



## THE WINDSOR FOREST COLLEGES GROUP BOARD OF GOVERNORS

### MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATION

Held at Langley College on Thursday 27 March 2025

PRESENT:	Jo Croft (Chair) Jacob Clay Tina Coates Nathan Garat ( <i>online</i> ) Nathan Green Anthony Haines Rob Lewis Gillian May (Group Principal & CEO) Janet Robertson Antonia Spinks Signe Sutherland Ian Thomson Sarah Waller Alison Wheatley	
APOLOGIES:	Paul Britton Louise Fellows Sam Foley Nathan Peters	
IN ATTENDANCE:	Amanda Down Anne Entwistle Lucy Gill Karen Griffiths Tracy Reeve	Principal, Sixth Form Principal, FE Group Finance Director Group Vice Principal Group Director of Governance

### **PART I**

<b><u>MINUTE NO.</u></b>		<b><u>ACTION</u></b>
	<b>The meeting started at 5.00pm</b>	
1.	<b><u>Health &amp; Safety Housekeeping</u></b> The Chair (JC) welcomed everyone to Slough and Langley College and introduced Sarah Waller as the new FE Teaching Staff Governor who was attending her first Corporation meeting after being appointed.	
2.	<b><u>Apologies for Absence</u></b> Apologies had been received as detailed above.	
3.	<b><u>AOB</u></b> There was no urgent other business notified.	
4.	<b><u>Declarations of interest</u></b> There were no declarations of interest.	

5. **Minutes of the previous meetings held on 11 and 20 December 2024**

The Minutes of the previous meetings held on 11 and 20 December 2024, having been previously circulated to members, were agreed as a true record and would be taken as signed by the Chair.

**All Members were agreed.**

6. **Matters arising from the minutes of the previous meetings held in December 2024**

The Director of Governance presented a report which updated the meeting on the current status of 'matters arising'; all were now completed.

**The update was NOTED**

7. **Governor Updates**

➤ Staff Governors' Report

Each of the Staff Governors gave the meeting a short verbal update.

**Support Staff Governor:** AW highlighted the recent Royal College of Nursing event where WFCG students had met the King (a video had been previously circulated). The recent Careers Event had been well attended. The Sweet Tub recycling scheme had raised £600 for Macmillan. The ESOL Department had also applied to be recognised under the FE College Sanctuary Award for the work with refugees. The recent Apprenticeship Week has been well attended and included good employer engagement.

**Teaching Staff Governor Sixth Form:** JC gave the meeting an update on what was happening at Windsor College. The recent Future Pathways fair could have benefitted from better attendance with 20 employers attending and several last minute withdrawals. Employer engagement continued to be a focus for improvement at Windsor. BTEC results had been good overall with a high pass rate in applied science. The College had held a successful STEM day during the previous week with lots of very useful subject specific talks. The meeting was reminded that A level exams would start on 12 May with quite a few papers taking place before the half-term break.

**Teaching Staff Governor FE:** SW introduced herself to the meeting and explained her role as Curriculum Director English and maths across WFCG. The mock exams for GCSE exams had recently taken place over two full days at both Slough & Langley College and BCA. Circa 1,000 students were involved at each of the sites and attendance had been strong (showing an improvement on the positive figure in the prior year). This full mock exam had been a new initiative for 2025 and was aiming to better prepare students for the real exam. SW asserted the scale of the project which had required great collaboration between the curriculum staff, exams team and the access team. It had really been a whole college event with the normal curriculum collapsed for the two days. Safeguarding week – held a couple of weeks ago – had been well received by learners.

The Chair (JC) thanked the staff governors for their input and asserted the value of Staff Voice for the Corporation.

**The Staff Governor Feedback was NOTED**

➤ Student Feedback

FE Student Governor (NG) presented an update for the meeting. He affirmed the whole college impact of the recent GCSE mocks which made it hard for some students when College was closed for two days; not all learners had somewhere to work outside college.

**The Student Governor Feedback was NOTED**

➤ Link Governor Feedback

RL informed the meeting that there had been an issue with aligning diary dates for student liaison meetings – JC also affirmed that this had also affected her – so he had no update at this time.

SS had met the arborist apprentices at BCA. They had all got good employers to support them through the apprenticeship but the big issue that they raised was being able to afford the specialist equipment and kit to complete the apprenticeship. They were happy with their course but none of them were fully aware of the WFCG Student App or the Student Survey; this had been passed on to the Apprenticeship Team to allow them to remedy this.

