

Draft Minutes of the Corporation (Part 1) meeting held at Welwyn Garden Campus on Monday 24 March 2025, at 17.00.

Present

Peter Thompson (Chair)	Andrew Slade (Principal & CEO)	Rob Birkett (Corporation Member)	Layla Buchner (Corporation Member)	Simon Caunce (Corporation Member)
Deborah Caviel (Corporation Member)	Jean Fawcett MBE (Corporation Member)	Chris Ford (Corporation Member)	Sarah Furley (Corporation Member)	Vince Glover (Corporation Member)
John O'Sullivan (Corporation Member)	Rob Payne (Corporation Member)	Richard Whitehead (Corporation Member)	Jamie Stevenson (Corporation Member)	Prof Mairi Watson (Corporation Member)

In Attendance

Jacqueline Page (Deputy Principal, Curriculum Performance & Student Experience)	Claire Dolan (Deputy Principal, Strategy Partnerships & Business Development)	Barbara Jones (Executive Director People and Culture)	Stephen Horrobin (Interim Finance Consultant)	David Lambert (Senior Lead for MIS, Estates and IT)
Michael Wood (Interim Director of Governance)	Yash Nandakumar (HE Student Observer)			

Apologies

Kevin Ibeh (Corporation Member)	Philip Fulton (Corporation Member)
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Minute	ITEM DISCUSSED
28/24	WELCOME / CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS
28/24.1	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
29/24	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
29/24.1	Apologies for absence had been received from Kevin Ibeh and Philip Fulton
30/24	CONFIRMATION OF ELIGIBILITY AND QUORUM
30/24.1	No notice had been received of any member becoming ineligible to hold office and the meeting was quorate.
31/24	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
31/24.1	There were no Declarations of Interest in relation to the matters to be discussed.

32/24	REQUESTS FOR URGENT BUSINESS
32/24.1	There was no urgent business.
34/24	MINUTES
34/24.1	The Minutes of the meetings held on 16 December and 24 February 2025 (Extraordinary) were approved as accurate records of the meetings.
35/24	MATTERS ARISING & ACTION LOG
35/24.1	There were no Matters Arising other than those items already on the Agenda.
36/24	PRINCIPAL'S REPORT
36/24.1	<p>The Principal reported on the following key good news stories and developments since the date of the last meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reference was made to the strategic journey that the College was on: how much had been achieved in recent years to correct falling student numbers and income; an improvement in the Ofsted Grade to a 2; changes in staff structures and an increase in the staff talent pool; improvements in the lack of College internal audit processes; no business, commercial and partnership development; poor staff survey results until recently; lack of financial reporting and growth strategies; contract issues with third parties and out-dated systems and processes. <p>Furthermore, the previous Strategic Plan did not allow for the College to improve, with poor reporting to Governors against a clear set of strategic objectives and KPIs. A huge amount of work has been done to improve the College's position, significantly growing the College and gaining external ratification, and developing the relationship between the College senior team and Governors. However, a number of fundamental issues were still being addressed, including the implementation of a new Finance System (scheduled for summer 2025) and continuation of the next phase of the Estates Masterplan;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the state-of-the-art High-Performance Centre opened on 20 March; well-attended Open Events were held on 4 and 6 February, with more scheduled for 29 April and 1 May; during National Apprenticeships Week in February, a wide range of activities had taken place showcasing the College; the SLB Women's Basketball Team made history at the Cup Final at the Utilita Arena, Birmingham; the College's Fashion Show would be held on 18 June to which all Governors were invited; Lambing Weekend would take place on 10/11 May. <p>The Corporation noted the report.</p>

37/24	NATIONAL POLICY UPDATES
37/24.1	The Corporation received an update in respect of National Policy developments, including legislation to create 'Skills England' and the proposed amendments to the Employment Rights Bill, which were noted .
38/24	RISK REGISTER
38/24.1	The Corporation approved the College's revised Risk Register, as scrutinised by the Audit Committee, which now included 15 new risks and six re-introduced risks. In response to a query relating to the number of outstanding Internal Audit actions, it was confirmed that the Risk Management Group was reviewing these actions, which would also be subject to additional review by Internal Audit.
39/24	STRATEGIC GOALS, KPIs and Annual Operating Plan
39/24.1	The Corporation considered an update on the achievement of Strategic Goals, KPIs and the Annual Operating Plan (AOP). Arising out of discussion, it was noted that apprenticeship numbers were lower than forecast and that there was a shortage of assessors, it being commented that it had taken some time to secure an assessor in Green-keeping.
39/24.2	Reference was made to the on-going ESFA Funding Audit and the complexity of evidence sets, dating back to 2017 in the case of apprenticeships. It was noted that it was likely that the College would be subject to more regular funding audits moving forward. The Corporation noted the report.
40/24	REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES
40/24.1	a) Curriculum & Quality Committee
40/24.1.1	i) Quality Report The Deputy Principal (CPSE) presented the Quality Report to the Corporation, the following key points being highlighted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> during the period of the Report, 33 compliments and 15 complaints had been received; a total of 642 CPD Learning Walks had been carried out since October 2024; student attendance still remained a major area of focus. Average school attendance was now 89% and this was having an impact on College attendance rates nationally; English & Maths continued to pose particular problems in terms of attendance and outcomes, although the College's achievement rates in both subjects were above the national average; Eleven Departments were in intensive support at the current point in time due to achievement rates. Governors queried why so many Departments were in intensive support, which was due to the close scrutiny of courses within specific

