

# Waltham Forest College



## THE CORPORATION OF WALTHAM FOREST COLLEGE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 OCTOBER 2025

### MEMBERS OF THE CORPORATION

Antoinette Beekye	present	Staff Member
John Bell	present	Member
Paul Butler	present	Member, Chair of the Corporation, Safeguarding Champion
Paul Clarke	present	Member
Kathryn Davies	present	Member
Simon Deschenes	present	Member
Janet Gardner	present	Member, Principal & Chief Executive Member
Susannah Hume	apologies	Member, SEND Champion
Thamilarasi Jasitharan	present	Staff Member
Remi Iyun	apologies	Member, EDI Champion
Bryan Johnston	present	Member
Alison Morris	present	Member, Corporation Vice Chair, Chair of C & Q, Skills Champion
Renatta Nzomono	apologies	Member, Chair of A & R
Amir Seyyad	present	Member, Chair of F & R
Leon Smith	present	Member, Health & Safety Champion
Gbeminiyi Soyinka	present	Member
Ozora Agota Lazar	present	Student Member
Adam Islam	present	Student Member

### CLERK TO THE CORPORATION

Naomi Shoffman                      Director of Governance (DoGov)

### IN ATTENDANCE

Rachael Booth	Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality (DPCQ)
Abena Rodman -Tay	Deputy Principal Finance & Resources (DPFR)
Amir Ahmed	Vice Principal (VP)
Melanie Price	Director of Human Resources (DoHR)
Michael Burgoyne	Assistant Principal HE & Academic Standards (AP)

**Due to the Coronavirus pandemic (Covid-19) the Corporation agreed that meetings may be held using Teams videoconferencing as per the Waltham Forest College Instrument & Articles, Instrument 1 (g).**

### **50.25 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Chair formally opened the meeting and welcomed all attendees. ii. Apologies for absence were received from Ms Hume who is on maternity leave, Ms Iyun due to a last minute work commitment, and Ms Nzomono due to illness. The Chair reminded everyone that the papers will be taken as read, most of which have already been scrutinised by the relevant committees, and asked that presenters highlight key points in their reports in order to allow sufficient time for discussion debate and questions

### **51.25 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

None

### **52.25 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS CORPORATION MEETING 8 JULY 2025**

i The Minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 8 July 2025, were agreed by the Corporation to be signed by the Chair as a true record.

The DoGov confirmed that all actions have either been completed or have not yet reached target date.

ii. Chair's Action Report:

- I. The Provision of Subcontracted Learner Services
- II. Safeguarding Policy – A member raised a query re the Safeguarding Lead Governor which was resolved outside of the meeting.
- III. IT Contract

It was noted that the documents had been circulated to all members and approved without any objections. The Chair emphasised the importance of transparency and proper documentation in these actions.

### **53.25 MATTERS ARISING**

None

### **54.25 PRINCIPAL'S COLLEGE REPORT**

The Principal presented a comprehensive report providing an overview of the College's performance for 2024–25 and progress against strategic priorities. The report highlighted continued strength in both curriculum quality and financial management, with the College maintaining a strong upward trajectory in outcomes, growth, and reputation. The Principal highlighted the following:

#### **Performance and Quality**

Overall student achievement rates were above the national rate and an improvement on the previous year. Achievement among 16–18 learners was very strong and above national rates, and adult achievement remained strong and above national rates. Governors commended these results as clear evidence of sustained improvement and effective leadership. Ambitious but realistic KPIs were proposed for 2025–26 to reflect the expanding Level 3 and English & Maths provision.

#### **Finance and Growth**

The College's financial position remained exceptionally robust, with a cash balance at year-end, equating to 198 cash days in hand. The draft Financial Health Score was "Outstanding" (300 points), exceeding targets. Final audited accounts will be presented to the December meeting. Recruitment for 2025–26 exceeded allocation. This growth, particularly in Construction and Engineering, supports the College's strategic focus on technical education in priority sectors. Governors noted that space pressures arising from this growth are being actively managed through timetable and estate reviews but is still causing some challenges and that further options are still to be explored. The Principal reported on an approach to the College to take over an adult learning centre which was deemed not viable by the executive due to its proximity to another London College.

#### **People and Culture**

The Principal reported that on the pay award that had been agreed for 2025–26, ahead of the national recommendation. National industrial action across the sector was noted, though no current impact is anticipated locally. The Executive continues to invest in positive staff engagement and wellbeing.

