

## Corporation Meeting – Quality & Curriculum

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2025 4.00pm – 6.30pm  
at Blossomfield Campus

<b>Present</b>	Paul Assinder – Chair of Corporation Tony Lucas – Vice Chair of Corporation Susie Ankrett Christine Abbott Megan Bacalla – FE Student Governor Rebecca Gater – Principal and CEO Sue Hopewell Helen Kinghorn Ravi Kumar Amirun Nehar Cheryl Pidler Harrison Thompson
<b>In Attendance</b>	Sam Bromwich – Director of Corporate Governance, Risk and Compliance, Nancy Buckley – Vice Principal Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships, Pete Haynes – Vice Principal HR and Student Services, Heather Hunt – Deputy Principal and CFO, Linda McLaughlin – Vice Principal Quality & Curriculum, Tina Taylor – Senior Governance Officer.
<b>Apologies</b>	Graham McKean, Dave Nanda, Holly Bayliss – Staff Governor Sarah Horton- Walsh, Mehreen Mirza, Sharmin Rima – HE Student Governor.

### 1. Welcome and Announcements

The Chair welcomed all attendees.

### 2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Graham McKean, Dave Nanda, Holly Bayliss, Sarah Horton-Walsh, Mehreen Mirza and Sharmin Rima – HE Student Governor.

### 3. Declarations of Interest

None received.

### 4. Membership Update

The Chair confirmed that the term of office for Christine Abbott expired December 2025 and has been extended for a further term of 4 years until December 2029. Christine was warmly congratulated on her reappointment.

The Corporation formally bid farewell to Graham McKean and expressed appreciation for his valuable contribution.

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

The report was shared and **NOTED**.

## **6. Minutes and Confidential Minutes of the Previous Corporation Meeting and Actions List held on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2025**

The minutes were deferred to January 2026 due to the limited timescales following the last Corporation meeting.

### **6.1 Matters Arising (verbal)**

None to be discussed.

### **6.2 Actions**

The actions report was deferred to January due to the limited timescales following the last Corporation meeting.

## **7. Committee Minutes**

The draft minutes of the Financial Oversight Group (FoG), held on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2025 were circulated and **NOTED** for information.

## **8. Chair's Update**

The Chair's update report summarised the activities of the Chair of Corporation and updated governors on key developments. The Chair confirmed that the report should be largely taken as read but wished to emphasise the following points.

The Chair thanked colleagues for their support with the shortlisting and interview process, conducted with Peridot Partners, for current governor vacancies. Graham McKean's (governor with an accountancy background) role will be filled in the new calendar year, and the Governance team are engaging with recruitment agencies. They will circulate the opportunity pack to all governors for wider network sharing. It was noted that, following the recent succession planning process, the Corporation is ideally seeking candidates with an employer skills background in this role.

An update was provided on the upcoming External Board Review, noting that the Chair and Governance Team had held a productive meeting with Rockborn. A scope and timeframe have been agreed, with work commencing in the spring term and findings will be presented to the July Corporation meeting.

The Chair expressed thanks to governors who participated in the focus groups and learning visits. It was noted that improvements are needed in providing feedback. The next round of visits is scheduled for March, and governors were encouraged to attend. The Director of Corporate Governance, Risk and Compliance highlighted that governors should perhaps focus on the same schools for continuity.

Two governors have not yet completed the KCSiE requirements. It was emphasised that this is a priority, particularly as one local college has recently been visited by Ofsted, underlining the importance of compliance. The deadline for completion has already passed.

There is a vacancy on the Remuneration Committee, and governors were invited to register their interest. The Chair of the Committee provided an overview of the Committee's responsibilities.

The top key risks were shared, with no changes since the November meeting. The report was **NOTED** for information, understanding and decision making by governors.

## **9. Principal's Update**

### **9a. Principal's Update report**

The report was shared to provide Governors with an update on key areas of the College.

#### **Strategic ambition 1:**

An update was given on the Facilitated 'Design Thinking' session which took place in November delivered by the Chief Executive from Active Learning.

**Strategic ambition 2:**

There was an update on current apprenticeships figures.

**Strategic ambition 3:**

A new legal counsel has been appointed following the departure of the previous postholder. The appointee previously held the position and is familiar with college processes, bringing additional experience gained during her absence. Her return is expected to provide continuity and ensure a smooth transition.

On the Communication review the Principal and CEO confirmed that Chalkstream will conduct a review of internal and external communications, including policies and processes. Meetings and analysis will take place in January, with a report due by month-end. This supports the strategic plan to improve communication.

