



THE WINDSOR FOREST COLLEGES GROUP

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE QUALITY & CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Thursday 28 November 2024 at 5.00pm (online via Zoom)

PRESENT:	Tina Coates	Chair
	Jacob Clay	Governor
	Nathan Garat	Governor
	Rob Lewis	Governor
	Gillian May	Group Principal & Chief Executive
	Janet Robertson	Governor
	Antonia Spinks	Governor
	Signe Sutherland	Governor
	Alison Wheatley	Governor
APOLOGIES:	Nathan Green	Student Governor FE
	Reena Kainth	AP Apprenticeships
	Jeremy Spooner	Co-opted Member of Q&C Committee
	Angela Wellings	Chair of Corporation
IN ATTENDANCE:	Amanda Down	Principal Sixth Form
	Anne Entwistle	Principal FE
	Tracy Reeve	Group Director of Governance
	Karen Griffiths	Group Vice Principal
	Laura Peters	AP * Safeguarding Curriculum & SEND
	Sinead O'Donoghue	AP Curriculum & Quality – Sixth Form
	Julie Goodyear	Head of Safeguarding
	Judy Brassington	AP ESOL, Adult and Community
	Naomi Bailey	AP Student Services – Sixth Form
	Simon Wright	AP Curriculum & Quality – Sixth Form
	Graeme Forrest	AP Engineering & Construction (FE)
	Nicole Onyett	AP Curriculum (FE)
	Vivien Gordon	AP Curriculum (FE)
	Simon Polley	AP Creative & Technical (FE)

(* AP = Assistant Principal)

<u>MINUTE</u>		<u>ACTION</u>
<u>No</u>		
1.	<u>Apologies for Absence</u> Apologies had been received as shown above. The Chair welcomed the APs to the meeting and commended the opportunity for the Quality & Curriculum (Q&C) Committee to look at the operational detail. The CEO/ Group Principal confirmed that a separate set of papers would be taken to the Board on 11 December bringing together Group performance.	
2.	<u>Notification of any other urgent business</u> There was no other business notified.	
3.	<u>Declarations of Interest</u> No member declared a conflict of interest with the agenda.	
4.	<u>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 June 2024</u> The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 19 June 2024, having been previously sent to members, were agreed as a true record and would be taken as signed by the Chair. All Members were agreed.	
5.	<u>Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting Held on 19 June 2024</u> The Group Director of Governance presented a report which confirmed that all matters arising had been actioned or would be covered within the current agenda. NOTED	

6. **Curriculum Risk Register (RR)**

This item was presented by the APs (SW and NO). Members considered the curriculum risk register 2023/24 detailing the key strategic risks. This had been reviewed by the management team (including APs) since last presented to the Q&C Committee in June 2024 and was aligned to the new WFCG Strategic Plan and the Post-Ofsted Action Plan. Members were reminded of the five priorities for TWFCG on the Strategic May 2024-29, namely:

- i. Growth: a particular focus on 16-19 study programmes, adults, apprenticeships and HE.
- ii. Quality: high quality, always, everywhere.
- iii. Personalised learning: study programmes and learning experiences at all levels that are based on a starting point, clear aim and individual need.
- iv. Alliances: develop alliances to support our students, employers and our local communities.
- v. Finance - to return to "Good" financial health by FY25, improving the financial point score year on year.

NO reminded Governors that the changes to the narrative on the Risk Register since last seen by the committee were highlighted to aid visibility. The top three risks had changed since last seen by the Q&C Committee. The meeting considered the following risks and their mitigation in more detail:

Risk 1: High turnover and reliance on inexperienced or unqualified teaching staff raise costs and threaten curriculum quality. (Current risk score at 16 'amber'):

Control Measures: Regular staffing reviews, internal training programs, and improved staff development initiatives.

Assurance: Ongoing Quality Review Boards and vacancy analysis.

Risk Rating: Chronic risk, continuously monitored.

Risk 2: Increased mental health issues among students and staff impact attendance, retention, and achievement. (Current risk score at 12 'green'):

Control Measures: Counselling services, mental health training, and support systems.

Assurance: KPI monitoring of attendance, retention, and staff turnover.

Risk Rating: Managed, with additional focus on well-being initiatives.

The meeting noted that 14.5% of staff absences were related to stress but not necessarily work stress; the college HR Team were undertaking further analysis of this data.

Risk 3: Inaccurate data tracking and monitoring capabilities potentially affect compliance and student outcomes. (Current risk score at 12 'green'):

Control Measures: Development of enhanced reporting features and staff training. There was now a close working relationship between curriculum and IT staff to improve systems and data across all aspects of college provision. .

Assurance: Enhanced reporting capabilities under regular review.

Risk Rating: Monitored closely as an area of improvement.

SW took over the presentation for the remaining risks.

Risk 4: National curriculum reforms may reduce curriculum diversity, impact progression routes and require significant staff retraining. (Current risk score at 12 'green'):

Control Measures: Proactive curriculum planning, investment in CPD, and collaboration with awarding bodies. Governors were reminded that since the new Labour government took power there had been a pause on curriculum review including the future of Applied General Qualifications (e.g. BTECs). SW assured the meeting that WFCG was well positioned to react quickly to any government announcements.

Assurance: Regular reviews within the Quality and Curriculum Committee.

Risk Rating: Acute risk, with ongoing adaptation and cross-college collaboration.

Risk 5: Inconsistent quality affects student outcomes and college reputation. (Current risk score at 10 'green'):

Control Measures: Rigorous recruitment, quality assurance programs, and targeted CPD.

Assurance: Regular observations, learner feedback, and external audits.

