



BOARD OF GOVERNORS: AUDIT COMMITTEE

Minutes

Wednesday 24 September 2025 at 5pm

Online via Zoom

		<u>Meeting Attendance</u>
PRESENT:	Tony Haines (<i>Committee Chair</i>)	(1 out of 1)
	Nathan Garat	(1 out of 1)
	Rob Lewis	(1 out of 1)
	Ian Thomson	(1 out of 1)
IN ATTENDANCE	Jo Croft	Chair of Corporation (<i>part: item 12 onwards as observer</i>)
	Lucy Gill	Group Director of Finance
	Gillian May	CEO & Group Principal
	Tracy Reeve	Group Director of Governance
	Wendy Stott	Group Management Accountant
	Peter Clark	Audit Director, internal auditors, Wylie Bissett Group (WBG)

PART I

MINUTE

No

ACTION

1.

Chair's Agenda Item

The Chair confirmed that there was nothing specific to raise under this item and welcomed Peter Clark of WBG to the meeting. PC confirmed that he would be presenting the internal audit reports on behalf of WBG.

2.

Apologies for Absence

No apologies had been received.

3.

Notification of any other urgent business

Election of Committee Chair

The Group Director of Governance (TR) suggested that Tony Haines (AH) should be elected as the Audit Committee Chair as he had been Acting Chair since March 2025. TR confirmed that AH was willing to take on the role.

The meeting AGREED to elect Tony Haines as Audit Committee Chair.

All Members were agreed.

No other business was notified.

4.

Declarations of Interest

No Member declared a conflict of interest with the agenda.

5.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 25 June 2025

The meeting considered the minutes of the WFCG Audit Committee meeting of 25 June 2025 which had previously been circulated to all members and **were agreed as a true record. They would be taken as signed by the Chair.**

All Members were agreed.

6.

Matters Arising of the Previous Meeting held on 25 June 2025

The Group Director of Governance (TR) presented a report which confirmed that all matters arising had been actioned, were not yet due for completion or were included on the agenda

MINUTE
No

ACTION

for the meeting. The meeting noted that the Curriculum Efficiency Report would next be brought to the November 2025 Audit Committee meeting.

The Matters Arising report was NOTED

- ***Failure to prevent fraud offence (update)***

The Group Director of Governance (TR) presented a report which outlined the progress made on reviewing exposure for the college under the new 'Failure to prevent fraud' offence which came into law on 1 September 2025. Governors noted current actions which provided mitigation against this new risk and were assured that a full risk assessment of possible exposure would be considered by the Executive Team in advance of the next Audit Committee meeting.

Anti-fraud & corruption policy: Governors considered the new Anti-Fraud Policy and agreed that it needed to be refined further by Exec and brought back to Audit Committee Members for email approval in advance of the next meeting.

ACTION: Executive Team to refine this policy for further review by Audit Committee (via email/ written resolution).

Exec.

Anti-bribery policy: The meeting noted the WFCG Anti-Bribery Policy which was presented for biennial review. TR confirmed that the only change was to change the title by removing ' & Corruption' as this was now included in the Anti-Fraud Policy.

The Anti-Bribery Policy was APPROVED as presented.

All Members were agreed.

ITEMS FOR DECISION/ APPROVAL

7.

Annual Internal Audit Report, Wylie Bissett Group 'WBG'

The meeting noted the Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25 from WBG which provided a summary of the internal audit work carried out during the year. PC presented the report and highlighted that WBG had been assessed as being fully compliant with the Global Internal Audit Standards (the last assessment was in November 2023, and a reassessment would be undertaken in November 2025). The report contained details of the six internal audits and follow-up audit work carried out at WFCG during the year including the overall conclusions and numbers of recommendations by priority categories. Five of the reviews (Cyber Security, Financial Controls, Payroll & Human Resources, Learner Records & Apprenticeships and Follow-up) had been given a substantial assurance opinion, one was strong (Business Continuity) and one (Procurement) was given a weak assurance rating.