The Chair (JC) had attended a link meeting at Windsor College and had seen increased student engagement with second year students inviting first years to attend. There had been a lot of discussion about mental health and instances of lack of access to iPads and laptops. It had been a useful session.

**The Link Governor Feedback was NOTED**

## **ITEMS FOR DECISION/ APPROVAL**

8.

### **Finance Matters**

#### ➤ Funding Allocation & pay award 2025/26

The meeting noted a paper which outlined the significant financial pressures facing WFCG resulting from both national funding decisions and internal cost pressures. The paper outlined the key challenges, the Group's financial position and the implications for the proposed pay award for 2025/26. *(This item is minuted in the Part II Confidential minute.)*

#### ➤ WFCG Fees Policy and proposals 2025/26

The Group Finance Director presented this paper which had been considered and approved by Members of the Resources Committee. Governors were advised that the policy remained essentially the same as that approved for the current financial year in March 2024.

Senior management were proposing that course fees for fee paying students should increase as follows:

- Full-time programmes: Increase from £5,350 to £5,500. (2.8% increase)
- Part-time programmes: Increase from £4,350 to £4,500. (3.45% increase)
- Level 6 Part-time provision: Increase from £4,500 to £4,600 (2.22% increase)
- Fees for commercial courses – 3% increase

The proposed increases for the transport to and from the BCA campus was a 7.5% increase:

	<b>2025-26</b>		<b>2024-25</b>	
	<b>Band A</b>	<b>Band B</b>	<b>Band A</b>	<b>Band B</b>
Term 1	370	440	345	410
Term 2	370	440	345	410
Term 3	290	345	270	320
<b>Total of termly passes</b>	<b>1,030</b>	<b>1,225</b>	<b>960</b>	<b>1,140</b>
<b>Annual</b>	<b>970</b>	<b>1,165</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>1,080</b>

- Students who received financial support would be asked to contribute either:
  - 40% of the annual fee for price band that applies to their chosen route (payable at the start of each term) or
  - 20% of the annual fee for price band that applies to their chosen route if the student also qualifies for free college meals as per the government criteria (payable at the start of each term),

The meeting sought confirmation on whether these proposed transport charges would fully cover the costs. LG confirmed that there was still a small subsidy which was mitigated by using the college fleet of minibuses for any additional trips during the college day. The CEO confirmed that most specialist land-based colleges had a wider transport network and offered

some subsidy. GM reminded the meeting that the scale of the subsidy at WFCG had been markedly reduced over the last five years.

LG informed the meeting that the HE fees for the University of Reading Foundation Degree would be £8,145 for Year 1 students and £7,900 for the Year 2 learners; this fee was set by University of Reading and WFCG did not receive all the fee funding.

***The meeting APPROVED the WFCG fees structure 2025-26 as presented.***

(All Members were agreed.)

9. **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. This document had been considered by both Resources Committee and Strategy Governance & Search Committee earlier in March and was being recommended for approval. SG&S had been particularly pleased with how well the Estates Strategy linked with the new WFCG Curriculum & Skills Strategy.

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 recent DfE condition survey 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. 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 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 Corporation:***

- 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.)

10.

**Updated WFCG Curriculum & Skills Strategy**

The meeting was reminded that the last review of the Curriculum Strategy had taken place in 2022 when WFCG was newly merged. Now that the college had completed a successful Ofsted inspection and achieved most of the initial post-merger objectives it was timely to update the Curriculum and Skills Strategy to deliver the objectives on the new WFCG Strategic Map 2025-28.

Group Vice Principal (KG) presented the summary paper and the revised WFCG Curriculum and Skills Strategy 2025-28. KG outlined how the Curriculum & Skills Strategy was linked to the College Corporate Strategy (2025-2028) and was designed to ensure that the College remained responsive to local, regional and national skills needs. The key areas of focus and objectives outlined in the strategy during the next three years would be as follows:

- **Regional Skills Development:** Expansion of industry-relevant programmes, including T Levels, green technologies, digital and screen industries.
- **Adult & Community Learning:** A flexible curriculum to meet the needs of adult learners, including short courses and professional upskilling.
- **Higher Education & Apprenticeships:** Growth in employer-led pathways and specialist provision in priority sectors.
- **14-16 Schools Provision:** Development of a direct-entry programme to support alternative education pathways for young learners. The meeting noted that there appeared to be substantial demand for provision for this age group who were not in mainstream school provision.
- **Specialist SEND & Foundation Learning:** Strengthening pathways for neurodiverse learners and expanding progression routes.