Risk Rating: Controlled, with further development required in targeted CPD and strategy consistency.

Risk 6: Low enrolment threatens curriculum area financial viability and alignment with local skills needs. (Current risk score at 9 'green'):

Control Measures: Application monitoring, school liaison efforts, and curriculum adjustments based on viability analysis.

Assurance: Regular application reports and curriculum planning reviews.
Risk Rating: Monitored, with attention to application trends and group size maintenance.

Risk 7: Limited industry placements impact study program compliance, funding, and student progression. (Current risk score at 8 'green'):

Control Measures: Dedicated industry placement strategy, employer engagement events, and placement timetabling.

Assurance: Learner and employer feedback, with an emphasis on increasing placement opportunities.

Risk Rating: Managed but requires continuous engagement and expansion efforts.

The meeting was opened up for governors comments and questions. Governors (SS) sought, and was given, confirmation that the college had a separate Risk Register for the Apprenticeship provision.

Governors discussed Risk 2 and the work around staff mental health. AS sought additional clarity on what the 'mandatory wellbeing target; on the new staff PDR form was likely to be. NO informed the meeting that this varied by individual but some examples could be: taking regular time for mindfulness and to have some headspace, better management of workload to limit out-of-hours working, or ensuring staff took all of their allocated leave. AS commended the attempt to work more creatively but highlighted the ongoing duty for the College as an employer to try and remove factors that might have an adverse impact on staff. The meeting discussed the relative responsibilities of the individual and the college as employer. AP Safeguarding Curriculum & SEND (LP) highlighted the Staff Wellbeing Officer in the college HR Team and the close liaison between management and HR on any staff wellbeing matters. LP informed the meeting that the college was trying to get staff to understand that it was their responsibility to be reflective and to be as open with management and HR on what the college might be able to do to help with any issues.

The Chair (TC) asked what impact the difficulties in recruiting for some specialist posts was having on Teaching & Learning. TC also sought assurance on the frequency of lessons being cancelled due to staff absence. SW highlighted that – unlike schools – FE Colleges did not have 'cover teachers' as people were usually specialists. However, the meeting was assured that the policy was never to cancel lessons; as a worst case the lesson might be moved online and work set but the staff always did a good job of ensuring that learning continued. TC asked whether the college tracked data on the number of lost lessons. SW confirmed that he did not know the answer but NO suggested that there was HR data available and this information could be confirmed for a future meeting. NO informed the meeting that the FE colleges had a cover rota in place so she was confident that there were no cancelled lessons.

The Curriculum Risk Register was NOTED and RECEIVED.

ACTION: Curriculum staff to liaise with HR about whether data on staff absence and cancelled lessons could be included in the new HR reporting system.

Exec/ HR

7. **Annual Safeguarding Update**

Head of Safeguarding (JG) presented the Safeguarding Report 2023/24 which provided a comprehensive overview of safeguarding within the college group. The report highlighted the key challenges and initiatives undertaken to ensure the safety and well-being of all members of our community. The report also contained detailed data on safeguarding as well as mental health and wellbeing for 2023/24 and the current year-to-date YTD. The report confirmed that the WFCG had continued to demonstrate a strong commitment to safeguarding and the well-being of students. The specialist audit conducted in January 2024 provided positive affirmation and resulted in the College Group receiving "The Leaders in Safeguarding Award". Furthermore, the Ofsted inspection in March 2024 provided external assurance that the safeguarding arrangements in place at WFCG continue to be effective. The College Group has implemented robust systems and processes to meet the needs of students, with dedicated safeguarding, bursary, and additional learning support teams. The meeting was also reminded that Safeguarding was also a key element on the College Risk Register in its own right.

JG highlighted the difference in demographics/diversity across the four college sites. Due to its location, the contextual safeguarding concerns at Langley were significantly more significant and more complex. However, the meeting was assured that the college worked closely with Thames Valley Police and Slough Safer Partnership to deliver education and

support to the students and ensure that the college was involved in all local initiatives to tackle serious/ organised crime and exploitation in the community. A room at the entrance of the college had been created as a base for Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) and provides them with secure bicycle storage. The PCSOs help to deliver specialist tutorials.

2023/24 Safeguarding Data: The meeting was reminded that the CPOMS (Child Protection Online Monitoring System) had been introduced to BCA at the start of 2023/24 ensuring that all four sites now used the same system for recording concerns. This allowed year-on-year trends to be recorded with more accuracy and allows a fast reaction to specific safeguarding events if there is a sudden spike in data. The meeting took the detailed data split by FE and sixth form as read. The 2023/24 data showed that across all four sites the category most reported was mental health concerns (785); this included anxiety, self-harm and suicidal thoughts. This data reflected the national trend which showed that in the last three years, the likelihood of young people having a mental health problem had increased by 50% with 1 in 6 children aged 5-16 likely to have a mental health problem and 17-22 year old women being the group most at risk of developing a mental health problem. The meeting noted the 227 FE referrals to the college counsellor and 119 in Sixth Form during 2023/24.

The data shows that there were 302 recorded safeguarding concerns reported resulting in 69 referrals being made to external organisations (Children's Social Care: 34, Adult Social Care: 25). The Predominant Safeguarding Concerns were: Child-on-child abuse (93), Sexual abuse (30), Exploitation (27). The data also showed an increase in Children Looked After (CLA) students – those in the care of the Local Authority – at 64 due to the number of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), 46 of which were at Langley College.

