

Corporation Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 19th March 2025 5.00pm – 8.00pm
Blossomfield Campus.

Present	Paul Assinder – Chair of Corporation Tony Lucas – Vice Chair of Corporation Susie Ankrett Megan Bacalla – FE Student Governor Rebecca Gater – Principal and CEO Helen Kinghorn Ravi Kumar Graham McKean Dave Nanda Amirun Nehar Cheryl Pidler Donna Poole – Staff Governor
In Attendance	Sam Bromwich – Director of Corporate Governance, Risk and Compliance, Nancy Buckley – Vice Principal Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships, Heather Hunt – Deputy Principal and CFO, Linda McLaughlin – Assistant Principal Quality and Innovation, Len Tildsley – Chair of Curriculum and Quality Committee Cheshire College South & West, Sandra White – Assistant Principal
Apologies	Christine Abbott, Pete Haynes – Vice Principal HR and Student Services, Sarah Horton-Walsh, Sharmin Rima – HE Student Governor, Tina Taylor – Senior Governance Officer, Harrison Thompson.
Not in Attendance	Mehreen Mirza,

1. Welcome and Announcements

The Chair highlighted the main theme of quality and curriculum and welcomed everyone to the meeting, including distinguished visitor Len Tildsley – Chair of the Curriculum and Quality Committee, Cheshire College South & West.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Christine Abbott, Pete Haynes, Sarah Horton-Walsh, Harrison Thompson, Sharmin Rima and Tina Taylor.

Mehreen Mirza was declared not in attendance.

3. Declarations of Interest

A declaration of interest was received from the Principal in relation to the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Institute of Technology (GBSIoT) update – the Principal is on the Board of Directors.

4. Membership Update

The Chair provided an update about the search for a new governor specialising in curriculum and quality. Peridot are sourcing candidates. The closing date is 21st March 2025, and interviews will be held on 8th April 2025.

5. Chair's Action and Use of College Seal and Chair's E-signature

There were none to declare.

6. Minutes of the Previous Corporation Meeting on 29th January 2025

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 29th January 2025 were circulated and **APPROVED**.

6.1 Matters Arising (verbal)

There were none to discuss.

6.2 Actions

The actions report was circulated, and updates were provided.

Regarding action item number 8 from December 2024, during the next Corporation Meeting the Chair and the Director of Corporate Governance, Risk and Compliance are planning to share a summary of touchpoints between teaching staff and governors.

Regarding action item number 16 from December 2024, the Principal explained that the external consultant has been asked to undertake further work on the review of Higher Education, including more analysis of the curriculum offer.

The Chair added that a sustainability seminar is currently being arranged with Lowell Williams on behalf of Colleges West Midlands, which will provide an update on the Green Skills Roadmap.

Regarding action item number 10 from January 2025, the Chair and the Principal explained that the Education Village is still awaiting funding confirmation from the West Midlands Combined Authority.

6.3 Top Key Risks

The Top Key Risks were shared for discussion.

The Chair highlighted that some quality and curriculum matters warrant inclusion in the Top Key Risks, such as achievement and attendance in some areas. The Principal explained that the next Top Key Risks will include programmes in intensive care, helping to provide more regular updates.

It was agreed that a new risk would be added under the subject called "Courses in Intensive Care". **ACTION**

The Top Key Risks were received and **NOTED** for information, understanding and decision making by governors.

7. Committee Minutes

The following draft minutes were circulated and **NOTED** for information:

- Additional Audit and Risk Committee on 11th February 2025
- Confidential Additional Remuneration Committee on 6th March 2025

8. Chair's Update

The Chair thanked the Governors for completing the online skills audit, which will help to identify any skillset gaps and inform future governor appointments.

The Chair thanked the Senior Governance Officer *in absentia* for putting together the governor newsletter. The Chair encouraged submission of news about governors for inclusion and explained that an issue will be produced each term, including a short biography about one of the governors. **ACTION**

The Chair highlighted the importance of making the best use of the wealth of skills among linked governors and the opportunities for discourse, including optimising involvement in Corporation Meetings.

