



West Thames College Further Education Corporation

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporation

held at 6.00pm on Wednesday 10 December 2025
at the College

Present: Mr S McGeoch (SM) Chair
Ms M Gajewska (MG) 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)
Ms B Bata (BB)
Mr T Hayhoe (TH) *(From item 49/25)*
Ms I Santos Silva (ISS)
Mr J Sanders (JS)
Mr D Mihaila (DM) *(Governor from Item 10d)*
Mr F Ahmed (FA)
Mr A Rides (AR)

Absent: Manraj Othi (MO)

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 K Lehmann (KL) Vice Principal
Ms C Beaman (CB) Vice Principal

47/25 **Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and extended a particular welcome to the Student Governors, who were attending their first Corporation meeting. The Chair noted that the Corporation was considering a change to the Instrument and Articles of Government later in the agenda, which would increase the number of Student Governors from two to three.

The Student Governors introduced themselves, outlining their courses and interests. The Chair expressed appreciation for their participation and encouraged them to contribute to discussions and share feedback.

MO was absent. AR attended the meeting virtually. It was confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

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

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48/25 Minutes of the Last Meeting

a) **Minutes from the Last Meeting** (8 October 2025)

The Corporation received the minutes from the last meeting in advance. (Paper 2a).

IT WAS DECIDED the minutes were a true record of the meeting and they were approved.

b) **Matters Arising**

An update on progress towards the actions agreed at the last meeting was received in advance of the meeting and was noted.

49/25 College Performance

a) **Data Dashboard**

The Chair provided an update on the re-development of the Data Dashboard and outlined its purpose in supporting strategic oversight. Members were invited to provide feedback on the dashboard through the survey circulated prior to the meeting.

TH entered the meeting

The Board reviewed the status of KPIs in the current Data Dashboard:

- **Teaching, Learning and Assessment:** It was reported that 89 learning walks had been completed. Of these, 66% were assessed as secure, 20 were consolidating, and 3 were identified as minimal. The minimal assessments related to English, Adult ESOL, and one PET (Pre-Employment Training) course for adults. Support measures were in place for these areas.

Q: *Once a learning walk is complete, do you ask students for their feedback?*

A: Yes. Obtaining student feedback is an integral part of the process.

The Student Governors confirmed they were aware of the process and had opportunities to provide feedback.

- **Deep Dives:** Deep Dives would be starting in January.

Attendance: Current attendance stood at 90%, exceeding the college target of 88% and ahead of the position at the same point last year. All directorates were above the college target except for Skills & Learning, which was slightly below. Actions were in place to address this. Attendance for English and Maths was reported to be strong compared to other colleges. The latest AoC report indicated that 16–18 student attendance for English was between 70% and 79.9% in 66% of colleges, and for Maths in 71% of colleges. Attendance of 80% or above for both subjects occurred in only 15% of colleges. The majority of colleges reported that attendance in English and Maths was worse than for other programmes: 97% (English) and 96% (Maths). Against this context, the college's current position of 86% was significantly stronger than the sector average

Student Governors shared observations regarding attendance challenges. The Board expressed appreciation for these contributions.

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- **Achievement:** There had been no change in achievement data since the last meeting.
- **Finance:** The projected financial health grade at year-end was reported as Outstanding, representing an improvement from last year's grade of Good. The financial health score was now 240, primarily due to a projected operating surplus for the year, which was above budget expectations.
- **Enrolments:** A positive picture was reported for 16–19 provision, with an upward trend expected to continue, although demographic changes in the coming years were noted. Caution was expressed regarding the Adult Skills Fund, as performance to date was lagging behind target and more significantly than in previous years. The gap needed to be closed, and plans were in place to deliver additional activity to improve performance.

Q: *Why are adult enrolments below target for this term, and what is different this year?*

A: Last year, the college over-recruited adult students, which was not funded, requiring enrolment to stop mid-year. This year, a cautious approach is being taken to avoid over-recruitment.

- **Human Resources:** A positive position was reported overall:
 - **Sickness Absence:** Currently at 3.1%, compared with 6.7% at the same point last year. This remains just above the sector benchmark.
 - **Ethnicity Profile:** BME staff representation increased by 1.7%, supporting the aim of maintaining a workforce reflective of the student body.
 - **Staff Utilisation:** Slightly above target.
 - **Staff Turnover:** Year-to-date turnover was just under 4%, against a target of 14% and a sector benchmark of 17.8%.

Q: *Does long-term sickness affect staff utilisation figures?*

A: Yes. Staff utilisation is reviewed monthly, and where staff are on long-term sickness absence, the figure is deflated.