Significant work was undertaken during 2023/24 to ensure that the student safeguarding tutorials linked to the safeguarding data and local risks; this had continued into 2024/25. Student feedback indicated that they feel safe at college and know who to talk to if they have any issues. Governors commended the strong student voice feedback which was positive in relation to Safeguarding provision and processes at WFCG. The wide range of staff training in safeguarding related matters was noted by the meeting. Overall, the meeting agreed that it felt assured that the College Group remained committed to supporting the well-being and safety of its students in the face of ongoing challenges.

The in-year data for 2024/25 was discussed and the scale of support being given on safeguarding matters and mental health was commended. The meeting thanked JG for the comprehensive report which provided strong assurance for governors.

The meeting NOTED and RECEIVED the Safeguarding Report which would be taken to the Board for information (11 December 2024).

- **Safeguarding Policy**

The meeting considered the College Safeguarding Policy which was presented for biennial review. There were no major changes other than titular changes to job roles cited in the policy. It had also been updated to reflect the latest DfE guidance KCSIE 2024 which had been amended to include an improved 'vulnerable adult' focus. The policy now contained a section on Apprentices and Employers.

The meeting did not have any questions or suggestions in relation to the policy but governors (RL) asked whether a change in the college Safeguarding Policy necessitated a change in employers' policies (i.e. in relation to Apprentices). JG confirmed that the college was delivering new online training to employers in 2024/25 covering their safeguarding responsibilities.

The meeting APPROVED the Safeguarding Policy as presented which would be RECOMMENDED to the Board for approval (11 December 2024).

- **WFCG Mental Health Strategy**

AP Student Services – Sixth Form (NB) presented a paper which provided an update on the implementation of the college's Mental Health Strategy for both staff and students. The College had now drafted a Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy that outlined the college's commitment to supporting both staff and students, alongside a Mental Health Strategy for students which would be agreed and published by 2025. The meeting noted that the focus of both documents was to prioritise the promotion of positive mental health and wellbeing by offering preventative actions that focussed on knowledge and understanding and identifying support where challenges arose. NB highlighted the change in focus towards prevention

rather than cure. The Mental Health Strategy contained details of the support measures currently in place plus a limited amount of mental health first aid provision and the availability of referrals to external agencies.

NB outlined the Students onboarding questionnaire and the improved return rate this year with 15% declaring a mental health concern (538 responses) compared with 12% (208) in the prior year. The meeting noted that Year 2 students had been asked to redo the questionnaire for 20224/25 in case there had been any changes in their circumstances. Although it was not good that numbers with mental health issues was increasing it did show that declaring mental health concerns was now less stigmatised and students were more prepared to disclose; this helped with college support planning.

The meeting discussed the work on Staff Mental Health and noted the promotion of the Employer Assistance Programme. There was also a well-used intranet page with training and support. HR staff were also working to normalise the support conversations so that staff felt confident in disclosing. NB highlighted that only five staff had declared a mental health concern in 2023/24 but there had been 107 log-ons to the Employee Assistance Programme; HR would be doing further work to analyse this data. The meeting noted the increase in numbers asking for help from HR during 2024/25; this was at 18 by the end of October half-term compared with 44 during the whole of 2023/24. The Mental Health Strategy would include an action to ensure that the college was capturing all the data. There was also a need to establish some working groups. Student Link meetings would also continue to consider mental health. The Committee Chair (TC) commended the good work that was going on across College.

Governors (SS) asked whether there were any student self-help groups running yet within WFCG. NB confirmed that there was not but this matter had been discussed. Current concerns were that students supporting other students might be problematic as they were under 18 and there was a concern that they might be overburdened with problems of fellow students. In addition, college safeguarding staff had formal supervision and counselling sessions to help them destress which would not be available for students. SS also asked what the College was doing to get employers involved in this work. NB confirmed that College Staff were looking at receiving mental health training which could then be delivered to employer partners. LP confirmed that the aim was to establish cross-group systems which could be used in all four colleges. She informed the meeting that the college Lead Counsellor had set up a mental health forum with membership from local partners – including local authorities, schools, other stakeholders. The first meeting of this group had been very successful with 30+ attendees and allowed the sharing of good practice in dealing with the emerging issues.

Governors (NG) commended the better declaration rates in the student group but sought confirmation on the penetration across all student groups and demographics. NG asked whether the College had data on declarations by gender, ethnicity, religion and whether there was any area where declarations might be under-represented. NB confirmed that the majority of declarations were from female students but young males were getting better at coming forward; there were targeted posters in toilets to target male students. LP confirmed that across FE getting young males to come forward was definitely an issue but the data showed the reasons and the college could see the difference between campuses e.g. Langley learners historically were more likely to keep issues private but this campus had recently seen an increase in counselling uptake. The meeting noted the limited capacity for counselling but the work that the college was doing to find other help methods e.g. Health and Wellbeing Hub for self-help. LP reminded the meeting that there was onsite counselling provision every day for learners. NB confirmed that the college worked with parents but needed to be mindful of confidentiality as the policy of the college was to work with students as young adults.

Governors (RL) highlighted the big increase in numbers declaring but asserted the need to look more closely at what the trend was telling governors and staff. He suggested that there was a need to look more closely at the impact of different methods of help and whether there had been a positive impact and students got better. NB confirmed that there was very clear evidence of progress and distance travelled for students receiving counselling. However, there was a wide range in the severity of anxiety; in some cases the success was apparent with students completing their programme and progressing. However, for some success was measured on a more limited basis i.e. 'getting through the day'. ***The meeting agreed that it would be useful for governors to see case studies which outlined the intervention and impact. Governors also suggested that it would be useful to see data on retention,***

achievement and declarations. NO informed the meeting that the college was also developing data to show whether learners were at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education Employment or Training) after they finished their course; one reason for this would be mental health.

