



West Thames College Further Education Corporation

Minutes of the Meeting of the Corporation

held at 6.00pm on Wednesday 5 July 2023
at the College

Present:	Mr S McGeoch (SM) Ms T Aust (TA) Mr A Barke (AB) Mr A Smith (AS) Ms B Sandhu (BS) Mr S Taylor (ST) Mr B Armstrong (BA) Ms R Turner (RT) Mr P Sullivan (PS) Mr A Rides (AR)	Chair Principal
Apologies:	Ms A Cornish (AC) Mr A Alimohamed (AA) Mr L McBirney (LM) Ms T Kaur (TK) Mr S Wilcox (SW)	
In Attendance:	Mr J Bolt (JB) Ms C Ajit Singh (CS) Ms K Frost (KF) Mr M Michaelides (MM) Mr M Cooper (MC) Ms M Gajewska-Kopczyk (MGK) Ms F Chalk (FC) Mr G Casley (GC) Mr T Hayhoe (TH)	Associate Member Associate Member Head of Governance Executive Director Resources and Student Experience Executive Director Finance, HR and Development Vice Principal, Curriculum and Quality External Governance Reviewer

34/23 **Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest**

BA took the Chair for the meeting and welcomed everyone. Introductions were made. FC was attending the meeting to observe as part of the External Review of Governance. SM and AB were attending the meeting virtually.

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from AC, AA, LM, TK and SW.

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

35/23 **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

a) **Corporation Meeting 22 March 2023**

Minutes from the meeting of the Corporation held on 22 March 2023 (Paper 1) were received in advance of the meeting. IT WAS DECIDED they were a true record of the meeting and they were approved.

b) **Corporation Strategy Day 23 May 2022**

Minutes from the meeting of the Corporation Strategy Day held on 23 May 2023 (Paper 2) 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' was received in advance of the meeting (Paper 3).

36/23 Strategic Items

a) **Executive Report**

The 'Executive Report – July 2023' (Paper 4) was received in advance of the meeting. The CEO drew attention to key points in the report:

- The College was expecting an Ofsted inspection within the next two academic years. There had been some minor changes to the process from September 2023. The College Nursery was inspected in April 2023 and maintained its Outstanding Grade. The report from the inspection was received in advance of the meeting (Paper 7). The College had been asked to participate in an Ofsted research project. The informal feedback received was very positive and had identified areas of good practice in terms of how the tuition fund is used to support students.
- Following feedback from the Corporation at the May Strategy Day, the Accountability Statement had been finalised and submitted. The final version was received in advance of the meeting. (Paper 8)
- The College had been part of the Strategic Development Fund project in green skills that was completed in March 2023. The fund had been replaced with the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) and a draft bid for funding was underway.
- At their last meeting, the Curriculum Quality and Student Experience (CQSE) Committee had asked the CEO to provide some information about the work the College was doing in terms of responding to local need for ESOL courses. This had been included in the Executive Report. There had been a massive growth in ESOL provision which demonstrated how highly responsive the College was and the impact the College was having in terms of meeting local need.
- The team were putting together Development Plan targets for next academic year based on the 3 Year Strategic Plan and the Accountability Statement. After input had been received from staff and students, the Development Plan would be brought to Governors in October 2023.
- Achievement rates: The College was the number one college in London for achievement in 2021-22 for 16-18 year olds, for adult students and overall for all levels. The position looked positive in terms of predicted achievement for this year.
- Partnerships: The College had been asked to deliver a session at the AoC National SEND Conference in December 2023 to share good practice in partnership working with Ambitious College. Talks were under way to move the teacher training programme to St Marys. The second round of Youth Hub had been completed with positive outcomes. Following the successful completion, the CEO and Director for Partnerships were asked to attend a meeting with a senior official from the DWP to talk about the effective partnership work.

Governors asked whether ESOL students were on other courses as well as ESOL. The CEO said most were primarily on ESOL courses but some did additional units such as Maths, Citizenship and Digital Skills.

Governors asked about the legal status of the students. MGK said it was mixed, a number were unaccompanied children, some were asylum seekers, some residents living in local hotels and some Ukrainian Refugees. The College had to manage the courses flexibly and be highly responsive to meet needs.