## **Skills and Future Careers**

The College successfully secured GLA funding for Wave 6 Skills Bootcamps, delivering three cohorts in Adult Social Care. Further progress was reported on Office for Students registration and new franchise partnerships for Higher National provision.

## **Estate and Facilities**

Planning for the new build development is at an advanced stage, with a decision expected in November. Given space constraints due to enrolment growth, alternative site options and scheduling changes, including longer days and potential weekend delivery, are under review.

## **Reputation and Profile**

The Principal highlighted the College's growing regional and national influence. The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions chose Waltham Forest College for his first official visit, reinforcing its status as a leading FE provider. The College also contributed to the Local London sub-regional strategy and continues to play a systems leadership role through its involvement in strategic policy and employer forums. Governors praised the College's positive media coverage and strengthened partnerships.

## **Discussion Points**

- Rationale for the 2025-26 KPIs
- Securing additional teaching space
- Managing funding pressures related to high needs learners.
- New Ofsted framework
- The College SAR & validation process
- The Post 16 Education and Skills White paper implications

## **THE CORPORATION AGREED TO:**

- **NOTE THE STRONG PERFORMANCE OVERALL AGAINST QUALITY KPIS FOR 2024/45**
- **NOTE THE STRONG PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE FINANCIAL KPIS FOR 2024/25**
- **APPROVE KPIS FOR 2025/26**
- **NOTE THE CONTINUED STRONG TREND OF GROWTH FOR 16–18-YEAR-OLD STUDENTS**

## **55.25 POLICIES/DOCUMENTS FOR APPROVAL**

The DPFR presented the following key policies and plan for review and approval:

- i. Financial Regulations - Updated with additional Procurement Act 23 requirements.
- ii. Subcontracting Fees and Charges Policy 2025-26 - updated to reflect the current DfE and GLA guidance for 2025/26.

## **THE CORPORATION AGREED TO APPROVE THE REVISED POLICIES.**

## **56.25 GOVERNOR APPOINTMENTS AND MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

The Director of Governance presented the Membership and Governance Report, providing an overview of Corporation composition, succession planning, performance evaluation, and governance development priorities.

### **• Board Composition**

The Corporation currently comprises 18 governors out of a maximum of 20, including 13 external members, the Principal, two staff governors, and two student governors. The Corporation continues to maintain a strong commitment to diversity, inclusion, and balanced representation, ensuring the membership reflects the College's community profile. The meeting noted that a minimum of eight members (40%) is required for meetings to be quorate.

### **• Appointment of Chair Designate**

Following a recruitment process conducted over the summer, two candidates were shortlisted and interviewed on 13 October 2025. The Search, Governance and Remuneration (SGR) Committee recommended the appointment of Mr Richard Harris as Chair Designate.

- **Board and Committee Performance Self-Assessment (2024–25)**

Governors completed the annual self-assessment based on the AoC Code of Good Governance. Results were highly positive, evidencing a well-functioning governance structure with strong accountability, transparency, and engagement. All committees were graded **Grade 1 – Outstanding**, with the following descriptors:

<b>Committee</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Summary</b>
Audit & Risk	1 – Outstanding	Strategic, vigilant, and impactful oversight
Curriculum & Quality	1 – Outstanding	Strong educational scrutiny and improvement focus
Finance & Resources	1 – Outstanding	Robust control and sustainability leadership
Search, Governance & Remuneration	1 – Outstanding	Effective leadership and succession planning

An overall **Governance Grade 1 – Outstanding** was proposed, recognising high levels of strategic challenge, accountability, and alignment with Ofsted expectations for outstanding leadership.

- **Skills Audit and Development**

Governors undertook a detailed skills analysis, identifying collective strengths and areas identified for further enhancement, including the introduction of targeted safeguarding training for Corporation members to enhance understanding of statutory oversight duties and reinforce their role in strategic safeguarding assurance. These findings will inform future training and succession planning for 2025–26.

- **Governor–Staff Visit Protocol**

A new Governor Visit Protocol was introduced to formalise professional engagement between governors and staff, encompassing both on-site and off-site visits. The SGR Committee has reviewed and recommended the protocol for approval.

- **Governance Action Plan 2025–26**

The Governance Action Plan (GAP) for 2025–26 was presented, outlining measures to strengthen governance effectiveness, address identified skills gaps, and maintain alignment with the College’s strategic aims. The SGR Committee has reviewed and recommended the plan for approval.

#### **Discussion Points**

Shadowing arrangements for Chair Designate and Safeguarding lead Governor.

