

West Herts College Corporation Board Meeting

Wednesday 25 March 2026

Online TEAMS Meeting

5pm – 7pm

MINUTES

Attendees:

Governors	Role:	Other Attendees	Role
Tony Breslin	Chair of Corporation	Nidha Patel	Group Director-Finance
Gill Worgan	Principal & CEO	Amanda Washbrook	Deputy Principal-Business Development
Phil Berry	External Governor	Emma Doree	Vice- Principal (L 17.20)
Charles Chidom	Staff Governor	Anne-Marie Kinsella	Governance Professional
Olivia Darbon	Staff Governor		
Laura Dawson	External Governor		
Wendy Donovan	External Governor		
Rachel Fox	External Governor	Apologies	
Chris Nicholls	External Governor	Chris Gentle	External Governor
Stuart Ord	External Governor	Chris Rowe	External Governor
Gary Phillips	External Governor	Jadan Khaliq	Student Governor
Martin Sidders	External Governor	Ash Wilson	Student Governor

Ref Agenda Item

25/25 1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

1.1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the Corporation meeting and extended a particular welcome to the new Staff Governor for Business Support, Olivia Darbon.

1.2. Apologies for absence and quoracy

Apologies were received and accepted. The meeting was confirmed as quorate.

All reports had been circulated in advance of the meeting for the consideration.

The Corporation agreed to take agenda item 4.1 first to enable the Vice Principal (ED) to leave the meeting afterwards.

1.3. Declaration of pecuniary interests

There were no declarations.

1.4. Requests for urgent business

There were no items for urgent business.

25/26 2. PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1. Approval of Minutes (11 February 2026)

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

2.2. Matters Arising and Action Log Review

There were no matters arising not on the agenda and there were no outstanding actions.

Ref	Action Log	when
0	Governance Professional (GP) to circulate previous EBR report (February 2024) for information.	Completed

25/22/6.5.2	Corporation to approve appointments at the next meeting the following appointments:	Agenda 6.2
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25/27 3. STRATEGIC ITEMS

3.1. Principals Report

The Principal provided an update confirming that the College continues to make strong progress against key quality performance indicators. Recent developments relating to qualification reforms were viewed positively, including changes to the proposed defunding of BTECs, adaptations to T-Levels, revisions to GCSEs, and the introduction of additional stepping-stone qualifications. The recent meeting with the Department for Education (DfE) had also been positive.

The Principal further reported that middle management coaching had been well received, with participants finding it highly beneficial. Plans are in place to continue the coaching programme into the next academic year with more members of the management team.

In response to questions from the Corporation regarding the potential impact of qualification reforms on apprenticeship funding, the Executive confirmed that the changes do not affect the College, as it does not deliver the apprenticeships being defunded. Further to this the College is reviewing relevant apprenticeship units and considering how these may be offered to existing employers.

The Corporation noted that the qualification reforms appear positive in principle, and further details regarding the implementation are awaited. It was also encouraging that T-Levels are becoming more accessible, with increased opportunities to combine elements within the curriculum where appropriate.

The Corporation discussed the new industrial placement guidance and the impact of rising student numbers. Members were assured that the College continues to secure sufficient placement opportunities, supported by strong external partnerships and the development of flexible models. Most students undertaking industry placements this academic year are currently on track, and where students are not, the reason is not a shortage of placements.

The Corporation also received assurance that the College is well positioned to offer multiple qualification options and will broaden its curriculum offer in line with future reforms and demand.

The report was noted.

3.2. Capital Projects

The Executive reported that Phase 3 of the Barnfield project is progressing well. A productive in-person meeting was held with the Luton Planning Officer. The College will apply for grant funding to enable the delivery of the building.

In response to questions from the Corporation, the Executive confirmed that the College has a dedicated individual, responsible for exploring social value opportunities from suppliers and employers. The delivery of the Phase 3 building is not dependent on this work. Securing grant funding that is available and intended to support capital projects of this sort is being prioritised.

The Executive confirmed that the College's historical track record of obtaining capital funding was positive, but each bid is a new competitive situation.

The Corporation highlighted the consistently high quality of the College's estate.

The report was noted.

25/28 4. QUALITY & STANDARDS

4.1. **Safeguarding Annual Report** – This item was taken first on the agenda.

The report outlined the safeguarding arrangements in place across the College Group and confirmed that robust processes are established to identify and address concerns. These are supported by comprehensive staff training and regularly updated policies that align with current legislative requirements. The College maintains strong partnerships with external agencies, including the police, local authorities, the justice system and specialist support services. Domestic abuse and mental health continue to be the most prevalent issues, with students known to the justice system, young carers, looked-after children and those with poor mental health most likely to require support.

The report also detailed the College's safeguarding framework and its compliance with key statutory duties. It was noted that the Corporation is responsible for ensuring that safeguarding procedures, policies and training meet statutory requirements, including Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) 2024, and has appointed a Designated Safeguarding Governor (DSG) to oversee and scrutinise safeguarding arrangements.

The Corporation asked whether mental health concerns were increasing and how the College supports students with these needs. The Executive confirmed that cases have risen, particularly post-Covid, and that there is sector-wide discussion about the underlying causes. There is now a higher proportion of diagnosed conditions and increased awareness among students. Staff receive high-quality training to ensure they are equipped to manage situations appropriately.

Assurance was provided regarding how the College ensures that safeguarding standards are met by external partners. The Executive explained that, although external agencies play an important role, the College retains ultimate responsibility for safeguarding. Subcontractors receive safeguarding training from the College, and employers undergo rigorous checks. The controls and oversight processes in place are robust.

