

**Minutes of the Standards Committee held on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at 4.30pm in Conference Room 2, Broadway**

- Members Present: Julius Adams  
Sally Cornfield  
Paul Hartridge  
Diana Martin (Chief Executive and Principal) (CEP)  
Paul Noon (Chair)
- In attendance: Dan Clarke (Assistant Principal)  
Rachel Corns (Vice Principal Curriculum & Performance)  
Gill Darwood (Director of Corporate Governance) (DCG)  
Susanne Davies (Director of IoT & Partnerships)  
Lynn Glazzard (Assistant Principal)  
Samantha Jocelyn-Sears (Assistant Principal)  
Kathryn Jones (Director of HR)  
Adrian Walker (Assistant Principal)

#### **Committee administrative matters**

**1 Confirmation of quorum**

- 1.1 The Director of Corporate Governance (DCG) confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

**2 Apologies for absence**

- 2.1 Apologies for absence were received from J Stokes and W Davies.

**3 Declarations of interest**

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.
- 3.2 The Chair welcomed Dan Clarke to his first meeting of the committee and members and attendees introduced themselves.

**4 Approve minutes of previous meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2025**

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2025 were agreed as a true record.

**5 Matters arising**

- 5.1 Actions rolled forward from the previous meeting were noted as:
- Paul Noon to share draft AI policy.
  - Work experience placements – to be covered at September Development Day.
  - CSCS card process – the CEP and P Hartridge confirmed this was now in place.
- 5.2 There were no further matters arising from the previous meeting.

**6 Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair for 2025/26**

- 6.1 **It was resolved** to appoint Paul Noon as Chair and Julius Adams as Vice Chair for the 2025/26 academic year.

**7 Committee business plan and meeting schedule 2025/26**

- 7.1 The DCG advised that the business plan for the Committee provided an indication of business and reports which would be submitted to the meetings of the Committee scheduled for 2025/26. The business plan also contained the proposed dates for the meeting during 2025/26 which were noted as:

- Tues 2 December 2025
- Mon 2 February 2026
- Tues 5 May 2026

- 7.2 **It was resolved** to recommend the committee's business plan for 2025/26 and meeting dates to the Corporation for approval.

**Standards and Performance Matters**

**8 Review of Operational Development Plan 2025**

- 8.1 The CEP presented the update on the College Operational Development Plan for 2025. The plan focussed on the identified key priorities for the College over the coming year and included milestones for each of these areas.
- 8.2 She advised that three actions were complete – one linked to Skills West Midlands and Warwickshire, one to the Master Collaboration Agreement around branding and the other linked to a new security service.
- 8.3 There were two actions postponed linked to capital developments as had been discussed at the recent Corporation Strategic Development Day.
- 8.4 All other milestones were in progress.
- 8.5 **It was resolved** to note the CODP update.

**9 Annual Accountability Statement update**

- 9.1 The CEP advised that the guidance for colleges on the annual Accountability Agreement and the duty for Corporations to review how effectively the College was meeting local needs was updated by the Department for Education in January 2025. The paper provided a summary of the guidance which was also shared in full with members. The national skills priorities had been updated to take into account the Skills England report, Industrial Strategy and Plan for change. Members were pleased to note the inclusion of Creative Industries in the list of priority sectors.
- 9.2 Providers were required to submit their next annual Accountability Statement by 30 June 2025 and therefore it was proposed to circulate the updated statement with board papers on 24<sup>th</sup> June for comments and additions to be received by Friday 27<sup>th</sup> June in order to submit the Accountability Statement by the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025 deadline, prior to the next Corporation Meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> July.

- 9.3 In response to a question relating to how local skills needs would be addressed, the CEP advised that in future the WMCA would be more involved in the annual strategic conversation which would bring local need into focus.
- 9.4 **It was resolved** to note the update on the annual Accountability Statement and approve the approach to approval of the revised statement.
- 10 **Data dashboard review**
- 10.1 The CEP presented a live overview of the Data Dashboard with a focus on in year performance by each key client group:
- 16-19 enrolments up compared to previous year, attendance slightly up although a challenge around mathematics and English persisted.
  - A level learners – Enrolments up on previous year and consistent attendance.
  - Adult learners – enrolments in a strong position against previous year, both in numbers and in income, with the potential to overperform. Attendance was slightly improved on previous year.
  - Apprentices – Enrolments down due to strategic withdrawal from subcontracting provision with just a handful of apprentices now coming to the end of programme. Enrolments overall looking on track to exceed target for new starts. Strong attendance which was slightly up on previous year.
  - Higher skills – Data as currently reported showed a reduction on previous year but this was attributable to move to other modes of higher level study which were not included in this data currently. Attendance was really strong for this cohort.
  - High Needs learners – enrolments were in line with previous year at 175, with an agreed increase to 240 for next year with resultant increased income and additional staffing requirement. Attendance was strong and improved on previous year at 89.5% given the significant challenges for this cohort.
- 10.2 The CEP provided further information on the college's assessment of its performance using the balanced score card approach. A Walker noted that Ofsted were currently going through consultation on their revised inspection framework, but the College's score card approach would provide stability for the College and its staff.
- 10.3 **It was resolved** to note the dashboard update.
- 11 **Risk register monitoring**
- 11.1 The CEP reported that the full College Risk Register was reviewed in detail at Audit Committee, and the extract provided to the committee presented an update in relation to the risks relevant to Standards Committee.
- 11.2 There were five risks reported through the Standards Committee, of which two had a higher net risk score of 9.
- Defunding of alternative provision – the CEP provided an update on mitigation which involved a contract being agreed with a local MAT to provide discrete provision to 40 students in 2025/26, in addition to the College's existing provision which supported learners funded by the local authority. On the next

