

## Minutes of the Standards Committee held on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026 at 4.30pm in Conference Room 1, Broadway

Members Present: Julius Adams  
Kaynat Ahmad  
Matthew Collins  
Sally Cornfield  
Nirmal Gupta (via Teams)  
Paul Hartridge  
Diana Martin (Chief Executive and Principal) (CEP)  
Paul Noon (Chair)

In attendance: Elaine Bonar (Observer)  
Dan Clarke (Assistant Principal Curriculum and Standards)  
Rachel Corns (Vice Principal Curriculum and Performance) (VPCP)  
Gill Darwood (Director of Corporate Governance) (DCG)  
Susanne Davies (Director of IoT & Partnerships)  
Lynn Glazzard (Assistant Principal Curriculum and Standards)  
Kathryn Jones (Director of Human Resources)  
Adrian Walker (Assistant Principal Quality and Standards)

### Committee administrative matters

#### 1 Confirmation of quorum

- 1.1 The Director of Corporate Governance (DCG) confirmed that the meeting was quorate.
- 1.2 Members and attendees introduced themselves to Elaine Bonar, who was observing the meeting.

#### 2 Apologies for absence

- 2.1 Apologies for absence had been received from Samantha Jocelyn-Sears, Neil Sambrook and Claire Millard.

#### 3 Declarations of interest

- 3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

#### 4 Minutes of previous meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025

- 4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2025 were agreed as a true record.

#### 5 Matters arising

- 5.1 There were no further matters arising from the previous meeting.

### Strategic Matters

#### 6 Growth and Skills Strategy update

- 6.1 The Committee received a presentation from Susanne Davies providing an update on the development of the College's Growth and Skills Strategy. The presentation set out the strategic context for the plan, including alignment with regional economic priorities, particularly those identified by the West

Midlands Combined Authority, and the College's role in responding to skills shortages and future growth sectors.

- 6.2 It was confirmed that the Growth and Skills Strategy was currently subject to consultation with stakeholders, with the final version to be presented to Corporation for approval. Members were advised that delivery of the strategy would be monitored through an internal implementation plan and associated performance measures.
- 6.3 In response to a question from N Gupta regarding the visibility of the construction sector within the strategy, it was confirmed that construction was identified as a priority sector within the plan, alongside related and supporting sectors.
- 6.4 The Chair welcomed the fact that the strategy was being consulted upon and noted the strong alignment with the priorities of the West Midlands Combined Authority. Members emphasised the importance, once approved, of ensuring effective communications to promote the strategy and to position the College as a leading voice in the regional skills agenda.
- 6.5 **It was resolved** to note the update on the growth and skills strategy.

## Standards and Performance Matters

### 7 **Operational Development Plan update**

7.1 The CEP presented the College Operational Development Plan (CODP) for the coming twelve months. This plan incorporated key actions from the Strategic Plan that related to the coming year as well as areas identified through the Annual Strategic Impact Assessment (ASIA) and regional and national priorities. This was then supported by Quality Improvement Plans in every curriculum area and professional services team, delivered through the performance management system and monitored through the annual cycle of performance data. Once approved by the Corporation, the Standards Committee would review progress against the CODP at each meeting.

7.2 **It was resolved** to recommend the College Operational Development Plan 2026 to the Corporation for approval.

### 8 **Data dashboard review**

8.1 The Committee received a presentation from Rachel Corns, Vice Principal on a draft version of the data dashboard. Members were advised that the dashboard now included all information from the last ASIA and had been updated to incorporate Higher Education within the adult provision area. Members were advised that a separate proposal would be brought to Corporation to seek agreement on the future scope of performance dashboard reporting, noting that current analytics showed low levels of traffic to some cross-college areas of the dashboard.

8.2 The Committee noted the following updates by provision area:

- 16–18: Performance exceeded expectations, with learner numbers 2% above the previous year and attendance 1% down at 90%.

