

West Herts College Corporation Board Meeting

Wednesday 08 July 2026

Watford

5pm – 7pm

MINUTES

Attendees:

Governors

Tony Breslin
Gill Worgan
Phil Berry
Charles Chidom
Olivia Darbon
Laura Dawson
Rachel Fox
Chris Gentle
Chris Nicholls
Stuart Ord
Gary Phillips
Martin Sidders

Role:

Chair of Corporation
Principal & CEO
External Governor
Staff Governor
Staff Governor
External Governor
External Governor
External Governor
External Governor
External Governor
External Governor
External Governor

Other Attendees

Sarah Knowles
Nidha Patel
Amanda Washbrook
Anne-Marie Kinsella

Role

Deputy Principal
Group Director-Finance
Deputy Principal-Business Development
Governance Professional

Apologies

Laura Dawson
Jadan Khaliq
Gary Phillips
Ash Wilson

External Governor
Student Governor
External Governor
Student Governor

Ref Agenda Item

- 25/45** The Corporation received the report and presentation from Rachel Robson of Stone King on the independent External Board Review undertaken between February and June 2026.

The Corporation noted the positive findings, including the strong governance culture, the quality of executive reporting, and the Governance SAR, which was highlighted as an example of best practice.

The review identified opportunities to strengthen governance further, including clearer monitoring of Strategic Plan objectives, stronger links between strategy and risk, enhancements to Remuneration Committee arrangements, and a more structured approach to the Link Governor role.

Governors welcomed the report and thanked the External Reviewer for all her hard work.

ACTION: The external board review recommendations to be incorporated into the 2026–27 Governance Action Plan and presented to the October 2026 Corporation meeting for consideration.

25/46 1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

1.1. Welcome

1.2. The Chair welcomed all attendees to the Corporation meeting

1.3. 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 consideration.

1.4. Declaration of pecuniary interests

There were no declarations.

1.5. Requests for urgent business

There were no requests for any urgent business.

25/47 2. PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1. Approval of Minutes (13 May 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.

Ref	Action Log	when
25/36/4.1	Governance Professional to draft a plan illustrating the relationship between the Corporation's Business Plan and Regulatory Documents	Due Oct 2026
25/38/6.1	Governance Professional to produce a timetable for learning walks for 2026–27 academic year.	Due Oct 2026

25/48 3. STRATEGIC ITEMS

3.1. Feedback from Strategic Away Day

The Corporation reflected positively on the recent Strategic Away Day and welcomed the opportunity to focus on the College's strategic priorities. The high levels of engagement and constructive discussion throughout the event was noted and it was emphasised the importance of translating the key themes and outcomes into clear actions. The Away Day was considered a valuable and successful exercise.

3.2. Principals Report

The Corporation received the Principal's Report and noted positive qualification achievement outcomes for 2024/25, continuing the upward trend seen over recent years.

The Corporation noted that a pay award for all staff had been included in the 2026/27 budget and that the minimum salary for qualified teachers would increase from 1 August 2026. The College remained competitive in the local market, although direct comparisons with schools were not always straightforward.

The Corporation noted that the College was reviewing its enrichment offer against new government expectations and continued to monitor developments relating to apprenticeships, NEET policy, devolution, and mental health support.

The Corporation was updated about changes to local education providers.

The Corporation commended the College's support for the FE Commissioner's active support programme, sharing good practice with other colleges in SEND, finance, estates, and quality assurance.

The report was noted and accepted.

3.3. Senior Post Holder (SPH) & Succession Planning (confidential part 2b)

(Please see confidential minutes (part 2b))

3.4. Barnfield Capital Project

The Corporation received an update on the Barnfield College Phase 3 development and noted that the project was progressing to schedule, with design work continuing and a Minor Material Amendment application submitted to the local planning authority.

Members noted that, subject to the procurement process, a preferred contractor is expected to be appointed in January 2027, with construction commencing in spring 2027 and completion targeted for June 2028.

The Corporation noted that the Capital Project Steering Group had been re-established to oversee the project and that regular updates would continue to be provided through Corporation reports and Steering Group minutes. Governors were invited to attend Steering Group meetings where appropriate.

Members thanked Associate Governors Richard Lewis and Guy Ainsley for their support in progressing the project through the Capital Project Steering Group (CPSG)

ACTION: Members to advise the Governance Professional they wish to join the CPSG for 2026-27

25/49 4. FINANCE & RESOURCES

4.1. Finance Report (confidential)

(Please see confidential minutes (part 2a))

4.2. Corporate Risk Register

Governors were advised that the Risk Register had been updated to reflect recent developments and mitigating actions, and that all changes had been reviewed by the Audit Committee on 23 June 2026. The total number of risks had reduced from 30 to 29 since March 2026. The Corporation noted that there remained one High-Level Risk on the Risk Register, with no additions to or removals from the High-Level Risk Register since the previous report.

The Corporation reviewed and accepted the Risk Register report.

4.3. Draft Budget (confidential)

(Please see confidential minutes (part 2a))

4.4. Human Resources Annual Report

The Corporation received the annual Workforce Report and noted that HR policies had been updated to reflect recent legislative changes and that the College continued to provide a wide range of employee benefits and wellbeing support.

Members welcomed the positive impact of recruitment and retention initiatives, with staff turnover remaining below sector averages, although challenges continued in recruiting construction and engineering teachers. The Corporation also noted the College's continued investment in staff development, including leadership programmes, training and apprenticeships.

Positive staff survey outcomes were noted, with improvements reported across leadership, communication, wellbeing and work-life balance. Sickness absence remained below sector benchmarks.