Governors were reminded of the importance of strategic impact and the associated financial growth to enable the full financial recovery forecast for WFCG. The meeting noted that the strategy outlined significant growth opportunities during the three-year period, including:

- **Expansion of Level 1 provision** (+90 learners by 2027/28) to address local skills gaps and social mobility.
- **Increase in Higher Education enrolments** (128 learners by 2027/28) generating £608K in additional income. This element of the strategy might be more problematic in the face of recently announced cuts to adult funding.
- **Growth in apprenticeships**, with targeted employer partnerships increasing enrolments to 440 by 2027/28.
- **New direct-entry 14-16 provision**, supporting alternative routes for disengaged learners with a projected intake of 150 by 2027/28.

KG informed the meeting that in drafting the new strategy the SLT had tried to reflect the key strengths across WFCG and the current direction of travel as well as the regional and national priorities. KG informed the meeting that local priorities did not seem likely to change under the new government's Skills England agenda. This would require an ongoing focus on working with employers and local authorities although there might be some change as the devolution agenda moved forward. KG assured the meeting that the Curriculum and Skills Strategy reflected all areas of provision and had a close focus on foundation students which would be key under the proposed new Ofsted inspection framework.

Principal FE (AE) gave the meeting an outline of the proposed expansion of the 14 to 16 offer at Slough and Langley College; the aim would be to grow the ESOL provision and offer a 5-day provision for young people. Governors noted that the funding for this provision was awarded on an in-year basis, unlike the current lagged funding for 16-18 learners. AE assured the meeting that the curriculum teams already had the necessary resources in place for the part-time provision from September 2025 and would ensure additional resources were in place for the direct access provision from September 2026. The in-year funding model in place for 14-16 learners would make it easier to fund growth in delivery of this provision.

GM reminded the meeting that this new Curriculum & Skills Strategy would be the focus of the annual strategic conversation with the college relationship team at DfE on Friday 28 March. The meeting noted that this new Curriculum and Skills Strategy had also been discussed at Quality & Curriculum Committee on 18 March 2025 and at Strategy Governance & Search

Committee on 19 March. Both committees were recommending the Curriculum & Skills Strategy to the Board for approval.

**The Board:**

- i. **APPROVED the Curriculum & Skills Strategy 2025-2028.**
- ii. **APPROVED the strategic priorities outlined in the strategy, particularly:**
  - **Expansion of Level 1 and Foundation Learning to improve access for disadvantaged learners.**
  - **Growth of Higher Education and Apprenticeships to meet employer needs and drive income generation.**
  - **Development of a direct-entry 14-16 provision, with an application for DfE funding by August 2025 for a September 2026 launch.**

11.

**WFCG Annual Accountability Statement**

The Group Principal/ CEO (GM) presented the draft College Annual Accountability Statement 2025 for consideration. GM reminded the meeting that this was supposed to be a 'succinct document' and continued to be a mandatory document for FE colleges and a condition of funding with the DfE. This had been reviewed by SLT – as required on an annual basis by DfE – and updated since last approved in May 2024. The draft had also been discussed with other Berkshire Principals from a regional and pan-regional perspective. GM thanked SG&S Committee member Rob Lewis (RL) for his input in editing and proof-reading the draft; some changes had been made. GM confirmed that the Accountability Statement as presented covered the 'duty to review' under the Local Needs Duty; this was highlighted by the new Section 6.

GM highlighted that the WFCG Accountability Statement 2025 included new local market intelligence data, demographic updates, and other significant changes, including the Slough and Langley College rebrand. Key additions for this iteration included:

- information on devolution work through the Berkshire Prosperity Board and Thames Valley Principals' collaboration.
- acknowledgment of the ongoing FE dashboard usage for WFCG in-year data.
- the annual review of the local needs duty statement.

The meeting was assured that the document aligned with the WFCG Curriculum and Skills Strategy and highlighted expansions in employer-led provision, apprenticeship pathways, direct entry for school age learners 14-16 (from September 2026), and industry-standard facilities improvements. GM confirmed that the revised Annual Accountability Statement would be published on the WFCG website and reviewed as part of the strategic conversation with the Department for Education (scheduled for 28 March 2025).

GM drew attention to the ONS demographic table 'Population Growth 16/17 year olds' on page 13 of the document. The national talk of 7% growth for 2025/26 did not appear to be true of the WFCG catchment area.

**The meeting APPROVED the WFCG Annual Accountability Statement 2025 as presented.**

(All Members were agreed.)

**ACTION: Accountability Statement to be submitted to the DfE and posted on the WFCG website to meet the deadline of 31 May 2025.**

GM/ TR

12.