- *A Levels*: Performance exceeded expectations. Learner numbers were reported as 11% lower, reflecting an increased take-up of T Levels. Attendance was reported as in line with previous year and at a high level. It was noted that the implications of the Eton sixth form development within the town centre would be brought to Corporation for consideration.
- *Adult and Higher Education*: Performance met expectations, with increased learner numbers and attendance reported as 1% lower but remaining high at 91%. Members were advised that growth funding from the West Midlands Combined Authority was unlikely in the current year due to wider funding constraints and that the position would therefore require careful monitoring.
- *Apprenticeships and Work-Based Learning*: Performance met expectations. Participation was reported as having decreased in line with the national picture with enrolments currently 21% lower, however, it was noted that apprenticeship starts in the current academic year had moved back by one month, meaning that comparisons were not like for like. Notwithstanding this, recovery plans were being considered within teams. It was also noted that, as the Growth and Skills Levy was loosened, reporting in this area would extend beyond apprenticeships alone. Attendance was reported as 3% lower, with further analysis underway to identify any areas of specific concern.
- *High Needs Learners*: Performance met expectations, with increased learner numbers and high attendance reported at 90%.

8.3 Members were advised that an additional dashboard tile was being developed to review T Level performance, with potential implementation from September 2026.

8.4 In response to a question from the Chair regarding the possible inclusion of Alternative Provision, it was noted that this was not directly funded provision for the College. However, it was acknowledged that alternative indicators, such as distance travelled and attendance could be explored. The Chair also noted that the introduction of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement and V Levels would result in a wider range of new activity requiring future consideration within performance reporting.

8.5 **It was resolved** to note the data dashboard update.

## 9 **Partnerships and sub-contracting report**

9.1 The Committee received a report presented by Susanne Davies providing a termly update on the College's partnership activity for 2025/26, including employer partnerships, Institute of Technology (IoT) delivery partners, Other Managing Agent arrangements and subcontracting.

9.2 Members were advised that there were no subcontracting arrangements in place for 2025/26 and that the College remained compliant with the Subcontracting Standard should a future strategic need arise. Employer partnerships continued through secondment and contractor arrangements, including with Avensys and K2, and it was noted that the Cadcoe arrangement

had concluded. The College continued its Other Managing Agent relationship with JTL to complete delivery for remaining learners.

9.3 The Committee noted that the Partnerships team provided quality oversight of all IoT delivery partners within the Black Country & Marches Institute of Technology. It was reported that the presence of University of Worcester in the IoT would end during 2026 following the relocation of health-related provision to the new Dudley Higher Education and Skills Centre.

9.4 Projected IoT licence fee income for 2025/26 was reported as £0.80m, with employer partnership activity contributing £0.77m against expenditure of £0.39m. Key risks and opportunities were highlighted, including increased flexibility in delivery at the IoT following the end of the licence at the year end, the impact of cautious partner forecasting and positive progress within the Medical Engineering partnership with Avensys.

9.5 [It was noted that a visit to the new Dudley Higher Education and Skills Centre would be arranged for Corporation.](#)

9.6 **It was resolved** to note the partnerships and sub-contracting report.

## 10 Risk register monitoring

10.1 The CEP reported that the senior team continued to monitor the risk register, with six risks relevant to the Committee, four of which remained high priority due to lower assurance levels and higher risk scores. Good progress had been reported since December, as summarised below:

- *Employer Engagement*: Progress had been made on the Growth and Skills Strategy with consultation taking place with employers and stakeholders, with a final draft expected in February.
- *Curriculum Reform*: The College continued to respond proactively to curriculum reform, working collaboratively with sector partners, with one delay relating to progression gateways being actively challenged by the Vice Principals.
- *Artificial Intelligence*: Significant work was underway on artificial intelligence, including completion of the Jisc Digital Elevation Tool to assess digital maturity and identify priority areas for development.
- *Apprenticeship Provision*: The risk score had increased to reflect concerns around apprentice onboarding, with a targeted working group established to address inefficiencies and secure early improvement.
- *Work Experience*: Following review by the Risk Scrutiny Group, further actions were agreed, with steady progress noted despite delays to policy updates and a focus on encouraging students to be proactive in looking for early placement opportunities.
- *Inspection Framework and Toolkit*: Good progress was reported across all agreed actions.