The meeting commended the progress made and agreed that this piece of work needed a clear action plan covering both staff and student support and intervention. This should include an exercise to pull together all of the strands of excellent work and expertise that already existed within the group.

The meeting NOTED the update on the WFCG Mental Health Strategy.

ACTION: Additional data to be brought to Q&C Committee on the impact of the college's support and intervention as outlined above (in italics).

8.

Self-Assessment Report (SAR) 2023/24

• **Sixth Form (SF) SAR and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2024/25**

This item was presented by the two Assistant Principals Curriculum & Quality for the Sixth Form (SO and SW). Members noted the detailed justification for the self-assessed grades of 'good' (Grade 2) for Overall Effectiveness, Quality of Education, Behaviour and Attitudes, Personal Development and Leadership & Management.

The meeting noted the detailed Sixth Form (SF) SAR and accompanying data for 2023/24 SO highlighted the following.

- The A Level Pass Rate had been sustained and was in line with 2023 at 96%.
- High Grades (A*-B): 38.7% which is a decrease from 2023 (45.43%)
- The Achievement Rate for 16-18 learners on A Level study programmes (2nd Year) was above the Sixth Form College (SFC) and General FE (GFE) average at 91%, an improvement of 2% compared to 2023.
- The Achievement Rate for 16-18 learners on other Level 3 programmes (2nd Year) is above the SFC and GFC average at 91.65%, an improvement of 5.25% from 2022-23.
- The Achievement Rates on all long courses for 16-18 learners continued to improve with Strode's at 80% compared to 74% (2022-23) and Windsor at 79% compared to 71% (2022-23).
- Overall Achievement for 16-18 learners on all courses continued to improve reflecting improved retention at 79.3% compared to 72.8% (2022-23).
- The Achievement Rate for males and females on 16-18 study programmes differed slightly between campuses with females performing better than males at Strode's (80% vs 78%) and males slightly better than females at Windsor (81% vs 79%).
- Level 3 BTEC Pass Rate marginally increased at 98% compared to 97% in 2023.
- High grades (D*-D): 29.7%. This is a slight drop from 2023 (32.78%)
- Pass rates for GCSE English and GCSE Maths remain above GFE averages with 63.3% of learners achieving a grade 4 and above in English compared to 20.9% and 37.4% of learners achieving a grade 4 and above in Maths compared to 17.4%.
- Actual attendance was consistent between the two colleges at 87%. This was in line with the prior year but remains below the College KPI of 90%. Punctuality to lessons was good and above 97%.
- Student satisfaction was positive with over 88% of students reporting that they were enjoying their learning and college experience. However, this was below the College KPI of 90%.
- Staff have established strong links with Industry partners, Employers and HEIs to ensure students have wider opportunities and gain invaluable industry skills.

The meeting noted the detailed Quality Improvement Plan and the nine actions that had been identified as areas for improvement within the sixth form colleges:

- Improve two-year retention rates on Level 3 courses to be in line with College KPI and secure improved achievement rates.
- Improve two-year retention rates on identified L3 and L2 courses to be in line with

college KPI and secure improved achievement for learners.

- Improve Pass Rates on identified A Level courses specifically A Level Maths and A Level Economics.
- Improve high grade achievement in identified L3 courses.
- Ensure that there is no differential between student groups, in particular: Achievement of 19+ males to be in line with 19+females and close gap between achievement of 16-18 learners and 19+ learners
- Achievement of Black Caribbean learners to be at least as good as SFC and GFE averages.
- Improve value added scores on identified L3 courses.
- Secure consistent engagement of all courses with local, regional and national priorities.
- Develop opportunities to share good practice across the SF provision to ensure consistently high quality TLA and learner experience.
- Improve student satisfaction on all courses to meet or be above KPI of 90%.

The meeting (AS) suggested that in some cases a lower High Grade outcome might be indicative of the cohort and not a reflection of the quality of teaching and learning. AS sought confirmation on what the Value Add (VA) data was showing. SO confirmed that there were some courses where VA was below the target of 5 and the meeting discussed the need for more work on stretch and challenge for learners. The meeting assured that the recent Quality Review Boards (QRBs) included discussions on a departmental level looking at mitigations which varied depending on the subject being delivered.

Governors (RL) commended the improvement but sought an explanation for the slip in High Grade for A levels and BTECs. SO confirmed that this was due to the need for improved stretch and challenge and assured the meeting that an action plan was in place in areas where this needed to improve. SS sought, and was given, clarity on which BTECs were underperforming (Business and Science) and which were over-performing (Art and Design, Sports Science).

SW highlighted a few areas where improvement actions were underway.

- i. Improve T&L – reinstate Bite-Size T&L Training on Monday morning. Face to face or pedagogical literature.
- ii. Behaviours and attitudes – being a bit more robust with attendance. Asking HODs to look at on a weekly basis and chase up individuals on a weekly basis.
- iii. Personal Development – positive Ofsted Skills grade. All staff had established links with employers. This employer focus was required to be the mainstay of all Schemes of Work for 2024/25 even though there was no Ofsted focus in-year. This involved contact with employers or HEIs.
- iv. L&M – focus on departmental QIPs for 2024/25 to get individualised targets and actions.

