

Strategic Plan

Going Further
2023-26



Our Strategic Plan

This Strategic Plan is prepared against a backdrop of circumstances that are widening inequalities between individuals and communities. The continuing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic persists, and particularly for young people in terms of their learning, personal development and mental health. High inflation is also impacting many people, leaving them unable to cope with high living costs. While the labour market is strong and unemployment levels are low, too many businesses are structured around low-skilled and low-paid jobs. This situation is exacerbated by pressing skills shortages which are impeding business growth and opportunities for the creation of higher-value jobs. Further to this, there are serious concerns about climate change and the need to rapidly accelerate decarbonisation to create a human age people want to live in. Skills, education and training are at the centre of solutions to all of these challenges, and colleges have long track records of responding highly effectively whenever they are called upon to help address even the most complex situations. The most successful colleges anticipate change, adapt, and lead, and this strategic plan sets out to ensure the College does that - maintaining an up to date understanding of national, regional and local contexts, and responding with the foresight needed to plan and deliver skills solutions timely and with high impact. Collaborative responses to problems will be key - sharing knowledge, resources, perspectives, expertise and experiences, across a range of key stakeholders. The College will make a meaningful contribution to collaborations and will fully embrace its leadership responsibilities whenever necessary. The College will also ensure its strategic priorities are appropriately funded and that teaching and learning facilities are able to deliver modern skills with the appropriate talent assigned to them. Employers will be at the heart of the College's curriculum and employees and students will continue to be the lifeblood of the College – and provided with the support they need to achieve their full potential in safe, inclusive, and respectful situations. This Plan brings forward new priorities, all of which are underpinned by an unwavering commitment to the delivery of high-quality education and training through an unrelenting pursuit for excellence.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "G Worgan".

Gill Worgan
Group Principal and Chief Executive

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "P Thompson".

Phil Thompson
Chair of Corporation

Executive Summary

National, regional and local legislation and circumstances are at the heart of the College's vision and mission. College work is driven by clear strategic aims and objectives which are underpinned by organisational values which place people at the centre. The College strives to deliver value for money by being efficient, flexible and innovative throughout all aspects of its work. The College fully recognises its responsibilities in terms of contributing to skills agendas at national, regional and local levels. In line with new legal accountabilities, the College will maintain an appropriate mix of competition and collaboration to maximise its contributions to meeting the needs of employers and local communities. The College's curriculum will be designed and implemented with the full involvement of employers and other community leaders to ensure the broadest range of socio-economic issues are continually being addressed. Inclusion and widening participation will feature strongly in the College's strategic and operational plans with the primary objective being for people to develop the skills they need to get on in life and work regardless of their backgrounds or start-points. Furthermore, the College will encourage people to be their authentic selves and achieve their full potential, supported by an organisational culture where everyone is treated with respect and dignity. Climate change and decarbonisation will remain at the core of key decision-making and curriculum planning in order to raise awareness, drive action, and achieve a more sustainable future in which people can thrive. The College will manage its finances responsibly and will ensure investment is made wisely and in line with the latest national skills and education requirements. The College will provide campuses that are beacons of inspiration with state of the art facilities, modern technologies and sustainable solutions. The College will strive to achieve the highest outcomes in all its endeavours and will hold itself to account against relevant and stretching measures of success. The College will be transparent about its performance and will value success and failure with equal regard - as catalysts for renewed energy, ambitions and commitments, that continually develop and improve the College to the benefit of all of its users and the communities it serves across its geographical regions.

Vision

Our vision is to transform life chances and create a better everyday life for many people.

Mission

Our Mission is to provide high-quality education and training in a safe, respectful and inclusive environment that prepares people for success in work and life and builds a foundation for lifelong learning.

Public Value Statement

We will provide a broad range of education provision and services to meet the needs, interests and aspirations of the communities we serve.

The College

- Will inspire interest in lifelong learning, working with employers to develop the skills needed for success in life and at work. We commit to this in the knowledge that:
 - Professional skills are central to individual earning power and the collective productivity of our local, regional and national economies
 - English, maths and digital skills are essential to accessing opportunities
 - The aspirations of many in our communities are challenged by economic, health and social pressures
- We will engage with as many people and organisations as possible, working in partnership to maximise benefits across our communities, with the views of stakeholders represented at College Board level.
- We recognise our responsibilities as a community asset for the people we serve, understanding community issues and making a meaningful contribution to providing solutions to these challenges.
- We will maintain a thorough understanding of local labour markets and facilitate positive relationships between employers and prospective employees.
- We value community well-being and are fully committed to providing lifelong learning opportunities through a range of courses.

