



West Thames College Further Education Corporation

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporation

held at 6.00pm on Wednesday 13 December 2023
at the College

Present:	Mr S McGeoch (SM)	Chair
	Ms T Aust (TA)	CEO
	Mr A Barke (AB)	
	Mr S Taylor (ST)	
	Ms R Turner (RT)	
	Mr P Sullivan (PS)	
	Ms A Cornish (AC)	
	Ms T Kaur (TK)	
	Mr T Hayhoe (TH)	
	Mr G Casley (GC)	
	Mr A Smith (AS)	
Apologies:	Mr A Rides (AR)	
	Mr A Alimohamed (AA)	
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 K Evans (KE)	Interim Executive Director
	Mr M Cooper (MC)	Executive Director
	Ms M Gajewska-Kopczyk (MGK)	Vice Principal

53/23 **Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. RT, TK and AB were attending the meeting virtually. Apologies for absence were received and accepted from AR and AA.

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

54/23 **Ofsted Training**

An Ofsted training session was provided for governors covering the current inspection framework and the role of the Board during the inspection.

Governors said the briefing was useful and asked if further information on key areas could start to be circulated to governors.

Action: MGK.

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55/23 Minutes of the Last Meeting

a) Minutes from the Last Meeting

Minutes from the meeting of the Corporation held on 11 October 2023 (Paper 1a) were received in advance of the meeting. IT WAS DECIDED they were a true record of the meeting and they were approved.

b) Matters Arising

The 'Summary Action List' was received in advance of the meeting (Paper 1b) and progress made towards the actions agreed was noted. The following matters arising were discussed:

48/23: Governors said the number of students who had said they felt unsafe in a survey carried out in the Summer Term was high at 8%. MGK explained the number was in line with previous years. When the results had been analysed, it was clear that a large number of negative responses were linked to one incident that had been dealt with. This year, an additional survey would be carried out at the end of the Autumn Term. Course Representatives had been asked to identify any hotspot areas. Governors said there had been a significant increase in the number of safeguarding disclosures this year, although acknowledged there might not be a direct link with the number of pupils who felt unsafe. Governors asked whether there were any demographic differences in the responses, for example, gender, ethnicity. MGK explained the report didn't provide that level of detail.

56/23 Strategic Report

a) Executive Report

The 'Executive Report' (Paper 2) was received in advance of the meeting. The CEO drew attention to key points in the report including the strategic context, the LSIF project, employer engagement and political influencing.

Governors asked whether the College was still on track to meet targets for student numbers. The CEO said the numbers were on track. There was a positive picture for enrolment.

Governors referred to the section in the report about partnerships and asked whether it was challenging to manage so many. The CEO said it was a key part of the College's work and was critical to ensure a positive impact on students. However, it was a drain on resource in terms of being able to effectively manage them.

Governors asked about the increase in the number of students with high needs and whether the trend was likely to continue. The CEO said the increase was likely to continue, in part due to demographics and in part due to the reputation of the College in meeting local need, recognising diversity and being inclusive.

AC declared an interest in that she was a Local Authority Officer and this was the area that she covered. AC said the local trend in terms of high needs was that local numbers far exceeded national figures. The Local Authority was working with the College to try and meet more needs and was looking at commissioning in a different way as part of preparing students with high needs for adulthood. The College had strengths in terms of inclusion and supporting young people who lived in the borough.

Governors asked whether the College would need to invest in additional equipment and staff to meet the needs of students with High Needs. The CEO said further

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investment in staff, space and equipment might be needed to cope with the increased demand and increasing complexity.

Governors asked for a Partnership Report to be provided to include a list of the partners, the areas of the curriculum they linked to, the management team lead, the duration of the partnership if applicable, the status of the relationship and any other key information. The report should identify whether there were any gaps.

Action: TA/MGK

Governors asked about the scale of activity in terms of bids and how hard was it to make sure that bidding opportunities were successfully integrated. The CEO explained that the majority of bids were collaborative. The focus was on chasing bids that would be worthwhile and have impact. The LSIF was an example of a successful bid.

