Part 1 Minutes of the Corporation meeting held Tuesday 17th March 2026 at 4.30pm in Conference Room 1, Broadway

Members Present:	Kaynat Ahmad	Paul Hartridge
	Matthew Collins	Diana Martin (CEP)
	Sally Cornfield (*Teams*)	Paul Noon (Chair)
	Wendy Davies	Simka Rifai
	Mireille Digard	Liz Sithole
	Nirmal Gupta	Sarah Wood

In Attendance:
Rachel Corns (Vice Principal)
Gill Darwood (Director of Corporate Governance) (DCG)
Susanne Davies (Director IoT and Partnerships)
Debbie Goode (Exec Director Public Affairs and Marketing)
Kathryn Jones (Director of HR)
Louise Jones (Chief Finance Officer) (CFO)
Claire Millard (Vice Principal)

Board administrative matters

1 Confirmation of quorum

1.1 The Director of Corporate Governance (DCG) confirmed that a quorum was present.

2 Apologies for absence

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Jason Parker, Mphathisi Ncube, Liam Butler, Julius Adams and Steve Johnson.

3 Declarations of interest

3.1 No declarations of interest were declared in relation to part 1 items.

3.2 In relation to part 2 matters, D Martin and G Darwood declared an interest in items 22.1 and 22.2. The DCG also declared an interest in item 22.3.

4 Minutes of previous meeting held on 9th December 2025

4.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 9th December 2025 were confirmed as a true record by members.

5 Matters arising

5.1 There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.

Student centred matters

6 SEND annual report

6.1 R Corns, Vice Principal, provided members with an annual overview of the provision for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The report noted that:

6.2 *16-18 (or those 19-24 with an EHCP as at 6/3/25)*
- 1170 learners declared a disability or learning difficulty.
- 374 learners with an Education Health and Care Plan.
- 240 learners had high needs funding.
- 178 learners were enrolled on discrete SEND provision.

6.3 *Adults*

- 532 learners declared a disability or learning difficulty (this number was high due to learners' self-declarations which may include items not requiring additional support, such as wearing spectacles).
- 160 learners were being supported.

6.4 *Apprentices*

- 181 learners declared a disability or learning difficulty.
- 86 learners were being supported.

6.5 The report further noted that the College:

- continued to work with local authorities and other organisations to provide support for SEND learners.
- employed multiple roles to support SEND and continued to review effectiveness.
- continued to engage in networking groups to ensure any reforms were met and to work together to ensure the offer met local need.

6.6 In relation to forthcoming SEND reform it was noted that the majority of changes would come into effect from 2028/29 but there was as yet no clarity on what the changes would mean for colleges.

6.7 The VP further advised that work was being undertaken to look at SEND learner achievements to identify gaps in achievement compared to their peers.

6.8 In response to a question from members, the VP confirmed that the College had sufficient resources in place to support the number of SEND learners, despite a historic funding shortfall for high needs places. The aim, where appropriate to do so, was to taper off support for learners as they progressed through College in order to develop independence and resilience.

6.9 Members requested that future reporting include data represented as a percentage of the total student cohort.

6.10 **It was resolved** to note the SEND Annual Report.

7 Students' Union Termly Report

7.1 Kaynat Ahmad and Simka Rifai provided an overview of the Students' Union termly report, highlighting a range of activities:

- *Public transport* – Focused on improving access to affordable student transport.
- *Holocaust Commemoration* – DSU supported a major remembrance event featuring student contributions and a survivor testimony.
- *Islamophobia Awareness Month* – Cultural-education stalls promoted understanding of Islamic traditions and encouraged open discussion.
- *Mental Health Activities* – Awareness sessions across both campuses received strong student engagement and volunteer support.
- *Community Support for Amelia* – A college-wide initiative created around 700 cards for a child with neuroblastoma as part of a national appeal.
- *Valentine's & Galentine's Day* – Creative activities fostered kindness, friendship, and positive community spirit.

- *AoC Conference* – The SU President participated in national discussions and networking to strengthen student voice.
- *NUS Conferences – Fair Deal for the Future* – DSU delegates contributed to national debates and campaigns.
- *GOAT Campaign – "Go Out and Talk"* – Student leaders engaged directly with students through on-campus conversations and awareness activities.
- *NUS VPFE Election Campaign* – The President stood again for national VPFE, promoting the messages "Love FE" and "Don't Ghost Your Vote."
- *New SU Leadership Team* – The new team had set priorities around wellbeing, enrichment, clubs, and cost-of-living support.
- *West Midlands Student Transport Lobby Event* – Regional lobbying secured a government commitment to improve student transport from 2027.
- *Unloc Governor Training* – Student governors completed leadership training, with Simka Rifai appointed to the Unloc Youth Board.
- *NAMSS Conference* – DSU shared its student engagement work and took part in sector wellbeing and inclusion workshops.
- *Sports Leadership Programme (AoC Sport)* – Five ambassadors delivered new clubs and wellbeing projects across sport, EDI and sustainability.
- *STI Awareness Sessions* – Brook had delivered sexual-health education sessions encouraging safe and informed conversations.

7.2 In response to a question from Members in relation to activities around public transport, K Ahmad confirmed that issues of reliability of public transport and safety had been raised at a recent meeting with the Mayor of the West Midlands and MPs.

