Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Corporation

Date:	Monday 7 July 2025	**Room number**	Boardroom, Chartered Accountants Hall, Moorgate Place, London
Present:	Andy Forbes (Chair) Charles Tennant (Vice-Chair) Natalie Davison (Principal/CEO) Akeel Ahmed (AA) David Baumslag (DB) Carole Ditty (CD) Nick Kavanagh (NK) Alex Keay (AK) Molly Makota (MM) Samuel Nelson (Staff Governor) (SNe) Sarah Noble (SN) Bim Osunsami Bal Panesar (BP)		
In attendance:	Jason Turton (Deputy Principal – Curriculum & Quality) Victoria Eastwood (Chief Governance Officer) Hiten Savla (Deputy Principal – Finance & Resources)		
Apologies	Apologies for absence were received from Paige Summers, Diana Olafsdottir, Mina Rehman, Katharina De Vita, Forhad Altafi, Cllr Elizabeth Kangethe and Esther Thompson.		

1.	**Welcome and apologies for absence** The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Paige Summers, Diana Olafsdottir, Mina Rehman, Katharina De Vita, Forhad Altafi, Cllr Elizabeth Kangethe and Esther Thompson.
2.	**Declarations of Interest** Governors were reminded of their responsibility to declare an interest in relation to specific items on the Agenda if appropriate. The Deputy Principal – Finance & Resources (DPFR) declared his membership of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW) where the meeting was being hosted.
3.	**Minutes of the Previous Meeting of the Corporation – 31 March 2025, Additional Meeting held on 28 April 2025 and Notes from the April Strategic Planning Event** The Minutes of the Previous Meeting of the Corporation – 31 March 2025, Additional Meeting held on 28 April 2025 and Notes from the April Strategic Planning Event were agreed as a true and accurate record. **Approved: The Minutes of the Previous Meeting of the Corporation – 31 March 2025, Additional Meeting held on 28 April 2025 and Notes from the April Strategic Planning Event were approved.**

4.	**Matters arising - update**

Agenda Item	Action	Responsibility	Timescale	Update
c/f	Staff recruitment data targeting HE and number of HE applicants to be provided.	EDHRS	ASAP	Included in HR Update to P&R – June 2025
6.	Future reports to include the percentage of students for the whole area alongside the numbers of student cases. Detail on low level concerns, monitoring online activity to see if there were any emerging trends and an understanding of the quality assurance process to also be included in future reports.	Director of Student Welfare & Support	Strategic Planning Event/June 2025	C/f
9.	February management accounts to be issued asap.	DPFR	ASAP	Complete

In response to a query from the Chair, the Deputy Principal – Curriculum & Quality (DPCQ) advised that due to fluctuations in the market the offer around the food school was on hold.

The Chief Governance Officer (CGO) confirmed that the following items had been approved via email and were required to be formally recorded in the Minutes:

Approved:
The Accountability Agreement 2025/26.
Additional budget for delivery by sub-contractors for £350,000 – full details provided in original email.
End of probationary period for the Deputy Principal – Finance & Resources and increase in salary as recommended by the Remuneration Committee – full details provided in original email.
Removal of DPCQ post from the structure (for a one year interim period)

5.	**Chair's Actions** There were no Chair's actions to report. **Agreed: that the current position be noted.**
6.	**EDI Update** The CGO provided an update on discussion from the EDI Working Group which had now been renamed as the EDI Steering Group. Key points included: - Need for a focus on EDI training for staff - Raising awareness was the key objective for the Committee - Lengthy and meaningful discussions took place - Work to take place over the summer in terms of training needs - EDI Steering Group members using their contacts re training - Bottom-up approach - EDI key focus for 2025/26 - Suggested actions against EDI objectives to be confirmed with the EDI Strategy Group