The meeting noted the overall opinion provided by WBG in the report:

'We are satisfied that sufficient internal audit work has been undertaken to allow us to draw a conclusion as to the adequacy and effectiveness of the Group's risk management, control and governance processes. Based on the work undertaken in the year, we are satisfied that the Group has appropriate governance, risk management and internal control arrangements in place.'

However, PC highlighted the 'weak assurance' in relation to the procurement audit review with a high risk finding raised surrounding procurement document storage and retention. (This would be discussed later in the meeting.) PC drew attention to the significant delays experienced during the audit process that hindered both the completion of the audit fieldwork and the audit reporting throughout the year. Governors noted that WB had set up regular meetings with the College throughout the year to try and improve the process. PC thanked the Audit Chair for his recent meeting with the internal audit team to discuss internal audit progress.

The meeting noted the benchmarking data provided and that WFCG had a higher number of recommendations in comparison with the colleges it had been benchmarked against (27 versus 19 but 6 of these 8 'additional' recommendations were low priority). The Chair commended the large number of substantial and strong grades but stressed the importance of an action plan to remedy the weak assurance around procurement.

Governors (RL) sought additional clarity on the 'significant delays due to a lack of college

response' highlighted by WBG and asked why these had occurred and what would be done to ensure this did not happen in future. The CEO asked the meeting to defer this conversation to the end of the meeting when she would provide a proposal to remedy the previous issues. PC confirmed that the delays had meant that there were a large number of internal audit reports being presented to this meeting which was not ideal; WBG and officers were working to ensure that they would be staggered throughout 2025/26. GM assured the meeting that conversations had already taken place within the senior team about workload and changes to the management of the internal audit process during 2025/26 regarding internal audit. GM assured the meeting that additional controls were now in place to prevent any future issues.

The Annual Internal Audit Report 2024/25 from WBG was NOTED and RECEIVED.

8.

Internal Audit Reports

○ **Procurement Review (July 2025)**

The meeting noted the formal report from WBG. The audit had resulted in five recommendations - 1 high priority, 2 medium and 2 low – and had generated a 'weak' opinion on the level of assurance. PC highlighted the issues with WBG not receiving the necessary evidence and documentation for the audit on a timely basis. The Group Director of Finance (LG) assured the meeting that the management responses had now been agreed and the recommendations had been accepted.

The Chair of Audit Committee (AH) sought confirmation on the sample test of 40 and whether the 19 instances of missing key procurement documentation was spread across all four colleges. PC confirmed that this was the case; Governors asserted that this was a key area to remedy and sought confirmation that this would be put right as soon as possible. Group Finance Director (LG) informed the meeting that the team had now identified part of the reason for this lack of documentation which was due to the way PO orders were raised and the EBIS system. It had become apparent that if special characters were included in a PO filename (including . , / or £) the software would not record the name of the file so the documentation became 'lost' in the EBIS system. LG assured the meeting that a new policy had been put in place regarding filenames to prevent this from happening in future.

Governors asked whether this caused any vulnerability. PC confirmed that although this would not be a long-term risk the missing documentation presented a short-term risk; especially in the current environment where procurement was a key area for fraud prevention.

AH stressed the importance of ensuring that management were acting on this weakness in a timely way and asked that there was a need for a clear log of process for Audit Committee assurance. The Group Director of Governance suggested that all internal audit recommendations should be included on the standing report to Audit Committee showing progress against external audit recommendations.

Governors (IT) suggested that some internal sample testing should be done internally during the next period to provide assurance for the Audit Committee that progress had been made on this issue (this would be in advance of the Internal audit service conducting follow-up testing). IT suggested that the sample did not need to be large, but it would provide clear evidence that management were acting on the weakness. This would be key for governors' assurance, especially with reference to the current focus on fraud. IT offered help in reviewing this testing in his role as Link Governor for Finance. PC commended this proposal as the internal testing would support the IAS follow-up review in June 2026.