Q: *Is the utilisation of agency staff measured similarly to permanent staff?*

A: No. Agency staff are not measured in the same way because their contracted hours are expected to match delivery hours. The college has reviewed the mix of agency and established staff; the proportion of agency staff has reduced significantly from last year's high level to 20% this year.

- **Health and Safety:** It was reported that accidents were being well recorded, investigated, and reviewed to identify causes and prevent recurrence. Risk assessments were being completed, and health and safety training was ongoing, with further work planned to ensure timely refresher training. There were no RIDDOR-reportable incidents.

Q: *Has everything related to the recent fire been resolved?*

A: Yes. The affected areas have been redecorated and refreshed, and the insurance claim has been processed.

Q: *Did students participate in work experience related to the repairs?*

A: Efforts are made to involve students, but most opportunities for this type of work occur during the summer period.

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Q: *Recent news reports raised concerns about solar panel safety. What measures are in place to ensure safety here?*

A: Solar panels are inspected regularly as part of the programmed maintenance schedule. All checks are now summarized and reported to the Finance, Resources and Capital Projects (FRCP) Committee.

Q: *Is the Business Continuity Plan up to date?*

A: Yes. The Business Continuity Plan is current and reviewed as necessary. Lessons from recent fire drills have been incorporated.

- **Sustainability:** Electricity consumption was reported as decreasing, while gas usage remained static. Overall, the college was spending less on energy compared to previous years. The Board reviewed progress against the sustainability roadmap and noted the key target of achieving net zero by 2040. Members discussed the need to set fresh sustainability targets and consider the next phase of initiatives to accelerate progress toward this goal.

b) Review of Progress towards the Development Plan

The Corporation received an update on progress towards the objectives in the Development Plan in advance of the meeting (Paper 3). The CEO highlighted key points:

- **Curriculum Offer:** On track overall. Work on foundation-level apprenticeships had not yet started and remained in progress. Recruitment to the Education and Early Years T Level had not taken place due to insufficient uptake.
- **Work Experience and Employer Engagement:** Significant activity was reported, including employer advisory boards and implementation of new software to track work placements and skills development. Student Governors confirmed they were using the system to monitor work experience and skills gained.
- **Funding Objective:** One objective was flagged amber: bidding for additional Adult Skills Fund allocations. While not all targets might not be achieved, the budget had been set on the assumption that some bids would not be successful.

Q: *Apart from the exception noted for Adult Skills and foundation apprenticeships, is everything else green?*

A: Yes. All other objectives are on track. Recruitment for apprenticeships is slightly behind target, but progress is being made on other aspects.

50/25 Strategic Items

a) Executive Report

The Corporation received an 'Executive Report - Dec 2025' in advance of the meeting. Members commended the report for its clarity and comprehensive summary of a complex and evolving external environment, including policy changes, reforms, and new initiatives. The overall outlook was positive, with government recognition of the role of Further Education in skills development and economic growth.

Key highlights included:

- The college was announced as a Beacon Award finalist for Careers, and commended for its ESOL provision.
- Shortlisted for three awards at the West London Business Awards.
- Recognition for EDI initiatives, including two apprentices reaching the finals.

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Q: *How do student destinations compare to previous years?*

A: Overall destination outcomes were 93%, consistent with the previous year.

Q: *What is being proposed at Level 2, and how will pathways be distinguished between Level 2 into work and Level 2 into education?*

A: The government's White Paper outlines two pathways into Level 2, but details on implementation remain unclear. There is a risk of students being directed into routes too early, particularly when they are unsure of their future plans. Governors asked Student Governors whether they were aware of Level 2 progression routes and university options and noted their responses.

Q: *How will students be supported in choosing the right pathway?*

A: Information, advice, and guidance at enrolment will be critical, supported by interviews at the start of the course and strengthened collaboration with school careers advisors.

The discussion highlighted the uncertainty surrounding reforms and the need for flexibility in strategic planning.

Q: *How will the college engage with initiatives such as Technical Excellence Colleges?*

A: Government plans allow for one Technical Excellence College per region, with a maximum of one in London. There are no current plans for a logistics focused Technical Excellence College. Engagement will depend on identified skills needs and government decisions. The college is in discussions with partners and the GLA, reviewing the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) to ensure logistics is recognized as a priority sector.

b) College Self-Assessment Report 2024-25

The Corporation received the 'College Self-Assessment Report 2024-25' (Paper 4b) in advance of the meeting and was noted.

The report concluded that the college's overall effectiveness was assessed as Outstanding, with apprenticeships graded as Good. The report will be shared with Ofsted and referenced in strategic discussions with the Department for Education.

IT WAS DECIDED to approve the College Self-Assessment Report 2024-25.

51/25 Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience (CQSE) Committee Report

The Corporation received the minutes from the CQSE meeting held on 28 November 2025 in advance of the meeting.