- We will ensure the College secures and develops a workforce that is able to provide the skills and experiences required to deliver provision of the highest quality.
- We will be professional in all undertakings and accessible wherever possible, providing a safe and welcoming place for people to gather and engage in learning and recreational activities.
- We will take responsible decisions, utilising public funds appropriately and always seeking to prioritise expenditure and investment to benefit local people.
- We will play our part in the net zero economy – taking action to reduce our climate impact, calculating our emissions annually and taking action to reduce them.

Skills and employment: the national picture

To perform the jobs employers will require over the coming years, England's workforce will have to increase levels of skills and knowledge in a range of areas. Even to meet current employer demand, there is a requirement for many workers to re-train or upskill.

Businesses continually report a shortage of skills and the availability of workers. Industries with the highest percentage of businesses experiencing pressing skills issues and which are likely to continue into the long-term include, 'Manufacturing, Engineering, Hospitality, Wholesale & Retail, Health & Social Work, Construction, Education, Digital, Finance and Business, and Logistics.

Workplace skills are coming under further pressure due to the government's commitment to delivering a net zero economy by 2050. This will require competence in new skills across the UK's workforce – to meet the technical requirements for the installation of technology for sustainability such as retrofit for buildings, electric vehicle chargers, solar panels, and air/ground source heat pumps, and also for the integration of sustainability into existing jobs. Every major sector in the UK will need to close a significant skills gap to enable them to reach net zero, and the sectors with the most pressing emissions reductions are already facing some of the most immediate skills and people shortages.

All employment sectors require employees to demonstrate basic functional skills in English and maths. In addition, following rapid technological advancements, digital skills are also regarded as fundamental workplace skills - ranging from computer literacy to more advanced skills such as digital marketing and cyber security. English, maths and digital skills are not only critical for job success but are also the gateway to other job-specific learning and development.

Employers from all employment sectors also report the pressing need for employees who are able to communicate effectively, can work positively as part of a team, and have the ability to solve problems. These skills are transferable between sectors and jobs and even in cases where new technologies are changing the fundamental aspects of work, they are still deemed as being essential.

While the demand for new and improved skills is clear, the number of adults participating in training has dropped significantly since 2010, and employers have also reduced training budgets by approximately 30% since 2005, with many businesses limiting investment in training to mandatory skills such as health and safety. This decline has impacted most significantly on employees with the lowest qualifications and skills levels. Moreover, people with health problems or disabilities remain furthest from employment.

Regional and sub-regional contexts

West Herts College Group is located within Hertfordshire and the South East Midlands (SEM), and more specifically within 3 vibrant towns with high levels of economic activity – Hemel Hempstead, Watford, and Luton.

Hertfordshire is a mix of semi-rural areas and towns and with businesses that are predominantly SMEs. The county has several internationally significant sectors, notably life sciences, agri-tech, advanced engineering/manufacturing, sustainable construction and the creative industries. The county's most significant assets include businesses at the cutting-edge of science and technology that compete on a global level; its proximity to London; and a higher than average skilled workforce. The pace of jobs growth is strong, but the county also has several major challenges to address. In particular, it has

seen limited productivity growth linked to widespread variation in skills and prosperity levels with too many of its people working in poorly paid and often part time jobs. There is also pressure on local transport infrastructure; a shortage of housing that people can afford; a loss of employment land; and challenges surrounding the decaying fabric of its New Towns.

Hemel Hempstead and Watford are two of the largest urban centres in Hertfordshire, within a sub region that accounts for 50% of all business activity in the county. The enterprise zone in Hemel Hempstead provides a centre for growth in businesses specialising in agri-tech, construction, and digital technologies; and the massively expanding UK's film industry is based in the south-west of the county. The towns are also home to a number of research and innovation businesses, with particular research strengths in agri-tech and buildings research. However, these sectors are still small and developing and supporting their long-term growth should be a priority, alongside measures to support more established strengths in professional services and information technology - high value sectors with significant potential for further growth.

SEM also presents a mix of semi-rural areas and towns with businesses that are predominantly SMEs. The SEM region is a rapidly growing and innovative economy, benefiting from connections to London and the Midlands, international routes and close proximity to the global cities of Oxford and Cambridge. The region includes a population of around 2m and over 80,000 businesses. It has the highest innovation ranking in the country and makes a major contribution to the growth and development of England's economy.

Luton sits at the far south of the South East Midlands area and is one of the region's major urban economies - a large town with significant employment, economic activity and connectivity. Its position, adjacent to the M1, connects the town to Hemel Hempstead, Watford and onward to London. Luton also operates in an economy facing away from the capital, and in this sense, it is distinct from the M25 arc in south Hertfordshire.