**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.

- **Risk 1 Failure to meet budget forecast (risk score remains at 16 'amber'):** Acute risk linked to financial health; the upwards pressure on pay was still a very real concern as 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 as discussed earlier in the meeting. 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.

- 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.**

13.

## **GOVERNANCE**

13.1

### **Board Membership**

The Director of Governance (TR) presented a paper which detailed the Members of the Corporation with cessation dates, and sub-committee membership. Governors were reminded that the current Board membership of TWFCG was determined at 18 members and there was one vacancy.

#### ➤ External Governors

The meeting noted that there were two External Governors who would come to the end of their first term of office on 31 May 2025: Sam Foley and Paul Britton. The Strategy Governance & Search Committee were recommending that both be reappointed for a second term of office of four years. The Director of Governance informed the meeting that she had canvassed both PB and SF and they were both prepared to serve a second term. The meeting discussed both of these existing governors.

**Paul Britton (PB)**: The meeting agreed that PB's specialist knowledge and experience as CEO of the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce was still a vital addition to the Corporation at WFCG. His detailed knowledge of the local and regional skills agenda and networking contacts with local employers had proved very valuable for WFCG over the last few years. The Director of Governance (TR) reminded the meeting of PB's contribution to the 'strong' Ofsted skills judgement in March 2024.

**Sam Foley (SF):** The meeting agreed that SF's role as Chair of Resources Committee as a qualified accountant was still vital to the skills set of the Board at WFCG. Her experience of estates work and campus development within an educational setting also made her a key member of the college's Capital Development Steering Group. TR informed the meeting that SF intended to end her period of working abroad and move back to the UK in April 2025 which would make her attendance at face-to-face Board meetings possible.

***It was AGREED that Sam Foley and Paul Britton BOTH be reappointed as a Governor of the WFCG Corporation for a second four-year term of office (until 31 May 2029).***

(All Members were agreed.)

➤ New members

The meeting discussed the two candidates who had been interviewed online by the SG&S on 4 February 2025 and then discussed at the recent SG&S committee meeting (19 March).

**Kerry Blandin (KB):** The meeting had been very impressed with KB – her passion and FE sector knowledge was impressive. She was well connected in the local area and understood the challenges facing the college. KB had been a member of the Mirror Board when she was an employee at WFCG and was really keen to move into the role of Governor. The meeting had been impressed by Kerry's enthusiasm and her willingness to ask questions and challenge the meeting. The meeting agreed that Kerry Blandin would make a valuable contribution to governance at WFCG with her knowledge of the education sector and lived experience of FE. It was agreed that she should be appointed to the current vacancy on the WFCG Corporation.

***The Corporation APPROVED KB's appointment as a Governor of WFCG for a four-year term of office starting immediately.***

**Dhiry Bihari (DB):** The meeting agreed that although he would be a valuable addition to the governance process at WFCG, DB was not such a strong candidate as KB. However, his engagement with the wider Slough community would be of value and would bring a different EDI focus to the Board. It was suggested that DB be offered a co-opted Governor role at WFCG with a seat on Quality & Curriculum Committee (subject to a conversation with the Chair of Q&C Committee).

***It was AGREED that DB should be offered a co-opted Governor role on the Board of WFCG with a seat on the Quality and Curriculum Committee.***

(All Members were agreed.)

13.2

**Role and appointment of senior independent governor**

The Director of Governance (TR) presented a proposal in relation to the creation of a Senior Independent Governor role at WFCG. The meeting noted that the role of Senior Independent Governor (SIG) was not a mandatory position on FE Corporations but had been adopted in a number of colleges and was common in the private sector (known as Senior Independent Director, SID). TR confirmed that the primary purpose of the SIG role was to :

a) undertake the Chair's annual appraisal (this was an example of FE good governance that WFCG did not currently comply with), and

b) to be an independent sounding board throughout the year for the Chair, or if governors have any concerns or issues that they do not wish to discuss with the Chair.

TR also highlighted that one key aspect of this role was that the appointed SIG should have no aspiration to be the Chair of Governors. The meeting considered a draft role description which was based on existing SIG roles in other FE Colleges. TR assured the meeting that the SIG position differed to that of Vice Chair of Corporation, whose role was primarily to deputise for the Chair and who may have other committee responsibilities. A suggested Role of the Vice Chair document was also presented show the difference in the two roles.