It was AGREED that:

- i. An update on progress against the procurement audit recommendations to be provided by the Finance Team at the next Audit Committee meeting and if required at future meetings.***
- ii. The standing report to Audit Committee on progress against audit recommendations should include all internal audit recommendations with target dates for completion in future iterations.***
- iii. Internal testing should be undertaken by the Finance Team (with support from Finance Link Governor) to check the availability of key procurement documents. This should be a small sample but should cover all four colleges, timing before next Audit Committee meeting (26/11/25).***

LG/ WS

LG/ WS

LG/ WS/ IT

The meeting considered the two medium priority recommendations in relation to cumulative spend exceeding £100k and the lack of a WFCG Procurement Policy. LG confirmed that the recommendations had been fully accepted, and action was underway as outlined in the management responses in the report. Similarly, the two low priority recommendations in relation to the WFCG Finance Regulations and a formal procurement reporting had been accepted, and timely action was planned. PC confirmed that all required evidence for the procurement audit had now been submitted by management and there was now no limitation of scope on this report.

The meeting RECEIVED the report from WBG on the audit of Procurement at WFCG.

○ ***Cyber Security (August 2025)***

The meeting noted the formal report from WBG. The audit had resulted in four medium priority recommendations and a considerable number (12) of good practice points. The meeting was pleased to note that the audit had generated a 'substantial' assurance grade in relation to Cyber security at WFCG and the associated policies, procedures and controls. However, PC highlighted the four 'medium' priority recommendations that had been made to – and accepted by – WFCG management. The meeting considered the four recommendations in more detail and were given assurance in relation to each one that management action was underway. The timelines for completion were noted as follows:

- i. ***Evidencing suppliers ongoing compliance with good practice and cyber security controls and credentials.*** The Data protection Officer and the finance team were introducing a mandatory requirement for this information within the college's procurement process. The implementation date was noted as January 2026. Governors sought, and were given, confirmation that this would apply to all WFCG suppliers not just those of a certain size.
- ii. ***Expedite plans to undertake 'tabletop exercises'*** to enhance effectiveness of the cyber incident response guidance already in place. This would be implemented later in the autumn with completion of the first exercise by January 2026.
- iii. ***Implement a comprehensive internal vulnerability scanning programme.*** The Group would procure Nessus scanning software by December 2025 to enhance its current solution.
- iv. ***Implement a Managed Detection and Response (MDR) system*** or one of the other alternatives (SIEM or SOC solution) to strengthen WFCG's cyber security posture. GM confirmed that as per the report the college was currently in discussions with JISC regarding adoption of their Splunk Managed SIEM service. It was hoped that this would provide an affordable solution. The Chair sought clarity on why the implementation date was 'to be confirmed' and it was noted that this was due to practicality and budget constraints. The CEO (GM) assured the meeting that this action was not being deferred but costs necessitated further investigation of options.

Governors (NG) sought an explanation from PC as to what it would have taken for WBG to make the priority high on any of these recommendations; especially the one in relation to vulnerability. PC confirmed that the recommendation had been reduced to a medium priority as WFCG had already implemented some limited one-off scans which provide limited assurance. The good work already undertaken across cyber security had been recognised by WBG. PC reminded the meeting that WBG would follow-up progress on all their 2025/26 recommendations during June 2026.

○ ***Cyber Security update from WFCG Group Director of IT (DF):*** The meeting also noted a cyber-security update from College Management dated September 2025; Audit Committee members were reminded that the risks in relation to cyber were now at number two on the WFCG Risk Register. GM informed the meeting that DF would be attending the Board meeting on 8 October to present his update and answer any further technical questions that governors might wish to ask especially in relation to any ongoing vulnerability. The Chair commended this focus and the early adoption of phishing testing as in his experience – working for the DfE – many colleges were getting caught out by cyber security issues. AH also reminded the meeting that unlike schools, any college suffering a cyber security incident would not receive funding from DfE to recover from the cyber incident. GM highlighted the additional training that had been put in place for all staff following the high number who did not spot the recent phishing test email including a number of SLT.

Governors sought confirmation on whether a criminal could gain the same access to WFCG systems if they went through the email of an occasional user rather than a more senior member of staff. GM suggested that DF would answer this query at the Board meeting.

The meeting RECEIVED:

- i) the internal audit report from WBG on Cyber Security at WFCG.***
- ii) the update on cyber security provided by SLT dated September 2025.***

ACTION: Further update to be provided to Governors by Group Director of IT on 8 October.