Governors congratulated the College for the news section in the Executive Report, including the recent successes.

Governors said the decrease in the numbers of apprentices and Higher Education students was disappointing. The CEO said there was a national issue with recruiting apprentices, particularly 16-19 students. The Higher Education student numbers might increase over the course of the year.

b) College Self-Assessment Report 2022-23

The 'Draft SAR for Corporation' (Paper 3) was received in advance of the meeting.

The CEO explained that the College was on the journey towards Outstanding. Although the current judgements were 'Good', progress had been made and aspects of key judgements were 'Outstanding'. Governors said they thought the report excellent and the achievement grades were incredibly good compared to national. A high standard was being maintained.

Governors asked why the proposed grade for apprenticeships was 'Good' considering the difficulties the College had experienced in this area. The CEO said the apprenticeship provision was graded as 'Good' by Ofsted last time they inspected. The curriculum intent, progression and skills led to an overall 'Good' judgement. Some of the challenges around apprenticeships were national issues.

Governors said they were recently asked to contribute to the SAR process as part of their curriculum link roles and said it would be good to receive feedback on why the final judgement for their area was made.

Action: TA/MGK

Governors asked whether the progress made since the last Ofsted inspection needed to be included in the report. The CEO said an update could be shared with governors but this would not be included in the SAR that is sent to Ofsted.

Action: TA/MGK

Governors asked why Behaviour and Attitudes had been graded as 'Good' when it was 'Outstanding' in the last Ofsted inspection. The CEO said there were still aspects to be developed.

Governors said they would like further details to be included in the report, in particular the % students achieving their target grades, an Area to Improve for Level 3 high

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grades and details about the performance of student groups to include: students in care, Free School Meals, additional learning support and minority ethnic groups.

Action: TA/MGK

IT WAS DECIDED to approve the following proposed judgements:

Quality of Education	Good
Behaviour & Attitudes	Good
Personal Development	Good
Leadership & Management	Good

57/23 **Student Governor Report**

A 'Student Governor Report' (Paper 4) was received in advance of the meeting. TK summarised the report.

Governors thanked TK for the report and for her contribution to the meeting. They asked about the issue with limited resources. TK explained that at one-point students didn't have access to all of the study materials but the issues had now been resolved.

TK left the meeting.

58/23 **Governance, Search and Strategy Committee Report**

a) **Committee Report**

'Governance, Search and Strategy Committee Minutes 2 November 2023' (Paper 5) were received in advance of the meeting.

b) **Risk Register**

The Chair confirmed that the new risk register would be completed by the Corporation Strategy day being held on 17 January 2024.

c) **Further Education Code of Governance**

A 'AoC Code of Good Governance Cover Sheet' (Paper 6a) and the updated 'AoC Code of Good Governance' (Paper 6b) were received in advance of the meeting. The Governance, Search and Strategy Committee were in the process of a review of the new code.

d) **Governance Action Plan**

The 'WTC Governance Action Plan 2023-24' (Paper 7) was received in advance of the meeting. The action plan was the outcome of the conversation held at the last Corporation meeting.

IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Governance Action Plan.

59/23 **Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience Committee Report**

a) **Report from Committee**

Minutes from the meeting of the CQSE Committee held on 22 November 2023 (Paper 8) had been received in advance of the meeting. The focus of the meeting had been validation of the SARs.

The Chair of the Committee said the involvement of link governors in the SAR process had been useful. There were some operational issues that needed addressing including staffing issues in Engineering and Motor Vehicle, data queries, the questions

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included in the student survey and student survey completion rates. Engineering/Motor Vehicle and Health and Care had good achievement rates despite significant staffing problems which should be commended.

On a strategic level, all curriculum areas could confidently talk about their work with Employer Advisory Boards. There was evidence of impact and of the strategy beginning to take effect.