Governors congratulated the College on the success stories, in particular the College being top for achievement rates last academic year, the College being invited to share expertise nationally and the College Nursery achieving Outstanding in their Ofsted inspection.

b) Update on Actions

An update on actions from the last meeting was given:

38/22: *Ensure KPIs and the Data Dashboard are related back to the Strategic Plan.* There wouldn't be any major changes in the short term to the Dashboard. A front sheet would be added showing key movements in KPIs. Consideration would be given to the work coming out of the risk management project and whether any other key risks needed to be included in the Dashboard. The College would work to ensure the information on there was more automated than it currently is.

17/23: The outcomes letter from the ESFA Strategic Conversation was received in advance of the meeting.

c) Receive Items

The following items were received in advance of the meeting:

- Progress towards the Development Plan 2022/23. (Paper 6)
- Ofsted Report for the College Nursery. (Paper 7)
- Final Accountability Statement 2023. (Paper 8).

The CEO drew attention to key areas in the Development Plan that wouldn't be covered later in the agenda:

Goal 2.3: Application and progression numbers were in a good position and up from the same point last year. External applications were up 3%.

Governors asked what was causing the increase in numbers. The CEO said it was the continued work the College was doing, particularly on internal progression. A higher number of students were achieving and progressing onto the next level course.

Governors said they had seen the marketing team's presentation recently which had shown what a sophisticated operation it was now.

Goal 2.4: Positive progress had been made with partnerships. New employer links and employer advisory boards had produced positive results.

37/23 Curriculum and Quality

a) Dashboard Review

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

- Teaching Learning and Assessment: 83% of learning walks were green which was in line with targets. There were still a small number to finalise.

- Attendance: Currently 84.6% compared to the target of 88%. Attendance was lower than target but it was a nationally reported issue. Attendance levels were good compared to other colleges in London.
- Achievement: Achievement levels were close to last year's results.
- Deep Dives: All of the deep dives had been completed and were split between green and amber. They had included a focus on additional areas this year.

Governors said the last Ofsted report mentioned feedback and asked how governors knew this had been addressed. MGK said that it could be seen in the commentary in the Data Dashboard for learning walks. One of the categories was assessment and feedback. 63 lessons had a good or better assessment for assessment and feedback. The other place was through the deep dives.

Governors asked about the areas at the Skills and Logistics Centre where there had been concerns and whether they had been addressed. MGK said the College had been looking at the curriculum and worked with an external organisation to help develop it further. There had also been closer monitoring. Predicted achievement was more positive but it would continue to be an area for scrutiny. Governors said they had recently attended a Student Voice meeting where positive feedback was received from students about changes they had seen at the Skills and Logistics Centre. The students had also mentioned the quality of feedback they received from both the academic and wellbeing side. Governors congratulated the staff who had been working with the students.

b) Development Plan 2022/23

The Corporation reviewed progress towards the relevant items in the Development Plan 2022/23.

Governors discussed the roll out of T Levels, in particular the timing of introducing them and difficulties of securing the necessary amount of work placement. Governors asked how much student interest there was in them. MGK said there was low levels of interest as they were high risk qualifications and not suitable for all students. There might be some alternative qualifications available but no information was available yet. Governors asked whether Universities would accept students who had studied T Levels. MGK said the number of Universities accepting them had increased.

Governors asked whether the Notice to Improve courses were on track. MGK said 75% were on track to improve.

c) Report from Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience (CQSE) Committee

Minutes from the meeting of the CQSE Committee held on 14 June 2023 (Paper 9) had been received in advance of the meeting.

d) Update on Actions

- 58/22a: SAR Validation Process. The SAR validation process had been reviewed and a proposal about a new process was received in advance of the meeting. (Papers 10a and 10b). The new process involved link governors more in the self-assessment process.
- Governor Link Visits: The governor curriculum link visits had taken place in the spring term. A summary of key themes from the visits and a copy of the completed visit forms was received in advance of the meeting. (Paper 11).

Governors asked the CEO to take forward the specific recommendations from the visits.

Action: TA

e) **Arrangements for Obtaining the Views of Students and Staff**

The draft 'Arrangements for Obtaining the Views of Staff and Students' (Paper 12) was received in advance of the meeting. The document had been reviewed by the CQSE Committee who were recommending it to the Corporation for approval. IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Arrangements for Obtaining the Views of Students and Staff.

AB left the meeting at 7pm.

