Corporation Meeting – Quality & Curriculum

Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 21st May 2026 4.00pm – 7.00pm at Stratford Upon Avon Campus

Present	Paul Assinder – Chair of Corporation Christine Abbott Susie Ankrett Holly Bayliss – Staff Governor Rebecca Gater – Principal and CEO Sue Hopewell Helen Kinghorn Ravi Kumar Tony Lucas – Vice Chair of Corporation Amirun Nehar
In Attendance	Sam Bromwich – Director of Corporate Governance, Risk and Compliance, Nancy Buckley – Vice Principal Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships, Linda McLaughlin – Vice Principal Quality & Curriculum, 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 two items), Darran Marks – IOT Director (for one item), Heather Cross – Rockborn Associates (Observing)
Apologies	Megan Bacalla – FE Student, Gerard McGrory, Mehreen Mirza, Dave Nanda, Sharmin Rima – HE Student Governor, Cheryl Pidler, Harrison Thompson, Sarah Horton-Walsh

1. **Welcome and Announcements**
   The Chair welcomed all attendees

2. **Apologies for Absence**
   Apologies were received and accepted Megan Bacalla – FE Student, Gerard McGrory, Mehreen Mirza, Dave Nanda, Sharmin Rima – HE Student Governor, Cheryl Pidler, Harrison Thompson, Sarah Horton-Walsh. The Chair expressed some governors will be late due to childcare.

3. **Declarations of Interest**
   The Chair asked governors to notify the governance team of any changes to their roles, as these may impact declarations of interests. The Principal and CEO declared an interest as a Director of the IoT for the purposes of this agenda item.

4. **Membership Update**
   The Membership report was circulated to note and approve a recommendation from the S&G committee. The Senior Governance Officer led the discussion on corporation membership changes.

New Member Appointment: Louise Parry was recommended as a Full Member by the Search and Governance Committee after a competitive recruitment process. With no objections raised by the Corporation the appointment was ratified effective 1st June 2026.

Student Governor Vacancies: The Senior Governance Officer reported on the resignation of Sharmin Rima as HE student governor and Megan Bacalla's upcoming departure, resulting in two student governor vacancies. Interviews for the FE Student Governor positions are scheduled for 8th June, with further details to be confirmed. The HE Student Governor interviews had also taken place, and further details will be confirmed.

Vice-Chair Vacancy Decision: The Corporation agreed to freeze the second vice-chair vacancy, following the Search and Governance Committee's recommendation, to keep the position available for future succession planning. It was noted that the current Vice Chair covers both Vice Chair roles, and the second position is not required at this time.

Succession Planning and Committee Vacancies: The Senior Governance Officer highlighted the need for succession planning, particularly for the Financial Oversight Group (FOG), and invited expressions of interest from members to fill the vacancy.

5. Chair's Action and Use of College Seal and Chair's E-signature
An update was given relating to Griffin Business Park Chair's Action and **NOTED.**

6. Minutes of the Previous Corporation Meeting and Actions List held on 17th March 2026.
The Minutes of the meeting held on 17th March 2026 were **APPROVED** subject to some minor amendments under item 1. **ACTION**

6.1 Matters Arising (verbal)
None

6.2 Actions
The action list was reviewed and updated, and it was confirmed which items could be closed.

7. Committee Minutes/Special Interest Group Notes
The following were circulated for information:

- Draft Property SiG 25.02.2026
- Draft A&R Committee 03.03.2026
- Draft Confidential Remuneration Committee 10.03.2026 (not shared with staff and students)
- Draft People & Performance SiG 18.03.2026
- Draft Financial Oversight Group 25.03.2026 & Confidential Minutes (not shared with staff and students)
- Draft Search & Governance 21.04.2026 & Confidential Minutes
- Draft People & Performance SiG 27.04.2026

The draft notes of the Quality SiG 07.05.2026 were deferred to the next meeting.