	In response to a query from the Chair, the CGO confirmed that the Director of HR was a member of the Strategy Group and HR would be involved in discussions re training and staff wellbeing. Training would also be incorporated into Staff Learning & Development (SLD) days where appropriate. **Agreed: that the update be received.**
7.	**Ofsted Debrief** The DPCQ provided the following update: - Overall effectiveness - Good - All areas rated Good other than Apprenticeships which was rated Requires Improvement (RI) however distance travelled was acknowledged. - Learners reported feeling safe, supported, calm environment - Recognised the change in culture – friendly and warm environment - High level of resources - High needs previously RI and lots of work taken place to achieve Good - Adult learning high achievement rates - Employer engagement improved significantly - Curriculum well sequenced - Work experience and competitions strong but level two work experience an area for improvement - Areas for improvement – involving employers in curriculum design in some courses, improving attendance for English and Maths, too few learners on apprenticeships achieve merits and work placements at level two. The DPCQ recorded his thanks to all Governors for their support on this journey. The Chair stated that the report read well. The Principal/CEO added that the report provided clear direction on where the College needed to improve. NK acknowledged that this was an amazing achievement and noted that the pace continued for the College as he had been contacted re work experience and apprentices highlighting that the momentum was still going. The Chair referred to the feedback from the Student Governors at the Curriculum & Quality Committee that highlighted that, although significant progress was being made, there was still work to do in terms of staffing issues. The Chair thanked the DPCQ for leading on the inspection alongside the Nominee and the work of all staff. **Agreed: that the update be received.**
8.	**Policy & Resources Committee Update including Tuition Fees Policy 2025/26** The DPFR referred to the Tuition Fees Policy 2025/26 which was recommended for approval by the Policy & Resources Committee. He advised the Board that the policy now allowed the College to charge an initial fee to students who may not have loans in place – that deposit was then refunded when the loans came through. The Chair noted the previous difficulties around fees and bad debt, advising that the Finance team needed to ensure they had all the relevant details and criteria in terms of fees. In response to a query from the Vice-Chair regarding HE fee caps, the DPFR advised that the College did not have any HE learners under the relevant provision. DB asked for further clarity re discretion for fees. The DPFR responded that the level of advanced learner loans had dropped dramatically and the College needed to consider the structure - first term fees were charged at 25%. The Chair queried the College's position with regard to the apprenticeship levy. The Principal/CEO advised that the College had a small number of apprentices, noting that this could be problematic if

	there are additional costs in the structure at the end of the apprenticeship, however, there were some success stories. The DPFR added that the College was looking at sharing part of the levy with some of the employers. **Approved: The Board of Corporation accepted the recommendation from the Policy & Resources Committee and approved the Tuition Fees Policy 2025/26.** CD, the Chair of the Policy & Resources (P&R) Committee, provided the following update from the June P&R meeting advising that there was a packed agenda and thanked all committee members for their time and diligence to review papers before the meeting. Key highlights included: - Strategic risk register noting the pleasing improvements and reduction in risk rating for five areas - Reinforced the point that the safeguarding risk had reduced but remained a key area of focus *(it was requested that an Ofsted debrief take place with the Director of Student Welfare – this would be actioned)* - Subcontracting update was positive, good metrics and noted the additions to subcontracting this year - Subcontracting plan recommended to the Board for approval (discussed later in the agenda) - HR update – draft risk register presented linked to staff wellbeing – currently under consultation with the unions. Strategic risks for governance – in relation to staff this was around sickness, retention and high absence rates - Themes emerging from department heads re staff survey – all issues being addressed - key themes included communication, staff wellbeing, toilets, accommodation - Update on capital projects – EV project coming in under budget and potentially ahead of time (additional funding to be discussed in management accounts c £270K) - Decarbonisation project – works out to tender and meeting now taken place with the DfE who were taking the decision internally to decide which way to go. CD noted that it was important for the Board to receive regular updates and ensure discussion and reassurance around Power Purchase Agreements (PPA) - Health and Safety update showing good progress and evidence of effective monitoring – committee were assured internal audit requirements were being met regarding equipment etc Discussion took place regarding the Link Governor role for Health and Safety. It was agreed that NK would meet with the Principal/CEO, as Chair of the Health & Safety Committee, and the CGO separately to discuss further. **Action: Ofsted debrief to take place with the Director of Student Welfare and Safeguarding Link Governors.** **NK to meet with the Principal/CEO and CGO to discuss the Link Governor role for Health & Safety.**
9.	**Curriculum & Quality Committee Update including Draft Curriculum Plan 2025/26** AK, Chair of the Curriculum & Quality (C&Q) Committee, provided the following update from discussions at the C&Q meeting: - Ofsted result and the journey since the first inspection - Importance of data – movement from reactive data to a live data source – need to get to real time data as the next step - Improvements – Ofsted's feedback was not a surprise in the areas of improvement - Areas for improvement – apprenticeships we know what needs to be improved; English and Maths (E&M) – staffing still an issue and a specific concern in terms of the Heads of Division (HoD's) inconsistently representing E&M as part of their curriculum area; work experience - Ofsted report: 'leaders have suitable governance arrangements in place. Governors are knowledgeable about the FE sector. They scrutinise college data and conduct quality assurance activities and so know well the strengths and weaknesses of their provision. Governors support and challenge leaders effectively to meet key objectives.' - Governors need to be the critical friend but it is ok to challenge and that is part of the role.