DF

○ *Payroll & Human Resources (July 2025)*

The meeting noted the formal report from WBG. The audit had provided a 'substantial' assurance opinion in relation to WFCG's controls in place for payroll and HR processing; there were four areas of good practice noted. However, the audit report did contain four recommendations - 1 medium priority and 3 low. The meeting noted that the management responses had now been agreed and the recommendations had been accepted. The meeting discussed the recommendations in detail and were given assurance as follows:

- i. ***Contracts for new starts*** had not been signed in a timely way in a number of instances (medium). This had been accepted by the Group Director of People and a new process had been put in place from 1 July 2025 to ensure that contracts were signed no later than the first day of employment. This was now built into the on-boarding process for new staff.
- ii. HR amendment forms (low) }
- iii. Leaver forms (low) }
- iv. Interview notes (low) } training had now been in place for all three of the above since 1 September 2025. The completion date for refresher training was April 2026.

The meeting RECEIVED the report from WBG on the audit of Payroll and Human Resources.

○ *Business Continuity & Risk Management (July 2025)*

PC presented the formal report from WBG from this audit which took place in July 2025. The audit had resulted in only 1 low priority recommendation and had generated a 'strong' opinion. Governors were pleased to see that the audit report also highlighted nine areas of good practice. The one recommendation in relation to using 'tabletop exercises' into its staff training plan had been accepted and would be implemented in December 2025.

There were no further comments or questions from the meeting.

The meeting RECEIVED the report from WBG on the audit of Business Continuity and Risk Management.

○ *Follow-up review (July 2025)*

The meeting noted the formal report from WBG's follow-up activity looking at the previous internal audit recommendations (from 2023/24) which took place in July 2025. The audit had resulted in only 1 low priority recommendation and had generated a 'substantial' opinion. The meeting noted the good practice recommendation for internal audit recommendations to be included on the standing report to Audit Committee detailing progress against all previous recommendations (as had been agreed earlier in the meeting).

PC highlighted the three open recommendations in relation to the compliance with DfE funding requirements. It was noted that two out of the three were now fully completed with the third being partially implemented. The meeting was assured that these recommendations would not have any impact on finding levels. Audit Committee members noted that next years' June 2026 Follow-up Report would be considerably larger as there had been more internal activity during 2024/25.

The meeting RECEIVED the report from WBG on the follow-up audit activity undertaken in June 2025.

9. **Internal Audit Plan 2025/26**

PC presented a paper which outlined the final draft of the internal audit plan for 2025/26. It was noted that this was now agreed with WBG. The meeting was assured that the proposals had considered several factors, including the College's latest strategic plan and risk register 2025/26, as well as the previous internal audits carried out in the College and the experience of the range of audits and their findings at other Colleges. The planned programme of work for 2025/26 being suggested was as follows:

- Funding Review (Adult Skills) (7 days)
- Budget and Financial Reporting (7 days)
- Safeguarding (7 days)
- Estates Management (6 days)
- Staff Recruitment & Retention (7 days)
- Curriculum Planning (6 days)
- Follow-up work (4 days)

PC confirmed that the proposed plan would involve 50 days of Mazars' time (including Audit Management time and attendance at Audit Committee meetings) which was in line with the initial plan for 2025/26. The timetable of reviews and the proposed dates throughout the year was noted. The meeting also noted the outline planning for areas to be reviewed in 2026/27. The Chair highlighted the changing market at the moment in adult funding which might complicate any audit of this area. The meeting was asked for approval of this audit plan or if there was anything else that they would expect to see covered.

The CEO/ Group Principal (GM) highlighted one area that she would like to see covered. The recent low priority issues highlighted in HR & Payroll along with the focus on the Single Central Record (SCR) at any Ofsted inspection made it important for the college group to ensure that there were no gaps in documentation. The issue at the last Ofsted had been reputational rather than a safeguarding concern but GM was seeking firm assurance that the SCR was now fully accurate. The size of the payroll at WFCG and large numbers of staff made the necessity for accuracy in payroll processes a key factor. The other factor that GM was seeking assurance on was the need for full adherence to safer recruitment practices. PC suggested that additional audit work on payroll processes, the SCR and safer recruitment could be undertaken as a standalone review or could be added to the financial reporting review in January 2026. GM asked that this area should be included on the WFCG annual cycle until management and governors were assured that compliance was high.