8. Chair's Update

8.1 Top Key Risks

The Chair provided an update on key risks, including cyber security, recruitment and achievement. The Top Key Risks were reviewed, with particular concern noted regarding apprenticeship numbers, which are currently rated at 8. A new risk relating to global uncertainty has been added, following a recent meeting attended by the Principal and CEO, where worst-case scenarios were discussed.

A Governor queried the College's energy usage mix. It was confirmed that operations are primarily electricity-based, with gas used only during the summer months. The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee emphasised that fuel-related risks, alongside all key risks, should be subject to stress testing. It was noted that, in a Middle Eastern bank context, fuel is not currently considered a top risk, which was seen as useful external validation, although it was acknowledged this position may change following further discussions.

The Chair introduced the proposal for a pre-meeting Governor session, outlining feedback received from the Search & Governance Committee and the rationale for the initiative. These discussions would take place outside formal meetings. The Vice Chair noted that, based on his experience, such sessions are helpful in providing space to discuss matters not included on the agenda. It was confirmed that this approach is used periodically and is recommended at least annually for Audit & Risk Committees. While less common for Corporation meetings, it was recognised as a manageable addition if kept proportionate.

An update was also provided on access via personal devices, confirming that changes have been implemented to meet Cyber Essentials requirements.

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

8.2 Verbal feedback on Focus Groups & Learning Visits
A verbal update was provided on the recent feedback received, which was **NOTED** for information, understanding and decision making by governors.

8.3 Feedback from FEC Roundtable

It was reported that the Director of Corporate Governance, Risk & Compliance attended an FE Commissioner roundtable in London, which focused on identifying effective governance practices, sharing case studies, and exploring tools to support reporting to the Department for Education.

Key characteristics of good governance highlighted included strong staff and student voice, understanding of the quality improvement cycle, effective challenge, and appropriate accountability. Indicators of weaker governance included limited understanding of apprenticeships, use of ad hoc meetings, unclear decision-making, and blurred formal/informal arrangements.

It was noted that the Corporation's governance arrangements provide a strong foundation in these areas, although the importance of maintaining a clear structure was emphasised.
The FE Commissioner also highlighted a focus on the learner journey from pre-entry to achievement, with further guidance expected. Governors were invited to share any suggestions ahead of the next meeting in September. The notes from the session will be circulated for Governors' information. **ACTION**

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

9. Presentation including Greater Birmingham Institute of Technology (GBIoT) Report
The Director of the Greater Birmingham Institute of Technology was welcomed to the meeting and delivered a presentation on the GBIoT.

It was reported that current utilisation is approximately 65%, noting that this figure relates to classroom use only, with activity concentrated at peak times. It was acknowledged that the GBIoT operates a different model, with a limited number of specialist digital and cyber classrooms.

In response to a Governor question on employer engagement, it was confirmed that an Employer Advisory Board and business network are in place, although engagement can be challenging where competitors are involved. Additional outreach to partners is being undertaken, and representation on other employer boards is being pursued, with a focus on maintaining neutrality and independence.

Governors queried whether partners are maximising use of the facility; it was acknowledged that there is scope to increase utilisation.

An update was provided on sector developments in cyber manufacturing, including a 'fake mobile phone factory' initiative, and Governors were invited to visit the IoT. **ACTION**

In response to a question on key challenges, it was noted that, on a personal level, adapting to the West Midlands region and building relationships has been a priority, alongside increasing visibility and creating opportunities for partners.

With no further questions, the Chair thanked the Director of the Greater Birmingham Institute of Technology, who then left the meeting.

10. Principal's Update

The Principal and CEO provided Governors with an update on key areas of the College. The following key points were confirmed.

The Principal and CEO reported on the Maths Resilience Coaching Programme, delivered in partnership with the University of Warwick. A pilot cohort of 12 students demonstrated improved confidence in maths and supported peers to overcome barriers. Positive student feedback highlighted strong impact, and options to roll out the programme more widely are being explored.

The Principal and CEO provided an update on maths and English progress measures, referencing DfE benchmarking data used to compare colleges. Performance outcomes were reported as strong, with positive external feedback noted.