The Chair thanked Cheryl Pidler for agreeing to chair the new Property Special Interest Group, which is due to meet on 27th March 2025.

The Chair provided a reminder to complete any outstanding Boxphish online cybersecurity training. **ACTION**

The Chair explained that there will be an online briefing about Ofsted changes, which is scheduled to take place on 24th March 2025.

9. Principal's Update

The Principal's report was circulated, and the Principal began with the appendix titled 'Strategic Plan Update 4', providing governors with an update on progress around each strategic ambition from July 2024 to January 2025 and priorities over the next six months.

The Principal highlighted that the Competition Lead and Quality Coach role is new for this academic year. The College is having significant impact in competitions in maths, e-sports, creative writing and animal care, providing valuable experiences and opportunities for learners to develop their skills.

The Principal highlighted other areas to celebrate in terms of improvements to quality for our learners, including awards, shortlisting for awards, and a strong performance in English shown in the resit results from November 2024.

The Principal highlighted that the last page focuses on enhancing the College's reputation. It includes details of high-profile visitors and staff involvement in events helping to raise our profile, along with some social media promotion.

A governor asked if there is ever external feedback when this type of update is published on the website, commenting that it contains valuable narratives and encouraging engagement could be worthwhile. The Principal explained that there has not been any feedback. Governors suggested social media promotion and using website analytics to explore engagement. Also, a governor commented that they were pleased that the update holds us to account and the format could be altered to make it more appealing to an external audience. For example, the start could focus on achievements. The Principal explained that engagement could be explored, and the format and promotion of the update could be considered with help from Marketing. **ACTION**

Governors asked if this type of update goes to the Student Executive and agreed that this could encourage helpful feedback. The Principal was also in agreement after explaining that these updates inform conversations but have not previously gone directly to the Student Executive. **ACTION**

The Chair asked if our competitors publish equivalent updates on their websites. The Principal explained that other colleges do not publish this type of update, but it is important for accountability.

The Chair commented that they were impressed to see the improvement in the Student Satisfaction Survey, particularly the increase in learners who would recommend the College to a friend, plus they enjoyed seeing the feedback about Movement Hour.

'Strategic Plan Update 4' was **APPROVED** by the governors and then the Principal provided further updates from the report.

In relation to the theme of quality and curriculum, initial analysis of the January exam results shows increased merit and distinction grades compared to the previous academic year, improved

exam attendance, and a positive trend of reduced near passes and ungraded papers. There are particularly pleasing above-average improvements in the areas of Engineering, Built Environment and Computing, which are rated amber because of concerns with some programmes under intensive care. Full results will be shared during the next Corporation Meeting.

Under 'Strategic Ambition 2', an update about the Learning Village was delivered under item 6.2. Once funding has been confirmed, the other special interest group will be established. There is an additional subcontract, and the Principal will circulate an updated version without this note struck out. **ACTION**

The Principal was pleased to hear from the Student Executive Committee about how students supported staff during the Whole College Development Day about inclusion. The Staff Governor added that colleagues find these days beneficial and now look forward to them. The Principal explained that these days were not very popular among some staff groups in the past. Since the new Head of Quality – Teaching, Learning and Innovation has taken a different approach, these days have more of a festival feel and staff and union feedback is positive.

The approval to tender for WMCA AEB and the approval of the Strategic Plan Progress 4 was **AGREED** by Governors

The report was **NOTED** for information, understanding and decision making by governors.

10. Quality

The Assistant Principal for Creative and Foundation provided an update mainly about programmes under intensive care. The presentation included:

- Successes
- Update on English and Maths
 - Challenges
 - Attendance gap between Vocational Programmes and English and Maths
 - Funding changes and revised curriculum structure
 - Exam preparation
 - Adult retention and achievement in GCSEs and Functional Skills
 - Use of technology
 - Relationships with other colleges
- Update on Foundation, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Community
 - Challenges
 - Retention and achievement
 - Working groups
 - Work experience

The Chair asked if there are signs of improvement. The Assistant Principal for Creative and Foundation commented that they want to build on some of the positive exam results from November mentioned under item 9, focusing on extra support for learners at grade 3. The Assistant Principal for Quality and Innovation added that they have heard innovative ideas in meetings with other colleges, which have been shared with the Senior Leadership and Executive Management Teams so that the current measured approach can be combined with new initiatives. Regarding English and Maths, predictions are higher compared to the previous academic year, and MOT reports and feedback are showing improvements.