- Curriculum Redesign across Sixth Form with a focus on Strode's College

SW took the meeting through a presentation which outlined the recent work to evaluate and redesign the curriculum at Strode's College. The reasons for this evaluation were noted as follows:

- Curriculum has been largely unchanged for several years
- Competition is offering new courses and numbers dropped slightly at Strode's
- Local skills needs
- Support improved outcomes for learners
- Defunding of BTECs (possibly)
- Funding of T Levels (definitely)
- Support growth in student numbers

The changes being proposed included:

- Additions to Level 2 (GCSE Sociology, BTEC in Esports, BTEC in Public Services, UAL Art & Design); A Level (Statistics, Environmental Science), BTECs (a number of extended diplomas and extended certificates), AAQs (Engineering) and T Levels

(Marketing, Media Broadcast & Production, Science, Craft & Design, Management & administration).

- Removal of some defunded BTECs (Sport, Science, Business, Creative Media Production, Extended Certificate in Psychology)
- Alternatives for some BTECs (AAQs)

The Sixth Form SAR 2022/23 and QIP 2023/24 report was NOTED and RECEIVED.

- Further Education (FE) SAR

This item was presented by two of the APs from the FE Colleges (SP and GF). Members noted the detailed justification for the self-assessed grades of 'Good - 2' for Overall Effectiveness, Quality of Education, Behaviour and Attitudes, Personal Development and Leadership & Management. AP Creative & Technical (SP) highlighted the growth in numbers across FE and the improvement in English and maths attainment (the numbers of learners moving up at least one grade). SP flagged the strong pass rate at BCA 96% where there had been a focus on student pastoral care and individualised learning. He also highlighted the work undertaken to look at the study programmes across FE. This included the introduction of the Pre Vocational Programme (for learners with no GCSE on entry) and was aimed at developing soft skills; this was running at BCA and Langley within the Schools provision. The college was also trialling a two-year L2 programme in Animal Management and Travel & Tourism. This was an attempt to be more inclusive and meet the needs of the students. There was also a focus on championing the skills element of the curriculum and staff were looking for even more employer involvement in the curriculum.

The meeting noted the following aspects of the Further Education SAR 2023/24 as highlighted in the executive summary paper:

Achievement and Progress:

- Achievement at BCA was 89% (versus 90% in the prior year) with the slight drop due to retention and moves to external assessment. The retention rate had been impacted by the mental health of the cohort.
- Achievement at Langley was at 82% (compared to 80% in the prior year) which had been achieved with a clear focus on quality improvement at Langley during the year.

Inclusivity and Support:

- The support for students with Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCP) at both BCA and Slough & Langley is now consistently good. The invaluable assistance of specialised tutors and Additional Learning Support (ALS) staff ensures good communication with Local Authorities, facilitating the necessary funding for optimal support.
- Analysis of the small achievement gaps indicate that retention has been negatively impacted by poor student mental health and local authority inflexibility.

Quality of Education:

- Significant improvements to complying with all aspects of the study programme at Slough and Langley college resulted in a consistent approach among both FE providers.
- 32% of students made one grade of progress from their grade on entry in English and maths. Indications are that this is potentially above the national rate.
- Students are increasingly industry ready resulting from a higher focus on employer engagement and skills development.

Behaviour & Attitudes:

- Teachers build welcoming and professional working environments in line with industry expectations.
- The study programme beyond the main qualification is well established in the majority of curriculum areas.
- Attendance continues to need a clear focus across all aspects of the study programme.

Personal Development:

- 100% of students benefited from industry relevant activities. Industry placement and skills weeks ensure students are informed and well prepared for their next steps.

- A diverse and informative tutorial programme was developed and implemented ensuring students were well-informed and more resilient to progress beyond college.

Leadership & Management:

- Leaders actively recognise and implement relevant staff development opportunities that result in good student outcomes.
- Strong connections with local stakeholders further strengthen student support and progression opportunities.
- The FE colleges need a more robust centralised system of monitoring and reflecting upon the quality of pedagogical approaches to teaching, learning and assessment in order to encourage student aspiration to meet and exceed targets.

- **FE Quality Improvement Plan 2024/25**

This paper was presented by the AP Engineering and Construction (GF) and the five key areas for improvement and future development in FE were noted as follows:

- Improve attendance rates at both FE colleges (89.5% at BCA and 85% at Langley) by creating tailored support plans for students with persistent attendance issues and discuss impact during tutorial sessions. Looking for patterns and trying to respond more quickly – using parents/ next of kin. Need to ensure good attendance to prepare students for the workplace.
- Continuing the development of Level 2 study programmes to improve achievement outcomes for students and prepare for qualification reform.
- Implementing a more robust system of monitoring and reflecting on the quality of teaching and learning that identifies CPD needs and support.
- Review and redesign the professional development curriculum to improve student's application of soft skills with the intention of enhancing their employment and progression readiness. This had a big impact (it was sometimes up to 30% of a learner's timetable) and there was a need to ensure consistency in delivery and quality and impact. The College was running a Passport to Skills Programme which would give all students access to developing necessary soft skills and industry relevant skills. Staff were going to create an Employer Board to increase employer engagement and ensure that what the college was delivering allowed students to be ready for the job market or to move on to Higher Education. Governors (RL) sought more detail on the Student Passport and whether students could retake aspects of the passport if they were lacking skills or experience. GF confirmed that this would be the case and there would be flexibility. The scheme would be running from induction so that students could assess what they want to achieve, with a mid-year review to reflect on progress and whether the goals were still relevant. The Employer Board would also allow employer bodies to recognise relevant skills e.g. CITB accreditation. The Passport would operate at five levels: Bronze, Silver, Gold, Platinum and Black to encourage stretch and challenge whilst making the scheme inclusive. GF confirmed that the skills would be relevant to the Level of Study but learners would be able to exceed their level. The meeting commended this new element of the study programme which would also enable the college to track and evidence how much the study programme added to soft skills and industry skills as well as just passing the qualification.
- Recognising and removing barriers to learning that would create an enhanced inclusive learning environment and allow all learners to become engaged. This would have a positive impact on attendance and achievement. GF highlighted the excellent pastoral support teams but confirmed that this was an ongoing process. The meeting noted that L2 and 3 at Slough and Langley College was achieving less well than L1 and entry. The focus at BCA was on L2 programmes where there was an achievement gap with L1 and entry level. Staff were looking at how this support work could be more student focussed.

