BOARD OF GOVERNORS: RESOURCES COMMITTEE

DRAFT Minutes
Wednesday 12 March 2025 at 08.30
Online via Zoom

			Meeting Attendance
PRESENT:	Sam Foley *(Chair)*		(3 out of 3)
	Jo Croft		(1 out of 1)
	Louise Fellows		(2 out of 3)
	Gillian May *(Group Principal and CEO)*		(3 out of 3)
	Antonia Spinks		(3 out of 3)
	Signe Sutherland		(3 out of 3)
IN ATTENDANCE:	Susan Brady	Group Director of People	
	Lucy Gill	Group Director of Finance	
	Karen Griffiths	Group Vice Principal	
	Tracy Reeve	Group Director of Governance	
	Wendy Stott	Group Management Accountant	
OBSERVER:	Simon Wright	Assistant Principal Curriculum & Quality (6th Form) ***(Part)***	

PART I

MINUTE No		ACTION
1.	**Apologies for Absence** The Director of Governance (TR) informed the meeting that no apologies had been received. The Resources Committee Chair (SF) welcomed Jo Croft to the Resources Committee in her new role as Chair of the Corporation at WFCG.	
2.	**Notifications of any other business** There was no other business notified.	
3.	**Declarations of Interest** No other Member declared a conflict of interest with the agenda.	
4.	**Minutes of the Previous Meeting of Resources Committee** The meeting considered the minutes of the WFCG Resources Committee meeting of 26 November 2024 which had previously been circulated to all members and **were agreed as a true record. They would be taken as signed by the Chair.** ***All Members were agreed***	
5.	**Matters Arising of the Previous Meeting of the Resources Committee** The Director of Governance (TR) presented a report which confirmed that all matters arising had been actioned or would be actioned in the future (timing not due for completion yet). ***NOTED***	
6.	**Estates Update** • *WFCG Estates Strategy 2025-28* The meeting considered the updated Estates Strategy for the Group. The document outlined the current condition and utilisation of the college estate, recent investments, strategic priorities and opportunities for future capital funding.	

MINUTE No		ACTION

The meeting was pleased to note that space utilisation had improved since last reported. The updates Estates Strategy had identified that challenges remained in upgrading ageing infrastructure, improving IT systems and ensuring sustainable development. A new DfE condition survey in Spring 2025 was expected to inform further funding opportunities. The key estate priorities identified included:

- Refurbishment of C Block at Slough & Langley College (£300k) and North Wing (£200k) for adult and high-needs provision.
- Urgent roof repairs at Windsor College (£50k).
- Progression of the Top Farm Drive redevelopment at BCA, with Phase 1 funded but Phase 2 requiring £2.5m investment.
- Continued commitment to IT infrastructure investment (£500k per annum for three years).

The CEO (GM) confirmed that the strategy supported the Group's Curriculum Strategy and Sustainability Policy. It was noted that this revised Estates Strategy would also be considered by the Strategy Governance & Search Committee (19 March 2025) in relation to the updated WFCG Curriculum & Skills Strategy before being taken to the Board for final approval. GM reminded the meeting that any future capital funding promised from central government in the second half of 2024/25 would be used for repair and maintenance work across the college estate; this was expected to be circa £1.8m for WFCG. The meeting was reminded of the challenge around managing the future repair and maintenance projects e.g. boilers needing repair or replacement which was not an exciting part of the Estates Strategy but would be crucial; the ongoing sustainability agenda would also be important to pursue. GM confirmed that this Estates Strategy was not based on a bid for additional capital but was advising governors and management where to spend any future funding. The committee chair (SF) asserted that in some respects the Estates Strategy was good news and provided assurance for governors as there were no areas which were urgently in need of additional funding. SF sought confirmation on what was likely to be the next big estates issue demanding urgent capital spend and GM highlighted the Portacabins at BCA, the update and maintenance of the legacy buildings at Strode's and the leaking roof at Windsor College. GM informed the meeting that there was a rumour in the FE sector that there may be a change in future funding with colleges receiving an annual capital allocation in the same way as schools currently did.

Governors (SS) sought confirmation on whether there was still a lack of student social space at Strode's and BCA. GM confirmed that there was an ongoing limit to social space at Strode's as any changes were limited due to the ongoing lease. However, BCA would benefit from additional social space once the heritage development work was underway.