The Corporation commended the targeted interventions being delivered and asked whether extremist views were influencing the College's safeguarding approach, particularly in the context of national trends. The Executive confirmed that the College continually monitors themes, including those reflected in national discourse, and adapts its approach accordingly.

The Corporation welcomed the quality of the report and endorsed the strong collaborative approach taken with external agencies. The Executive confirmed that a clear process is in place to ensure continuity of effective relationships when external personnel change. Successor staff are met promptly, and the College ensures that it does not rely on a single point of contact in order to maintain resilience within its safeguarding partnerships.

The Corporation noted the positive impact of the Youth Engagement Team and requested anonymised examples of success stories in future reports, where possible.

The Corporation thanked ED for the report.

The report was noted.

ED left at 17.20

25/29 5. FINANCE & RESOURCES

5.1. Finance Report (confidential)

Please see confidential minutes (part 2)

5.2. Corporate Risk Register

The Corporation received an update on the revisions to the Risk Management Policy and the accompanying risk register. It was noted that both documents had been updated in line with the new policy requirements and Internal Audit (IA) recommendations. The revisions had improved clarity, strengthened the overall structure, and introduced a new Target risk score. The Executive confirmed that duplications had been removed and that the register had undergone a thorough review.

Members of the Audit Committee commented on the significant improvement in the usability of the document. They noted that the revised version was far less unwieldy while still retaining the necessary depth and breadth. The contribution of Internal Audit to the document's development was acknowledged as particularly valuable.

The Corporation sought clarification on the process for escalating risks to the strategic register when they cannot be adequately managed at operational level. The Executive confirmed that the escalation process is clear and well understood. Members were assured that risk mitigations are tested, with a specialist company engaged to carry out simulation exercises. This work complements existing operational continuity testing and internal audit scrutiny.

The removal of the English and maths risk from the register was explained as a result of broader qualification reforms, which have reduced the specific risk in this area. Improvements continue to be made and the nature of the risk has changed. Ongoing oversight remains in place through the Quality, Curriculum and Compliance Committee (QCC), ensuring the risk continues to be monitored through appropriate mechanisms.

The report was noted.

25/30 6. GOVERNANCE & COMPLIANCE

6.1. Feedback from Learning Walks

There had been no learning walks since the last meeting.

6.2. Update on Corporation Membership

It was noted that Olivia Darbon had replaced David York as Staff Governor for Business Support. Olivia was elected unopposed, and her two-year term of office will expire on 24 March 2028.

It was also noted that Wendy Donovan's (WD) term of office will expire on 7 May 2026, and as she did not wish to be reappointed for a second term, this meeting marked her final attendance. WD was invited to return for Farewell and Appreciation event on the 8 July.

ACTION:

The terms of office for Tony Breslin and Martin Sidders also expire on 7 May 2026. Their reappointments will be considered and approved at the Corporation meeting on 13 May 2026.

DECISION:

The Corporation approved the following appointments, effective from 1 August 2026:

- Laura Dawson – Vice-Chair of the Corporation and Chair of the Search & Governance Committee and the Remuneration Committee
- Gary Philips – Chair of the Quality & Curriculum Committee
- Rachel Fox – Designated Governor for Equality, Disability and Inclusion, and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (EDI & SEND)

6.3. Update on Corporation Action Plan

The updates on the Action Plan were reviewed and accepted.

6.4. Committee Feedback and Recommendations

6.4.1. Audit Committee

The Audit Committee met on the 24 February; the Chair of Audit Committee gave a verbal update on the reports scrutinised at the meeting and an outline of the documents/decisions recommended for approval.

DECISION: The Corporation approved the following:

- Financial Regulations
- Buzzacott to continue as the College's External Auditor for 2025-26

6.4.2. Quality & Curriculum Committee

The Quality and Curriculum Committee met on the 03 March – The Chair of QCC gave a verbal update on the reports scrutinised at the meeting.

6.4.3. Search & Governance Committee

The Search & Governance Committee met on the 09 March. The Chair of S&G gave a verbal report on the progress of the recruitment campaign to fill the upcoming vacancies in September.

6.5. Policy Approvals:

6.5.1. **Anti-Bribery Policy and Procedure** (recommended for approval by the Audit Committee)

6.5.2. **Risk Management Policy** (recommended for approval by the Audit Committee)

6.5.3. **Whistleblowing Policy** (recommended for approval by the Audit Committee)

DECISION: The Corporation approved the following policies:

- Anti-Bribery Policy and Procedure
- Risk Management Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

25/31 7. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

25/32 8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Wednesday 13 May, 5pm – Watford

Meeting closed: 18.38

Minutes approved by the Corporation on the 13 May 2026

Ref	Summary of Actions	when
25/30/6.2	The terms of office for Tony Breslin and Martin Sidders also expire on 7 May 2026. Their reappointments will be considered and approved at the Corporation meeting on 13 May 2026.	13 May 26

Ref	Summary of Decisions
25/30/6.2	<p>The Corporation approved the following appointments, effective from 1 August 2026:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Laura Dawson – Vice-Chair of the Corporation and Chair of the Search & Governance Committee and the Remuneration Committee • Gary Philips – Chair of the Quality & Curriculum Committee • Rachel Fox – Designated Governor for Safeguarding, Equality, Disability and Inclusion, and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (EDI & SEND)
25/30/6.4	<p>The Corporation approved the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial Regulations • Buzzacott to continue as the College’s External Auditor for 2025-26
25/30/6.5	<p>The Corporation approved the following policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anti-Bribery Policy and Procedure • Risk Management Policy • Whistleblowing Policy