Set within Luton's 2040 Vision is a renewed ambition for greener and fairer growth, making the link between local people and opportunity stronger, whilst benefitting from new norms emerging from the pandemic. As such, Luton is in the midst of one of its most significant periods of regeneration. The expansion of the airport will create huge opportunities for Luton's economy, creating new jobs and economic activity. The Town Centre Master Plan provides the framework for the future, with investments already underway, and planned, at The Station, Hat District and the Power Court Stadium. These will include design and construction activity and also the introduction of new businesses and workspaces, creating a diversity of employment and pathways. There is a huge opportunity to align growth and regeneration with local people, delivering significant benefits in the form of new jobs, training initiatives and infrastructure enhancements. To maximise these opportunities, partnership working between the town and its skills providers will be essential - the development of the Barnfield College estate is timely in this regard and will have an important part to play in the creation and delivery of the skills that will be needed by businesses and local people.

Both Luton and Hertfordshire have firm ambitions to be net zero by 2040 and 2050 respectively and these ambitions are reflected in regional and local skills strategies in terms of skills priorities.

Collaborations between employers, education providers, and other public and private key stakeholders is strong across Hertfordshire and SEM. Local Enterprise partnerships (LEPs) have been highly effective in establishing important strategic connections and partnerships between key stakeholders and have facilitated high-impact discussions and decisions about skills priorities and solutions, based on detailed information and data. This work provides a strong platform from which collaborations can go further.

Government expectations: employment and skills

2022 was a significant year for skills with the passing of new laws through the Skills and Post-16 Education Act (2022). These new laws are intended to transform the skills and training landscape, address pressures on employers, improve job opportunities for everyone and boost productivity and growth.

The legislation is also intended to drive economic recovery and growth by making it easier for people to get the skills they need to secure well-paid jobs in industries with skills gaps, such as health and social care, engineering, digital, clean energy and manufacturing. In addition, green skills are prioritised to support the growing green economy now and in the future. Schools are also mandated to make sure all children get to meet providers of technical education routes such as apprenticeships, T-Levels and other relevant training programmes, opening their eyes to a wide range of careers.

This new legislation also sets out to provide more people with opportunities to get jobs in their local areas, by requiring employers and colleges to work more closely together to identify the skills needed within communities.

Essentially, the legislation aims to make sure everyone can gain the skills they need to progress into a rewarding job, and businesses have access to a pipeline of talented, qualified employees for their workforces.

Key measures introduced by the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022 include:

- Embedding employers in the heart of the skills system by placing a legal requirement on colleges and other providers to work with employers to develop skills plans, so that the training on offer meets the needs of local areas, and people no longer have to leave their hometowns to find jobs.
- Making sure all pupils meet providers of technical education so that they understand the wide range of career routes and training available to them, such as apprenticeships, T Levels or traineeships, not just the traditional academic options
- Prioritising green skills so the training on offer across the country meets the needs of the growing green economy and helps gets more people into jobs
- Supporting the transformation of the current student loans system so from 2025 learners can access a flexible loan for higher-level education and training at university or college, useable at any point in their lives

- Creating a unified skills system that ensures all technical qualifications match up to employers' high standards.

What this new legislation means for the College

In line with new requirements placed on all colleges and designated institutions, the College will keep its provision under close review to ensure that it is making a meaningful contribution to the needs of students, employers, and others residing in the communities across the geographical area the College serves. The College will also ensure its curriculum offer provides progression pathways between lower and higher-level qualifications which are accessible and relevant.

Building on existing national, regional and local collaborative arrangements, the College will work with other colleges and designated institutions to ensure the provision of education and skills training is fully aligned to the needs of students, employers and communities across the region – and that the College's offer links coherently with the education and training offered by other providers where necessary. In addition, where approved Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) are in place, the College will use them as key points of reference and key drivers towards the following objectives:

For people, the College will be a touchpoint throughout their lives by providing a dynamic curriculum offer that is updated regularly to provide the skills people need as the world changes. Flexible and blended learning and guidance will empower each person to get a job, progress in their career, and be an active citizen.

For productivity, the College will lead and participate in strategic collaborations that will align closely with employers to understand the most pressing skills issues, offering advice and support and developing skills training solutions that properly meet needs.

For place, the College will work collaboratively with other skills providers and other key stakeholders in new ways, to respond to the needs of people, employers and communities. The College will develop learning pathways through which people of all

abilities, ages, backgrounds and talents can be guided to reach their full potential and contribute their skills, energies and commitment to wider society throughout their lives.

Strategic Aims and Objectives



Aim 1: Students

Vision

The College will provide students with the skills they need to maximise opportunities in life and work.