review it was likely that the net risk for alternative provision would be reduced.

- Work experience – actions were subject to delay, particularly around the implementation of the work experience strategy which was now expected to extend to the end of the academic year. Work also continued on methodology for recording health and safety assessments and the effective logging of work experience activity. As a result of the delays on these actions, the reporting on progress to SLG was not yet established.
- 11.3 R Corns advised that curriculum areas were being given flexibility to decide the most appropriate week for their learners on study programmes to undertake work experience activity, as requirements were less prescriptive than T Levels.
- 11.4 The chair noted that his understanding was that some colleges had not engaged with T Levels at the present time, and the CEP confirmed that the College had been more proactive than many other providers, resulting in the high level of uptake of T Levels seen which continued into 2025/26 applications.
- 11.5 P Hartridge noted that the sign-up process for apprenticeships remained very complex and R Corns advised that this continued to be an area of attention with the employer engagement team to ensure that sign-ups were appropriate. She advised that she was a member of a national group looking at apprenticeship reform.
- 11.6 Other actions were progressing well and were complete or on track.
- 11.7 **It was resolved** to note the risk register update.
- 12 **Quality assurance of partnerships and subcontracted provision**
- 12.1 S Davies presented the report on partnership arrangements for 2024/25, including sub-contracted provision, secondment arrangements, collaborations, and updates on other partnership activities. It also outlined plans for 2025/26.
- 12.2 The report noted that:
- Expectation of niche high-value subcontracts may still be required.
  - Focus on supporting Black Country and Marches IoT provision.
  - Collaboration on initiatives like the UK Turing Scheme and management of cross-college contracts via the Central Contracts Register.
  - Total sub-contracting activity for 2024/25: £0.47m with payments to partners around £0.42m.
  - IoT licence fee income in 2024/25: £0.41m with additional starts planned to increase income.
  - Employer partnership income in 2024/25: £0.49m, with anticipated spend of £0.32m.
  - Risks: Uncertainty around future of IoTs, over-cautious partner numbers affecting income, movement of Worcester University to Health Innovation Dudley, quality and financial viability concerns around medical engineering.
  - No active sub-contracting arrangements in 2025/26, focus on in-house delivery.

- Continued support for curriculum through employer partnerships, and support for OMAs until contracts closed, but open to future partnerships in 2025/26.
- Continued collaboration with IoT partners in 2025/26.

12.3 **It was resolved** to note the partnerships update.

## Teaching and Learning Matters

### 13 Curriculum planning update

13.1 R Corns presented an update on curriculum planning which highlighted:

- Curriculum planning cycle, oversight arrangements and use of the new 4Cast planning system.
- Support for curriculum teams in developing their plans with PowerBI tools which calculated contribution by area and staffing requirement.
- Curriculum pitches undertaken by CMs with SLG members during March.
- The planned curriculum model for 2025/26 had shown an encouraging response in terms of applications with strong applications and acceptances which were increased compared to the same point in the previous year and included 784 applications for T Levels which exceeded A level applications. A number of areas were at or near capacity.
- School liaison activity around the new curriculum model.
- New timetable developments.
- Progression gateway assessments.
- Planned future actions and developments.
- Reporting and ProMonitor through a balanced scorecard.

13.2 Following the presentation, R Corns and the CEP provided further detail and clarification in response to questions from members, which included discussion of a range of topics:

- Increases in applications were considered to be the result of a demographic increase which would continue for the next two years, and in respect of the CAT Centre, the excellent reputation of the centre, limited local competition in this area of provision and high levels of demand for programmes linked to green skills such as electrical.
- For those courses where a waiting list was necessary due to limitations on capacity, students were offered an advice and guidance meeting to look at other options, and early enrolment was undertaken to free up places as soon as possible.
- Additional funding if available would resolve the physical capacity issues but would require additional staffing. K Jones noted that these areas were fully staffed at present.
- The Chair suggested it would be helpful to set out a proposal to present to WMCA to highlight this challenge.
- The CEP noted the College's involvement in the Action for Construction group and the need to involve awarding bodies in addressing this challenge.
- P Hartridge suggested it may be helpful to look at the timing of progression enrolment for future years to make it later in the summer term thereby offering more time for learners to pass the progression gateway prior to enrolment on the next level. The CEP agreed this could be considered

although would need to be balanced with other pressures at this point in the year, such as examinations.