TR informed the meeting that after discussion with the Chair of Governors and the CEO/ Group Principal it had been suggested that Rob Lewis (RL) should be appointed as the SIG at WFCG after his term of office and tenure as Vice-Chair ended in May 2025. RL's legacy governance role at Strode's College and subsequently WFCG, and his experience as Vice Chair of the Corporation made him an ideal candidate to take on this new role. The meeting



agreed that RL had the necessary knowledge and experience detailed in the role description and displayed all of the necessary personal qualities in abundance. The meeting agreed that although RL had already served two terms of office as a governor of WFCG, this new SIG role would justify appointing him for an exceptional third term of office where he would support the new Chair and whoever took over from him as Vice Chair of the Corporation. This continuity and maintenance of legacy knowledge would balance several new governor appointments which would take place during spring 2025.

***The Corporation APPROVED:***

- i. the proposal to create a SIG role on the Board of WFCG***
- ii. the draft role description for the SIG***
- iii. the appointment of Rob Lewis to the SIG role when his current term of office and tenure as Vice Chair ended in May 2025.***

(All Members were agreed.)

13.3

**Use of the College Seal**

The meeting noted the two uses of the WFCG seal since the last timetabled Corporation meeting.

- i) Grant agreement with Slough Borough Council for the provision of adult numeracy services under the Multiply contract (28 January 2025)
- ii) A licence on the Strode's lease to undertake the repair and maintenance work to the almshouses at Strode's College. (Seal applied 19 March 2025.)

***The Governance update report was NOTED and RECEIVED.***

14.

**Management Accounts February 2025**

The Group Finance Director (LG) presented the management accounts for February 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 February 2025 reforecast budget:

- The EBITDA for the year-to-date (YTD) amounted to £1.250 million compared to the forecast of £2.135m.
- For the year to date there were variances against forecast in income (£1.005m positive), pay costs (£275,000 adverse to fund High Needs support staff) and non-pay costs (£455,000 negative). The non-pay costs were ahead due to curriculum costs being front loaded.
- Pay costs as a percentage of income were at 68.94% 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 28 February 2025 were 32 (up from 29.55 January) which was ahead of the FEC benchmark of 25.
- The cash balance at the end of February was £4.666 million in credit, which was £948,000 ahead of the reforecast. The meeting noted that DfE grants of £1.363m were within this balance.
- The financial health for the 12 months to 28 February 2025 was at 'Good', with the year-end forecast of 180 points 'Good'.

The meeting took the detailed Management Accounts as read.

***The Management Accounts for February 2025 were NOTED and RECEIVED.***

15.

**Curriculum Efficiency Report**

The CEO (GM) presented an update on the work which was still ongoing across WFCG to drive forward curriculum efficiency. It was noted that this had been discussed in detail at recent Audit Committee and Quality & Curriculum Committee meetings.

Corporation Members noted that, across the group, staff utilisation remained exceptionally high. However, remission for management tasks within teaching roles - as well as reduced hours allocated for trainee and newly qualified teachers - also remained significant. The ongoing curriculum planning process was aiming to address this imbalance with the aim of reducing remission costs and improving overall efficiency.

GM informed the meeting that group sizes which had increased proportionally with the rise in student numbers at the start of the 2024-25 academic year had now fallen in line with the benchmark. However, these group sizes were still financially viable (apart from T levels). GM reminded the meeting that this model had not yet been extended to adult provision as there was no FE Commissioner benchmark tool available for adult provision. Governors were assured that study hours were carefully aligned with funding bands to ensure revenue maximisation. GM informed the meeting that at the R06 point WFCG had reported 4,650 learners and 95.55% of these were in the top funding band; this was commended as a strong funding position. The meeting was assured that the aim was to get as close to 100% in the top funding band as possible although some learners would always necessarily be on a smaller programme. There would also always be variation as some learners e.g. ESOL started part-way through the year so would have insufficient time to meet the full 580 hours.

Governors were pleased to note that retention of students remained ahead of the national benchmark and continued to improve year-on-year. This success reflected enhanced recruitment processes and more effective Information, Advice, and Guidance (IAG) services.

Other key points were highlighted as follows:

- There was an opportunity to increase assessor workloads for apprenticeships, supporting further utilisation as provision grows.
- High Needs income was also increasing, currently outperforming benchmarks. This reflected the significant growth in High Needs student numbers at both BCA and Slough & Langley College.

