

## West Herts College Corporation Board Meeting

Wednesday 21 May 2025  
Hemel Hempstead Campus  
5pm – 7pm

### MINUTES

#### Attendees:

<b>Governors</b>	<b>Role:</b>	<b>Other Attendees</b>	<b>Role</b>
Tony Breslin	Chair of Corporation	Emma Doree	Director of Student Experience
Gill Worgan	Principal & CEO	Cath Gunn	Principal of Barnfield College
Guy Ainsley	External Governor	Sarah Knowles	Deputy Principal
Charles Chidom	Staff Governor	Nidha Patel	Director of Finance
Laura Dawson	External Governor	Amanda Washbrook	Deputy Principal
Mariam Hassan	Student Governor	Nidha Patel	Director of Finance
Richard Lewis	External Governor	Anne-Marie Kinsella	Governance Professional
Chris Nicholls	External Governor		
Stuart Ord (L)6pm	External Governor	<b>Apologies</b>	<b>Role:</b>
Martin Sidders	External Governor	Phil Berry	External Governor
David York	Staff Governor	Wendy Donovan	External Governor
		Zoubair Aouam	Student Governor

Ref	Agenda Item
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#### 35/24 1. GENERAL BUSINESS

##### 1.1. Apologies for absence and quoracy

Apologies were noted and accepted, and the meeting was quorate.  
All reports had been circulated in advance of the meeting for the Board's consideration.

##### 1.2. Declaration of pecuniary interests

There were no declarations.

##### 1.3. Requests for urgent business

There were no requests for urgent business.

#### 36/24 2. PREVIOUS MEETING

##### 2.1. Approve Minutes of previous meeting (02 April 2025)

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record and approved for electronic signature.

##### 2.2. Action from previous Corporation meeting

There were no matters arising not on the agenda.

Ref	Summary of Actions	when
	No actions were recorded at the last meeting and there are no outstanding actions.	

#### 37/24 3. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The report highlighted that the College is performing well against all Key Performance Indicators. The national averages for student attendance and punctuality were discussed in relation to the context and complexities of West Herts College. The Board were satisfied that the college targets for attendance and punctuality are sufficiently challenging. The inclusion of behaviour in the dashboard KPI's was

discussed. It was noted that KPI's reflect current priorities and it was agreed that these priorities would be reviewed at the Strategy Away Day in June.

The report highlighted that adult skills budget has been reduced by 22% and the College is taking actions to mitigate against the impact of it on its adult qualification offer. The Board discussed the impact of the adult funding reduction and possible options to meet the needs of adult learners in alternative ways. The College would consider reducing the curriculum offer for 2025-26 and research other specific projects and funding for adult learning. Going forward, the adult education funding will be devolved to strategic authorities and there will be new arrangements regarding adult skills funding allocations. It was agreed that using College money to subsidise adult programmes to maintain current funding levels was not advisable as there is currently no growth in adult education to sustain this type of investment going forward.

In line with DfE expectations, the impact of transitioning from the use of sub-contractors to direct delivery in 23-24 was discussed and it was noted by the Board that this transition had led to an underspend and the subsequent funding reduction in 25/26, The Board were assured that this would be included in the strategic conversation with the Department for Education later this year.

The College has recently joined two key strategic groups which have been set up by Herts Futures (Herts County Council) with regard to the Adult Skills Strategy and the Get Britain Working Steering Group. The Board asked how effective these groups were in bringing about change. The Executive outlined the challenges the groups faced in removing barriers to employment for specific groups, especially in the light of the limitations on sharing information between key organisations. However, the Board were confident that the College had a voice in this matter and some input into the decision making. The Board commended the College for always being involved in new initiatives and looked forward to further updates.

The Board congratulated the 4 Hairdressing students who have progressed to the second round of the World Skills competition. It was also noted that the College is supporting the young people performing with Electric Umbrella in ITVs Britain's Got Talent show.

The report was noted.

## **38/24 4. RESPONSIBILITY & ACCOUNTABILITY**

### **4.1. Complaints – Annual Summary Report**

The College provides informal and formal opportunities for students to share information about their experiences. Students typically provide informal feedback through discussions with their teachers, course leaders, Heads of School, the Student Support team, and members of the quality team via focus groups. In circumstances where individuals wish to make formal complaints, they can do so via the College's website or by writing to the Principal. The College aims to resolve complaints quickly and to the satisfaction of the complainant. No complaints have been referred to external agencies.