SF sought confirmation on whether there was any aerated concrete (RAAC) across the four sites; GM confirmed that WFCG did not have any RAAC nor any cladding.

The meeting commended the useful report which showed that although there was no financial crisis looming in relation to the WFCG Estate the Corporation would need to keep a careful watching brief and this Estate Strategy provided a useful 'roadmap'.

After discussion the Resources Committee:

i. ***APPROVED the Estates Strategy as a framework for prioritising future investments and estate management decisions.***

ii. ***Endorsed the capital investment priorities, recognising the need for further funding to address outstanding infrastructure challenges.***

iii. ***Supported ongoing engagement with funding opportunities, including potential DfE capital allocations, to secure resources for priority projects.***

iv. ***Acknowledged the progress on IT infrastructure upgrades and endorse the continued phased investment over the next three years.***

v. ***Committed to sustainability initiatives, supporting the Estates Team in embedding energy efficiency and renewable technologies across the estate.***

(All Members were agreed.)

ACTION: Take the WFCG Estates Strategy to the Board for approval (27/03/25). **GM/ TR**

MINUTE No | **ACTION**

- *Proposal for E Block at Langley College*

The meeting noted that the plans to lease the unused E Block to neighbouring Langley Hall Primary Academy (LHPA) had now fallen away due to irreconcilable differences. The College was not in a position to commit to an 18-year lease without regular break clauses which had proved difficult for the school to accept.

Although she was sad to walk away from the concept of having an ‘educational campus’ at Slough & Langley College, GM assured the meeting that the Estates Director at Langley College was confident that a similar income could be achieved by using the building for short-term lets. The meeting noted that the college was currently taking action to refurbish the floor – involving the removal of asbestos - and undertaking minor work on the kitchens and toilets. Governors were assured that future bookings for space as a community facility were looking very strong and the target income for short term lettings would be £70,000 per annum.

The update was NOTED.

- *Sale of land at Honey Lane, BCA: Update from 6 February 2025 meeting*

The meeting received the notes from a meeting between WFCG management and representatives of Elivia Homes which had been considered by the Capital Development Steering Group on 6 February 2025. This meeting had clarified the current progress with the land sale at Honey Lane BCA and confirmed Elivia’s process to fulfil all the RBWM planning conditions necessary before completion could be finalised. The complicated timeline to completion was noted and the fact that management were hopeful that the college would be in receipt of funds before the end of 2025. The plan from Elivia Homes for the discharge of the RBWM planning conditions was discussed. The complicated nature of the condition in relation to surface water drainage was noted; GM informed the meeting that this submission had been made in line with the original timeline by Elivia Homes. GM informed the meeting that the college management had paused on any future activity within the heritage work planning which would incur a cost commitment. The current expenditure and commitment to this work – being undertaken by heritage project manager Coreus – was currently circa £300,000 in-year 2024/25. GM confirmed that this expenditure would need to be reimbursed to college funds once the sale completed as it was all in relation to the heritage project. This pause had been initiated at governors request (CDSG and Audit Committee members). GM assured the Resources Committee members that sufficient planning and exploratory work had already been undertaken to meet the requirement of commencing heritage work within three months of being in receipt of Honey Lane sale funds.

The Chair sought confirmation on whether there would be any impact on the 2024/25 WFCG Financial Statements as completion of the sale was likely to be six months later than initially expected. GM confirmed that the college external auditors – MHA – had been made aware of the delay during the audit planning meeting held earlier in the month The final sale would be treated as a post balance sheet event but the deal would need to be finalised before Board approval (mid-December) and the submission of the accounts by 31 December 2025. The Group Finance Director (LG) reminded the meeting that from a College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR) and ESFA perspective the cash balance forecast at July 2025 did not include the land sale receipt. The committee chair asked management to secure an assurance in writing from MHA that they were content to proceed on this new timeline. The Chair of the Capital Development Steering Group (JC) assured the meeting that this delayed timeline and the impact on the college finances had been discussed at the recent CDSG update meeting (as evidenced from the notes). JC assured the meeting that although the college had little control over the process to get to completion on the sale, all appeared to be on track and Elivia Homes were working to clear deadlines. Resources Committee was assured that management and CDSG would continue to monitor the progress of the land sale very closely.