Strategic Objectives

Students will gain the qualifications and skills they need for their next steps.

Students will develop their knowledge and skills at modern, fully-fit for purpose campuses with state of the art facilities

Students will be able to access real-world industry experience to prepare for jobs and careers.

Students will develop the soft skills needed to be highly effective employees and citizens.

Equipping students with the right knowledge, skills and behaviours will set them up for success in life and work. Technical skills for jobs are central to long-term prosperity and must be matched with the necessary soft skills for working in teams and developing the personal potential to progress, gain promotions, and maximise earning potential. This is a combination of attributes that many employers place particular emphasis on when recruiting and promoting employees. Soft skills are also key to developing self-confidence, a sense of control over actions and their consequences, and the ability to successfully deal with life changes and challenges.

Through highly effective teaching, learning and assessment the College will place equal emphasis on students developing the hard and soft skills needed to enhance their workplace productivity and citizenship skills. Teachers will set high expectations of students, inspiring them to achieve compelling goals centred on ambitious plans for careers and wider aspirations.

Dynamic partnerships with employers will harness a professional influence, creating qualifications that are recognised as key drivers of knowledge and professional skill sets.

Progress will be indicated by:

Qualification achievement rates.

Student destinations.

The impact of the Bravura Project.

Employer satisfaction.

Aim 2: College employees

Vision

Employees will be outstanding in their roles and positively influence the skills, attitudes, values, and behaviours of students and colleagues.

Strategic Objectives

Employees will be able to achieve their potential through a broad range of personalised training and development, and opportunities to upskill their industry knowledge and practice.

Employees will be empowered to contribute to key decisions about working practices and strategies that impact work/life balance and wellbeing.

Employees will be valued and respected and supported to be their authentic selves.

Employees will be able to develop the skills and knowledge they need to advance their careers.

The College will communicate a clear vision to employees and explain how they can contribute to the achievement of it in their individual roles. The College will be transparent about its expectations and employees will use College values as their compass in all aspects of their work and decision-making. Decision-making will place the wellbeing of employees at the centre to improve the health and happiness of employees whenever practicable. Leadership and management will be open, honest and respectful, and foster productive relationships between people. Hard work and

excellence will be recognised and rewarded, and people will be connected by actions of kindness, while respectfully appreciating individual viewpoints and contributions.

Working conditions will provide people with the modern environments and technologies needed to achieve excellence and College policies will take account of specific individual circumstances. People will be encouraged and supported to be their authentic selves in all aspects of their work and encouraged to engage in career growth opportunities that maximise their professional achievement and earning potential.

Progress will be indicated by:

Employee satisfaction.

Employee recruitment and retention.

The diversity of the employee population.

The impact of training and development opportunities.

The effectiveness of succession planning.

Aim 3: Communities

Vision

The College will be rooted in its local economies and contribute meaningfully to the needs of students, employers and local people across the geographical areas it serves.

Strategic Objectives

The College will maintain an up to date understanding of the cultural, and socio-economic contexts impacting on employment and skills across the geographical area it serves.

The College will share specialist knowledge, expertise and facilities and combine its strengths with other partner organisations to solve problems and drive improvements for businesses and local people.

The College will deliver education programmes relevant to the needs of communities and deliver educational outcomes that raise aspirations and achievements.

The College occupies a pivotal space in the learning and skills landscape and also has a wider role across its communities by widening access to learning, and contributing to community cohesion and the development of civil society and enterprise. The College aims to be a dynamic nucleus at the heart of its communities, promoting a shared agenda of activities which both fulfil its central role of providing learning and skills training to young people and adults, but which also reaches out to its communities and initiates a whole range of further activities – bringing more people into the learning experience.

High on the agenda in present circumstances is the need to be working actively to develop partnerships with local employers, helping to fill skills gaps and working with them to tailor training to local needs. The College will ensure it is properly represented as a joint partner in local employment and skills planning processes with stakeholders such as employer representative bodies, local authorities, and local enterprise partnerships.

The College will work with other key stakeholders to share existing public sector intelligence and data to increase common understanding of wider community needs.

Progress will be indicated by:

Participation rates in education and training by specific groups.

Levels of student participation in community-led projects and volunteering.

Community access to the College's facilities and resources.

The College's status with other key community organisations.

Aim 4: Sustainability

Vision

The College will be resilient, just and climate neutral, and demonstrate leadership that brings to life experiences that allow others to contextualise their learning.

Strategic Objectives

The College will drive sustainability throughout all of its work.

The College will reduce its carbon emissions by adapting its working practices.

The College will embed climate and environmental education in all its courses.

