Corporation Meeting – Finance/People/Resources

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 28th January 2026 4.00pm – 7.00pm at Woodlands Campus

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

1. **Welcome and Announcements**

   The Chair welcomed all attendees.

2. **Apologies for Absence**
   Apologies were received and accepted from Christine Abbott, Tony Lucas – Vice Chair of Corporation, Megan Bacalla – FE Student Governor, Dave Nanda, Mehreen Mirza, Sharmin Rima – HE Student Governor, Amirun Nehar, Nancy Buckley – Vice Principal Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships, Linda McLaughlin – Vice Principal Quality & Curriculum. The meeting was confirmed as quorate.

3. **Declarations of Interest**
   None received.

4. **Membership Update**
   The Corporation **APPROVED** the appointment of Gerard McGrory – Full Member effective 1st February 2026 for a term of office of 4 years.

   Dave Nanda has been appointed to the Remuneration Committee effective 1st January 2026.

5. **Chair's Action and Use of College Seal and Chair's E-signature**
   There were no items to discuss.

6. **Minutes and Confidential Minutes of the Previous Corporation Meeting and Actions List held on 25th November 2025 and 11th December 2025, and the Confidential Minutes of 25th November 2025 and 11th December 2025**

The Minutes and Confidential Minutes of 25th November 2025 and 11th December 2025, and the Confidential Minutes of 25th November 2025 and 11th December 2025 were **APPROVED.**

6.1 Matters Arising (verbal)
None to be discussed.

6.2 Actions
The actions report was circulated and considered, with an update provided on actions that had been closed. It was noted that the action relating to the curriculum strategy should be updated to include Nancy Buckley.

A governor queried whether all members had completed their Boxphish training. It was noted that some individuals have not yet completed the most recent training, although reminders are ongoing. The Director of Corporate Governance, Risk & Compliance advised that the training is continuous and confirmed that all governors have now completed the KCSiE training.

7. **Committee Minutes**
The draft minutes of the Audit & Risk committee meeting, held on 25th November 2025 were circulated and **NOTED** for information.

A copy of the Remuneration committee meeting minutes held on 3rd December 2025 were deferred to March. **ACTION**

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.

The top key risks were presented, with reference made to changes in the cyber risk reflected in the report. It was noted that cyber risk has been considered by the Audit & Risk Committee on two occasions, in March and October, and remains a standing item on the agenda. Governors were advised that a further "Solihull Unplugged" day is planned, aimed at maintaining focus on cyber resilience and supporting preparedness in the event of a cyber breach.

Governors were informed that a new Head of Adult Skills is currently in the process of being appointed. An update on 16–18 recruitment was provided, noting that numbers are 156 above the current target, which was viewed positively. The Chair commented that recruitment remains a key risk but is being effectively managed and mitigated. In response, it was noted that demographic changes are expected to have a greater impact as the sector approaches 2030.
In relation to student achievement, it was reported that the overall achievement rate has improved by 1.7%; however, it remains below the national average.

An update was provided on governor recruitment, noting that there is a further vacancy. Following discussion at the Search & Governance Committee and consideration of the skills analysis, it was noted that HR expertise would be beneficial, alongside experience as a local employer with knowledge of the Stratford and Warwickshire area. The preferred areas of expertise for the role were outlined. ***A governor asked*** whether external recommendations were being sought, and it was confirmed that the vacancy is being advertised via job boards and social media, with recommendations welcomed.

A governor reflected on earlier discussions at the Search & Governance Committee, noting the value of appointing someone with strong employer connections who could actively network with businesses and support engagement, particularly within the Stratford and Warwickshire area.

The Principal and CEO also referenced feedback from an external speaker on communications, noting that experience in internal communications or PR could be advantageous. It was acknowledged that this could complement HR expertise within the Board.

Governors were advised of upcoming briefings and meetings, including confirmation that David Hughes will attend as the headline speaker at the Governor Development Morning in February. Governors were encouraged to prepare questions in advance.

In relation to focus groups, ***a governor suggested*** that dates and times should be shared as far in advance as possible to support continuity of governor attendance. **ACTION**

The Principal and CEO confirmed that the financial strategy will be discussed at the forthcoming Strategic Plan briefing.

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

9. Principal's Update

9a. Principal's Update report

The report was received, providing Governors with an update on key areas of College activity. It was noted that the report was shorter than usual due to the Christmas period and the timing of the paper deadline, with limited activity during that period.

Strategic Ambition 1:
An update was provided on GCSE English and Maths resit outcomes, noting that there were 475 passes.

Strategic Ambition 3:

Governors were advised that the pension fund has been revalued, with the total fund now standing at £22m. It was reported that, over the 17-year horizon scanning period, the College's pension contributions are forecast to reduce by £1.1m. This item is scheduled for discussion at the Financial Oversight Group (FOG) meeting in March, where options for the use of the £1.1m will be considered.

Reputation and Strategic Partnership Building:

An update was provided on the national Hall of Fame, which recognises outstanding college alumni. It was noted that two individuals were inducted this year, including Santina Bunting, a former construction apprentice nominated by Susie Ankrett. Governors noted the significance of Santina's achievement, highlighting her success as a young woman in construction from a diverse ethnic background. It was reported that an induction ceremony will take place in London, followed by a celebratory event at the College in late March, to which Governors will be invited.

Governors were also advised that the College has been shortlisted as a finalist in the MP First Awards, within the Innovation and Creativity category.

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

10. Children in Care and Care Leavers Update

The report was received, providing an important update on Children in Care and Care Leavers within the College. A copy of the Children in Care and Care Leavers report was shared for information.

The Director of Student Services attended the meeting for this item.

The Chair thanked the Director of Student Services for the update, noting that the report was positive and reflected well on both the Director and the wider team, recognising the effective management of this area.