***Governors suggested that the fact WFCG was so generous with remission should be highlighted in discussions with the Trade Unions about staff pay.***

***The curriculum efficiency report was NOTED and RECEIVED.***

Exec

#### 16. **Applications Report 2025/26**

The meeting noted the current applications report for 16-19 programmes at 18/03/25 which showed that the Group was 3% (105 learners) behind the same position in the prior year. The current 'change' in applications by college was BCA -8% (-97), Langley +14% (+81), Strode's +1% (+6) and Windsor -11% (-95). The meeting also noted the offers accepted by college which was running 2% (-35) behind the prior year. GM confirmed that the applications data was monitored on a weekly basis and shared with all staff. It was also noted that these numbers did not include all of the progressing students as staff had just started to undertake interviews for progressing students. GM informed the meeting that she expected a flat enrolment but some growth at Slough and Langley feeding the ESOL provision.

***The applications update was NOTED***

#### 17. **Academic Report 2024/25**

##### **Update on in-year performance 2024/25**

The meeting noted an update report – presented by AD and AE – on performance year-to-date against the College KPIs. AD highlighted the following summary data:

- The group had secured significant growth in ESFA funded 16-18 Learners. WFCG had recruited 4719 learners against an allocation of 4455 in 2024-2025.
- Adult Education Budget grant funded enrolments were expected to finish the year on 3392 compared against 2967 in 2023-2024.

- Retention on 16-19 study programmes at RO7 was currently 92.4% compared to 90.90% (23/24) overall for the same recorded point last year.
- Overall actual attendance was below the college KPI of 90% at 87.7% which was a marginal improvement on 2023/24. Ongoing actions remained in place to secure improvements in actual attendance.
- Actual attendance was lower for 19+ learners (84.5%) compared to 16–18-year-olds (88.1%) reflecting the challenges of the 19+ cohort.
- Punctuality was good across all of the provision (97.4%).

The meeting also noted the data by College site; the lower retention in the Sixth Form reflected the number of two-year courses.

➤ **Progress against Quality Improvement Plans (QIP) 2024/5**

The meeting noted the detailed update which tracked progress against the Sixth Form and Further Education (FE) QIPs for 2024-25.

***The Sixth Form and Further Education (FE) update report was NOTED.***

- **Apprenticeship Update 2024/25**

The paper was presented by the Group VP (KG) who led the apprenticeship provision across WFCG. Governors were reminded that currently, the BCA site's apprenticeship provision was rated as *Requires Improvement*, while Slough & Langley College still faced issues despite its good outcomes. The meeting noted the recent restructure of the leadership of the provision. This restructure had allowed the college to address current performance challenges, improve strategic and operational focus and reduce the costs associated with the leadership and management of the apprenticeship provision.

The meeting noted the key updates and discussed current progress as follows:

- **Enrolments 2025/26:** Apprenticeship enrolment at R06 (6 February 2025) was 776 apprentices (an increase of 89 apprentices and £388k from the same point in 2024/25). Specific growth had been noted in Sports Turf operatives at BCA, Property Maintenance, Plumbing and Light motor vehicle technicians.
- **Changes to English and Maths requirements:** The meeting noted that from 11 February 2025, the requirements for English and maths were optional for apprentices who were aged 19 and over at the start of their apprenticeship training. Funding would continue to be available for English and maths qualifications for adults if they, or their employer, felt that this was required. All apprentices would continue to be required to secure, and be assessed, on the job-specific English and maths skills that they would need as part of the apprenticeship standard. Young apprentices, who were aged 16-18 at the start of their apprenticeship, would continue to be required to secure up to a Level 2 qualification in English and maths, if they did not already hold one. KG informed the meeting that management felt nervous around the messaging that English and maths qualifications were not necessary so 19+ learners at WFCG were still being enrolled for English and maths but were being permitted to drop it before their End Point Assessment (EPA) if achievement was proving problematic. KG informed the meeting that by 5 April WFCG was required to provide data to DfE on the number of learners impacted; this was circa 189 across WFCG. The meeting was also reminded that colleges would lose funding if apprentices were not studying English and maths.
- **Introduction of shorter apprenticeships:** The meeting noted that apprenticeships currently had a duration of at least 12 months but new legislation had recognised that there were circumstances where a learner could achieve full occupational competence more quickly. To support this, government would be reducing the minimum duration of an apprenticeship to 8 months, down from the current minimum of 12 months. Changes would be introduced from August 2025, subject to the legislative timetable. Currently there were three 'trail blazer' apprenticeships planned, one of which would be the Media apprenticeship offered at Windsor College.