Early discussions are underway with external partners regarding the potential development of a town centre hub linked to sport and e-sports provision. This includes exploration of possible capital funding opportunities. The project remains at an early stage.

The Principal and CEO outlined recent and upcoming senior leadership and operational appointments, including the roles of Deputy Principal – Education and Director of Communications. These roles will strengthen campus management, student experience, and day-to-day operations. Governors were thanked for supporting promotion of vacancies.

The College has also been awarded the Silver UK Feminist Award, exceeding expectations for a first submission.

The Communications Review Report, undertaken by an external specialist, was received. The report provides a baseline to support the incoming Director of Communications and future development.

Approval has been secured for an additional modular classroom block, with delivery planned for August. Progress at Gryphon Park continues, including planning for change of use, internal design work, and associated legal processes.

A confidential update was provided regarding the delayed sale of the Stratford residential sites. An extension to the completion deadline was considered. It was noted that delays are due to wider planning issues, with minimal risk to the College. Market conditions and ongoing risks associated with the vacant buildings were also highlighted. The Corporation **APPROVED** the extension approved (date to be confirmed).

A bid has been submitted for Stratford construction development funding, supported by College match funding. The outcome is expected in July.

The new heat pump installation training centre was launched successfully, receiving positive feedback from attendees and stakeholders, and is expected to enhance the college's technical training offer.

The following documents were shared for information.

- Letter to The Rt Hon Bridget Philipson 1 March 2026
- Letter from Jacqui Smith
- AoC letter to PM on college funding – April 2026
- DfE Financial Health Letter outcome
- Communications Review Report
- WMCA College Compact Agreement

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

11. Annual Draft Accountability Statement 2026/2027

The Vice Principal Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships presented the draft Annual Accountability Statement for 2026–27, incorporating feedback from the Skills Link Governor and reflecting commitments under the WMCA College Compact. A timeline for final approval and submission was outlined.

The draft had been reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Governors, with feedback incorporated, and sets out the College's priorities, partnerships and employer engagement activity. The WMCA Compact, received on 6 May, was noted and included as an appendix.

The final version will be presented for approval at the Corporation meeting on 1 July, ahead of submission to the DfE by 31 July.

A Governor noted interest in the targets and queried the level of employer involvement. Positive feedback on the document was received.

It was **AGREED** that the draft was approved, with a final version to be circulated ahead of formal approval on 1 July.

11.1 Link Governor feedback on Skills

The Skills Link Governor followed on from the update, and it was reiterated that the document provides a clear external-facing summary of the College's current position, strategic priorities, and key employer partnerships.

Discussion highlighted the importance of:

- explicitly referencing major employer partnerships to demonstrate scale and impact; and
- strengthening the forward-looking narrative by articulating anticipated regional developments and opportunities over the next five years.

This includes recognising significant infrastructure and regeneration activity (e.g. potential metro extension, Arden Cross development, and HS2) and ensuring these are reflected within the strategic context.

Overall, the document was recognised as a strong draft, with governors encouraged to provide further input to enhance its strategic narrative and ensure it fully reflects the College's ambition and regional positioning.

11.2 West Midlands College Compact

The Vice Principal Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships provided an update on the WMCA College Compact received on 6 May, which sets out commitments for colleges and providers to collaborate at local, regional and national levels to support delivery of regional skills priorities and employer needs.

It was noted that the College has indicated its intention to sign the Compact, with the key commitments referenced within the draft Accountability Statement and included as an appendix. Further sector-wide discussions are planned to ensure collective delivery.

The update was noted, with further detail expected as national policy developments continue to be clarified.

There was a break for food.

12. Quality and Curriculum Update 2026/2027

Spring Student Satisfaction Survey

The Vice Principal Quality & Curriculum presented the Student Survey Report.

A Governor queried whether lower percentage scores, attributed to variability, may also indicate performance-related issues, including potential links to teaching quality. It was confirmed that this is monitored through learning activities and observation walks.