The Board congratulated the College for the notable reduction in the number of complaints received about teaching and learning compared to last academic year and commended the College on the extensive support provided to new and developing teachers through training and development, mentoring, and team teaching which had clearly had a positive impact.

The number of complaints received about student exclusions had also reduced compared to last year and this was due to improved communications with parents/carers and external agencies, regarding student behaviour and the potential sanctions that the College may apply.

The Board was satisfied that the College has made several changes in light of feedback received through the complaints process, including the arrangements in place to implement the access arrangements for students who are unknown to the College prior to their enrolment.

The report was noted.

#### **4.2. Student/Enrolment Applications and College Reach**

The enrolment target for students aged 16-18 for next academic year (25/26) is 7513 across the Group. This is an increase of over 1000 compared to 2023/24. To meet this target the College has developed a range of marketing activities that can be applied virtually and on-campus, these were detailed in the report.

There is currently a high number of applicants expressing an interest in enrolling with the College in September and in addition there are a significant number of students currently studying at the College, who are due to complete their studies in the summer and undertake a next-level qualification next academic year.

Growth areas are in Engineering and Construction following the opening of the new Construction and Engineering Centre. Hairdressing and Beauty Therapy, Aeronautical Engineering, Travel and Aviation, Interior Design and Architecture and Health, Education and Care are showing increases.

. I'm not sure we should specify areas currently showing decline in the public domain – parents / young people may be put off by this info and it can change very quickly too. The DfE's pause on qualification reform for key subjects in Electrical Installation and Health and Social Care, has led to the continuation of the popular existing qualifications in these subjects.

In response to questions from the Board, the Executive said that the College buildings are utilised effectively and outlined the challenges and solutions in regard to accommodating the extra students. A full review of the property strategy is being undertaken which includes the proposal for new classrooms. Timetabling is complex but is being managed well. It was highlighted that the change in DfE policy also has an impact on capacity, and policies are subject to constant change e.g., the increase in teaching hours associated with English and Maths, T-Levels

The report was noted.

#### **4.3. Finance Report** (confidential item) (Please see separate minutes)

### **39/24 5. REGULARITY COMPLIANCE**

#### **5.1. Accountability Statement & Employment Strategy Report**

The Accountability Statement presents the College's short-term objectives relating to new provision or growth in the academic year 2025/6 compared to 2024/25, which have been planned to meet specific national and local skills priorities, it reflects the College's Strategic Plan.

The Statement forms part of the College's Accountability Agreement with the ESFA and must be signed off by a Corporation prior to submission to the Department for Education.

##### **5.1.1 Local Skills and Community Engagement Strategy**

The College works closely with the Education Review Boards (ERB) to prepare Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs). West Herts College was graded 'Strong' for its contribution to meeting skills needs in the inspection in April 2024.

The College leads the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) project for all FE colleges across Hertfordshire, and the LSIF health project for the FE colleges in the South-East Midlands and collaborate with six other local colleges in an inter-college skills competition project, to create more opportunities for learners to benefit from competitive activity. This year the College are leading the SEND competition.

The Board considered both reports together and asked for further clarification on how priorities are evaluated. The College explained that the LSIP's are due for a refresh and with the involvement of Skills England this will create a clearer picture going forward. The College also carry out their own evaluations by working closely with stakeholders to reflect more defined priorities for specific areas including an increased focus on creative industries in South Midlands.

The Chair of the Quality and Curriculum Committee said that the process for developing the LSIPs had been discussed in detail at the Committee meeting in October and the flow chart in the report outlined the process well. The Executive added that in terms of flexibility of the LSIPs, there are a number of planned activities, and these are subject to change depending on circumstances, for example the reduction on the Adult funding budget.

It was noted that the completion of the Accountability Statement was the DfE's mechanism for reporting and it is prescriptive. The College cannot include its own priorities.

The report was noted.