- Changes to EPA principles: The government had recently announced that the assessment process for apprenticeships would be streamlined under a new set of principles. This would 'remove any unnecessary duplication and ensure the amount of assessment is proportionate'. Where appropriate, End-Point Assessment Organisations (EPAOs) would be able to delegate assessment to the training provider, in line with the assessment plan.
- Payment simplification: From August 2025 the DfE would begin to remove the need to submit overlapping data via both the ILR and Apprenticeship Service account in order to receive funding for apprenticeship training. This change would remove duplication and eliminate data mismatches between the ILR and Apprenticeship Service submissions. The change was welcomed as it would save significant MIS time, reduce administrative burdens and improve cash flow.
- Visit from Ofqual: The meeting noted that the WFCG apprenticeship provision had been recently (11/02/25) visited by a team from Ofqual, including the Deputy Chief Regulator. During the visit - which took place in National Apprenticeship Week – the Ofqual team toured the site, met with staff and apprentices and discussed some of the anticipated changes. KG confirmed that this visit had enabled a sharing of information and feedback on proposed changes and had cemented a useful relationship that both the college and Ofqual were keen to continue.

***The Apprenticeship update report was NOTED.***

- **Higher Education (HE) & Access to HE**: Principal Sixth Form (AD) presented the update report for HE. AD informed the meeting that HE student enrolment continued to be positive with growth in enrolment numbers for 2024-25 across the college group. There were now 175 students enrolled on HE courses, including 56 on Level 4 courses in Hair and Beauty, Education and Training, Performance and the Creatives, and 66 enrolled on Access to HE courses. This compared to 167 students on Higher Education courses, and 41 students enrolled on Access to HE in 2023-24. Enrolments on the Creative Arts and Production delivered at Windsor College, had seen a significant increase in student numbers following the change of focus to Stage, Screen and Design, supporting learner progression from Level 3 and addressing local skills needs.

Governors noted that strong progress had been made against teaching, learning and assessment targets set at the start of the academic year as evidenced in feedback from external verifiers. Reading weeks had been introduced to Access Courses to promote and support independent study skills and better prepare students for progression to HE and further strategies for scaffolding writing have been introduced. Work continued on developing the use of feedback and feedforward to signpost students in their academic development, on standardising processes across the whole provision and on supporting students in accessing and utilising high quality academic literature and resources.

Strong engagement with the Skills Agenda and wider opportunities for students beyond the classroom were in place with a wide range of master classes delivered. There was also ongoing involvement of industry experts in developing curriculum content delivery. Access to HE students had received support with UCAS applications in liaison with UWL, Oxford Brooks and BNU and had undertaken practical experiments utilising the facilities at Windsor College to support their studies. In addition, staff were participating in regional partnership meetings to discuss health and life sciences as part of the Thames Valley LSIP. Further development of links with employers to impact curriculum design and delivery would remain a key priority.

The meeting noted that new HE courses had been introduced to meet student and local skills' needs, including the new Higher Technical Qualification in Leadership and Management. Good progress had been made with research and planning for Access to Animal Management/ Vet Science which would meet an identified local skills need and student interest. It was hoped to introduce this at BCA from September 2025 but this would be dependent on recruitment and appropriate staffing being in place. There was also planning for an Access to Policing offer.

AD confirmed that good progress had been made towards the consolidation of the group's university partners in the delivery of HE programmes. A strong partnership remained in place with the University of West London with whom WFCG was working to confirm the WFCG HE curriculum offer for 2025. Unfortunately, the contract with St Mary's had not progressed as previously discussed; this break was mutually agreed by both parties. A partnership with the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) had been successfully launched, initiated to co-plan and deliver new provision in line with local, regional and national skills need. The meeting was reminded that two of the WFCG's Access to HE students had recently been chosen by RCN to attend their re-launch VIP event in London in March. They had taken this opportunity to talk about their work placement opportunities in the presence of King Charles.

The meeting noted the areas for further development within HE as follows:

- The interview process for Access to HE to ensure students were attending interview sessions and receiving appropriate information and guidance.
- Higher Technical Qualifications were to be investigated more fully as possible replacements for HND provision e.g. in Business.
- Further development and use of the WFCG Student App for HE and Access to HE was to be introduced this academic year with the aim of supporting consistent communication and access to college services.
- Marketing strategies had been reviewed and a revised HE marketing strategy had been produced to support sustained growth across HE and Access to HE provision.
- Continued development of support services including additional learning support to be undertaken to assist HE students' achievement and success.
- Further engagement of employers and HEIs in the development and delivery of course content to ensure students were developing appropriate skills for progression to employment and further study.

***The Higher Education update report was NOTED.***

- **Adult provision:** The move to create one adult provision across all four college sites had been successfully delivered. Governors agreed that, in the light of funding cuts, it had been a prudent decision to rationalise the management of the team and ensure that close monitoring was taking place centrally. Governors were assured that the management team and MIS staff met regularly to track enrolment, allocations and expenditure. Changes to funding methodologies had meant that the college had filled its adult allocation more speedily and with fewer learners than in previous years, with no in-year growth available. In light of this ongoing pressure on adult funding further examination of cost contribution, staff utilisation and site specialism was in progress for all courses. The adult team continued to develop good relationships with Greater London Authority (GLA) and DfE funding authorities.