The CEO confirmed that the College had hosted a stakeholder consultation meeting on Wednesday 26 February with 17 parish councillors and representatives of local residents in Burchetts Green and Honey Lane. This had been a positive meeting – with the majority of the input from Elivia Homes - which had focussed on the operational impact of the building work including noise and traffic.

NOTED

ACTION: LG to ask external auditors MHA for written assurance that they would be able to accommodate the delayed timeline for the receipt of the capital income from the Honey Lane land sale within the 2024/25 financial statements audit. **LG**

MINUTE No		ACTION

[Simon Wright left the meeting.]

7. **TWFCG Fees Policy and fees proposal 2025/26**

The Group Finance Director gave the meeting a verbal update on the proposals for 2025/26 and informed the meeting that the proposed fees and charges policy for WFCG 2025/26 would follow. The delay on being able to finalise transport costs was due to contract meetings with the bus companies being held during the next two weeks.

LG outlined the proposal for Higher Education (HE) fees which had been finalised after the HE Team had undertaken a comprehensive benchmarking exercise against local and regional competitors. The proposal was for full time programmes to go up from £5350 to £5500 (2.8%) and part-time increase from £4350 to £4500 (3.45%). Level 6 part-time programmes would increase from £4500 to £4600 (2.2%). Fees for all commercial courses would be increased by 3%. The meeting noted that the bus prices for the BCA campus would have to increase by at least 5% due to the coach companies passing on their increased costs including the employer's national insurance costs. The Group Vice Principal (KG) informed the meeting that she and the transport lead at WFCG had joined an FE forum to see how other colleges were dealing with rising transport costs. KG informed the meeting that WFCG had been unable to ascertain much useful advice but it had been reassuring to confirm that WFCG's strategies to deal with this were better developed than a number of other colleges. GM informed the meeting that even with these increases the college would still be partially subsidising transport costs. Governors were assured that these travel costs were similar to the costs at The Henley College and a number of Buckinghamshire secondary schools with transport provision. Governors asserted the need for the college to continue to try and protect the neediest learners from large increases wherever possible. LG assured the meeting that the college would still offer a cheaper annual bus pass and would continue with bursary options to support learners with travel.

The verbal update was NOTED and the meeting AGREED that a paper outlining the WFCG fee proposals for 2025/26 should be circulated to Resources Committee Members for approval in advance of being taken to the Board (27 March 2025).

All Members were agreed.

ACTION: as above – paper to be circulated for written approval outside the meeting. **LG/ TR**

8. **Human Resources Report**

The Group Director of People (SB) presented her report which provided information on the group's key HR data for the academic year 2024-25. This report provided an analysis of key workforce metrics, including recruitment, headcount, turnover, sickness absence, and staff profile data, with a focus on identifying trends and areas requiring intervention.

The very detailed data was taken as read and the key findings were noted as follows:

- **Recruitment & Selection:** Recruitment challenges persisted, with continued reliance on agencies. However, a reduction in unfilled vacancies from **26.62% to 22.48%** indicated some progress. SB informed the meeting that an additional member of staff would be joining the recruitment team on 1 April which would provide the capacity to do more proactive search and head hunting and reduce the reliance on agencies.

- **Workforce Turnover:** Overall turnover had **decreased to 19.1%** (from 25%), although academic (20.1%) and management (29.8%) turnover remained areas of concern. SB highlighted that the national benchmark for teaching turnover included schoolteachers. The figure of 20% turnover for academic staff at WFCG was probably average for FE but was still quite high and demanded further attention. The management turnover at 29.8% was high but this rolling annual figure included the impact of the restructure across the FE colleges during 2024.

- **Headcount & Workforce Composition:** The workforce has stabilized at **980 employees**, with an increase in support staff (especially Learning Support Assistants) driven by student learning needs.

- **Sickness Absence:** Average days lost per employee had **increased to 4.46 days** but was still below the **sector benchmark of 7.8 days**. SB informed the meeting that she was not convinced that this figure had actually increased but sickness absence was now being more accurately recorded due to additional training from HR. Long-term absence cases (15 employees) required continued management. SB highlighted the need to separate the long-term absence from the overall absence figure in order to make the data more useful. This additional analysis would also look at the reasons for absence as better information was now available.

