p>The Committee had also considered the project to support high attainment, particularly around progress.</p> <p>The Minutes of the Students, Curriculum and Quality Committee held 6 March 2024 were received.</p>
5.2	<p><b>Accountability Agreement, Skills and meeting local need Update</b></p>
	<p>Prior to discussions in May on the accountability Agreement for 2024/2025 the key pillars of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) Skills Strategy were shared with governors.</p> <p>Jacque Carman highlighted the significant challenge to raise qualifications of the local community to Level 3.</p> <p>Additionally, the College needed to be mindful of a second Local Skills Improvement Plan, which it hoped would be cohesive in relation to WMCA strategy. That the Corporation noted the key themes in the WMCA strategy.</p>
5.3	<p><b>Annual Plan and Targets Update</b></p>
	<p>Members noted overall good progress against targets as reported.</p> <p>It was also noted that the new Financial Handbook for the FE Sector had now been published.</p> <p>Regarding apprenticeships review Craig Tucker provided an overview of the recent deep dive undertaken by an external consultant. Several improvements were noted, with a particular area of development around managers being able to talk in depth with confidence on course intent. Some apprentices were able to talk about their work and the support they received from their coaches. Less positive were responses relating to legacy apprenticeships around careers education, and high grade achievement.</p> <p>Craig Tucker also reported on success in appointing to new posts and in green shoots for business growth.</p> <p>A governor had participated in the review and concurred that while some improvements were positive, there was further work to be done around delivery and structure, that delivery appeared to be very traditional and needed to be different in the apprenticeship arena.</p> <p>Apprenticeships continued to be monitored by the Students' Curriculum and Quality Committee.</p> <p>The Corporation noted the update.</p>
6	<p><b>Compliance and Committees</b></p>
6.1	<p><b>Single Equality Scheme</b></p>
	<p>Jacque Carman was pleased to present a new Single Equality Scheme for the College which focused on protecting individuals and providing a safe space where staff and students felt comfortable to be their whole selves. The approach was both compliant with the Education Act and protected characteristics while also recognising the context of the community.</p>

	<p>Governors commended how far the College had progressed with the new scheme and raised several points further including;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The changing narrative on public sector spending</li> <li>• Assurance re accuracy in law</li> <li>• Potential misinterpretation of language</li> <li>• Data assurance that the College and Corporation are meeting duty and delivering the scheme.</li> </ul> <p>Jacque Carman welcomed the support while acknowledging that checks would be made with the College solicitors regarding legality of statements.</p>
6.1a	Members talked about accessibility of information and it was agreed that a leaflet would be considered.
	The Corporation approved the Single Equality Scheme subject to any amendments following review by the College solicitors.
6.2	<b>Minutes of the Personnel Committee held 21 February 2024 - Committee Chair's Overview</b>
	The minutes of the Personnel Committee held 21 February 2024 were received.
6.2a	<b>Settlement Agreement Policy</b>
	<p>Members noted that the Settlement Agreement Policy changes addressed the requirements of Managing Public Money.</p> <p>Clarification was also provided on the route of address regarding all staff and Senior Post Holders, to be further supported by a review of Committee Terms Of Reference to support the role of the Chair or Vice Chair.</p> <p>Governors raised a few questions to help clarify where any misunderstanding could be alleviated.</p>
	The Corporation approved the revised Settlement Agreement Policy on recommendation of the Personnel Committee, subject to minor amendments discussed.
6.3	<b>Minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee held 13 March 2024 – Committee Chair's Overview</b>
	<p>The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee noted that the revised budget summary had improved very slightly and that the HCE Ltd income had improved by more than was expected.</p> <p>Minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee held 13 March 2024 were received.</p>
6.3a	<b>Tuition Fees Policy 2024/2025</b>
	Members noted that the policy had been updated to incorporate staff changes and a revised fee for Higher Education. However, to accommodate a very recent Government policy change on apprentices, a further adjustment would be required.
	The Corporation approved the Tuition Fees Policy 2024/2025 on recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee and agreed that changes to address government policy on apprentices could be returned to the Finance and Resources Committee.
6.3b	<b>Estates and Capital Projects Update</b>
	<p>Andrew Woodford summarised estates projects whereby</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trinity Point was progressing well and subject to outstanding issues being addressed should be handed to the College at the end of April.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of Shenstone house was reliant on the completion of Trinity Point with the tender for work currently underway.</li> <li>• Block 9 work was also due to commence in April with costs in line with proposals.</li> <li>• Work to undertake an IT refresh was also under way.</li> </ul> <p>Members also noted the current position of the College in relation to the Pool Road Development. The College was working with Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council. It was important that the College designed a fit for purpose facility.</p>
6.3b a	The Clerk would pursue a meeting for governors to take place at Trinity Point
6.3c	<b>College Coaches</b>
	In addition to earlier discussion under the Principal's report members noted that the College continued to work to make the scheme as efficient as possible. It was agreed that oversight remained with the Finance and Resources Committee.
	The Corporation agreed that the College makes no changes to the current business model involving coaches, and to keep under annual review through the Finance and Resources Committee.
6.4	<b>Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held 7 March 2024 – Committee Chair's Overview</b>
	The Chair of the Audit Committee highlighted that while the Audit Plan was slightly behind schedule items were being addressed. Additionally, there had been a significant step in developing the reporting of risk which Andrew Woodford was commended on. Minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held 7 March 2024 were received.
6.4a	<b>Risk Management Mid-Year Update</b>
	Andrew Woodford highlighted that the risk register had been updated to reflect digital and AI concerns as discussed at the Corporation Development Day. The process was being developed moving away from reliance on word documents into use of a Powerbi dashboard, which was demonstrated. The spreadsheet of risks was also provided, which was supported by a range of filter functions. The new approach would retain word documents to support and explain the data. Governors asked if mitigations were included and how major concerns were highlighted. Andrew Woodford noted that mitigations and actions would be incorporated and Jacquie Carman responded that concerns would be drawn out in the narrative and particularly highlighted in the new report cover sheets. Managers were asked to highlight risks of taking or not taking actions to support a balanced view of risks. Members were very supportive of the new approach. The Chair emphasised that future reporting should lean towards greater use of current information dashboards, however, this was reliant on recruitment of further staff to support digital developments.
	On recommendation of the Audit Committee the Corporation approved the mid-year updates to the risk management suite of reports, incorporating: Risk Management Summary Risk Action Plan 2023-2024 Mid-Year Update Risk Spreadsheet Risk Register 2023-2024 Mid-Year Update

<b>7</b>		<b>Governance</b>
	<b>7.1</b>	<b>Link Governors Feedback</b>
		Governors outlined that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training on SEND was booked</li> <li>• Safeguarding staff had been met with and were commended for their expertise and management in midst of increased and complex workload demands.</li> <li>• Careers link meeting was due</li> <li>• Equality and Diversity link work had been very supportive.</li> </ul>
<b>8</b>		<b>Any Other Business</b>
		There was none.
<b>9</b>		<b>Date of Next Meeting</b> The next meeting was noted as scheduled for 21 May 2024
<b>10</b>		<b>Confidential</b>
	<b>10a</b>	<b>Completion of Probation</b>
		<i>A confidential minute was taken.</i>

**The meeting closed at 20:14.**