#### **THE CORPORATION AGREED TO:**

- **APPROVE THE APPOINTMENT OF MR RICHARD HARRIS AS CHAIR DESIGNATE.**
- **APPROVE THE COMMITTEE SELF-ASSESSMENT GRADES (2024–25),**
- **ENDORSE THE OVERALL GOVERNANCE GRADE 1 – OUTSTANDING AND THE ONGOING FOCUS ON MAINTAINING ROBUST, TRANSPARENT, AND INCLUSIVE GOVERNANCE**
- **APPROVE THE GOVERNOR–STAFF VISIT PROTOCOL,**
- **APPROVE THE GOVERNANCE ACTION PLAN 2025–26.**

#### **57.25 HUMAN RESOURCES ANNUAL REPORT**

The Director of HR presented the Annual Report and highlighted the following points:

- There has been a steady rise in staffing levels to support the growth of the college.
- The sickness absence at 5.12%, is below national averages and continues a positive trend of reductions.
- The increase in the gender pay gap, is linked to recruitment in lower-paid roles such as LSAs and structural changes.
- Staff survey participation had declined slightly, reflecting the very short window for completion last year due to external survey used.
- The partnership with new managed service provider aimed at improving recruitment efficiency and reducing costs.
- The ongoing initiatives, including the Women’s Network and Talent Development Programme, aimed at mentoring and leadership development. Talent Development Programme to improve equity and leadership progression including emerging talent.

- Preparations for compliance with the Employment Rights Bill.

**Discussion points:**

- The reasons for the increase in the gender pay gap,
- The HR team's proactive stance on wellbeing, equality, and workforce transparency
- Talent Development Programme

**THE CORPORATION NOTED THE HUMAN RESOURCES ANNUAL REPORT.**

**58.25 SAFEGUARDING & PREVENT ANNUAL REPORT**

The Vice Principal presented the Safeguarding and Prevent Annual Report, providing a detailed overview of safeguarding activity, referral trends, and emerging risks across the College and highlighted the following points:

- The report highlighted an increase in safeguarding referrals compared with the previous year, particularly linked to mental health concerns such as anxiety, depression, and self-harm.
- The success of the Mental Health Ambassador Programme, which has generated approximately a quarter of all referrals and strengthened peer-to-peer support networks across the student community. The evidence demonstrates improved early identification and signposting of low-level concerns, contributing to the prevention of escalation into more serious cases.
- The College's compliance with Martyn's Law, with the introduction of lockdown drills, safety plan stress-testing, and enhanced staff training to improve emergency preparedness. Collaboration with local authorities and insurers was recognised as good practice, ensuring that procedures remain robust and aligned with emerging statutory requirements.
- The positive outcomes of the recent Section 11 audit, demonstrating strong compliance with safeguarding standards and continuous improvement in record-keeping, reporting, and partnership working.

**Discussion point:**

The impact of escalating caseloads on the safeguarding team - The Principal confirmed that an additional safeguarding officer had been appointed, providing immediate relief to the team, and that a review of safeguarding resourcing will be undertaken to ensure long-term resilience. It was agreed that the next meeting would receive an update.

**THE CORPORATION AGREED TO NOTE THE SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENT ANNUAL REPORT.**

**59. 25 CURRICULUM & QUALITY REPORT**

The interim Deputy Principal for Curriculum and Quality and Assistant Principal presented a detailed analysis of academic performance, curriculum expansion, and quality enhancement initiatives across the 2024–2025 academic year. And commencement of the 2025-26 academic year highlighting the following:

- **Achievement and Progression:** Achievement rates rose significantly, surpassing national benchmarks and previous performance. Governors praised staff for maintaining academic standards during curriculum changes. The vast majority of students progressed to employment, apprenticeships, or higher education — aligning with national Skills for Jobs priorities.
- **Maths and English Development:** Development plans for through structured interventions, external training, mastery pedagogy, and AI-assisted marking. Leadership strengthened with new Assistant Principal for English and Maths and a Deputy Director of Curriculum. Governors supported decisive actions taken to continue to bring about rapid improvements.
- **Apprenticeships and Work-Based Learning** - Achievement rates improved by 20.3%, closing the gap with national averages, although still slightly below benchmark levels. New tracking and CRM systems enhanced employer communication and learner retention. Governors praised this turnaround and recommended maintaining close oversight of programme quality and employer engagement.
- **Curriculum Development and T Levels:** Expansion of T Level pathways strengthened partnerships with regional employers and addressed local skills shortages.