- **Diversity & Inclusion:** Significant improvements in data collection had reduced gaps in ethnicity and disability reporting. However, representation of **staff with disabilities (4.9%) remained well below the national average (24%)**, highlighting a need for targeted recruitment and retention strategies. SB confirmed the positive impact of the recent work by HR to clarify staff personal data; only 28 members of staff had now not declared their disability status (down from 200 earlier in the year). The figure for those not declaring their ethnicity data was now 14. SB confirmed that a number of those who had still not provided this information were sessional staff who did not have easy access to the college HR system. SB highlighted that representation of staff with a declared disability was significantly under the national average even allowing for those who had opted for 'prefer not to say'. This would be a focus for action moving forward in the HR Team. This under representation was also true in relation to the percentage of black staff at WFCG (0.6%). However, the lack of black representation could partly be attributed to the demographic of the local population as Asian representation within the staff was above national census levels. The HR Team would be looking at the media being used for recruitment to try and improve the reach. The Chair (SF) asked whether there could be an issue in relation to disability around having a lack of access across campuses. This was not deemed to be a factor; GM confirmed that the only building with access issues was the Mansion at BCA and this would be addressed through the heritage project.

The meeting discussed the proposed actions in response to these findings:

- Strengthen proactive candidate search efforts to reduce agency reliance further.
- Implement targeted retention strategies for academic and management roles to curb high turnover.
- Enhance sickness absence management, particularly for long-term cases, while reinforcing well-being initiatives.
- Address gender imbalances in support staff recruitment and improve disability representation through inclusive hiring practices.

Governors (JC) asked whether senior management were concerned about the high levels of management turnover and whether the reasons for this higher level had been understood. SB reminded the meeting that the post-merger restructure in 2024 had skewed the data. However, SB confirmed that the data held by HR was limited as there had been a historical lack of exit interviews. SB confirmed that the HR Team would be looking more closely at this and would use data from exit interviews undertaken in future. The governors commended this approach and agreed that it would be important to understand whether there were any ongoing cultural issues or a lack of support.

The Chair thanked the Group Director of HR for her report and asserted that it seemed more positive than recent reports. The CEO concurred that it was a more positive report than had been seen during the last 6-12 months. GM echoed the ongoing challenge around recruiting teaching staff to skills shortage areas. The meeting noted that a detailed analysis of the recent staff survey would be brought to the next Resources Committee meeting; this was going to be discussed with the Mirror Board to get their perspective and suggestions for action.

The Human Resources Report was NOTED

- **<u>Letter from AoC to unions, January 2025</u>**

The meeting noted a copy of a letter sent from the AoC to all FE sector unions explaining the DfE announcement in relation to bringing forward £50m of additional funding (of the £300m promised for 2025-26) into 2024/25. This explained that the level of funding would be insufficient to match the 5.5% pay award given to staff in schools.

NOTED

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9. **Management Accounts January 2025**

The Group Finance Director (LG) presented the management accounts for January 2025 which had previously been circulated to all governors by email.

The final key financial indicators for the first six months of the financial year were noted as follows against the January 2025 reforecast budget:

- The EBITDA for the year-to-date (YTD) amounted to £1.056 million compared to the forecast of £849,000. This was being driven by better income from growth in apprenticeships, earning the full adult (AEB) allocation, GLA funding and increased element 3 high needs funding. LG reminded the meeting that the high needs increased delivery incurred additional staff costs which partly offset the additional income.
- For the year to date there were variances against forecast in income (£844,000 positive), pay costs (£170,000 adverse to fund High Needs support staff) and non-pay costs (£427,000 positive). The non-pay costs were ahead due to curriculum costs being front loaded.
- Pay costs as a percentage of income were at 69.08% against the budget of 71%. GM confirmed that pay costs were still deemed as a risk but were currently holding due to careful scrutiny of any additional expenditure at Executive level.
- Cash days at 31 January 2025 were 29.55 (up from 25.66 in December 2024) which was ahead of the FEC benchmark of 25.
- The cash balance at the end of January was £3.877 million in credit, which was £62,000 ahead of the reforecast. The meeting noted that DfE grants of £1.430m were within this balance.
- The financial health for the 12 months to 31 January 2025 was at 'Good', with a year-end forecast of 180 points.