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

RQF L3 Exam Results

The report was shared for information and presented the results from the January BTEC RQF Level 3 examinations which help to provide a good indicator of progress towards final achievement.

A governor queried the extent to which teachers emphasise retrieval practice and skills development. The Staff Governor advised that, while this is already a core requirement within maths and English, it has also been embedded across T Level programmes and other curriculum areas.

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

Regional Performance Ranking

The report was shared for information and presented to Governors the regional performance ranking data.

A governor asked whether more real-time information could be provided. The Vice Principal Quality & Curriculum confirmed that the presentation would give a clear indication of current performance and expressed confidence in the College's position.

A governor commented on the absence of an explicit equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) impact within the report, noting that they would have expected to see this reflected. It was clarified that the report does not include specific EDI trend analysis, and that EDI data and trends have been reported separately.

Following a governor's question regarding submission of data to AoC MiADs, it was confirmed that this is not undertaken, as too few colleges participate for the data to be sufficiently representative, making meaningful comparison difficult.

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

<u>Quality Update on KPIs – presentation</u>

The Vice Principal Quality & Curriculum presented an update on Faculty KPIs and overall achievement, outlining current performance and projected outcomes.

The Chair noted the improved position and sought assurance on the level of confidence in the projections. The Vice Principal confirmed a high level of confidence, noting that the figures reflect rigorous challenge and scrutiny with Heads of School, although non-regulated provision has not been included.

A governor queried whether areas with strong retention and attendance would translate into sustained learner engagement and achievement. The Vice Principal advised that this is monitored on a case-by-case basis with Heads of School and confirmed that targeted support is in place, with evidence of learner progress.

A governor asked whether summer provision would be implemented to support learners requiring further progress. The Vice Principal confirmed that additional support would be provided where necessary.

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

13. Curriculum & Skills Strategy

The Curriculum and Skills Strategy was presented to provide an updated framework aligned to the College's 'Bold Futures' Strategic Plan. A draft had been circulated in advance for governor review, and feedback received had been incorporated into the revised version.

The Curriculum and Skills Strategy was **APPROVED**, subject to final minor amendments and presentation tidying.

14. Careers and Guidance Report

The Director of Student Services attended the meeting.

The Director of Student Services presented a report outlining activity to date, impact achieved, and areas for further development. The Careers Service report was received for information.

A governor queried whether apprentices and adult learners are aware of the careers support available. It was noted that they should be informed; however, further work is required to confirm this and provide supporting data.

A governor asked whether the Careers Strategy incorporates provision for children in care. It was confirmed that this is included within the approach.

A governor asked whether the Careers Leadership Team works with employer advisory boards across the College. It was confirmed that this is not the case in the current structure, but this is being reviewed as part of planned improvements.

In relation to learners with EHCPs, it was noted that the College seeks to ensure access to appropriately qualified careers advisers to provide specialist guidance.

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

<u>Link Governor feedback on Careers</u>

The Vice Chair provided an update in the absence of the Careers Link Governor, noting that the careers team was highly competent and their work was impressive. However, he raised a concern regarding the wider student cohort, querying how many additional students receive careers advice beyond those directly supported. It was noted that there is currently a gap in understanding this, and while existing provision is effective, it would benefit from further expansion.

The Director of Student Services advised that, although the National Careers Strategy suggests all learners should receive one-to-one careers guidance, this is challenging given the size of the College. It was acknowledged that further work is required to better understand how learners access careers advice across the organisation.

The Student Governor referenced the student survey and asked whether this provided insight into learner progression. It was noted that further work is needed to track and understand learner destinations. ***The Chair requested*** that additional work be undertaken in this area. The Principal and CEO confirmed that careers education is delivered in a variety of ways across the College; however, it is not consistently recorded. It was agreed that improved tracking and recording of careers activity is required.

A governor suggested the introduction of a career's advice chatbot to support students without requiring additional resource. The Director of Student Services confirmed that this is currently being explored and has potential.

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

15. Termly Safeguarding Report

The Director of Student Services presented an update on Safeguarding and Prevent.