The Chair noted the positive feedback within the Ofsted report for governance. It was noted that Governors being visible was appreciated by staff and this needed to continue. The Vice-Chair advised that it was also recognised at the C&Q meeting that the College was in a good position but the work did not stop here – we know what good looks like but what did excellent look like. The foundations were now in place and thanks were recorded to AK for his work on this. The DPCQ added that the challenge and critical friend from Governors had a huge impact and the work of C&Q had been inspiring – further thanks were recorded from the DPCQ to AK for his work with C&Q.

AK stated that C&Q could not be looked at in isolation and needed to be considered in the totality of P&R. Reference to the strategic risk register need to be maintained as well as considering this holistically to ensure all elements were being balanced.

The Chair stated that there had been feedback from the Student Governors regarding weakness in some of the teaching around E&M and staffing problems at Level 3 counselling which highlighted there will still inconsistencies in some areas.

CD advised that the strategic risk register discussion at P&R did question whether, as Ofsted was completed, this was a good opportunity to consider whether the College were looking at all the right risks to take forward and the need to consider the landscape, horizon scanning etc. It was noted that risk appetite would be considered at the November Strategic Planning Event.

The DPCQ presented the revised Curriculum Plan 2025/26, highlighting:
- The first draft of the plan had been presented to the C&Q Committee who had asked for more detail around growth, areas of decline and timeline around particular areas which had been included
- Linked to London Growth Plans and Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIP)
- Highlighted challenges and areas for growth
- Data re progression and allocation growth
- EV – Sustainable construction, micro credentials
- Decline – childcare curriculum area level three and Beauty at lower levels
- REACH and RISE provision

BP questioned whether the College had the skilled resources for some of the growth areas eg cyber security and digital. The DPCQ responded that the College worked with the people and companies that installed the equipment and engaged with an expert in that area to keep the staff upskilled as it was very difficult to find staff in these areas. The Chair added that this was now one of the biggest constraints and would need to be a future focus for the Board.

AA advised that it was important to note that there was a curriculum growth for new courses but four cross cutting themes needed to be embedded: Digital, ICT updating ESOL, E&M. The DPCQ replied that the Director for E&M was responsive to this but further discussions would be needed at the C&Q Committee.

DB stated that it would be helpful if there was more data to advise whether the College was confident that numbers could be achieved, progress, whether courses were making or losing money and whether learners were securing jobs relevant to their courses – this would make it easier to identify areas that needed further debate and could be RAG rated until the data became more quantified. The DPCQ replied that there was a headline report that informed discussion with curriculum areas which could be provided for next year. The Chair further suggested the need to focus in on certain departments or areas – was there a high demand? Was the subject well taught and did do the students' progress. The key issue was growth on the basis of quality.

AK advised that the triangulation between C&Q, P&R and the Corporation was really important and the College needed to consider what it wanted to be known for, staff that can lead forward and what it did not want to continuing doing – not yet at that stage.