ACTION: The scope of the financial reporting review in January 2026 would be amended to include the HR work as outlined above: payroll, SCR and compliance with safer recruitment guidelines.

WBG

The Chair asked whether the audit programme would ever include the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI). PC confirmed that he had already undertaken this for a couple of clients and it was increasingly on the radar of leaders.

Governors (RL) suggested that fraud and the new 'failure to prevent fraud' offence would also be an area to review. PC affirmed that this would be a good idea within the risk-based approach to audit coverage and this could be included on the 2026/27 plan.

ACTION: Include audits of AI and fraud within the 2026/27 internal audit plan.

WBG

Governors (IT) asked whether there was a benchmark for what colleges should be spending on internal audit as a percentage of turnover. PC informed the meeting that he was unaware of any FE sector benchmark but anecdotally within WBG's circa 200 clients (across a number of sectors) the number of audit days was based on size, scale and geographical spread. Within his knowledge of FE college internal audit annual contract days, WFCG's contract for 40 days was somewhere in the middle from 20 at the low end to 60 at top. The meeting thanked PC for the useful context.

Members NOTED the report and APPROVED the proposed internal audit coverage 2025-26 subject to the addition of HR payroll, SCR and safer recruitment. This would be RECOMMENDED to the Board for approval (8 October 2025).

All Members were agreed.

10.

Draft Audit Committee Annual Report 2024-25

Group Director of Governance (TR) presented the first draft of this annual report which outlined the work of the Audit Committee for the Financial Year to 31 July 2025. This would be presented to the Corporation in December 2025 to provide assurance around the Audit Committee's work during the 2024/25 year. Members were reminded that this document had to be submitted to the DfE with the College financial statements. It was noted that this initial draft would be re-presented for final approval at the November 2025 Audit Committee meeting when the auditor's performance indicators would be agreed and appended to the report. The external and internal auditors for 2024/25 would be asked to self-assess against the performance indicators in advance of this meeting. Governors did not have anything to add to this draft report and the Chair summarised it as being very comprehensive. TR confirmed that the wording currently highlighted would be confirmed or amended once the annual internal audit report and the Financial Statements 2024/25 were finalised. TR also confirmed that the value judgements which had been made on internal and external audit providers would be confirmed for the final report in November after consultation with the Group FD and the CEO/ Group Principal.

The meeting asked for specific reference to be made in the Annual Report to the discussions at this Audit Committee meeting and the action agreed with management in relation to the weak assurance for the Procurement Review and the delays in internal audit 2024-25.

It was AGREED that the draft Audit Committee Annual Report 2024/25 should be APPROVED in draft with the addition of assurance around action on the weak procurement review and delays to internal audit; final version to be considered in November 2025.

TR

All Members were agreed.

• ***Audit Committee Review of Effectiveness***

The meeting considered an extract from the self-assessment template which had been developed by the Director of Governance (TR) to review the Corporation's compliance against its adopted code of good governance, 'The Code of FE Good Governance'. The governance self-assessment had been completed for all elements of the code but only the sections relevant to the Audit Committee were considered by the meeting. Audit Committee members noted that all elements of this self-assessment were RAG rated as green, WFCG was fully compliant.

Audit Committee NOTED the assurance provided and AGREED that it was fully meeting its stated purpose.

• ***Bourneville Checklist***

The Group Director of Governance presented the Bourneville Checklist for annual review. Governors were reminded that this had first been circulated in July 2019, when the then CEO of the ESFA, wrote a letter to all college chairs of governors to draw attention to some lessons from a 2016 investigation into Bourneville College. The Bourneville Checklist had arisen from this example of poor management and governance and included the 15 separate actions that ESFA either required or expected governing bodies, chairs, or accounting officers to undertake to review their ongoing compliance. The meeting considered the checklist which had been completed in relation to WFCG by the Group Director of Governance and reviewed by the Executive Team. Audit Committee members were reassured that all suggested actions on the checklist were already in place.