The Corporation reviewed the College's gender and ethnicity pay gap data. Information about workforce performance was discussed.

The report was noted and accepted.

ACTION: Director of HR to circulate to Corporation members the themes recorded under 'other' in the employee relations data and include this date in future reports.

25/50 GOVERNANCE & COMPLIANCE

5.1 Corporation Meetings 2026-27

ACTION: October meeting to be held at Hemel Hempstead Campus.

DECISION: The Corporation agreed the Corporation Business Plan for 2026-27 and its meeting dates.

5.2 Update on Board Membership

5.2.1 Approval of Appointments

The Chair of the Search & Governance Committee outlined the recruitment process undertaken and the rationale for the recommendation to appoint Unette Spencer as an External Governor for a two-year term commencing 7 October 2026.

Members noted that a robust recruitment exercise had been conducted, including two external searches through Nurole and interviews with shortlisted candidates. Whilst the process had resulted in one recommended appointment, the Corporation noted that one External Governor vacancy would remain from September 2026.

In response to questions, the Chair of the Search & Governance Committee advised that Nurole had not delivered the level of success anticipated. Members discussed the potential to utilise wider employer networks and business organisations whilst recognising the value of engaging an independent recruitment provider to support an objective and transparent selection process. It was noted that the College would continue to explore future recruitment opportunities to address future vacancies.

Phil Berry withdrew from the meeting whilst the Corporation considered a proposal from the Chair regarding the extension of his term of office.

The Chair proposed that Phil Berry's (PB) term of office be extended for a further two years. Members noted that PB continued to provide valuable Higher Education and external sector expertise and that his experience and knowledge of both the sector and the College supported continuity within the Corporation. The proposed extension was confirmed as being consistent with the Corporation's Instrument and Articles of Government and Standing Orders.

DECISION:

- The Corporation approved the appointment of Unette Spencer as an External Governor for a 2 year term starting on 7th October 2026.
- The Corporation approved the reappointment of Phil Berry's term for a further two years starting 31 July 2026.

5.3 Committee Feedback

5.3.1 Quality & Curriculum Committee

5.3.1.1 Annual Report to Corporation

The Chair of the Quality and Curriculum Committee provided a verbal update on the key discussions from the Committee's most recent meeting and the contents of its Annual Report to Corporation. Members noted the positive outcomes and progress being made across the College. NEET figures were highlighted as a national trend and an area for continued monitoring, given the limited employment opportunities currently available.

The Committee highlighted the Quality Improvement Action Plan (QIAP), which was commended as an effective tool for focusing improvement activity, including the upskilling of teachers to support disadvantaged learners. Members welcomed the comprehensive staff development programme and requested a future update on its impact.

The Committee thanked the relevant senior leader for their hard work and contribution.

That the Annual Report to Corporation be received and accepted.

5.3.2 Audit Committee

5.3.2.1 Approve Buzzacott Letter of Engagement

The Chair of the Audit Committee provided a verbal update on the Committee's recent meeting. Members noted that a significant number of Internal Audit reviews had received high assurance opinions, with only a small number of recommendations identified to further refine existing processes.

Members noted the outcome of the tender exercise and supported the reappointment of Scrutton Bland.

Members also noted that a new External Audit lead from Buzzacott had recently taken over responsibility for the College's audit as part of the firm's normal rotation arrangements.

DECISION: The Corporation approved the signing of the Buzzacott Letter of Engagement.

5.3.3 Search & Governance Committee

Minutes were available to governors to view, and membership updates were discussed under agenda item 5.2.

5.3.4 Capital Projects Steering Group

Minutes were available to governors to view, and membership updates were discussed under agenda item 3.4

5.4 Policy Approvals

5.4.1 Sub-Contractors Fees & Charges policy

Members received the Subcontractor (Supply Chain) Fees and Charges Policy for 2026–27 and noted that revisions were primarily presentational, with no material changes to the College's subcontracting arrangements. Members also noted that subcontracting activity had reduced significantly and remained within DfE thresholds.

DECISION: The Corporation approved the Sub-Contractors Fees and Charges Policy

25/51 5. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business.

25/52 6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Wednesday 07 October 2026, Watford, 5pm.

Meeting closed: 18.42

Minutes approved by the Corporation on 14 October 2026

Ref	Summary of Actions	when
25/36/4.1	Governance Professional to draft a plan illustrating the relationship between the Corporation's Business Plan and Regulatory Documents	07 Oct 2026
25/38/6.1	Governance Professional to produce a timetable for learning walks for 2026–27 academic year.	07 Oct 2026
25/46	The Corporation agreed that the recommendations should be incorporated into the Corporation's 2026–27 Governance Action Plan and come to the first meeting in October 2026 for review.	07 Oct 2026
25/48/3.4	Members to advise the Governance Professional they wish to join the CPSG for 2026-27	07Oct 2026
25/49/4.4	Director of HR to circulate to Corporation members the themes recorded under 'other' in the employee relations data and include this date in future reports.	07 July 2027
25/50/5.1	October meeting to be held at Hemel Hempstead Campus.	07 Oct 2026
Ref	Summary of Decisions	
25/50/5.1	The Corporation agreed the Corporation Business Plan for 2026-27 and its meeting dates.	
25/50/5.2	The Corporation approved the reappointment of Phil Berry's term for a further two years. Governor.	
25/50/5.2	The Corporation approved the appointment of Unette Spencer as an External	
25/50/5.3.2	The Corporation approved the signing of the Buzzacott Letter of Engagement	
25/50/5.4.1	The Corporation approved the Sub-Contractors Fees and Charges Policy	