The meeting took the detailed Management Accounts as read. LG confirmed that element 2 income from local authorities now been paid for Terms 1 and 2 and the cash position 2024-25 was now back on track and was actually tracking ahead of forecast for February and March. LG confirmed that the pressure on cash and pay costs remained but the January management accounts were reflecting a positive upturn in EBITDA. Although the college's EBITDA as a percentage was not yet at 'Good' the aim was to get to 6% by the year-end (position was 4% at end of Jan). The Chair commended the upward trajectory in all the financial KPIs and the progress that had been made.

LG informed the meeting that these accounts did not include the expected in-year growth funding for 2024/25. The meeting noted that this would not be as much as hoped for as details had been made public earlier in the week and it was confirmed that colleges would only receive 66% (two-thirds) of the additional income that they had actually earned for 2024/25. This would reduce WFCG's in year addition from £668,000 to circa £440,000. LG informed the meeting that the DfE had also released the 'toolkit' for colleges to work out their 2025/26 14-16 allocation. This would be based on a 3.8% increase in funding per learner plus the lagged funding to reflect student growth 2024/25; this would generate an additional £3.4m of income for WFCG in 2025-26. LG was hopeful that this increase in income would strengthen WFCG's bottom line cash position and push the college well ahead of the 25 cash day minimum by year end.

GM confirmed that she and the Group Finance Director had talked with the external auditors (MHA) about the possibility of a covenant breach for the remaining loan at year-end 2024-25 - as occurred in 2023-24 - but this should be rectified for the 2025-26 financial statements as cash reserves were built back up. The ongoing and tightening restrictions around adult growth were discussed by the meeting and how these funding cuts sat alongside the governments skills priorities. GM highlighted that the provision which would be key for the adult Skills England priorities was expensive to deliver and it was generally easier and cheaper for colleges to deliver classroom based adult courses e.g. ESOL. However, current thinking was that the government might offer specific funding for Skills England provision in future years (2026 onwards) which was ring- fenced for priority provision.

LG informed the meeting that she would be making some minor changes to the format of the WFCG management accounts from February 2025. LG had been talking to a finance specialist who was a member of the FE Commissioner's Team to enhance WFCG's narrative commentary to the College Financial Forecasting return (CFFR). The advice had been that the narrative to the WFCG management accounts and CFFR needed to make it clear how the college intended to get from 'A to B' and enact financial improvement. The Chair suggested that LG should seek feedback from governors after the new format was introduced. The meeting noted that a mid-year reforecast would be prepared as soon as the information on in-year growth funding 2024/25 was available.

The Management Accounts for January 2025 were NOTED and RECEIVED.

10. **Applications Report: Enrolment 2023/24**

The meeting noted the current applications report for 16-19 programmes at 25/02/25 which showed that the Group was 4% (130 learners) behind the same position in the prior year for applications. Offers accepted were 5% below the prior year. However, the CEO informed the meeting that these figures were now at (-5%) and -3% for offers accepted at 11 March 2025. On 11 March BCA and Slough & Langley were ahead for offers accepted, 1% and 14% respectively. Strode's and Windsor Colleges were both behind -11% and -7% respectively.

GM confirmed that growth for 2025-26 continued at Slough & Langley College predicated on progressing ESOL learners and demographic growth. BCA was holding at broadly the same level as last year and GM asserted her 'marker' of animal management which historically had been a useful indicator of enrolment. The meeting noted that the gap in 'offers accepted' was less than applications which showed that interviews were up to date. GM confirmed that the ongoing marketing and recruitment during the next few months would be key but management were expecting a flat enrolment due to the change in demographics. GM reminded the meeting that this was probably not a bad time for a flatter enrolment as the government had indicated that there was unlikely to be any in-year growth funding during 2025-26.

The applications update was NOTED

- ***Adult Skills Funding:*** The meeting noted the response from the Minister for Skills to Jack Rankin MP (Windsor) answering his concerns regarding the cap on Adult Skills Funding for in-year growth and how it was affecting WFCG.