The College estate will achieve high standards in terms of sustainability

The College will encourage private-public collaborations to harness innovations that accelerate decarbonisation.

The College is a key community leader of skills, a major employer, and has significant responsibility for estates and buildings. In these regards, the College has extensive opportunities to positively impact decarbonisation and climate change and to lead others by example.

The College's estate will be fit for purpose, well-managed, and support strategies to reduce carbon emissions. In addition, the College will raise awareness of climate sustainability issues among its own people throughout all of its working practices, and among others through the training programmes it provides.

The College will inspire students, employers and communities, to lead the change needed to create a sustainable future by collaborating with government and other key stakeholders about how it can support national, regional and local environmental aims.

This work will underpin the College's strategic moves regarding capital investment, partnership working arrangements, and the development and delivery of education and training programmes.

Progress will be indicated by:

The reduction in the College's carbon emissions.

The condition and sustainability of the College's estate.

The relevance of the College's education and training programmes.

Support for employers to improve the sustainability of their businesses.

Aim 5: Success

Vision

The College will be a highly-effective and highly-regarded anchor institution that makes a meaningful contribution to the needs of employers and local communities.

Strategic Objectives

The College will maintain a positive reputation and be a place of choice to work and learn for people of all backgrounds and start-points.

Students will be inspired to achieve their potential and secure their intended destinations in life and work.

The College will make a positive impact on employment and skills across the communities it serves and the near regions.

The College will successfully lead strategic collaborations that meet national, regional and local skills needs and wider government socio-economic agendas.

The College will be a beacon of sustainability through the use of sustainable technologies

The College's work will be driven by a clear vision and mission. The College will present a strong identity which is visible to employees, students, and external stakeholders. Employees and students will be empowered to be enterprising and bring forward new ideas, underpinned by working practices that align with College values. In all instances, employees and students will be trusted to carry out their work to high standards.

The College will be determined in its efforts to be inclusive and employee and student communities will be respectful to people from all backgrounds. Employees will be able to learn new skills, grow in their professions, work together, and create highly collegiate working environments that add value to individual employee and student experiences.

Employees and students will know they are highly valued by purposeful leadership and management action that positions the College as an attractive place to work and learn – where everyone is contributing meaningfully to a positive College culture.

Progress will be indicated by:

Shared purpose and values, advocacy

Talent recruitment and retention

Quality of education

Stakeholder satisfaction and market share

Profitability, revenue, growth, resilience

Continuous reductions in carbon emissions

Measures of Success



Ref	Strategic Aim	Measure of Success
1	The College will provide students with the skills they need to maximise opportunities in life and work.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Quality of Education will be at least Good. 2. Qualification achievement rates will exceed national averages. 3. Students can access job-specific skills in line with the intended destinations. 4. At least 95% of students will achieve their intended destination. 5. At least 90% of students will be satisfied with the College and their courses. 6. At least 90% of employers will be satisfied with the College and its services.
2	Employees will be outstanding in their roles and positively influence the skills, attitudes, values, and behaviours of students and colleagues.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. At least 95% of employees will meet their performance objectives. 2. At least 90% of employees and students will confirm the College is a good place to work and learn. 3. At least 90% of employees will know how their individual role contributes to the achievement of the College's strategic aims. 4. The employee population will reflect the diversity of local communities and will demonstrate the College's values relating to equality, diversity and inclusion.
3	The College will be rooted in its local economies and contribute meaningfully to the needs of students, employers and local people across the geographical areas it serves.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The College will widen access and increase participation from people who are under-represented in education and employment. 2. Students will engage in community-led projects and volunteering. 3. Community groups will access the College's facilities and resources for their own development sake. 4. The College will provide a pipeline of skilled employees into businesses.
4	The College will be resilient, just, and climate neutral, and demonstrate leadership that brings to life experiences that allow others to contextualise their learning.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The College will reduce its carbon emissions in line with agreed levels included within its Sustainability Strategy. 2. The College will make adaptations to its estate to improve sustainability and reduce carbon emissions. 3. All learning programmes will include education about climate change and sustainability. 4. The College will lead / participate in collaborations to increase resource, expertise and funding for higher-impact on decarbonisation.
5	The College will be a highly-effective and highly-regarded anchor institution that makes a meaningful contribution to the needs of employers and local communities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The College will made a strong contribution to meeting the skills needs of local employers and local communities . 2. Enrolment targets will be achieved. 3. The College will attract and retain the workforce needed to deliver all services. 4. The College will generate operational surpluses and cash to maintain financial health that is at least Good (ESFA Rating; College Financial Policies). 5. Teachers will have the required industry skills and experience to properly prepare people for modern jobs.