The Chair of Q&C (TC) commended the considerable effort on improving all aspects of quality across FE during 2023/24. The improvement secured at Langley had been a particular success.

The Further Education SAR 2022/23 and QIP 2023/24 report was NOTED and RECEIVED.

- Higher Education

The meeting noted a report from Curriculum Director HE (AW) which advised the governors of the key strengths and areas for development arising from the review of the Higher Education (HE) and Access to HE provision in the academic year 2023/24. During 2022/23 there were 163 (119 in prior year) students enrolled on full and part-time programmes in Higher Education validated by four universities (Bucks NU, University of Reading, University of West London, and University for the Arts London), City and Guilds, VTCT and Pearson. AW highlighted that the different format of the SAR from FE and Sixth Form was because it needed to be submitted to different external agencies.

The key strengths of the HE provision at WFCG during 2023/24 were noted as:

- Sustained outstanding pass rates at 97%. Which is above National Benchmark evidenced in table on page 6 under section B.
- Very high standards of student work in FDs in Education, HND in Business, Creative Media, Production Arts and BA (Hons) evidenced through student outcomes.
- Consistent high-level of student care, consideration and support, embeds a sense of student-centred learning, which provides holistic support for students (academic and mental well-being). This is a significantly contributing factor to the high retention and high satisfaction rates.
- The revised interview processes have proved an excellent enhancement and pre-course preparation on FDs in Education, Business and BA (Hons) – comments within student induction survey and progression talks moving from Level 4, 5 and 6.
- Innovative teaching and assessment methods used across all courses -comments made within External Examiner reports.
- Embracing of the use of AI in innovative teaching mechanisms commended by External Examiners
- Rigorous academic standards have been maintained in order to judge accurate outcomes

Areas for improvement included:

- Use of consistent e-learning platforms (virtual learning environment VLE) across all programmes.
- To demonstrate consistent use to students on how to access high quality academic literature/resources across the whole of the HE provision.
- Consistency of student experience across all programmes to be implemented by the HE Board and agreed.
- Further improve the standardisation processes across the HE provisions through cross-moderation focusing on all programmes.
- To develop the use of feedback and feed-forward to signpost students in their academic development focusing on Education, Business and Art and Design/Production Arts.
- In order to sustain and increase HE numbers across the provision, Leadership and Management to review existing HE provision and research potential new programmes to meet the ever-changing needs of our students and to avoid over assessment

The meeting noted the identified improvement within the HE provision at WFCG since the 2022/23 SAR:

- All HE staff have received training and now have a clear understanding of the mechanisms and processes in place in order to support HE students effectively, including using the new ILP system and AI mechanisms .
- Development of a more specific and focused HE peer development network, through the use of peer observations within departments. This has benefited staff in being able to share expertise in order to share teaching strategies and improved student experience.
- Students have benefited from workshops which have ensured a smooth transition from one level to the next, by sharing information about the potential next stage in their studies to achieve their career aims.

- A stronger focus on internal progression, including liaising with Level 3 Lecturers has ensured that Level 3 learners are better prepared for their next year of study.

AW informed the meeting that there had now been a update on the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) following the Autumn Budget; the timeline for introduction had now moved from Autumn 2025 to the 2026/27 academic year. This might change WFCG's future delivery with its partner HEIs.

The Higher Education (HE) SAR 2023/24 and QIP 2024/25 report was NOTED and RECEIVED.

- **Adult Provision SAR 2023/24**

Assistant Principal Adult and Community (JB) presented the report which gave a review of discreet adult provision delivered at WFCG including:

- ESOL, maths, English and Basic Digital Skills at Langley
- Professional, Leisure and ESOL at Windsor and Strode's
- Community provision delivered in Southall, Slough and Maidenhead.

The meeting noted that three key elements of this provision – Overall Effectiveness, Quality of Education and Personal Development - were graded as 'good' (2) for 2023/24. The grades assessed for Behaviour and Attitudes and Leadership and Management were both 'outstanding' grade 1.

The following highlights were noted:

- Wide range of flexible courses that meet the needs of the local community and employers, with a focus on subjects such as ESOL, English, Maths, Digital Skills Work Skills, Living and Working in the UK, Counselling, Accountancy, Mental Health, Business Admin and leisure.
- Expert Teaching, learning and assessment. Rigorous assessments in ESOL, Maths and English check the learners starting point and teachers are well qualified in the areas they teach e.g. all ESOL teachers have a recognised ESOL qualification in addition to a teaching qualification. Courses from pre-entry (no English at all) to L1 and L2.
- Pass rate above national average for ESOL (93% versus 89%) and externally assessed international qualifications ensured progression and recognition .
- Personal Development The department supports adult learners in various circumstances and learning is enriched through collaboration with various outside agencies such as Refugee Support, the Jobcentre Plus, Careers Service and volunteering charities. Additionally, Langley was supported by an ESOL pastoral tutor and an Adult pastoral who helped with bursaries, personal issues and referrals to local support agencies as necessary e.g. regarding accommodation.