NOTED

- ***Association of Colleges (AoC) Funding Briefing, March 2025***: The meeting noted this briefing which provided useful context. Governors were reminded that an announcement from DfE on the following aspects of funding has been expected for the last month (since 13 February 2025):
  - 16-18 in-year growth funding 2024/25
  - Funding rates 2025/26
  - Additional funding for the recent increase in employer national insurance contributions which will adversely impact colleges' staffing budgets.
  - The allocation of the £50 million announced for the sector in January 2025.

DfE had now circulated information on 16-18 funding via an ESFA Update (5 March 2025) and updated the guidance on 16-19 funding rates for 2025-26. However there had not yet been any clarity on the timing of in-year growth funding for the current academic year or on any assistance for colleges managing increased NI costs. Governors were assured that additional information on the in-year growth allocations, funding for the employers National Insurance increase, and capital allocation would be circulated as soon as it was available.

NOTED

11. **Risk Register**

The Group Principal (GM) presented the Risk Register for 2024/25 which continued to be reviewed and updated by the Senior Leadership Team. The meeting discussed the highest scoring risks and the updated narrative explaining current mitigation and assurance levels.

- <u>Risk 1 Failure to meet budget forecast (risk score remains at 16 'amber'):</u> Acute risk linked to financial health; the upwards pressure on pay was still a very real concern as

MINUTE No		ACTION

discussed earlier in the meeting. GM reminded the meeting that the whole FE sector had been promised an additional £50m for 2024-25 which was predicated on, but not formally ring-fenced to being used for 'pay awards'. Each college would not know their individual share of this overall pot until May 2025. GM reminded the meeting that in previous meetings with the trade union representatives during 2024-25 management had told the trade unions that all of the WFCG share would go into pay. However, the national insurance increase – unless separately funded by government – would have to be covered by this money. Current thinking was that the distribution to staff would be fairest via a non-consolidated payment made at the end of July 2025; this would be paid as a defined sum to all staff not as a percentage of income. ***GM assured the meeting that a recommendation on any pay award would come to the summer meeting of Resources Committee before being taken to the Board for approval.*** The meeting was reminded that the AoC pay recommendation was currently a 3.8% increase but WFCG would have to take out the amount ring-fenced for automatic pay progression before circulating an award to all staff. GM confirmed that management were working to keep the trade unions involved and informed.

- Risk 2 IT Failure with loss of data for staff or students (risk score remains at 16 'amber'): This risk remained at number two on the Risk Register and Governors were reminded that capital had been ringfenced during 2024/25 for essential IT improvements. The systems upgrades (in IT, HR and Finance) to increase efficiency and resilience had been discussed at recent committee meetings and was now being actioned as a priority. The meeting was assured that good progress was being made in all areas.
- Risk 3 Uncertainty and risks associated with emerging national curriculum reforms (risk score remains at 12 'amber'): This key 'acute' risk was being well managed and senior staff continued to be engaged in advisory groups linked to reform. The meeting was reminded that there had been a pause in future curriculum change and it was expected that some of the BTECs would not now be defunded as originally planned.
- Risk 4 External Safeguarding Risks (risk score remains at 12 'amber'): The meeting was assured that the Executive Team continued to work with all relevant agencies in relation to any safeguarding incidents.
- Risk 5 Poor student outcome data in some curriculum areas results in a challenge to the Good Ofsted rating and the resulting impact on quality and reputation (risk score remains at 12 'amber'): The CEO confirmed that post Ofsted inspection this continued to be a focus for management to ensure consistency across the four campuses. The CEO reminded the meeting that a more detailed Curriculum Risk Register was a standing report to the Quality & Curriculum Committee.
- Risk 6 Changes to external funding risk future financial sustainability (risk score remains at 12 'amber'): The CEO reminded the meeting of the pro-active approach to adult education in Slough which was now being driven forward following the rebranding of Slough and Langley College.

Members NOTED and RECEIVED the updated College Risk Register.

12. **Dates and Times of Future Meetings**

The Director of Governance confirmed that the next meeting was timetabled for Thursday 26 June 2025 at 08.30am on Zoom.

NOTED

13. **Any Urgent Business**

There were no other urgent items of business raised.

The meeting closed at 9.40am.

Chair... Date..