A governor asked if the changes to apprenticeships will have an impact. The Assistant Principal for Creative and Foundation commented that they are not expecting a huge impact because these learners would be doing Functional Skills.

Regarding the MOT report provided by Assistant Principal for Quality and Innovation, **A governor asked** why retention is 97% but predicted achievement is 81% for the Foundation Access to Further Education programmes. The Assistant Principal for Quality and Innovation explained that one of the MOT meetings with the Head of Foundation, Community and ESOL was pushed back to 20th March 2025, so that data is from the previous MOT meeting. The Assistant Principal for Creative and Foundation is working with the Head of Foundation, Community and ESOL on specific actions to address the challenges in this area. **A governor asked** what proportion of learners are on reach programmes and what proportion of learners are on disengagement programmes. The Assistant Principal for Creative and Foundation explained that it is around half and half but there is some blurring of the boundaries.

Regarding predicted achievement in English and Maths, **A governor asked** about the gap between retention and predicted achievement. The Assistant Principal for Quality and Innovation and Assistant Principal for Creative and Foundation explained that they are working with the Head of School for English and Maths on making more accurate predictions and predicted achievement is expected to increase.

A governor asked if there is any link between the two schools in intensive care and student satisfaction. Regarding Foundation, the Assistant Principal for Creative and Foundation commented that most students appear to be happy, but this is not reflected in the student satisfaction survey. Regarding English and Maths, the impression is that learners tend to prefer Vocational Programmes plus the survey has been changed to gather feedback more effectively.

A governor asked for more information about the shortages of permanent staff in English and Maths. The Assistant Principal for Creative and Foundation explained that a lot of roles have been filled already, interviews are taking place again, and by Easter it is expected that agency staff will no longer be required.

The Chair commented that it was interesting to hear about students coming to the College who are familiar with failing in English and Maths and asked how it can be addressed. The Assistant Principal for Creative and Foundation commented that giving learners a year between failed exams and resits can allow time to support learners and build confidence through noting and rewarding successes, as well as avoiding the possibility of a double failure in one year. Also, the Head of School for English and Maths works hard to build rapport with teachers, which helps with the development of a positive relationship between teachers and learners. The Principal added that the 'Teach the Teacher' project lead by the Quality Coach and English Lecturer provides a trauma-informed approach to resist and tackling the failure mindset. For Maths, the Assistant Principal for Creative and Foundation explained that the Department for Education is funding extra exam preparation. For English, there are AQA resources and seminars. The Assistant Principal for Quality and Innovation added that the Head of School for English and Maths has worked with other heads of school to improve how the timetable supports learners.

The Chair commented that it was interesting hearing about competition from other platforms providing learning opportunities and asked if all the channels of delivery have been explored. The Assistant Principal for Creative and Foundation explained that the College offers online learning, and other models are being explored.

Regarding work experience, a governor commented that the Solihull Employment and Skills Team project can provide feedback about why employers might not embrace work experience. The Principal commented that supporting learners with special educational needs can present a greater challenge for some employers due to the need to invest extra time. The Assistant Principal for Creative and Foundation explained that the College has specialists who can help employers with their disability awareness, and Foundation work experience is tailored to suit a learner's needs. The governor added that they are Chair of the Forum for Supported Internships

for Solihull, and they are happy to share information from the Assistant Principal for Creative and Foundation with members.

The Chair asked the Assistant Principal for Creative and Foundation for final comments on what governors need to know about their areas of work. The Assistant Principal for Creative and Foundation expressed a sense of pride, particular for work in the area of English and Maths. The Assistant Principal for Creative and Foundation is interested to hear about supported internships because the Programme Manager for Supported Internships and ALD is liaising with employers and more work can be done in this area. The Assistant Principal for Creative and Foundation also expressed a passion for supporting inclusive apprenticeships. The Assistant Principal for Creative and Foundation expressed gratitude for a governor visitor to Foundation and invited governors to make contact at any time if they have questions.