A workload taskforce will be launched in the new year, led by BMT, to address concerns highlighted by Ofsted and the recent stress survey. Consultation with staff will inform actions. Curriculum planning, initiated on 21 November, will continue through spring and summer, feeding into the curriculum and skills strategy.

**Strategic ambition 4:**

Curriculum planning was launched with CMT on 21 November. This process will continue through the spring and summer terms and will inform the development of the curriculum and skills strategy.

**Strategic Plan Progress Update 5**

An update was provided on the sale of the Stratford student residence. Five outstanding issues remain before planning permission can be granted. Completion, originally expected in quarter one, is now anticipated in quarter two as advised by the Case Officer. A further Property Special Interest Group (SIG) meeting will be arranged to provide an update.

***The Chair asked*** whether the apprenticeships target was affected by national trends in lower recruitment. The Principal and CEO noted that while some colleges and training providers are experiencing similar challenges, this is also sector specific. The target was not considered overly ambitious, but further work is required on sales. The Vice Principal for Business Growth, Skills & Partnership added that vacancies in the West Midlands are down by approximately one-third compared to last year, though tenders are currently in progress.

***The Chair queried*** whether financial performance was a concern given current targets. The Deputy Principal and CEO confirmed that figures are being reviewed and noted that any shortfall is expected to be mitigated through alternative income streams. The Chair also enquired about the pay award offer and staff response. The Principal and CEO reported that feedback to date has been positive.

***Governors asked*** about the union's request for a 10% pay increase. The Principal and CEO explained that this was a national position, and the local representatives acknowledged it was not feasible.

***Governors also queried*** whether a list of colleges planning to strike was available. The Principal and CEO confirmed that the initial concern was unfounded and advised that an updated list exists, with this college not included.

A copy of the draft Strategic Plan 2026-2028 was shared for approval along with a copy of the Operational Plan template for information.

The Principal and CEO provided clarification on the HE Strategy, explaining that it had not been shared as it would be premature to launch such an enabling strategy before completing the wider Curriculum and Skills Strategy and the overarching Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan will be prioritised, followed by the development of the Curriculum and Skills Plan. This plan will encompass key industry sectors in the West Midlands and beyond, align with the Industrial Strategy and Combined Authority Growth Plan, and include all provision types, with HE forming part of this. A draft Curriculum and Skills Strategy is expected to be presented to Corporation in either March or May. **ACTION**

The Principal and CEO also referred to the draft Strategic Plan, noting that an updated version incorporating governors' feedback has been shared and this public-facing document will be published on the website. Supporting the Strategic Plan will be a series of operational plans detailing specific actions and three-year stretch targets. These operational plans will not be shared publicly but will provide the framework for monitoring progress. Governors will receive regular updates on KPIs to maintain oversight and assurance of progress against the Strategic Plan. Corporation will continue to oversee delivery throughout the three-year cycle.

**A governor queried** the absence of operational plans within the Strategic Plan, expressing concern about approving the plan without clarity on implementation. The governor expected Year 1 operational plans and KPIs and felt uncomfortable proceeding without this detail. **The Chair clarified** that the operational plans, which outline the 'what and how', will be presented in March. The Principal and CEO confirmed that operational plans are being developed in January and will commence then.

**Another governor questioned** why approval was required now. The Principal and CEO explained that the current plan ends in December, and the new plan starts in January, although there is no external deadline. It was agreed that the Strategic Plan paper would be presented at the January Corporation meeting, with governors informed that papers would be circulated after the deadline. **ACTION**

**Following a question from the Chair**, further discussion took place on the Investment Strategy. The Deputy Principal and CFO outlined the Investment Strategy and Investment Plan in alignment with the Estates Strategy. Governors emphasised their responsibility to approve the Strategic Plan and agreed this would be confirmed at the January meeting to ensure confidence in delivering the first phase of the strategy.

The Corporation was satisfied that final sign-off of the Strategic Plan 2026–2028 will take place at the January Corporation meeting along with the Operational Plans and noted the explanation for why the HE Strategy had not been shared.

- 10. Self-Assessment 24/25 including Final Achievement Report (Including Governance SAR)**  
The College Self-Assessment Report (SAR) 2024/25, College Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2025/26 and Final Achievement Summary were shared for approval. It was noted that the College SAR has been produced to summarise performance from the previous academic year and has been written in line with the new Inspection Framework.

The Vice Principal for Quality & Curriculum explained that feedback received prior to submission of the board pack is being incorporated into updates to the current SAR. Additional comments can still be shared for consideration.