The Children in Care and Care Leavers Link Governor provided a verbal update, advising that she had undertaken three visits. It was noted that there has been a noticeable increase in the team's confidence over time and that the team has continued to strengthen, supported by increased resources, which have made a significant difference. Governors noted that this cohort is of particular interest to Ofsted, given its relevance to learners in social care. It was reported that the College has developed transition packs for young people approaching the age of 18, alongside enhanced careers support for learners. Plans to introduce a "Praise Week" were also noted. From a Link Governor assurance perspective, it was confirmed that arrangements continue to improve and that the area is being managed effectively. As a next step, it was suggested that a similar level of detail be provided for learners experiencing financial hardship.

A governor commented that the report was positive and provided assurance, expressing thanks to the Director of Student Services and the team. It was noted that the report was helpful in evidencing the support in place for this group of learners.

Governors commented that the insight provided was valuable and welcomed the inclusive approach, noting that the work reflects a wider culture and ethos across the College rather than activity led by a single team. Discussion highlighted the importance of training not only specialist coordinators but also curriculum staff, to ensure a consistent and informed approach.

The Vice Principal HR and Student Services thanked the Link Governor for her contribution, noting that her Ofsted experience has been particularly beneficial and that the Link Governor relationship has worked well.

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

The Director of Student Services left the meeting.

11. Bids and Projects including Termly KPI Report

The report was shared and provided an update on successful/unsuccessful bids over £100K.
The report was **NOTED** for information, understanding and decision making by governors.

12. Annual HR Presentation & HR Report

The annual HR Report for 2024/25 was shared and a presentation delivered on the following key points:

- College Profile
- Pay comparisons
- Lecturer Salaries
- Recruitment challenges
- Sickness absence
- Gender pay gap reporting for all departments
- Turnover and leaver views
- Employment law changes

Governors discussed absence management arrangements, including the level of process triggers, which were noted to be relatively high and generous. The Vice Principal HR and Student Services advised that the College's approach is broadly in line with sector practice and explained how the system triggers operate. Reference was also made to the use of the Bradford Factor. It was agreed that comparative information on absence triggers used by other colleges would be sought. **ACTION**

In response to governor scrutiny, it was confirmed that absence patterns are monitored and reviewed, and the process for identifying trends was outlined. Governors also explored whether any conflicts of interest had been identified in relation to sickness absence, particularly for staff working from home, and it was confirmed that this had been considered.

Discussion took place around return-to-work meetings and whether a more formal approach could have an impact on absence levels. The Vice Principal HR and Student Services advised that this is currently being reviewed and outlined the College's absence management approach, emphasising the importance of meaningful conversations rather than a purely procedural focus.

Governors questioned how staff wellbeing is captured through surveys and whether wellbeing is a core principle within this work. The Vice Principal HR and Student Services confirmed that staff workstreams are in place to address wellbeing. ***A further comment was made*** regarding forthcoming employment reforms and the additional pressures these may place on leadership, reinforcing the importance of reviewing absence triggers.

Governors also discussed trends relating to the growth in teaching staff and noted the intention to target this group as part of a proactive absence management strategy.

With no further questions or comments, the update was **NOTED** for information, understanding, and decision-making by Governors.

The meeting then adjourned briefly for food.

13. Finance Matters

The Treasury Management Annual Report 2024/2025 and the Cashflow Forecast were received.

In response to a governor query regarding whether the £852k represented a percentage of the College's turnover, the Deputy Principal and CFO confirmed that this equates to between 1–2%. ***A governor also noted*** an error within the report, clarifying that the figure referenced at point 8 (mismanagement) should read £120k rather than £85k.

It was further noted, following discussion at the Financial Oversight Group and as set out in the salient report, that the relevant funds will be received in March 2026, rather than March 2025.

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

14. Property Update Report

To report provided Corporation with an update on property issues and for Corporation to approve the process for approving the award of the Motor Vehicle and Brick Workshop contracts.

A governor challenged the approach to student residences, highlighting ongoing issues at Stratford and questioning when alternatives should be considered. The Deputy Principal and CFO confirmed that contracts had been exchanged subject to planning, with costs still being incurred. It was noted that the developer could withdraw, although the Birmingham property group had invested further funds. The governor suggested that a mutual withdrawal may need to be explored informally, recognising that the college would face demolition and redevelopment costs if the site reverted to its ownership. The Chair proposed engaging Savills to review potential future uses. It was agreed to obtain indicative demolition costs to inform financial planning, with further modelling to be considered by the Property SiG.

The Corporation **APPROVED** that the Motor Vehicle extension can be awarded provided this is within the budget agreed and If additional budgets are required, it can be approved via a Chair's Action.

Subject to discussions at the Property SiG, the Corporation further **APPROVED** that the contract award for the brick workshop is discussed at the Property SIG and then approved via a Chair's Action.

In relation to Stratford STEM growth, the Chair agreed to seek approval via Chair's Action if required. The Property SiG Chair noted that an offline discussion could take place following Property SiG before any Chair's Action was completed. This was **APPROVED** by the Corporation.

15. Governance Items
There were no items to discuss.

16. Confidential Items

Confidential item – not for publication

17. Policies
There were no policies to be approved.

18. Items for Information
The following items were shared for information:

- October and November PMR
- Gifts & Hospitality Report
- Sustainability Report

It was noted that the December PMR will be added to the next meeting.

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

19. Any Other Business

Governor Travel Expenses reminder
Governors were reminded that reasonable travel expenses can be claimed and should be submitted at the time of travel. Clarification was sought on where claims should be made from, and it was agreed that this information would be confirmed to governors. **ACTION**

20. Future Dates
Dates were confirmed as per the agenda.

The Chair thanked everyone, and the meeting ended at 6.50pm.