The meeting noted the clear actions which had been put into place for 2024/25 to secure a move towards an overall grade of 'outstanding' for Adult provision:

- Attendance remained below the college target of 90% at 85% ESOL, 80% Community, and 76% Adult English and Maths
- Achievement particularly in English (60% versus 71% national average) remained below the college target of 90%, however this needed to be reviewed in line with the challenges faced by adult learners. Classes now twice a week rather than once a week.
- Utilisation of Technology the departments to fully utilise technology platforms such as Google Classroom, ILP, AI and the Adult Learning App to enhance consistency, accessibility, and inclusivity for all learners.
- Further development and consolidation of a discreet year round adult provision to grow adult student enrolment and provide strong teaching learning, assessment and support to further meet the needs of the local communities and employers.

The Adult SAR 2023/24 and QIP 2024/25 report was NOTED and RECEIVED.

➤ **Apprenticeship Update 2023/24 and QIP 2024/25**

The paper was presented by the Group VP (KG) in the absence of the AP Apprenticeships (RK). It was noted that the overall grading for Apprenticeships 2023/24 was Graded a '3' Requires Improvement on the SAR as there were significant improvements needed.

KG outlined the achievement data for Apprenticeships across the college group. The following was highlighted:

- Achievement for the year 2023/24 was Good'. The final achievement rate overall was 62.6% (Langley: 72%, BCA 58.2%). BCA achievement rates required further improvement and were predicted to meet the 60% threshold in the current academic year. The meeting was reminded that Floristry was being defunded but the remaining learners would be supported until successful completion this year. Arborist, Horticulture and Landbased Service Engineer apprenticeships were seeing lots of interest from employers, which would be positive with the possible future threat to Greenkeeping from competitor BIGGA.
- Significant improvement in Apprenticeship funding for 2024/25 with new enrolments.
- Greenkeeping: Improvements made within the Greenkeeping provision. The provision is now showing signs of improvement following a thorough post Ofsted review of delivery, caseloads and management of the course. Robust tracking and monitoring processes are now in place and the number of learner who have passed their planned end date (PPED) have reduced from 80 to 49. The meeting was assured that a further eight learners were already booked in for their End Point Assessment (EPA). A new Programme Lead was appointed for Greenkeeping.
- ESFA Funding Audit: Based on the PWC funding audit (commissioned within the annual ESFA random sample for 2022/23), a review of all paperwork and processes was conducted. The meeting was assured that a thorough review had taken place of all the audit findings which focused around onboarding processes, recording and tracking of learner support and the internal quality control processes of the team. An audit action plan is in place and governors were pleased to note that nearly all the recommendations made had now been actioned. Close monitoring continued and an internal quality cycle implemented.
- Staffing in certain areas for Apprenticeships was still proving to be a challenge, e.g: Engineering. The meeting noted that a planned visit from the FE Commissioner Team to look at Apprenticeships had been postponed from December 2024 to February 2025. This would help the college to move forward with the new structure and share good practice on merging processes across the two colleges.
- Enrolments 24/25: Current predictions identify additional apprenticeship income (in year) of circa £392k. We have seen significant growth in Hair, Motor Vehicle (Light) and Arborist. Further in-fills possible for: Motor Vehicle (Heavy), Hairdressing, Business Admin, Hort and Landscaping. We have seen numbers grow in Hairdressing, Arborist, Horticulture.
- Electrical: The meeting noted that there were still sanctions in place by City & Guilds for the electrical apprenticeship provision; there were 23 new electrical apprentices currently on hold, and work was being carried out with the new apprentices and employers to keep them 'warm'. However, the college was working closely with the City & Guilds external verifier who had given staff a very clear action plan. The team was confident that sufficient progress had been made and were hopeful that the sanction would be lifted after his next visit in January 2025.

The link Governor for Apprenticeships (SS) highlighted the ongoing issue with data in relation to Apprenticeships. SS suggested that the Apprenticeship data received less attention and that management needed to improve the visibility for managers; this was crucial as it remained one of the curriculum areas at WFCG graded as Requires Improvement. Group VP (KG) confirmed that the Data Dashboard was still a work in progress as it was not reading off the ILP. However, KG highlighted the new national data dashboard being launched by DfE in December 2024; although limited to published data this would be useful for benchmarking. TC suggested that a repeat Deep Dive into Apprenticeships should be brought to Q&C Committee later in the year.

The Apprenticeship Update report and QIP 2024/25 was NOTED and RECEIVED.

ACTION: a repeat Deep Dive into Apprenticeships at WFCG should be brought to Q&C Committee later in the year (June 2025).

- **Special Educational Needs (SEND)**

The meeting noted a report from AP Curriculum Safeguarding and SEND (LP) which provided an update for Governors on key areas concerning SEND and High Needs provision across WFCG, including:

- Three year trend-High Needs numbers for 2023/24, including E2/E3 categorisation
- 2023/24 Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP) outcome data
- 2024 Ofsted feedback on SEND provision
- Student Voice feedback
- Quality improvement initiatives at WFCG related to SEND
- EHCP numbers for 2024/25, including Element 2 and Element 3 funding

LP highlighted the positive Ofsted feedback on High Needs provision that had been received in March 2024, with a change in grading from RI to Good. The college group received a good with outstanding features rating from Ofsted in March 2024. WFCG continued to provide tailored courses, an inclusive environment, and excellent support for students with High Needs. The meeting also noted the EHCP achievement rate of 84.3% for 2023/24, which was 2.3% above overall achievement and higher than the prior year figure (83.9%). Student retention for EHCP learners was also above college KPIs at 90.7%.