- **Digital Pedagogy and Innovation:** “Tech October” initiative successfully boosted digital teaching practice and AI integration. High staff participation increased use of innovative tools such as Teachermatic for lesson planning and assessment.
- **Behaviour, Inclusion, and Learner Experience:** Standardised uniform policy improved behaviour, punctuality, and professionalism. Employers report stronger workplace readiness. Zero-tolerance policies and enhanced pastoral support reduced disciplinary cases and improved attendance and wellbeing.
- **Quality Assurance Processes:** Strengthened through peer reviews, external professionals delivering specialist training (English and maths), and enhanced CPD to maintain consistent teaching and learning standards.
- **T Level and Apprenticeship Programme Development:** Ongoing plans to deepen employer collaboration, expand digital learning, and refine performance tracking to sustain excellence in outcomes.

**Discussion points:**

- The importance of sustaining employer partnerships, with feedback from industry indicating strong satisfaction with the calibre of students.
- The need for continued investment in digital infrastructure and training to sustain momentum.
- The external consultants used for CPD.
- Learners’ positive responses to uniform policy
- The academic leadership’s data-driven approach and its alignment with Ofsted’s quality improvement framework.

**THE CORPORATION AGREED TO NOTE THE PROGRESS ON THE KEY ASPECTS OF CURRICULUM AND QUALITY.**

**60.25 INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2025-26 – MONTHLY MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS FOR 31 JULY 2025**

The DPFR presented the draft management accounts to July 2025 and highlighted the following points:

- The full-year surplus shows a positive variance.
- Cash position at year-end,
- Student recruitment exceeded the annual target.
- Financial Health Score is ‘Outstanding.’
- Details of NICs grant and Post-16 Budget Grant received.
- Overall, the accounts show strong alignment with strategic and budgetary objectives, confirming robust financial management and sustained growth.

**Discussion points:**

Governors discussed the balance between maintaining financial resilience and fulfilling the College’s charitable obligations. The Board agreed that future surpluses should be directed towards strategic capital projects, such as infrastructure enhancements and new build opportunities. Further analysis of investment returns and reserves management will be presented at a future meeting.

**THE CORPORATION AGREED TO NOTE THE MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS FOR 31 JULY 2025**

**61.25 HEALTH & SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT**

The DPFR presented the report which provides a summary of the Health and Safety performance for the academic year 2024/25 including internal audits, policy reviews, incidents and accidents Mandatory and in-house health and safety training, workplace risk assessments and the work of the Health and Safety Committee.

**THE CORPORATION AGREED TO:**

- **NOTE THE CONTENTS OF THE REPORT.**
- **NOTE THE KEY RISKS BEING MANAGED BY THE COLLEGE AND ACTIONS TAKEN.**

**62.25 RISK MANAGEMENT -REVIEW OF THE UPDATED RISK REGISTER**

The DPFR provided an update on the College Risk Register, focusing on strategic risks, mitigation measures, and alignment with the college’s moderate risk appetite.

Governors discussed the medium risk associated with cyber and ICT, reflecting the national landscape and recent cyber-attacks. The IT team’s capacity and structure are under review to ensure they can handle these risks effectively. A review on the IT infrastructure and cyber security has been commissioned. The review aims to address the strategic risk register’s high-risk items related to IT and cyber security.

Governors also focused on the strategic risk register and discussed the need to revisit the risk tolerance and appetite strategy. It was noted that the current risk tolerance levels might be too low, making it difficult to manage risks effectively. The importance of aligning the risk management strategy with the practical realities faced by the College was emphasised. It was agreed to review the College’s risk appetite, viewing the current framework as overly cautious. A revised approach balancing prudence and flexibility will be drafted by the DPFR in consultation with the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.

**THE CORPORATION NOTED THE RISK REGISTER AND THE MITIGATING ACTIONS BEING TAKEN.**

**63.25 GDPR ANNUAL REPORT**

The DPFR presented the GDPR Annual Summary Report which details any formal breaches recorded between September 2024 and August 2025, with resulting actions and improvements made to address them. Human error remains the primary cause, and ongoing staff awareness campaigns continue. None of the breaches resulted in a formal investigation by the ICO.

**THE CORPORATION NOTED GDPR ANNUAL REPORT.**

**64.25 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

**16 DECEMBER 2025**

*Staff Governors and staff members withdrew from the meeting.*

***Minutes 65.25 -67.25 recorded under Part 2***

The meeting concluded at **21:45**.

<b>These minutes have been approved by the Corporation as a correct record.</b>	
<b>CHAIR: Paul Butler</b>	<b>DATE: 16 December 2025</b>
	<b>REMOTE CONFIRMATION:</b>  <b>OR SIGNED:</b>