The meeting NOTED and RECEIVED the annual Bourneville Checklist completed for WFCG for 2024/25.

• ***Managing Public Money Guidelines***

The meeting considered a document which mapped WFCG current processes and activity against the requirements of the Managing Public Money (MPM) rules issued by HM Treasury. All FE Colleges were now required to comply with MPM rules since being reclassified within the public sector in November 2022. TR assured the meeting that the Executive at WFCG were very mindful of all requirements of MPM and would continue to work within these rules. The meeting discussed whether it was accurate to grade some areas 'amber' as they had not yet been tested or whether these should be 'green' as the college was aware and would ensure compliance.

**MINUTE
No**

ACTION

TR

The meeting NOTED and RECEIVED the MPM checklist completed for WFCG for 2024/25.

ACTION: Consider whether 'amber' or 'green' grading was appropriate if action or MPM compliance had never been tested.

11. **Whistleblowing Policy**

The Group Director of Governance presented the WFCG Whistleblowing Policy which had been updated by the Group Director of People for its biennial review. TR confirmed that only titular updates had been made since this policy was last reviewed in September 2023.

The Whistleblowing Policy was APPROVED and would be RECOMMENDED to the Board for approval (8 October 2025)

All Audit Committee Members were agreed.

[The Chair of the Corporation (JC) joined the meeting as an observer.]

12. **Risk Register**

The CEO/ Group Principal (GM) presented the updated Risk Register for 2025-26 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 risk scores, mitigation and assurance levels.

- Risk 1 Failure to meet budget forecast (risk score reduced to 12 'amber'): Acute risk linked to financial health; the upwards pressure on pay was still a very real concern. GM reminded the meeting that lagged funding, increased funding rates, additional adult and apprenticeship income and tight control of costs had returned the College to a positive EBITDA and financial health in 2024/25. The pay costs as a percentage of income were still above the 68% target at 70% for FY25 but had shown improvement since the prior year. The possibility of sensitivity in relation to industrial relations and pay disputes was noted. GM highlighted the financial turnaround and the small operating surplus for 2024-25 which was a massive improvement on the prior year. The proposal to reduce the risk score from 16 to 12 would be considered at the Resources Committee on 25 September 2025.
- Risk 2 IT Failure with loss of data for staff or students (risk score remains at 16 'amber'): 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 were now being actioned as a priority. GM assured the meeting that good progress was being made on system upgrades and the recent audit of cyber security (as discussed earlier in the meeting) had provided a substantial assurance opinion. The Q&A session with the Director of IT at the October Board meeting would provide additional assurance.
- Risk 3 Uncertainty and risks associated with emerging national curriculum reforms (risk score remains at 9 'green'): This key 'acute' risk was being well managed and senior staff continued to be engaged in advisory groups linked to reform. The T level roll out across WFCG was now confirmed and costed with a clear curriculum plan in place. The meeting was reminded that a revised WFCG Curriculum & Skills Strategy had been approved by the Board in March 2025. The meeting talked about this risk in more detail and GM outlined the recent issues with the take-up of T Levels across the group and the ongoing concern about the defunding of certain vocational qualifications (BTECS). The Health & Social Care (H&SC) T Level was not running at WFCG in 2025-26 as it limited career progression into nursing rather than other care-based careers and learners did not want to take this qualification. There was a concern about the proposed defunding of the H&SC BTEC as the vocational students at WFCG could not access the T level in H&SC.
- Risk 4 Loss of vehicular access to Slough & Langley (S&L) campus (NEW risk with a risk score at 12 'amber'): The meeting noted this risk which had just emerged but which related to legacy land sales at S&L before merger, as well as legal competence. GM assured the meeting that there was a clear action plan in place to mitigate this risk which was being discussed in detail at Resources Committee on 25 September and which would

be brought to the Board in October 2025.