The meeting recommenced after a break for food and prayer.

10.1 QIP Update 24/25

The report presented to Governors on progress against actions identified in the 2023/24 QIP and to present the College QIP for 2024/25 which outlines the key priorities for the College.

A governor noted the attendance was below average and requested further analysis and that emphasised that attendance should remain a key focus.

Governors discussed whether they were satisfied with the speed of progress. In depth discussions took place about how the results would be confirmed at the end of the end of the academic year.

A governor queried the retention for vocational subject and whether the scores were correct. The Assistant Principal for Quality and Innovation confirmed that she would review the dashboard and confirm. **ACTION**

10.2 Quality Report (Term 2)

There was a discussion regarding the accuracy of the risk ratings, particularly the prevalence of 'orange' ratings compared to 'red'. This raised the question of whether the assessments might be overly cautious. The Principal noted that the rigorous monitoring processes in place reflect a high standard of expectation across all areas.

A Governor asked what proportion of the entries were for English and Maths. The Principal confirmed that 3,800 out of 9,000 entries were in these subjects. The Governor observed that this could significantly impact overall achievement outcomes and noted the absence of actual student numbers, making it difficult to assess the full impact. It was agreed that a 'Learner Numbers by Provision Type' section would be added to the report for greater clarity. **ACTION**

Governors discussed Student behaviour and how it could be monitored.

A governor noted that Built Environment is below the national average. The Assistant Principal for Quality and Innovation explained that there have been some promising results for Built Environment and predicted achievement is above the national average.

10.3 Focus Group Feedback

The Chair asked about focus group follow-up. The Assistant Principal explained that feedback is displayed and round two of the focus groups provides an opportunity to further explore topics. The Assistant Principal for Quality and Innovation added that information about focus groups is shared with the Student Representatives to help show that learners' voices are heard.

11. GBSIoT Termly Update

The report was shared which provided the Corporation with an update about GBSIoT. The following items were shared as a linked document for information:

- SCUC Corporation GBSIoT Board 5-year Plan Budget 25
- GBSIoT Board Hub Dashboard December 24
- Quarterly Management Accounts January 2025

A letter to IoT Partners from Minister Smith was shared which confirmed that the IoT license will continue for a further 3 years under summer 2028.

The Vice Principal for Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships explained that on 17th January 2025 a notification was received from the Department of Education containing information about planned withdrawal of support for the IoT. The IoT's national network wrote to the Minister of State for Skills with a case for continuing support. The Minister of State for Skills visited the GBSIoT to learn more from learners, employers and other stakeholders, which was followed by a decision to continue support for the IoT until 2028.

Following a governor's question, the Vice Principal for Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships explained that between 17th January and late February 2025 the College's Legal Counsel examined the potential implications of disbanding the GBSIoT, taking into account that it is based on the grounds of Aston University.

The Vice Principal for Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships expects that future government policies that might affect the IoT. For example, the IoT might fall under the umbrella of Technical Excellence Colleges.

The Vice Principal for Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships announced that the GBSIoT Operations Director has resigned and is due to leave the College at the end of April or early May 2025. The advert for this role is live.

Governors were advised that the Director of Operations has resigned to the GBSIoT Board. The Board agreed 27-02-25. The Director job description is being revised and will be approved by the Board week commencing 3rd March.

With there being no further comments or questions, the report was **NOTED** for information, understanding and decision making by governors.

12. Employer Engagement Strategy

The report updated governors on the College's Employer Engagement Strategy which draws from Local and National Skills policy and aligns to OFSTED skills requirements, and College strategy.

The Vice Principal for Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships thanked Susie Ankrett and Ravi Kumar for their help with shaping the Employer Engagement Strategy.

The Employer Engagement Strategy uses extracts from the College's strategic plan referring to employers and stakeholders. It ties in with the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022, the West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Plan, including the WMCA Employment and Skills Strategy, the Solihull Economic Strategy, and Ofsted requirements.