The Chair reported that the committee had reviewed the self-evaluation of each curriculum area and questioned curriculum managers on key aspects, with the aim of agreeing an overall grade for each area. Governors who provided feedback on their link areas were thanked, as this enabled the committee to focus on issues within individual curriculum areas.

The Committee noted an increase in the number of areas graded Outstanding compared to previous years. Areas that did not self-assess as Outstanding were generally those with less stable staffing. Two areas were identified as vulnerable: Apprenticeships and the Skills & Logistics Centre, due to staffing and site constraints affecting sustainability and growth. Apprenticeship targets were unlikely to be met this

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year, while the Skills & Logistics Centre has opportunities for growth but couldn't respond fully to demand because of staffing limitations.

The Committee also discussed the approach to target grades, noting that the College was focused on aspirational targets.

It was noted that the College had moved away from Functional Skills Level 2 in English and Maths, with a significant increase in students taking GCSEs.

Thanks were passed onto the Committee.

52/25 **Risk Register**

The Corporation received the updated Strategic Risk Register in advance and noted changes since the last meeting. Areas of higher risk included: curriculum reform, staff recruitment and retention, facility integrity and data protection and cyber security.

Governors would be asked to complete cyber security training to strengthen awareness.

53/25 **Finance, Resources and Capital Projects (FRCP) Committee Report**

a) **Minutes of the Last Meeting** (26 November 2025)

The Corporation received the minutes from the FRCP Committee meeting held on 26 November 2025 in advance of the meeting (Paper 7a) and noted the Chair's verbal update. Items of note are listed below.

- i) There was a general update on the status of negotiations on the Skills and Logistics Centre. However, there was nothing definitive to report.
- ii) The statement of cash flows in the October management accounts included a payment to Hounslow for the accrued liability on the Skills and Logistics Centre lease.

b) **Annual Human Resources Report**

The 'Annual Human Resources Report' (Paper 7b) was received in advance of the meeting. It was noted that the Finance, Resources and Capital Projects Committee had reviewed the report at their meeting held on 26 November 2025 and found it to be a positive report.

c) **Annual Health and Safety Report**

The 'Annual Health and Safety Report' (Paper 7c) was received in advance of the meeting. It was noted that the Finance, Resources and Capital Projects Committee had reviewed the report at their meeting held on 26 November 2025

d) **Final End of Year Management Accounts July 2025**

The 'Final Year End Management Accounts July 2025' (Paper 7d) was received in advance of the meeting. There were no significant changes to report.

e) **Latest Management Accounts Oct 2025**

The 'Latest Management Accounts Oct 2025' (Paper 7e) was received in advance of the meeting.

- MC reported a favorable variance of over £300k, driven by high-needs student funding and payroll savings, offsetting an adult funding shortfall.
- Operating surplus forecast at £750k, compared to budget of £200k, reflecting a prudent approach.
- Key variances and contingencies were summarized.

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- Ability to achieve the forecast reduction in debtors balance at 31 July 2026 was discussed.
- Apprenticeships reported a negative contribution of £142k, which remained an area of concern.

The Board discussed capital expenditure. An additional £1.0 m of capital grant funding would be spent this academic year compared to the Budget, increasing total expenditure to £2.4 m. The Board were satisfied the funding was being spent for appropriate purposes and **IT WAS DECIDED** to approve the proposed capital grant expenditure.

54/25 **Audit Committee Report**

a) **Minutes of the Last Meeting** (3 December 2025)

The Corporation received the minutes from the last meeting of the Audit Committee held on 3 December 2025 in advance of the meeting. (Paper 8a). The Chair of the Committee gave a verbal update:

- Financial statements audit and post-audit completed with three clean opinions.
- Regularity self-assessment reviewed.
- Internal audit on bursaries resulted in weak assurance, due to a change in methodology from fixed-rate to needs-based assessment. Recommendations were implemented immediately.
- Risk management discussion highlighted the dynamic nature of cyber security and AI-related risks.

The Committee reviewed the external audit contract and agreed to recommend extending the current contract with Buzzacott for one further year, followed by retendering. This decision considered the requirement for auditor partner rotation after 10 years to maintain independence.

IT WAS DECIDED to approve the appointment of Buzzacott as the financial statement auditors for a further term of one year.

b) **Annual Audit Committee Report**

The Annual Audit Committee Report (Paper 8b) was received and noted. The Committee's assurance statement was confirmed. A change in internal auditors during the year was noted.

c) **Post Audit Report and Letter of Representation**

The 'Post Audit Management Report' (Paper 8ci) and the 'Letter of Representation' (Paper 8cii) were received in advance of the meeting. MC confirmed the audits were clean with unqualified opinions, all necessary information had been provided to the auditors and that he was satisfied with the use of the Going Concern basis. All outstanding items had been completed apart from the signing which would be completed after the meeting.