- I3.3 The CEP noted that all of these developments had been achieved by the team in addition to their day-to-day activities and other colleges were now looking at these developments. S Jocelyn-Spears advised that assessors from Gatsby had commended the innovative curriculum approach and the College had also been asked to host a DfE policy development session.

- I3.4 **It was resolved** to note the curriculum planning update.

#### I4 **Teaching and learning update**

- I4.1 A Walker provided an update on performance following the publication of National Achievement Rates for 2023/24 in March 2025. The data showed the College was improving in almost all areas with a few areas where further improvement was needed. It was noted that the data did not always represent a consistent picture when compared to other providers, for example due to a different approach to English and mathematics entries.
- I4.2 The quality team continued to work closely with curriculum to monitor in-year metrics and support improvement. There were several courses/curriculum areas that were showing strong improvements in their overall quality. As a result, in-year retention was currently strong with predicted achievement showing improvements if secured, as increased retention would contribute to increased achievement rates. There were a small minority of areas that required further improvement.
- I4.3 P Hartridge noted that he would find it helpful to see more detailed data reported by qualification level. A Walker confirmed that this information was available and could be shared, and that this analysis was used to inform intervention activity.
- I4.4 Joint activity across the College showed that teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) was typically strong. Emerging strengths were teachers' high levels of technical knowledge, learner engagement, digital technologies in some areas, and links to industry. There were improvement needs in some areas covering assessment for learning strategies, e.g. questioning, enhancing revision and exam preparation practices, strengthening routines for learning, and behaviour management (mainly new teachers). Furthermore, 1-1 TLA Coach support was being provided to 88 staff.
- I4.5 A wide range of CPD had been delivered to staff which had contributed to raising standards and effective use of technologies to enhance teaching and learning. The report included feedback analysis of the College Conference held in April with strong staff feedback received from participants. Digital training for staff had been undertaken with curriculum areas resulting in increased use of technology and better learner engagement.
- I4.6 P Hartridge asked if it would be possible to consider holding College Conference days on the first day of term rather than the last, and the CEP agreed to give this suggestion consideration.

14.7 In relation to students' use of AI, A Walker advised that a module on the use of CoPilot was being developed for all learners for induction.

14.8 **It was resolved** to note the Quality and Teaching, Learning and Assessment update.

15 **Compliments and complaints analysis**

*This matter is the subject of a separate and confidential minute.*

### Safeguarding and Student Conduct Matters

16 **Safeguarding and learner conduct report**

*This matter is the subject of a separate and confidential minute.*

### Higher Education matters

17 **Higher Education update**

17.1 S Davies presented the report which provided members with an update on all matters relating to Higher Education at the College. Members noted the key updates relating to:

- Learner numbers currently at 500.
- Update on the development of a new HE Strategy for the College – mapping of college provision being undertaken and looking at future developments around modular provision, Lifelong Learning Loan entitlement and partnership agreements with HEIs.
- Office for Students – Conditions of Registration, including new condition (E6 – Harassment and Sexual Misconduct) which linked into the discussion under the previous item.

17.2 A Walker noted that good practice on the new OfS condition around Harassment and Sexual Misconduct was being considered, and he noted that no complaints had been highlighted which related to this under the earlier agenda item.

17.3 **It was resolved** to note the Higher Education update.

18 **Freedom of Speech Annual Report**

18.1 S Davies reported that the College had a legal duty to ensure Freedom of Speech for all staff, students and wider stakeholders. The report highlighted the current position of Freedom of Speech at the College and the ongoing activities that ensured the College met the legal obligations regarding this duty. It included a summary of activities undertaken to ensure that Freedom of Speech was protected, as well as an outline of forthcoming legislation that would impact the approach to Freedom of Speech in regard to Higher Education provision.

18.2 **It was resolved** to note the Freedom of Speech Annual update.

19 **Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Policy**

19.1 The CEP stated that the policy covered Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance given to all students, irrespective of age and learning programme. It

identified the statutory requirements and articulated the College's responsibilities with regard to key areas of delivering including work experience and work readiness. No substantive changes had been made to the policy.

19.2 **It was resolved** to recommend the policy to the Corporation.

20 **Any Other Business**

20.1 The Chair enquired if there were implications from the recent Supreme Court ruling in relation to the Equality Act and the definition of sex as meaning biological sex, and what the impact of this might be on the College. K Jones advised that guidance was expected from AoC shortly. It was noted that, in practical terms, the majority of College sites had gender neutral toilets as well as single sex toilets, and there were also accessible gender-neutral changing facilities at Evolve. A further update would be provided to Corporation in due course.

20.2 There were no further matters of any other business.

21 **Date of next meeting**

21.1 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025 at 4.30pm.

The meeting closed at 18.30 hours.

*Approved by committee members at the meeting held 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025.*