Following in depth discussions, the Vice Principal for Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships and the Principal agreed that the Employer Engagement Strategy may not be appropriate for an external audience due to some sensitive content. The Principal added that

there are existing channels of communication for speaking to employers and making use of their feedback.

A governor asked for more quantitative targets. ACTION

The Chair praised the work done on the Employer Engagement Strategy and thanked governors for their input. The Chair added that it is a work in progress. For example, it could benefit from some more quantified targets, which could be an appendix.

Governors **accepted** the Strategy and agreed that it could be published on the website. It was also noted that a review of the Strategy would be conducted at the end of 2025.

13. Bids and Projects Report, including Termly KPI Report

The Vice Principal for Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships shared the report and explained the purpose of the reports were to:

- Approval of Coventry Council Social Work Degree Apprenticeship (SWDA) tender.
- Renewal of Innovate UK Further Education Innovation Fund (FEIF) for a further year.
- Provide an update on bids and projects with including termly bids and contracts tracker for Autumn term.

The Vice Principal for Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships explained that the College is still waiting to hear if the bid for the Coventry Council Social Work Degree Apprenticeship has been successful.

A governor asked for more information about expenses, specifically in 2028 and 2029. The Vice Principal for Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships explained that it is a three-year programme, and the figures relate to the first cohort, but the increasing expenses associated with the cohorts starting in 2028 and 2029 have also been considered.

The Chair asked about room to accommodate the learners. The Vice Principal for Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships explained that the learners will be out in the workplace and a teacher with the appropriate qualifications has just been recruited, which is part of the requirements for getting the degree validated by Oxford Brookes University.

The Chair asked about the opportunity for the College to continue the work linked to Innovate UK. The Vice Principal for Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships explained that the College will continue to receive a share of Innovate UK's Further Education Innovation Fund, which means that new staff contracts can be extended for another year. He further asked about the contribution in the next 3 years. It was confirmed that it is projected to be 34.16% in the first 3 years. The Principal responded to say that although it is not 40% there is a strategic drive for this type of provision.

With there being no further comments or questions, governors **APPROVED** the Coventry Council Social Work Degree Apprenticeship (SWDA) tender.

APPROVED the renewal of Innovate UK Further Education Innovation Fund (FEIF) for a further year

The report providing an update on the current bids and projects was shared and **NOTED** for information, understanding and decision making by governors.

14. Feedback to Governors on SEND (verbal)

The linked governor provided detailed feedback about SEND.

The Chair commented that this is an excellent example of the value of a linked governor.

15. Governance Items

The Director of Corporate Governance, Risk and Compliance presented the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee to reappoint the external auditors.

The Chair asked about the price and the Director of Corporate Governance, Risk and Compliance confirmed that it is within budget plus no fee increases throughout the year.

A governor mentioned scoping and the Director of Corporate Governance, Risk and Compliance commented that the Audit and Risk Committee went into a lot of detail around scoping.

The Chair asked about the contract length. The Director of Corporate Governance, Risk and Compliance confirmed that it is a three-year contract with Bishop Fleming.

The reappointment of the external auditors for a further one year was **APPROVED**.

16. Confidential

The item was discussed under item 7.

17. Items for Information

The Health and Safety Update Report from the Audit and Risk Committee was shared and **NOTED** for information understanding and decision making by governors.

A governor asked about the high number of fire marshals in comparison to the number of first aiders, as well as bleed kits and defibrillators. The Principal commented that the College has this equipment. It was noted that a review of first aid is underway. The Principal added that feedback from this review can be shared with governors. **ACTION**

18. Any Other Business

The Director of Corporate Governance, Risk and Compliance provided a reminder about the learning visits and focus groups, asking governors to add their name to a date if possible. **ACTION**

19. Future Dates

Dates were confirmed as per the agenda.

The Chair thanked everyone, and the meeting ended at 8:09pm.



Signed:

Dated: 22.05.2025

Paul Assinder – Chair of Corporation