The SAR process had highlighted that there had been very little movement in some areas since 2017/18. Partly this was due to the impact of COVID but the current aim was to become 'Outstanding'. The Chair posed a number of questions: Did the Corporation still aspire to achieve an 'Outstanding' grade or was 'Good' good enough? If the aspiration was still to achieve 'Outstanding', how could the Corporation accelerate progress to ensure at least 50% of the provision was 'Outstanding'? Should particular curriculum areas be targeted? Were more resources needed to make this happen?

The CEO said it was important to ensure all students received an outstanding learning experience but timescales had never been set for achieving an 'Outstanding' Ofsted grade. There was funding that could be used to put in place additional resources. It was agreed that the Chair of the Committee would meet with TA and MGK to look at how to move forward with this. Governors asked the leadership team to put together an action plan for how the College would move more of the provision to 'Outstanding' including the additional resources required. The plan should include a list of the curriculum areas and a realistic timeline for each area.

Action: TA/MGK

b) Dashboard Review

The Corporation reviewed relevant KPIs in the Data Dashboard:

- Teaching Learning and Assessment: Learning walks were underway. Teachers were being assessed against 'Outstanding' criteria.
- Deep Dives were underway and were including very thorough checks of the curriculum areas.
- Attendance was currently 88.1% compared to the target of 87% and last year's 85%. The attendance process had been changed and the results could be seen.
- Achievement data for 2022-23 was fully complete and remained strong.

c) Development Plan Review

An update on progress towards the Development Plan 2023-24 (Paper 9) was received in advance of the meeting. Governors asked why so many areas were graded as 'Green'. The CEO said they were green because they were on track.

60/23 Finance, Resources and Capital Projects Committee Report

a) Report from the Committee

Minutes from the meeting of the FRCP Committee held on 22 November 2023 (Paper 10) had been received in advance of the meeting.

It was noted that some changes had been made to the Annual Report and Financial Statements since they were circulated to the Finance, Resources and Capital Projects Committee. A list of the changes would be circulated to committee members.

b) Dashboard Review

The Corporation reviewed progress towards the KPIs in the Data Dashboard:

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- Finance: The financial health grade was 'Outstanding'.
- HR: Sickness levels were reducing but still above target. Long term sickness was still a big proportion of the total. Staff ethnicity was broadly representative of the student body. The College was on track for staff turnover and there had been an improvement in staff utilisation.
- Health and Safety had been discussed at the Finance, Resources and Capital Projects Committee.
- Sustainability was on track. There had been a slight increase in the energy usage for electricity which was being investigated.

c) **Development Plan Review**

The College was under target in terms of spend on staff training and development but a large amount of training was being completed. A significant amount of the training was free which was leading to the underspend. The Human Resources ET+ group had discussed the underspend and were putting together a costed plan to identify gaps and put in place additional training and development.

d) **Annual Human Resources Report**

The 'Annual Human Resources Report' (Paper 11) was received in advance of the meeting. The report had been discussed in detail by the Finance, Resources and Capital Projects Committee.

e) **Annual Health and Safety Report**

The 'Annual Health and Safety Report' (Paper 12) was received in advance of the meeting. The report had been discussed in detail by the Finance, Resources and Capital Projects Committee.

f) **Delegated Authority to Sign the Legal Charge for the Barclays Loan**

The following papers were received in advance of the meeting:

- Confirmation from solicitors that a new Board resolution was not required to re-execute the charge. (Paper 13a)
- DfE consent for amendment to existing borrowing arrangements. (Paper 13b)
- Minutes of a special meeting of the Corporation on 29 September 2021 (Paper 13c)
- Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation on 11 May 2022. (Paper 13d)

MC explained that the College needed to re-execute the legal charge for Barclays Loan due to the time passed since it was signed. Following the ONS reclassification, Department for Education consent had been required which had been received. A new Board resolution wasn't needed. SM and TH would sign the legal charge and it would be counter signed by TA and MC.