38/23 **Resources and Student Experience**

a) **Dashboard Review**

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

- **Health and Safety:** The number of accidents in the first two terms were comparable to last year and proportionate to the expected areas. There had been no reportable accidents. 63 risk assessments had been completed in the spring term. 86% of risk assessments were for trips and visits. 257 health and safety training sessions had been delivered.
- **Sustainability:** There had been a 13.5% reduction in overall energy consumption. Recycling levels had increased by 31%. Sustainability training sessions had been completed for staff. Next year this would be rolled out to governors. Electrical vehicle charging points had been installed and an E transit van purchased. The solar panel tender was out.

b) **Development Plan 2022-23**

The Corporation reviewed progress towards the relevant items in the Development Plan 2022/23.

c) **Update on Actions**

14/23: The Just Say Something Hounslow Film would be used next year with students as part of Tutorial, Counselling and Wellbeing sessions.

d) **Health and Safety Policy**

The draft 'Health and Safety Policy' (Paper 13) was received in advance of the meeting. The policy had been reviewed by the Finance, Resources and Capital Projects Committee and was being recommended for approval. IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Health and Safety policy.

39/23 **Finance, Human Resources and Audit**

a) **Dashboard Review**

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

- **Finance:** The Financial Health Grade was Good with a score of 230/300. The forecast outturn showed a £150k surplus for the year. Both the current ratio and profitability ratio were above the sector median. In terms of funding allocation, 16-19 enrolment was above target and adult funding was at 99.7% of what was targeted.
- **Human Resources:** Sickness absence was higher this year at just over 5% compared to the target of 3.5%. 50% of the absence was due to long term absence. An analysis of patterns was underway. Staff utilisation was almost at the target of 94%. Staff turnover was 5% below the same point last year. There had

been a slight divergence in terms of the staff BAME proportion compared to students. Some of this was driven by the higher numbers of ESOL students.

Governors asked what support the College provided for staff with mental health issues. MC explained the support that was offered. Going forward it would be useful to measure the impact of the support.

Governors asked whether the interest rate for the bank loan was higher now. MC said the bank loan was a fixed rate and fixed term so there had been no increases.

Governors asked whether the internal or external auditor provided information about staff utilisation. MC said internal audit could review that area. The FE Commissioner had carried out some work on curriculum efficiency recently which might help with colleges sharing information and benchmarking.

Governors said the level of staff utilisation was good compared to other colleges and congratulated the team for keeping it a focus and making effective use of staff.

b) **Development Plan 2022/23**

The Corporation reviewed progress towards the relevant items in the Development Plan 2022/23.

c) **Report from Finance, Resources and Capital Projects (FRCP) Committee**

Minutes from the meeting of the FRCP Committee held on 21 June 2023 had been received in advance of the meeting (Paper 14).

d) **Update on Actions**

16: The draft 'Framework for the Pay and Conditions of Staff' had been received in advance of the meeting (Paper 15). The framework had been reviewed in detail by the FRCP Committee who were recommending it for approval.

Governors asked whether there was anything linking pay with staff performance and whether someone being managed under the capability procedure would receive an increment. MC said there was no element of performance related pay in the framework and it wasn't something that was done in the sector. Any staff on capability were managed to address the issues and improve their performance to where it needed to be. Governors asked how low and high performance was managed. The CEO said performance was managed through the appraisal programme and line management scheme. Occasionally staff were given honoraria payments.

IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Framework for the Pay and Conditions of Staff.

e) **College Budget 2023/24**

The proposed '2023-24 Budget and 2024-25 Financial Plan' was received in advance of the meeting. (Paper 16). MC explained that the budget and financial plan had been reviewed by the FRCP Committee who were recommending it for approval.

The budget and financial plan would deliver an operating surplus of £400k in 2023-24 reducing to £120k the following year. The expenditure included an assumed pay award of 5%, 6% inflation on non pay lines and a contingency of £200k for pay and £200k for non pay. There were risks associated with growth.

The projected operating results would result in the College receiving an ESFA financial health grade of 'Outstanding' in 2023-24 reducing to 'Good' the following year. Forecasts showed the College to have a healthy cash balance across both years with

no anticipated adverse cash flow issues. There was projected compliance with current bank loan covenants.

Governors asked if the budget remained the same throughout the year. MC said the budget stayed the same. For management purposes, the budget was flexed around the October half term. Variances were reported to governors termly.

Governors asked whether T Levels had a different funding rate and if the funding would cover what needed to be delivered. MC said the base rate was higher than for the 16-19 study programme, the funding varied depending on the course. MC would look into whether the funding would cover the costs.