10.2 **It was resolved** to note the risk register monitoring report.

## Teaching and Learning Matters

- 11 **Quality, Teaching, Learning and Assessment update**
- 11.1 The Committee received a presentation from A Walker, Assistant Principal Quality and Performance, providing an update on Teaching, Learning and Assessment and outlining recent quality assurance activity and emerging findings across curriculum areas.
- 11.2 Members were advised that overall quality assurance judgements were graded as 'very strong', 'strong', 'requiring support' or 'requiring targeted intervention'. The presentation highlighted areas of strongest practice, including Aspire Early Years, Sport, Skills Shop, and Hair and Beauty. Areas identified as requiring further support included Advance I Engineering, Automotive, Institute of Technology provision and Modern Methods of Construction.
- 11.3 Key themes for improvement were identified, including over-reliance on questioning in some areas, variable quality and impact of feedback to learners, inconsistent use of group profiles to support adaptive teaching, and behaviour management challenges in some Entry to FE groups. The importance of using group profiles more effectively to understand learner needs and inform teaching strategies was emphasised.
- 11.4 Members noted that external quality assurance reports remained strong. Retention was reported as 94%, in line with the previous year, with apprenticeship retention reported as 3.5% higher year on year. The value of using initial assessments to inform target grades was being reinforced, alongside the need to develop greater consistency in careers education, information, advice and guidance through the tutorial programme.
- 11.5 Future planned activity would include consideration of staff workload in preparation for progression gateway assessments, mentoring for new staff and the development of artificial intelligence tools, such as practice examination questions providing formative feedback to learners.
- 11.6 In response to a question regarding the effectiveness of adaptive practice for learners with inclusion needs, it was noted that practice within discrete SEND provision was a strength, with further work required to embed consistent practice within mainstream provision. Members also noted the importance of supporting staff to clearly articulate the College's SEND practice and impact.
- 11.7 The CEP advised that to enable members to have a full picture of activity in this key area of its remit, future meetings would receive a detailed written paper in advance of the meeting, supported by a summary presentation.
- 11.8 **It was resolved** to note the Quality, Teaching, Learning and Assessment update.

- 12           **Confidential - Compliments and complaints analysis**  
*This matter is the subject of a separate and confidential minute.*

### Safeguarding and Student Conduct Matters

- 13           **Safeguarding and learner conduct report**  
*This matter is the subject of a separate and confidential*

### Higher Education Matters

- 14           **Higher Education update**
- 14.1        The Committee received a report presented by Susanne Davies providing an overview of the College's Higher Education provision, including policy developments, compliance activity and partnerships.
- 14.2        Members were advised that the College currently had 599 students studying on programmes at Level 4 or above. It was confirmed that Higher Education fees for 2026/27 had been approved by Corporation and that all regulatory and compliance requirements were up to date. The Committee also noted that the College continued to monitor changes in Higher Education policy and regulation and to respond as required, including recent changes to conditions of registration for colleges, which were intended to reduce regulatory burden.
- 14.3        Members were advised that preparations for implementation of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement were underway, with initial delivery expected from January 2027 in selected sector areas and full rollout planned for September 2027. It was noted that this work was being led through a dedicated project, including development of the necessary systems and infrastructure.
- 14.4        **It was resolved** to note the higher education update.
- 15           **Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement**
- 15.1        K Jones advised that in compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015 the College was required to produce a modern slavery and human trafficking statement for each financial year and have this approved by the Corporation. The document had therefore been updated to show financial information for the last financial year.
- 15.2        **It was resolved** to recommend the modern slavery and human trafficking statement to the Corporation for approval.
- 16           **Any Other Business**
- 16.1        There were no items of other business.
- 17           **Date of next meeting**
- 17.1        The next committee meeting would be held on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2026.

The meeting closed at 17.44 hours.

**Approved by committee members at the meeting held 5<sup>th</sup> May 2026.**