On the recommendation of both the Audit Committee and the Finance, Resources and Capital Projects Committee, **IT WAS DECIDED** to approve the Post Audit Report and the Letter of Representation.

d) **Annual Report and Financial Statements Year Ended 31 July 2025**

The 'Report and Financial Statements for Year Ended 31 July 2025' (Paper 8d) was received in advance of the meeting.

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On the recommendation of the Audit Committee and the Finance, Resources and Capital Projects Committee, **IT WAS DECIDED** to approve the Report and Financial Statements for Year Ended 31 July 2025; and to authorise the Chair and the CEO to sign the Report and Financial Statements on behalf of the Corporation.

e) **Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire**

The 'Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire' (Paper 8e) was received in advance of the meeting.

It was noted that the DfE insolvency guidance (2019) had been distributed to all governors and no new senior postholder had been paid £150k or over.

IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire.

55/24 **Remuneration Committee Report**

a) **Annual Remuneration Report 2024-25**

The 'Annual Remuneration Report 2024-25' (Paper 9a) was received in advance of the meeting and was noted.

b) **Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference**

The 'Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference' (Paper 9b) was received in advance of the meeting. The committee had reviewed the Terms of Reference at their meeting on 22 October 2025 and were recommending it for approval with no material changes.

IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference.

56/25 **Governance, Search and Strategy (GSS) Committee**

a) **Minutes of the Last Meeting** (12 November 2025)

The Corporation received the minutes from the meeting of the GSS Committee held on 12 November 2025 in advance of the meeting (Paper 10a).

b) **Corporation Self-Assessment Report 2024-25 and Governor Action Plan**

The Corporation received the report from the Governance Self-Assessment 2024-25 and the proposed Governor Action Plan for 2025-26 in advance of the meeting. (Paper 10b). The Chair thanked governors for their participation in the review.

The report summarised the findings of the self-assessment and included an updated Governor Action Plan as Appendix 3. The review comprised several elements, including an assessment of the Board's performance against the FE Code of Governance, which concluded that the Board was performing well overall.

The GSS Committee had reviewed the report at its last meeting and recommended approval. No further comments or questions were raised.

IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Corporation Self-Assessment Report 2024-25 and the Governor Action Plan 2025-26.

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c) **Re-Appointment of Governors**

The Corporation reviewed the recommendation from the Governance, Search and Strategy Committee regarding the re-appointment of governors who were approaching the end of their term of office. **IT WAS DECIDED:**

- To re-appoint Rose Turner as a governor for a term of two years running from May 2026 to May 2028.
- To re-appoint Philip Sullivan as a governor for a term of four years running from May 2026 to May 2030.
- To re-appoint Alan Rides as a governor for a term of three years from July 2026 to July 2029.
- To re-appoint Annita Gray as a governor for a term of four years from July 2026 to July 2030.

d) **Update to the Instrument and Articles of Government**

The Corporation considered a recommendation from the Governance, Search and Strategy Committee to amend Instrument 2(1e) of the Instrument and Articles of Government to increase the permitted number of student governors from two to three.

The proposed wording was:

“at least one and not more than three members who are students at the institution and have been nominated and/or elected by their fellow students, or if the Corporation so decides, by a recognised association representing such students (‘student members’).”

IT WAS DECIDED to approve the amendment to Instrument 2(1e) as set out above. This change would allow up to three student governors to be appointed, strengthening student representation on the Board.

57/25 **Use of the College Seal**

The Corporation received a report confirming the recent use of the College Seal in accordance with governance requirements. The seal was affixed to two new lease agreements executed as deeds with Ambitious about Autism. Both agreements were signed and sealed by the Chair of the Corporation and the CEO & Principal. The leases run from 1 August 2025 to 31 July 2037.

The Corporation noted the report. No decision was required.

58/25 **Confidential Items**

Confidential items were discussed.

61/25 **Date of the Next Meeting**

The date of the next meetings of the Corporation were:

- Corporation Strategy Day: Wednesday 11 February 2026.
- Corporation Meeting: Wednesday 25 March 2026.

The Board noted that West Thames College, in partnership with Hounslow Friends of Faith and Al Mustafa Welfare Trust, received a Recognition Award from the Faith and Belief Forum at the London Dangoor Awards Ceremony on 25 November 2025 for

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the Interfaith Iftar 2025. This award acknowledges the College's commitment to fostering unity, dialogue, and mutual understanding among diverse communities. The Board expressed appreciation for this achievement and congratulated all involved. It was noted that the next IFTAR event would be 6 March 2026.

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