A governor queried whether subcontracted students report safeguarding concerns to the College. It was confirmed that, while subcontractors manage day-to-day activity, these learners remain College students and appropriate links and oversight are maintained. It was also noted that no subcontracting safeguarding reports have been received.

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

16. Link Governor Feedback to all Governors on SEND

The SEND Link Governor provided a verbal update

It was noted that there has been a recent personnel change within the team, with an internal appointment bringing relevant experience and a strong background to the role. Positive feedback was shared regarding the effectiveness of the team, with strong collaboration and a developing culture of understanding and engagement across curriculum areas, indicating positive progress. Governors were advised of the importance of understanding learner numbers; however, this data was not available at the time of the meeting. Positive relationships with the Local Authority were noted, alongside complimentary feedback received from parents.

It was highlighted that, as part of improving transition arrangements, new SEND learners and their parents will be invited into College in June to support transition and address any concerns early.

A concern was raised regarding inefficiencies in administrative processes, particularly in relation to chasing reports, with a view that these processes could be streamlined. Discussion also covered team resourcing and the forthcoming SEND reforms. It was noted that visibility of these reforms to governors is important, particularly in the context of Ofsted. It was agreed that a briefing session would be arranged for governors to provide further insight into these changes. **ACTION**

The Chair thanked the Director of Student Services for the update. *The Director of Student Services left the meeting.*

17. Subcontracting Update Report

The Vice Principal Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships provided an update on progress against the Sub-Contracting Plan for 2025/26. The Corporation **APPROVED** the following recommendations:

- Overall Subcontracting strategy
- Proposal to renew RMF contract for third year of 3 year contract
- Proposal to renew Colebridge contract for second year of 3 year contract

18. Review/Approve Bank Mandate

The report provided an update to the bank mandate for the College's Lloyds account to include an additional online payment authoriser. It was noted that this change does not alter or reduce existing authority controls. The Corporation **APPROVED** the change.

19. Bids and Projects

The report was shared for information and provided an update on bids submitted and outcomes for projects over £100k and included a summary of bidding activity for the current academic year, alongside an update on the appointment of a new bid writer and project manager.

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

20. Governance Items and Feedback from Search & Governance Committee

<u>Membership Update Report</u>

The item was discussed under item 4.

<u>Governor Self-Assessment update</u>

The Director of Corporate Governance Risk and Compliance noted that, as an External Board Review (EBR) is being undertaken, there is no requirement to complete a separate self-assessment, and doing so would create unnecessary duplication.

It was further noted that the existing skills audit has been reviewed due to overlap with the self-assessment process. Work has been undertaken with two members of the Search and Governance Committee to streamline the approach, with the revised skills audit proposed as the basis for the self-assessment.

Governors will be invited to complete the revised process, with the opportunity to participate in group discussions where appropriate or, where preferred, to meet individually to provide further input.

Governor Objectives 2025/26
The Governor objectives for 2025/26 were presented, having been reviewed through the Search & Governance Committee. It was noted that an accompanying action plan is in place and will be monitored through regular Search & Governance meetings.

2026/2027 Meeting Dates
The meeting dates were presented for information. It was agreed that a poll would be undertaken to determine whether the current 4:00pm start time remains appropriate or if an alternative time should be considered. **ACTION**

21. Confidential
There were no items discussed.

22. Policies
The following policies were below the line, taken as read, and **APPROVED.**
- Grievance Procedure for all Staff
- Grievance Procedure for Senior Post Holders
- 3 Policy on the Remuneration and Appraisal of Senior Post Holders and the Director of Corporate Governance, Risk and Compliance.

23. Items for Information
The following items were shared for information:
- PMR –March 2026
- Monitoring – Access and Participation Plan (APP) – Next Approval 2029.
- Gifts and Hospitality Report
- Health and Safety Update Report

24. Confidential Item
A confidential item was discussed. *ITEM NOT FOR CIRCULATION*

25. Any Other Business
No items discussed.

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

The Chair thanked everyone, and the meeting ended at 7.20pm.