- Risk 5 Uncertainty and risks associated with the devolution of the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) and future funding arrangements (NEW risk with a risk score of 12 'amber'): The meeting was reminded that a growth in the ASF allocation of 10% had been confirmed for 2025-26. GM informed the meeting that the Thames Valley Principals' Group had deferred their November 2025 meeting as the recent move of the ASF to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) had led to even more uncertainty.
- Risk 6 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. This had been discussed in detail during the Governors' update safeguarding training at the Strategy Day on 13 June 2025.
- Risk 7 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 8 'green'): The CEO confirmed that 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.

The meeting NOTED and APPROVED the updated WFCG Risk Register.

All Members were AGREED.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

13.

Enrolment Update

The CEO/ Group Principal presented the current enrolment report for 2025/26 across the group and highlighted the compound growth since merger.

- 14-19 students

The meeting noted the current enrolment against the DfE 16-19 allocation by college. At the time of reporting, 16-19 learner headcount across the College Group was 5,119 which was 332 ahead of the prior year enrolment (4,787). Against current retention rates management estimated that this would equate to between £1.4m and £1.6m of lagged funding to be received in 2026/27. Members were reminded that this report was an early indicator of enrolment performance for 16–19-year-olds but numbers could fluctuate until the census date in late October when the final funded number would be confirmed.

GM highlighted the very pleasing figures at Slough & Langley College which had exceeded the prior year figure of 1,373 by 11% (148 learners). BCA had also recruited well with 1,729 16-18 learners enrolled against the prior year of 1,652 (+ 5%). Windsor had exceeded target by 1% (6 learners) with an intake of 652. Strode's recruitment had increased by 9% (11 learners) on the prior year and was now at 1,217. GM reminded the meeting of the curriculum review undertaken at Strode's which had added level 2 courses and some vocational provision to sit alongside the traditional A levels. Circa 20% of students at Strode's now on vocational courses alongside A Levels.

Governors commended the very strong enrolment across the whole college group which showed compound growth on the prior year's strong enrolment. GM confirmed that the college would be submitting a request for in-year growth funding 2025-26 if it became a possibility; however, availability of growth funding would not be known until later in the academic year. The CEO highlighted the excellent progress against the strategic plan (2024-29) for 16-18 learners; this had the target of 4,800 full time students (retained and funded) by 2028/29. The total figure enrolled for 2025-26 (before withdrawals was now at 5,119. The meeting commended the 996 additional students across the group since merger and the associated funding which had enabled the group to improve financial performance.

- Adults and apprentices

GM confirmed that this data was available earlier in the year than in previous years.

Apprenticeships: Learner numbers were circa 180 higher than the prior year. However, in order to match 2024/25 funding, an additional £600k would need to be generated from apprentice starts. The pipeline was strong and indicated circa 270 apprentices that were due to start; this would be sufficient to hit the £600k target. GM informed the meeting that a full

projection would be presented to the Resources Committee and the Board later in autumn.

Adult Skills Fund (ASF): Year-on-year performance was ahead. GM reminded the meeting of the 10% cap on growth. The current R02 2025/26 was at £3,586k with the same figure last year being £3,273k (an increase of £313k year-on-year). In order to match the full-year 2024/25 performance, a further £430k of enrolments would be required; projections were being developed with curriculum leads. At this stage no budget to run a January 2026 enrolment so there were waiting lists; this was noted as common across the sector. GM confirmed that there would be no over delivery due to the financial constraints.

Greater London Authority (GLA) Funding: The current funding (R02 2025/26) was at £321k compared to £391k at the same point in 2024/25 (a decrease of £70k). However, 16–18 recruitment was strong, placing the Group above the growth claim baseline. The key area of concern was construction enrolments which were currently falling short (a drop of circa £36k on prior year). The meeting noted that an additional £260k of enrolments would be needed to match last year's performance. GM assured the meeting that a full projection across all funding streams would be developed over the coming weeks to ensure delivery against budgeted targets.

The enrolment update was NOTED

14.