Governors asked about the level of the charge which was 140% on a Market Value basis. MC said it was based on the valuation carried out in 2021. Governors asked about the costs involved. MC said the disbursement, valuation and legal fees had cost the College approx. £100k.

61/23 **Audit Committee Report**

a) **Report from the Committee**

Minutes from the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 29 November 2023 (Paper 14) had been received in advance of the meeting.

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The Chair of the Committee said that the overall controls and governance had been good in both the internal and external audit. One area that needed further focus was cyber security. The CEO explained that an internal audit of Cyber Security had been arranged for this academic year. Governors would be asked to complete some online cyber security training.

b) Audit Committee Annual Report 2022-23

The 'Audit Committee Annual Report' (Paper 15) was received in advance of the meeting.

Governors asked why the internal audit opinion for some internal audits was substantial rather than strong. It was agreed the reasons would be circulated.

Governors asked whether any processes had been changed following the data quality issue mentioned in the report. The CEO explained that the internal processes had been amended to ensure the error wouldn't happen again. It was agreed to add the actions taken to the relevant section in the Audit Committee Annual Report.

After making the amendment, IT WAS DECIDED to accept the Annual Report from the Audit Committee

c) Post Audit Report and Letter of Representation

The 'Post Audit Report' (Paper 16a) and the 'Letter of Representation' (Paper 16b) was received in advance of the meeting. On the recommendation of the Audit Committee, IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Post Audit Report and the Letter of Representation.

d) Financial Statements year Ended 31 July 2023

The 'Draft Report and Financial Statements for Year Ended 31 July 2023' (Paper 17) had been received in advance of the meeting. The Report and Financial Statements had been reviewed by both the Finance, Resources and Capital Projects Committee and the Audit Committee.

MC reported that two amendments had been made since circulation of the report. The first was around the DfE consent for the loan and the second around the responsibility of the Remuneration Committee in setting the pay and remuneration for Senior Postholders.

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 2023; and to authorise the Chair and the CEO to sign the Report and Financial Statements on behalf of the Corporation.

62/23 Remuneration Committee

a) Summary Report from the Remuneration Committee

The Chair of the Remuneration Committee gave a verbal report from the meeting of the Committee held on 6 December 2023. The Committee had met and discussed Senior Postholder pay. It had been decided that the Chair would monitor the performance and pay of the Head of Governance.

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b) **Annual Remuneration Committee Report**

The 'Annual Remuneration Committee Report 2022-23' (Paper 18) was received in advance of the meeting.

c) **Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference**

The 'Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference' (Paper 19) was received in advance of the meeting.

IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Remuneration Committee terms of reference.

d) **Chair Role Description**

An updated 'Chair Role Description' (Paper 20) was received in advance of the meeting and was approved.

63/23 Date of the Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting of the Corporation was Wednesday 20 March 2023.
The Corporation Strategy Day would be held on Wednesday 17 January 2024.

Summary of Actions

No.	Action	Lead	Target Date
54/23	Start to circulate Ofsted briefing information on key areas to governors.	MGK	July 24
56/23a	Provide a Partnership Report to include a list of the partners, areas of the curriculum they link to, the management team lead, the duration of the partnership if applicable, the status of the relationship and any other key information. The report should identify whether there are any gaps.	MGK/TA	Mar 24
56/23b	Provide feedback to link governors about why the final grade for their subject was awarded.	MGK	Mar 24
56/23bi	Provide governors with an update on progress made since the last Ofsted inspection.	TA/MGK	Mar 24
56/23bii	Add further details to the SAR report to include: % students achieving their target grades, an Area to Improve for Level 3 high grades and details about the performance of student groups to include: students in care, Free School Meals, additional learning support and minority ethnic groups.	TA/MGK	Mar 24
59/23	Put together an action plan for how the College will move more of the provision to 'Outstanding' including the additional resources required. The plan should include a list of the curriculum areas and a realistic timescale for each area.	TA/MGK	Mar 24

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