The meeting commended the significant increase in High Needs E2/E3 funding and the confirmation of 503 commissioned places for the 2025/26 academic year (up from 480 in the current year). Additionally, there had been an increase in High Needs funding by £1,042,735 against prior year and an increase in EHCP student numbers of 78 from 2022/23. The E2/3 funding was now at £6.5m. The college group self-assessed its High Needs provision as Good with outstanding features for 2023/24 and has identified key areas for improvement for 2024/25, including adult and apprenticeship support, staff CPD, tracking student progress against EHCP outcomes and standardising IAG support.

The meeting noted the six priorities for the SEND QIP 2024/25 which included:

- Tracking of student progress.
- To develop consistent learning support access for students on apprenticeships and adult courses.
- To continue to develop cross group SEN training and CPD opportunities for all staff across both sites to ensure staff have good knowledge around SEN needs and how to effectively support in and outside of the classroom
- Review the processes of EHCP assessment - interview - taster day - transition to ensure smoother sharing of information for internal and external stakeholders
- Standardise Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) for EHCP learners to ensure all students had the same access. LP reminded the meeting that this had been raised by Ofsted but she believed that the change needed was to ensure that learners understood what IAG they had actually received.
- Ensure all WFCG teams working with High needs learners are working collaboratively to provide stakeholders consistency

The SEND SAR 2023/24 and QIP 2024/25 was NOTED and RECEIVED.

9. **Update on in-year performance 2024/25**

The meeting noted an update report – presented by NO - on performance year-to-date against the College KPIs. NO highlighted the following summary data:

- 16-19 Attendance: Current in-year attendance of 89.7% across the group against a target of 90%.

- Adult (19+) Attendance: Current in-year attendance of 85.6% across the group against the 90% target.
- In-year Retention: Current retention rate across the group of 97% against the target of 95%
- Adult (19+) Retention: Current retention rate across the group of 98% against the 95% target

The meeting also noted the data by College site; the lower retention in the Sixth Form reflected the number of two-year courses. NO highlighted that the current underperformance in attendance was partly predicated on how the English and maths data was being incorporated. MIS were working on resolving this.

The monitoring report on in-year performance 2024/25 was NOTED.

10.

Annual Complaints Report 2023/24

AP Curriculum FE (VG) presented the annual Complaints Report for the Windsor Forest Colleges Group 2023/24 which had been prepared by the College Data Protection Officer (YHM). Governors were reminded that the College strategic priorities placed a high priority on the management of learners' experience, in particular learner satisfaction and its likely impact on the teaching and learning experience. The College therefore regarded complaints to be one of the key elements of the learner voice.

The meeting noted that there was a decrease in complaints from 19 in the prior year to 14 in 2023/24 (this figure had been 29 in 2021/22). Of the 14 complaints received, 5 were upheld – 2 curriculum related and 3 in customer service and exams. The meeting was assured that complaints were being dealt with in a timely and effective manner. Governors were given assurance on the very detailed nature of the complaint which had been carried over from the previous academic year but was now settled. The EDI data breakdown in relation to the complaints was noted; there were no trends within this data.

VG informed the meeting that the CEO/ Group Principal did not believe that the current system of reporting complaints across WFCG was consistent. The informal treatment of 'complaints' as concerns within sixth form had depressed the numbers reported. VG informed the meeting that the College had now changed the Complaint procedure so that anything in writing was categorised as a complaint – even if not formalised as such. Governors (SS) suggested that the new format for 2024/25 should also capture compliments to provide a balance for governors. Governors (NG) also asked that additional data on trend reporting for the number of upheld complaints be included in future annual complaint reports. ACTION: add to complaints report for 2024/25.

The Complaints report was NOTED and RECEIVED

ACTION:

- i) ***The Complaints Reporting would be further developed for 2024/25 to cover all aspects of TWFCG provision and ensure that there was no under-reporting within the sixth form.***
- ii) ***WFCG Complaints Report 2024/25 to include:***
 - ***Compliments as well as complaints.***
 - ***Trend data on the number of upheld complaints***

11.

Student Voice

The meeting received an update from AP Student Services for the Sixth Form (NB) which provided an overview of the learner voice structures across WFCG, along with the key mechanisms for capturing non-curriculum specific student feedback. The report also outlined the results for the 2023/24 end of year survey and a summary to date of the 2024 induction survey, with commentary on actions where necessary.

The meeting noted that Sixth Form and FE both operated a number of learner voice activities that sat within the scope of the college's Student Voice Statement. Student feedback was collected throughout the year through a combination of forums, surveys and activities, with the addition of an induction and end of year survey. These were supplementary to curriculum targeted feedback.

The colleges each have a Student Union Executive (SUE) made up of voted in candidates, the FE and Sixth Form Student Governors sat within this. The SUE and activities are supported by student engagement teams that led on link and liaison committees with the Governors and termly student conferences to explore key themes and facilitate questions and answers with leaders.

NB reminded the meeting that as well as the End-Year and Induction surveys there were regular in-year opportunities to access Learner Voice. The meeting noted how surveys were used differently between Sixth Form and FE with FE focussing specifically on satisfaction. The meeting took the very detailed student voice data as read. The high satisfaction was commended but there were some areas for improvement. The low uptake in 6th Form at the end of the year survey 2023/24 was noted; this had been run on the College App when students had maybe already disengaged; this would be changed for 2024/25.

The meeting noted and commended the range of clubs and events on offer at each of the colleges.

The Learner Voice update was NOTED.

12. **Dates and Times of Future Meetings** *(All to be held online via Zoom.)*

The draft meeting dates for 2024/25 were noted as:

- Tuesday 18 March 2025, 5.00pm
- Thursday 19 June 2025, 5.00pm

NOTED

13. **Any Urgent Business**

There was no urgent other business notified.

The meeting ended at 6.40pm

Chair

Date