	The Chair referred to the work taking place in apprenticeships – rebuilding the offer on a better basis before growth and recorded his thanks to all staff involved. The Chair thanked the DPCQ for the Curriculum Plan 2025/26 and this was approved. **Agreed: that the current position be noted.** **Approved: the Curriculum Plan 2025/26 was approved.**
10.	**Subcontracting/Partnership Update including Subcontracting Plan 2025/26** The DPFR informed the Corporation as follows: - Increased subcontracting twice in year - Going forward looked at spend based on the curriculum plan internally – allocation request for £1m subcontracting delivery - Key element around non devolved element of funding – becoming more difficult to deliver – was it preferable to chase the ESFA funding or pursue the GLA funding - Subcontractors do deliver a good service – the College only works with two providers - The subcontracting plan 2025/26 was recommended for approval by the P&R Committee The Chair stated that subcontracted provision provided flexibility but needed to be carefully monitored and controlled. NK questioned how often the KPI's/contracts were checked with the subcontracted partners. The DPFR replied that partners were quality checked once per term and financial health was reviewed on an annual basis. A Subcontracting audit was also undertaken annually by the External Auditors. The DPCQ added that the College offered the same Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to subcontractors as staff. BP requested that the Subcontracting Plan also be reviewed at the Audit & Risk Committee – this was agreed. **Approved: the Subcontracting Plan 2025/26 was approved as recommended by the Policy & Resources Committee.** **Action: Subcontracting Plan 2025/26 to be reviewed by the Audit & Risk Committee.**
11.	**KPI Dashboard** The Principal/CEO updated the Corporation on the following key points: - Monitoring performance against objectives in the strategic plan - Fourth monitoring report for the academic year - Strategic priority 1: launched staff survey for the current academic year – results of previous staff survey were disappointing and it was hoped this had significantly improved. Inserted questions from H&S executive standard for dialogue and workload - Strategic priority 2 – effective planning process in terms of market needs; how well meeting recruitment targets – key income lines all on track – 16-18; GLA and High Needs; some of the smaller income lines (HE, small cost, apprenticeships) no major concerns re income but did raise questions around strategic choices. Target 2.4 market share data was not reliable – current data was now from the Council – rebased the market share at 15.3%. - Strategic Priority 3 – positive messages from internal quality assurance processes validated by Ofsted- credit to the teaching staff and internal team supporting teachers; target 3.4 – previously not seeing the data coming through on work placement completion, however, moved to new system and now at 89% completion, however, more external placements at L2 were needed - Priority 4 – same projections as made with Ofsted – HoD for Creative and Construction vocational achievements rates 90% and 91% respectively; apprenticeships 57% - DfE target 60% - Priority 5 – FE Commissioner written new guidance on Finance KPI's at the College must use – EBITDA, Cash Days in Hand increased to 40 days; increase in staffing costs as a projection of income at 70% – target is 65% - work taking place with HoDs to reduce this

	The Chair thanked the Principal/CEO for the report noting that it was useful to have all the information in one place. **Agreed: That the current position be noted.**
12.	**Draft Annual Budget and Three-Year Forecast** The Chair clarified that the Board were not being asked to approve the budget at this meeting as there was still some work to take place. The budgeting process had been delayed due to Ofsted and an additional meeting to consider the final version would be convened before the end of July 2025. The DPFR highlighted the following: - Further updates made to the version presented to P&R - Additional funding approved by DfE – anticipating £600K but will receive £1m - Budget that was presented was bottom up – further work taking place on this - 791K deficit allowing for a 2.3% increment- this may not be enough, aiming for 4% anticipating 4-5% recommendation from the Association of Colleges (AoC) - Meetings taking place with departments (target 2% cut on staffing and 1% cut on non-pay) – current savings £490K – curriculum departments considering ways to deliver on low level units, areas around non-pay decreased – additional departments still to meet this week - Aim is break even with a 4% pay increase (c1.2 million) - Union – 10% national pay award – anticipating a national ballot - Last year allowed for £150K cover for sickness and maternity – this year increased to £300K based on spend in the current year but this needed to be managed – staff will be advised, as an incentive, to consider the current sickness spend would have been the equivalent of a 1.5% pay increase SNe stated that staff shortage and sickness correlated and would increase if pressure was put on staff consistently working hard. There was an issue with staffing and it needed to be faced as it was causing real illnesses through stress. There was a lot of goodwill but there also needed to be support for new staff coming in. The Chair stated that there were a small number of staff that, when performance was being addressed, the response was to take sickness leave. This was a complicated issue and it was agreed that there was a need to support staff wellbeing and reduce the recruitment gap. AK noted that the budget costs were projected to double in terms of sickness and advised that in commercial employment they would address provision. The College was one of the remaining General Further Education (GFE) Colleges operating at scale but was this sustainable with the costs incurred and the current breadth of curriculum. DB stated that the budget needed to be realistic. There were a lot of things that went off target this year and although it was accepted that generally things did not always go as well as hoped but the negatives needed to be built in – therefore the budget must be prudent. The Chair asked for clarity on whether a vacancy allowance had been included. The DPFR advised that all departments where the curriculum plan needed additional staff had been allowed for and vacancies in support areas where additional staff requested had been requested had also been factored. The Chair referred to the contribution analysis which indicated several areas where a lot could be done to improve efficiency in terms of staff cost ratio against income. The DPFR advised that the additional budgeting meetings would address this. The Principal/CEO added that there was also a lot to consider in terms of leadership and management as the College had not focussed on cost efficiency measures. DB questioned the reasons for the contribution being low in some areas. The Principal/CEO responded that Horizons would have a lower contribution because of the support costs involved.