**DECISION:** The Corporation approved the Accountability Statement

**ACTION:** The Chair of Corporation to sign the Accountability Statement

5.2. **DfE Grant -Phase 2 Project** (confidential item)  
(Please see separate minutes)

5.3. **Draft Budget** (confidential – Part 2)  
(Please see separate minutes)

## 40/24 6. BOARD & ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

### 6.1. Feedback from Committees:

#### 6.1.1. Search & Governance (12 May 2025)

The Chair of the Search and Governance Committee gave a verbal update on the progress of recruiting governors to fill upcoming vacancies in September. The Search and Governance Committee was extremely pleased with the quality of applicants and had selected 10 candidates for interview. The range of applicants had been more diverse than in previous years. The interviews will take place on the 23 and 24 June and the panel will be the members of the Search and Governance Committee, who will feedback to the Corporation about the outcome of the interviews at the next meeting.

The potential for the use of associate members and early introduction to committee membership for new governors was discussed.

The Search and Governance Minutes will be available at the next meeting for noting.

The Corporation was pleased to hear that Chris Nicholls, Independent Governor, had agreed to stay on for another year. The extension to CN's terms of office was in compliance with the instrument and articles of government for West Herts College.

**DECISION:** The Corporation agreed to an extension Chris Nicholls term of office to 31 July 2026.

#### 6.1.2. **Quality & Curriculum** (13 May 2025)

The Chair of the Quality & Curriculum Committee (CN) gave a verbal update on the topics discussed at the last meeting and the work of the Committee in its first year. CN noted the success of the outcomes for ESOL Adult Learners and the introduction of the Stepping Stones qualification for Maths students. He also noted the high-quality reports provided by the Executive to the Committee and their positive responses to any challenges during the Committee meeting.

The Quality and Curriculum Minutes will be available at the next meeting for noting.

The Quality and Curriculum Committee had submitted to the Corporation their first annual report. The Chair of the Committee recommended that the Committee continue its work into 2025-26 and asked for approval of the newly developed role description for the Chair of the Committee.

Appendices:

- 6.1.2.1. Annual Report to Corporation
- 6.1.2.2. Role Description for QCC Chair

**DECISION:** The Corporation agreed to make the Quality & Curriculum Committee a permanent part of their constitution

**DECISION:** The Corporation approved the role description for the Chair of the Quality and Curriculum Committee pending the amendment of a typo.

#### 6.2. **Corporation Membership Update**

Please see also agenda item 6.1

The membership was noted.

#### 6.3. **Calendar of meeting dates for 2025-26**

**DECISION:** The meeting dates for 2025-26 were agreed by the Corporation.

#### 6.4. **Learning Walks**

Chris Nicholls (CN) and Phil Berry (PB) had completed learning walks since the last meeting. Laura Dawson (LD) had attended a college production of Legally Blonde.

CN reported that he had attended a learning walk at Watford. He had seen 7 different type of lessons and found the quality of teaching and learning, to be good with students fully engaged in all lessons. The lessons he visited were Level 3 Sport, Level 3 Business, a Dance Class, Art and Design, Interior design: Level 3 Makeup(Media) and Level 2 Cooking. CN found good examples of practical work and evidence from students of promotion within their jobs as a result of their college learning. CN said that he learning walk had been influential in his decision to extend his term of office for another year and encouraged board members to participate in learning walks whenever they could.

LD reported that the production of legally blonde was first year under study students who were full of enthusiasm and energy .

PB will give his feedback at the next meeting.

One governor said that his partner had recently completed a level 2 course in counselling and reported that they found the course to be well run and the quality of the teaching good.

**41/24 7. URGENT BUSINESS**

There was no urgent business.

**42/24 8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - Wed 09 July 2025 – Watford**

Meeting closed: 18.35

**Minutes approved by the Corporation on the 09 July 2025**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Summary of Actions</b>	<b>when</b>
39/24/5.1.1	The Chair of Corporation to sign the Accountability Statement	21/05/25

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Summary of Decisions</b>
39/24/5.1.1	The Corporation approved the Accountability Statement
40/24/6.1.1	The Corporation agreed to an extension Chris Nicholls term of office to 31 July 2026.
40/24/6.1.2	The Corporation approved the role description for the Chair of the Quality and Curriculum Committee pending the amendment of a typo.
40/24/6.3	The meeting dates for 2025-26 were agreed by the Corporation.