Action: MC

IT WAS DECIDED to:

- a) Approve the operating revenue budget for 2023-24 with gross income of £22,978k and gross expenditure of £22,578k giving an operating surplus of £400k.
- b) Approve the financial plan for 2024-25 with operating surplus of £120k.
- c) Agree to a capital expenditure programme for 2023-24 of £950k in total.
- f) **Financial Scheme of Delegation**
The draft 'Financial Scheme of Delegation' (Paper 17) had been received in advance of the meeting. The FRCP Committee had reviewed the Financial Scheme of Delegation at their last meeting and were recommending it for approval. IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Financial Scheme of Delegation.
- g) **Chair's Action: Approval of Energy Contracts**
It was agreed the Chair would review and approve the spend on the energy contracts when they came up for review in July 2023.
- h) **Report from Audit Committee**
Minutes from the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 28 June 2023 were received in advance of the meeting (Paper 18).

Governors asked whether any of the data quality issues in the funding review internal audit could impact funding. MC said there were no funding implications. Governors asked whether the auditors looked at 100% of the population. MC said they took a sample and there was some coverage of controls.

- i) **Anti Money Laundering Policy**
The draft 'Anti Money Laundering Policy' was received in advance of the meeting. (Paper 19). The policy had been reviewed by the Audit Committee who were recommending it for approval.

Governors said it would be important that relevant people signed off to say they had read the policy although noted that the risks were minimal.

IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Anti Money Laundering Policy.

- j) **Receive Items**
The following items were received in advance of the meeting:
 - College Financial Dashboard (Paper 20)
 - Management Accounts (Paper 21)
 - Post 16 Audit Code of Practice 2022-23 (Paper 22)

40/23 Governance

a) **Chair and Vice Chair Appointments**

The Head of Governance reported that SM had indicated he was willing to continue as Chair for a further academic year. IT WAS DECIDED to appoint SM as Chair of the Corporation for the period 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024.

The Head of Governance reported that PS, the new Chair of the FRCP Committee and RT, the new Chair of the CQSE Committee had both agreed to take on the Vice Chair role. IT WAS DECIDED to appoint RT and PS as Vice Chairs of the Corporation for the period 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024.

b) **Corporation Determination**

IT WAS DECIDED to decrease the total number of members on the Corporation to 15.

c) **Appointment of Bruce Armstrong as Associate Member**

IT WAS DECIDED to appoint Bruce Armstrong as an Associate Member for the period 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024.

d) **Appointment of Charanjit Ajit Singh as Associate Member**

IT WAS DECIDED to appoint Charanjit Ajit Singh as an Associate Member for the period 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024.

e) **Appointment of John Bolt as Associate Member**

IT WAS DECIDED to appoint John Bolt as an Associate Member for the period 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024.

f) **Committee Chairs and Membership for 2023-24**

A list of the proposed Committee Chairs and Committee Membership for 2023-24 was received in advance of the meeting. (Paper 23). IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Committee Chairs and Membership for 2023-24.

g) **Scheme of Delegation and Committee Terms of Reference 2023-24**

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

IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Scheme of Delegation and Committee Terms of Reference 2023-24.

h) **Governor's Handbook 2023-24**

The draft 'Governor's Handbook 2023-24' (Paper 25) was received in advance of the meeting. IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Governor's Handbook 2023-24.

i) **Standing Orders 2023-24**

The draft 'Standing Orders 2023-24' (Paper 26) was received in advance of the meeting. IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Standing Orders 2023-24.

j) **Governor Code of Conduct**

The draft 'Governor Code of Conduct' (Paper 27) was received in advance of the meeting. IT WAS DECIDED to approve the Governor Code of Conduct

k) **Policy Status List**

The 'Policy Schedule' (Paper 28a) and the 'Corporation Policy Review and Monitoring Schedule 2023-24' (Paper 28b) was received in advance of the meeting.

IT WAS DECIDED to give delegated authority for approval of College policies as detailed in the policy schedule.

l) Receive Items: Governance Updates

'Governance Updates – Summer 2023' was received in advance of the meeting.

41/23 Risk Update

SM reported that work was underway on the review of the risk management process.

42/23 Farewells

Thanks were passed onto all of the governors who were coming to the end of their term of office including SW, BA, BS, LM and TK.

The CEO reported that MM had resigned from his role and would be leaving the College at the end of September 2023.

43/23 Date of the Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting of the Corporation was Wednesday 11 October 2023.

Summary of Actions

No.	Action	Lead	Target Date
37/23	Take forward the specific recommendations made in the Governors Curriculum Link visits and detailed in the Link Visit Summary Report.	TA	Dec 23
39/23	Look into whether the T Levels funding will cover what needs to be delivered.	MC	Oct 23