	Different subjects had different contribution rates dependant on delivery costs. The general target for most areas was 60% other than High Needs. The DPFR added that funding per learner was a fixed value item but areas such as engineering received a higher rate. The College target was 55-60% as an average. CD advised that the desire to achieve break-even was understood but the depreciation charge needed to be considered. Aspirations were to improve the bottom line but would this compromise on quality as there was a lot to be achieved and the mitigations needed to be realistic. In response to a query from the Chair concerning depreciation, the DPFR informed the Board that this was a legacy issue which was being corrected but the College had spent a lot of money over a few years on the estate. BP asked for clarity on the additional allocation to lecturers. The DPFR responded that this was because overall spend around management and curriculum previously sat under support staff but this had been reallocated which is why there was a variance. The current increase was £900K. NK asked how confident the College was that the savings could be made. The DPFR advised that c£500K had currently been saved but further meetings were taking place - achieving the break-even position should not be too difficult. The Chair stated that the Board would not want to set a budget that was over ambitious and there was therefore a need to be prudent. DB stated that if the target was EBITDA – 3.5% then the cash position needed to be considered. The DPFR replied that the cash position remained static and increased slightly for next year. He was working closer with EBITDA than working with the bottom line as this clarified cash to invest. Education specific EBITDA was currently 4% but this was going to be increased to 6%. AA referred to staff sickness and morale, asking for the projection for next year and whether the College had preventative strategies in place. The DPFR advised that this year sickness would be half a million and next year £350K had been included. There had been long term sickness without any case management and the College offered a generous sickness policy of six months full pay. There were a lot of wellbeing resources in place including an Employee Assistance Programme. Discussion took place around medical insurance cover, flu jabs etc and other initiatives that could be implemented and it was noted this was being focussed on. BO queried how much of the sickness absence was legacy as staff morale was improving. The DPFR responded that a large amount would be legacy. The College was over estimating on the budget for sickness next year but did not want to risk an underestimation. The Chair stated that this was a budget in process. Progress so far was noted and the Board would convene by the end of the month to consider the final version. **Agreed: that the current position be noted.**
13.	**Management Accounts – Period 10** The DPFR reported there had been a slight improvement from period 9 and as it was now closer to the end of the academic year, movement should not be as significant going forward. **Agreed: that the accounts be received.**
14.	**Broadway Theatre Update** The Principal/CEO provided the following update: - The College had a long standing relationship with the Theatre and a lease over 20 years - The College had been making a significant but modest contribution to the Theatre which was not acceptable particularly since Managing Public Money regulations were introduced