Register of Outstanding Audit Recommendations

The Group Finance Director (LG) presented the current list of outstanding audit recommendations and action taking place in relation to the following:

- Enrolment compliance (incomplete learner record apprentices)
- ILR data integrity and historical ILR inaccuracies. New guidance now issued on the recording of prior attainment.
- Financial controls:
 - Debtor reporting and revenue recognition: work ongoing and would be tested within the external audit 2024-25.
 - Outdated Finance Regulations: work now undertaken to ensure full compliance with Managing Public Money (MPM); draft to be presented to Resources Committee 25/09/25. Further work to improve wording and layout of Finance Regulations to improve the user experience will be actioned during autumn 2025.
 - Fixed asset register and capital grant release; work was underway with significant progress made to date.
 - Payroll reconciliations had been introduced to mitigate any control weakness. This would be further tested within the external audit 2024-25.
 - Systems access for finance staff (now only issued on a least-privilege basis) and leavers accounts not being actioned in a timely way. Both fully actioned and would be tested within the external audit 2024-25.

LG confirmed that the recommendations marked as 'closed' due to internal audit work would be reviewed through the external audit and confirmed at the next Audit Committee meeting. The meeting was informed that external auditors MHA would be on site 1-8 October with the field work closing meeting on Friday 10 October. The Management Report would then be completed and brought to the Audit Committee in November 2025. The Chair asked for early sight of the Management Report from MHA and any recommendations as soon as it was available; in advance of the November meeting.

ACTION: Update Audit Committee on Management Report findings from MHA in advance of the final report coming to the Audit Committee (November 2025).

LG/ WS/ TR

The Audit Committee Members were pleased to note that the September 2025 update confirmed that progress had been made against all of the recommendations and that they would be 'closed' or superseded after the external audit 2024/25 by MHA was conducted.

The Outstanding Audit Recommendations Report was NOTED.

ACTION: Internal Audit recommendations to be added to future iterations of this report.

LG/ WS

MINUTE
No

ACTION

15.

Fraud, Irregularity and Whistleblowing Report

The Group Finance Director (LG) presented the report which confirmed that there had been no incidences of fraud, corruption or irregularity perpetrated against the College during the year-to-date 2025/26.

The meeting noted that the Whistleblowing report as presented in the papers was also a nil return for the period 1 August 2025 to date. However, the Group Director of Governance (TR) informed the meeting that she had received a whistleblowing complaint on Monday 22 September from a member of staff. This complaint was in relation to whether the correct HR procedures had been followed after an incident in the car park between a member of staff and a minibus driver. The complaint had cited potential safeguarding and health and safety concerns due to the actions of the minibus driver. TR confirmed that action was being taken in response to the complaint which complied with the WFCG Whistleblowing Policy; Rob Lewis as the Senior Independent Governor at WFCG would be meeting with three staff members cited in the complaint to determine whether the WFCG Staff Disciplinary Policy had been adhered to fully and action taken reflected the potentially serious nature of the alleged incident. These meeting were scheduled to take place on Thursday 25 September with the Group Director of Governance in attendance .

Members NOTED the Fraud Report (nil return).

Members NOTED the Whistleblowing Report

ACTION: Update on the outcome of the Whistleblowing investigation to be brought to the Audit Committee in November 2025.

TR

16.

Dates and Times of Future Meetings

The dates and times for the Audit Committee meetings in 2025/26 were noted as:

- Wednesday 26 November 2025, 5.00pm
- Wednesday 11 March 2026, 5.00pm
- Wednesday 24 June 2026, 5.00pm

TR confirmed that all of these meeting would be held online via Zoom and the calendar invites were already in people's diaries.

Members NOTED the Audit Committee dates for 2025/26.

17.

Any Urgent Business

There were no urgent items of business raised.

The Chair thanked the meeting for their rigour and challenge in response to the internal audit reports. He thanked PC, the team at WBG and officers for their honesty and transparency. AH suggested that the now improved communication and management of internal audit would help to ensure that any future delays to the internal audit process during 2025-26 would be mitigated. The meeting agreed that the detailed debate at the meeting had given governors a high degree of assurance and future plans to enhance reporting to the Audit Committee would ensure that the actions necessary to respond to recent internal audit recommendations were put in place on a timely basis.

PC left the meeting before the short Part II confidential discussion. .

The Part I Audit Committee meeting closed at 6.55pm.

Chair.....

Date.....