**The Chair acknowledged** the helpful feedback provided by governors and noted the significant work undertaken. **A governor commented** on the challenges of adapting to the new Ofsted framework and commended that the SAR aligns with this updated approach.

Further discussion took place regarding schools under pressure and areas where teaching quality requires improvement. The Vice Principal for Quality & Curriculum confirmed that while progress

has been made in teaching and learning, and most areas are performing strongly, there is still work to do. The SAR will be refined to ensure clarity and diplomacy before publication.

**A governor raised concerns** about targets and factors impacting performance. The Vice Principal for Quality & Curriculum responded that the SAR highlights areas where performance is below expectations and stressed the need for greater rigour in addressing poor-quality teaching.

**A governor raised concerns** regarding learner safety and inclusion at the Woodlands campus, referencing recent survey feedback and local deprivation issues highlighted in a news bulletin about the local area. The governor emphasised the importance of considering the wider context of where learners live, rather than viewing this solely as a site-based issue, noting that some learners do not feel safe travelling to and from campus.

The Vice Principal for Quality & Curriculum confirmed that meetings are taking place with the Woodlands campus team to address these concerns. The focus includes reviewing inclusion practices, exploring whether issues are linked to specific courses, and considering factors such as affordability of food in the refectory, which may impact learners staying on site. Senior Leadership Team discussions have taken place, and an action plan is in development. **A governor also highlighted** the need to consider learners entitled to free school meals and acknowledged that this may be influenced by localised socio-economic factors.

**Another governor expressed concern** that learners at the Woodlands campus may feel disadvantaged compared to those at other sites, citing the lack of recreational facilities and the condition of some areas of the campus.

**The Student Governor raised concerns** about the effectiveness of current feedback mechanisms, noting that conferences do not always uncover underlying issues. They suggested implementing class-based student focus groups, particularly in schools facing challenges, to ensure feedback is not filtered and issues are addressed directly. It was observed that student representatives often share only positive news. The Vice Principal for Quality & Curriculum responded that Heads of School do attend focus groups to discuss matters with students and clarified that conferences involve representatives feeding back to Heads of School. The Student Governor further proposed introducing a survey to capture broader student feedback.

**A governor acknowledged** the significant work involved in producing the SAR and noted the challenges posed by the new inspection framework. The governor asked where the organisation was positioning itself within this framework. A response was provided.

It was noted that the SAR will be updated to reflect feedback received. The Corporation **APPROVED** the SAR, subject to these updates, and agreed that the Chair will sign the final version once amendments have been made. Governors requested sight of the final version before it is signed. Governors have 24 hours to review the updated document, after which the Chair will proceed with signing. **ACTION**

## 11. Quality Improvement Plan (QiP) 2025/26

The QiP was shared for information.

**A governor queried** whether attendance, which remains low, has shown any improvement. The Vice Principal for Quality & Curriculum advised that the Curriculum Management Team is reviewing this with a focus on rigour and improving processes.

Discussion followed on why attendance is strong in some areas but not others. The Principal and CEO explained that Heads of School in high-attendance areas share successful practices with other Heads of School to replicate what works well.

The Final Achievement Summary was shared for information and discussed. The Chair asked whether there is clear alignment within teams so that everyone understands their role. The Vice

Principal for Quality & Curriculum acknowledged challenges, noting that some teams are more aligned than others, as reflected in performance boards, and confirmed awareness of these issues. In-depth discussion took place on strategies in place following governor challenge.

**A governor commended** the Vice Principal for Quality & Curriculum for her delivery during SAR meetings, noting the clarity and firmness of her message to staff.

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

## 12. Quality Update

The Vice Principal for Quality & Curriculum presented the Term 1 Quality Report and the Autumn Student Satisfaction Survey for information. The Complaints Report was also shared, along with the Concerns and Complaints Policy and Procedure for approval.

**A governor queried** the factors influencing movement in three areas. The Vice Principal for Quality & Curriculum clarified that the changes were not limited to engineering and provided a detailed explanation of the decrease in numbers.

**A query was raised** regarding apprenticeship attendance percentages and their impact on participation rates. The Vice Principal for Quality & Curriculum confirmed this will be added.

### **ACTION**

**Discussion took place** on the questionnaire design, with concerns that the question “Would you recommend the college to a friend?” was too simplistic. The Vice Principal for Quality & Curriculum noted that learners were consulted on terminology, but governors challenged that the question does not provide meaningful insight. The Student Governor suggested alternative phrasing.