	- The Theatre closed in January 2024 due to RAAC and the lease expired - The Department for Education (DfE) previously provided capital funds to address the RAAC but due to a lack of engagement with the Council (including the proposal of alternative models), this was withdrawn - In March 2025 the Broadway Board agreed that the Principal/CEO would put forward a further proposal (at this point the Council had engaged a property agent) - As of last week, there had been no response - The College has shaped plans internally to relaunch Performance Arts - The Principal/CEO wrote to the Commercial Agent and Leader of Council and explained that the College was withdrawing the proposal - Considering the Rush Green campus to develop a smaller theatre – current Director of Broadway had submitted an Expression of Interest (EOI) to Arts Council England to support this In response to a query from NK, the Principal/CEO confirmed that the lease expired in July 2024 and the Theatre was producing a deficit as there was still a member of staff employed by the College. The Chair stated that this was the best position the College could achieve and would ensure the College was no longer losing money each year. **Agreed: that the current position be noted.**
15.	**Institute of Technology (IoT) Update** The DPCQ informed the Board of Directing Body's decision not to relicense for the IoT, explaining the reasons for the decision as highlighted in the report. It was noted that the future of IoT's after the three-year extension period was uncertain. **Agreed: that the position be received.**
16.	**GDPR Update** The CGO updated the Committee on the internal data breaches and UK GDPR request received during 2024/25. **Agreed: that the update be received.**
17.	**Audit & Risk Committee Update including Internal Audit Plan 2025/26** BO, Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee, highlighted the following: - Good feedback in terms of staff cooperation with the internal audit process - Completed nine audits in total and on track to complete the rest for the academic year - Reduced audits for 2025/26 to nine from fourteen which also reduces the number of audit days - Discussed what to focus on for next year for the Internal Audit Plan 2025/26 and the Committee collectively decided and agreed with the Auditors – the Internal Audit Plan 2025/26 is recommended to the Board for approval - Two new members of the Committee so in a better position to focus on other areas as well as internal audit **Approved: the Internal Audit Plan 2025/26, as recommended by the Audit & Risk Committee, was approved.**
18.	**Risk Register** The DPFR provided the following update: - Risk register had been considered at C&Q and P&R - Overall risk reduced in 5 areas - 2 areas remain in an amber position - Risk appetite to be considered in the autumn term **Agreed: that the update be received.**

19.	**Board of Corporation and Committee Meeting Schedule 2025/26** The CGO asked the Board to consider the suggested dates for the 2025/26 meetings schedule - no comments were received. **Approved:**
20.	**Governance Update** The Chair referred to the Governance report highlighting sector updates and progress against the External Board review. The Corporation noted the position against the Weston College recommendations and approved the scheme of delegation for 2025/26. **Agreed: That the current position be noted.** **Approved: The Scheme of Delegation for 2025/26 was approved.**
21.	**ONS Update** The CGO reported that the limit for total remuneration for senior pay had been increased to £174,00 and approval would now be required for salaries over this amount. It was noted that there were no settlement agreements or matters requiring ONS approval for the College to report. The CGO advised that thorough processes and procedure were now in place to monitor compliance against ONS and MPM regulations and therefore the ONS update would not remain a standing agenda item for the Board but would continue to be monitored through the P&R Committee. **Agreed: That the update be received.**
22.	**AoB** The Chair recorded his thanks to Alex Keay and Jason Turton for all their hard work and efforts in ensuring the College received the 'Good' Ofsted rating. This was echoed by the Board. Best wishes for the future to both Alex and Jason were recorded – they would be missed.
23.	**Self-assessment – to be issued after the meeting.**
24.	**Date and time of next meeting – TBA**

The Chair thanked all in attendance for their contributions. The meeting closed at 7.05pm.

Agenda Item	**Action**	**Responsibility**	**Timescale**	**Update**
C/f	Future reports to include the percentage of students for the whole area alongside the numbers of student cases. Detail on low level concerns, monitoring online activity to see if there were any emerging trends and an understanding of the quality assurance process to also be included in future reports.	Director of Student Welfare & Support	Strategic Planning Event/June 2025	Considered for presentation at the meeting
8.	Ofsted debrief to take place with the Director of Student Welfare and Safeguarding Link Governors.	CGO/DSW	After the summer break	TBA

8.	NK to meet with the Principal/CEO and CGO to discuss the Link Governor role for Health & Safety.	CGO	ASAP	Arranged
10.	Subcontracting Plan 2025/26 to be reviewed by the Audit & Risk Committee.	CGO	2025/26	Added to business cycle

Signed……………………………….. Date………………………………………
Andy Forbes (Chair)