40/24.1.2	<p>areas in order to ensure that achievement rates continued to improve significantly;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the change in the system of lesson observations to a more supportive programme of feedback had been well-received by teaching staff. <p>The Corporation noted the report.</p> <p>ii) Summary Committee Minutes</p> <p>The Corporation noted the summary Minutes of the Curriculum & Quality Committee held on 12 February 2025.</p>
40/24.2	b) Estates & Infrastructure Committee
40/24.2.1	<p>i) Estates Masterplan</p> <p>It was noted the Estates Masterplan would be taken under Part 2 of the Agenda.</p>
40/24.2.2	<p>ii) Summary Committee Minutes</p> <p>The Corporation noted the summary Minutes of the Estates & Infrastructure Committee held on 9 February 2025.</p>
40/24.3	c) Finance & Resources Committee
40/24.3.1	i) Management Accounts
40/24.3.2	<p>The Interim Finance Consultant presented Management Accounts and Cashflow Forecasts for the period ended 31 January 2025. The operating deficit to date was £1.4m, with a projected year-end out-turn of £870k. Pay and non-pay expenditure was £395k lower than budget, with cash standing at £4.7m (cf £13m in the Financial Statements). The cash balance at the end of the year was still projected to be in the range of £2.5 to £4.5m. The College was, however, doing everything to maintain £4m in cash reserves.</p> <p>It was noted that were there to be any penalties arising out of the on-going ESFA Funding Audit, this would impact in the current financial year.</p>
40/24.3.3	<p>Arising out of discussion, Governors enquired as to what 'levers' were being applied to reduce the deficit position, including a temporary freeze on recruitment. The Principal advised that all staffing requests were subject to detailed scrutiny by the SLT on a fortnightly basis which had resulted in a saving of £300k. In addition, certain capital projects (eg replacement of boilers) had been put on hold.</p>
40/24.3.4	<p>It was agreed that a more detailed session on the College's finances, including the presentation of Key Financial Information by the Interim Finance Consultant, should take place at the Corporation Strategy Day on 2 June. It was reiterated that it was important for Governors to focus on EBITDA and cash held at the bank. In addition, as more adult work was commissioned, profiling would have an impact on the actual position in-year, so the full-year forecast needed to be taken into consideration.</p>

		Action
		The Corporation noted the Management Accounts to 31 January 2025.
40/24.4	ii) New Finance System	
40/24.4.1		It was reported that four potential suppliers were being evaluated in respect of the procurement of a new Finance System, to be implemented in August 2025. It was confirmed that support would end for the existing system on 31 December 2025.
40/24.4.2	i) Summary Committee Minutes	
		The Corporation noted the summary Minutes of the Finance & Resources Committee held on 29 January 2025.
40/24.5	d) People Committee	
	i) Safeguarding & Prevent Report	
40/24.5.1		The Deputy Principal (CPSE) introduced the Safeguarding & Prevent Report, it being noted that the new Children's Well-being and School Bill would introduce a mandatory Well-being Standards Framework, enhanced mental health support, digital safeguarding measures and strengthened inclusivity requirements. This would require the College to align its policies and resources to meeting emerging expectations.
40/24.5.2		The College had successfully implemented CPOMS and had provided increased support for residential and care-experienced students, resulting in a reduction in incidents and enhanced responsiveness to student needs. The Corporation noted the report.
40/24.6	ii) In-Year EDI Report	
40/24.6.1		The Corporation received a presentation on EDI developments.
40/24.7	iii) Gender Pay Gap Report	
40/24.7.1		The Executive Director (People & Culture) presented key highlights from the Gender Pay Gap Report, 2023/24, it being noted that median pay gap had increased from 9.3% to 13.4%, based on hourly rates of £16.88 and £14.90 for male and female staff, respectively. It was commented that the increase in the pay gap was largely attributable to historic issues in 2023/24 which would be considered both by the EDI Committee and the People Committee.
40/24.7.2		The Chair of the People Committee observed that arising out of the recent Staff Survey, 92% of staff had indicated that they were happy in working at the College, as evidenced in lower attrition rates. Increased staff development opportunities (including leadership training) had also had a positive impact.

40/24.7.3	<p>The Corporation noted the report.</p> <p>iv) Summary Committee Minutes</p> <p>The Corporation noted the summary Minutes of the meeting of the People Committee held on 5 February 2025.</p>
40/24.8	e) Audit Committee
40/24.8.1	<p>i) Hospitality & Gifts Policy</p> <p>The Corporation approved the Hospitality & Gifts Policy which was unchanged.</p>
40/24.8.2	<p>ii) Summary Committee Minutes</p> <p>The Corporation noted the summary Minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 24 February 2025.</p>
41/24	BUSINESS CYCLE, 2024/25
41/24.1	The Corporation noted the Business Cycle, 2024/25.
42/24	ANY OTHER BUSINESS
42/24.1	There being no further business, the meeting closed at 20.00, the dates of future meetings being confirmed as 22 May (Special); 2 June (Strategy Day) and 2 July 2025.