**A governor asked** whether serious efforts are made to resolve complaints informally before escalation, noting that students may not understand the formal nature of the process and that poor communication often leads to complaints. In-depth discussion followed on the complaints report, with clarification provided on outcomes and the role of the Student Support Team in assisting learners.

The Concerns and Complaints Policy and Procedure was **APPROVED**.

## 13. Higher Education Report including monitoring of the Access and Participation Plan (APP)

The revised HE Strategy was not shared due to a change in the agenda and will now be reviewed and approved in March. **ACTION**

The Vice Principal for Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships presented a paper updating governors on progress towards the APP and provided a detailed explanation of developments.

**A governor queried** the lack of progress on activities relating to improved pastoral support. The Vice Principal explained that this is due to the early stage of implementation, with mentoring and a peer programme planned to enable students to work with university peers.

**A governor asked** whether students still share space with HE students and suggested observing the experience. The Vice Principal noted that no concerns have been raised in feedback groups. **Governor comments were received** noting that the mix of students seemed unusual. The Vice Principal agreed to raise this with the Head of HE & Research to check if HE students have expressed concerns about mixing with A-level students. **ACTION**

**A governor asked** about mental health sign-ups, whether numbers met expectations, and what constitutes an intervention. Access to online support was also discussed.

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

#### 14. Equality and Diversity Objectives

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services presented an update on the Equality and Diversity Objectives and progress achieved to date.

**Governors discussed the report in detail**, including the challenges faced by the college. Questions were raised regarding inclusion and engagement with deprived white middle-class communities, and whether actions are being taken to ensure all communities feel welcomed. The Vice Principal HR and Student Services confirmed that these issues have been considered within the EDI Steering Group.

Further discussion took place on achieving a representative staff profile and how this impacts the student population.

The Equality and Diversity Objectives were **APPROVED**.

#### 15. Governance Items

##### 15.1 Annual Report of Remuneration Committee 24/25

The Director of Corporate Governance, Risk and Compliance presented a report outlining how the committee fulfilled its 2024/25 duties, made recommendations on remuneration, benefits and performance for the Principal, Senior Post Holders and the Director, and assured the Corporation these responsibilities were effectively discharged.

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

The College's Policy on the Remuneration and Appraisal of Senior Post Holders and the Director of Corporate Governance, Risk and Compliance was **APPROVED**.

##### 15.2 Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference

The revised Terms of Reference for the Remuneration Committee were presented for approval.

**A governor queried** the inclusion of responsibilities relating to agreeing benefits, including exit clauses for the Principal. The Director of Corporate Governance, Risk and Compliance explained that this was added in response to lessons learned from the Western College case.

The Chair of the Remuneration Committee reminded governors to complete the Chair Appraisal feedback form.

The Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference was **APPROVED**.

#### 16. Confidential Items

This item was taken at the end of the meeting following a change to the agenda. The Remuneration Committee update was discussed with Remuneration Committee members and Corporation members only, excluding Staff and Student Governors.

**Confidential item – not for publication.**

#### 17. Policies

The following policies were circulated:

- 17.1 Concerns and Complaints Policy and Procedure
- 17.2 Disciplinary Procedure for all Staff
- 17.3 Maternity Policy
- 17.4 Shared Parental Leave Policy

**A governor asked** whether the Disciplinary Procedure for All Staff should set a time limit on full-pay suspension during investigations, and if introducing such a limit is necessary or feasible. The Vice Principal for HR and Student Services explained that, for fairness and legal compliance, no fixed timeframe is set, as cases are resolved pragmatically and usually quickly. It was noted that prolonged suspensions are rare and have not posed an issue.

**On the disciplinary procedure, a governor expressed surprise** that informal warnings are not formally recorded. The Vice Principal HR and Student Services clarified that managers keep notes, but these do not go on the employee's file and outlined the process in detail. Further discussion took place on whether formal warnings should be issued by a panel rather than a manager. The Vice Principal HR and Student Services agreed to review the wording of the policy.

It was also noted that references to "Clerk to Corporation" in some policies should be updated.

#### **ACTION**

The policies were **APPROVED**, subject to agreed changes.

#### **18. Items for Information**

The following items were shared for information:

- 18.1 Bids and Projects
- 18.2 Gifts and Hospitality Report
- 18.3 PMR- September 2025

The reports were **NOTED** for information, understanding and decision making by governors.

#### **19 Any Other Business**

None to be discussed.

#### **20 Future Dates**

Dates were confirmed as per the agenda.

The Chair thanked everyone, and the meeting ended at 18:46