Current Adult enrolment was at 2351 enrolments generating on programme payments of £1,489,843 under the Adult Skills Fund (ASF); at the same point in 2023-2024 the College Group had 2592 enrolments generating on programme payments of £1,311,938 for ASF. In February 2025 the College Group had enrolled 480 enrolments generating on programme payments of £314,909 for GLA funding; this compared with 205 enrolments generating on programme payments of £181,735 for GLA. The meeting discussed the disappointment of the non-availability of in-year growth funding for adult provision which meant that the College Group had been unable to grow or sustain the number of adults it was able to support in comparison with the prior year. Governors were reminded that the demand was high, but people were being put onto waiting lists for 2025-26.

The meeting noted that the funding position for 2025/26 looked equally bleak as there had been a recent announcement confirming a national cut of 6% to adult education budgets for 2025/26 (this had been expected to be circa 2%). The anticipated cut to GLA funding was 3.8% for 2025/26. However, the recent termly meeting with GLA indicated that they hoped to make more significant reductions from those providers with the largest allocations to protect those with small allocations. However, there had been no written confirmation of this. WFCG was focusing on alternative GLA funding streams; the commercial team was ready to bid for Bootcamps though early indications were that these would be competitive and

would need to be aligned with the newly published London Growth Plan. The meeting was reminded that the very successful Multiply maths provision would end in March 2025.

The meeting noted that the Assistant Principal for Adults and Group Vice Principal were currently undertaking a cost contribution exercise for all adult courses on all sites. Staff utilisation would be considered as management planned the delivery schedule for 2025-26. However, it was likely that WFCG's programme of funded adult learning would be negatively impacted by funding cuts.

KG highlighted that Slough & Langley College - led by the ESOL team - had applied for a College of Sanctuary award. Results were pending but management were optimistic that the good work undertaken every day to support asylum seekers and those new to the UK would be recognised.

***The monitoring report on Adult provision was NOTED.***

18. **FE Commissioner's Annual Report 2023/24**

The meeting noted the recently published (January 2025) annual report from the FE Commissioner for the 2023-24 academic year. This provided useful case studies and gave a good overview of the current issues affecting the FE sector.

***NOTED***

19. **Minutes from Strategy Governance & Search Committees 4 February & 19 March 2025**

The meeting noted and received the minutes from the meeting held on 4 February 2025. TR informed the meeting that the minutes from the March meeting would be circulated as soon as finalised. The committee chair (TC) confirmed that the major matters considered by the March meeting had been brought forward within the current agenda.

***The minutes were NOTED and RECEIVED.***

20. **Minutes from Resources Committee – 12 March 2025**

The Board noted and received the minutes from the meeting held on 12 March. In the absence of the committee chair (SF), TR confirmed that the major matters considered by the March meeting had been brought forward to the Board within the current agenda.

***The minutes were NOTED and RECEIVED.***

21. **Minutes from Audit Committee – 12 March 2025**

The Board noted and received the minutes from the meeting held on 12 March. The acting chair of the Committee (AH) confirmed that the major matters considered by the meeting had been brought forward to the Board within the current agenda.

***The minutes were NOTED and RECEIVED.***

22. **Minutes from Quality & Curriculum Committee – 18 March 2025**

The newly elected chair of the committee (SS) confirmed that the major matters considered by the meeting had been brought forward to the Board within the current agenda including the Curriculum Strategy and the in-year performance report. TR apologised and informed the meeting that the minutes from the meeting were not yet available, they would be circulated as soon as finalised.

***NOTED***

23. **Dates and Times of Future Meetings and Events**

The dates and times of future meetings were noted. TR confirmed that Corporation meetings were scheduled on:

- Friday, 13 June 2025, 8.30am to 1.30pm Strategy Event and meeting (at BCA)
- Wednesday, 9 July 2025, 5.00pm at Slough and Langley College

***NOTED***

<u>MINUTE NO.</u>		<u>ACTION</u>
24.	<b><u>Any Urgent Business</u></b> There was no other urgent business.  <b>The meeting ended at 7.20pm.</b>	

*At this stage of the meeting, it was agreed by all members present that matters of a private and confidential nature were to be discussed and had there been any members of the public present they would have been asked to leave the meeting.*