7.3 Members concluded that the Students' Union remained highly active and committed to expanding student engagement, opportunities and visibility.

7.4 On behalf of Members, the Chair thanked the Students' Union for their vital work in enriching the lives of students.

7.5 **It was resolved** to note the Students' Union termly report.

8 Data dashboard review and future reporting

8.1 The CEP advised that the Dudley Dashboard had been updated with the refresh of annual data reporting as well as live in-year performance data. She advised that a further development was planned to add a tile reporting on T Level performance indicators.

8.2 In discussion, Members highlighted the value of the transparency demonstrated through the public dashboard, which had been cited by external stakeholders such as DfE and Ofsted as an example of excellent practice. Members expressed a desire to retain all of the areas reported on, but recognised that if it were possible to automate some of the data reporting through the use of Power Bi, this would reduce the workload involved in maintaining the dashboard.

8.3 **It was resolved** to note the review of the Data Dashboard.

9 **Vice Principals' Termly Report**

9.1 The Vice Principals presented their termly report, outlining progress across all curriculum areas. Highlights included strong outcomes in skills competitions, strengthened employer partnerships, enhanced curriculum activity, and positive learner engagement across vocational, technical and academic programmes.

9.2 The VPs highlighted in particular the breadth of skills competitions taking place across the College and acknowledged the work of Assistant Principal Sam Sears in promoting and leading this initiative.

9.3 Members also noted participation in a wide range of sporting competitions, including representation at the AoC national basketball competition.

9.4 The report also detailed a schools engagement event at the IoT attended by 90 learners, focused on technical pathways into Construction as part of CTEC activity. In addition, 130 staff from the Construction departments of five Colleges would be participating in a best-practice sharing event on College Conference Day.

9.5 Members noted the introduction of new planned provision, including dog grooming within the Animal Science Centre.

9.6 The report provided assurance that curriculum delivery, enrichment activity and industry collaboration continued to progress well across all areas.

9.7 Discussion took place on how the impact of enrichment and competition activities could be measured to evidence the resulting gains in confidence and improved grades for individual learners. Members agreed that a longitudinal impact study would be beneficial in demonstrating longer-term outcomes.

9.8 W Davies, as careers lead governor, reported on a careers engagement session she had attended, noting the alignment between the development of personal skills and participation in skills competitions.

9.9 **It was resolved** to note the Vice Principals' termly report.

10 **Lifelong Learning Entitlement presentation**

10.1 D Goode provided a presentation which outlined the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE), a new flexible funding model providing adults up to the age of 60 with a personal entitlement equivalent to four years of higher-level study.

10.2 Members were briefed on key features, including modular, credit-based learning, eligibility rules, the forthcoming personal LLE digital account, and funding arrangements for tuition, maintenance and priority subject areas.

10.3 The slides highlighted potential benefits for learners and providers, examples of learner journeys, and the repayment framework.

10.4 The College's preparations were noted, including the appointment of a LLE lead, further development of modular provision and staff training.

10.5 Challenges and risks were also considered, including increased IAG demands, data limitations, potential risk of some learners failing to achieve a complete qualification, competitive pressures, and uncertainty around timelines for rollout.

10.6 In relation to the financial risk to the provider of a student enrolling on a programme with insufficient credits to cover the necessary funding, the DfE had indicated that in these circumstances they would act as guarantor.

10.7 **It was resolved** to note the presentation on the Lifelong Learning Entitlement.

Routine business matters

11 Minutes of Standards Committee of 2nd February 2026

11.0.1 P Noon, as Chair of the Standards Committee, presented the draft minutes of the meeting held 2nd February 2026, noting a number of items were recommended by the Committee and therefore included on the current agenda. Other matters considered by the committee had included:

– Growth and Skills Strategy update.
– Data dashboard review.
– Partnerships and sub-contracting report.
– Risk Register monitoring report.
– Quality, teaching, Learning and Assessment update.
– Compliments and complaints analysis.
– Safeguarding and learner conduct report.
– Higher Education update.

11.0.2 **It was resolved** to note the minutes of the Standards Committee held 2nd February 2026.

11.1 Operational Development Plan 2026

11.1.1 The CEP presented the annual College Operational Development (CODP) for the coming 12 months. The 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 supported by Quality improvement Plans in each curriculum area and professional services team, delivered through the performance management system and monitored through the annual cycle of performance data. The Standards Committee would then review the CODP at each meeting.

11.1.2 The CEP reported on ongoing curriculum changes and noted some national discontent regarding both the pace and scale of these changes, including challenges as a result of defunding of some apprenticeships. The College would continue to prioritise what was in the best interests of learners.

11.1.3 The timing and development of the new Strategic Plan was discussed, with work commencing at the forthcoming College Conference Day, followed by consultation involving the Students' Union, staff and Corporation members. The Chair emphasised the need for agility in responding to the continuing pace of external change.

11.1.4 The College Operational Development Plan had been recommended for approval by the Standards Committee.

11.1.5 **It was resolved** to approve the College Operational Development Plan for 2026.

11.2 Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement

11.2.1 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 College's Corporation. The document had been recommended for approval by the Standards Committee.

11.2.2 **It was resolved** to approve the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement.

12 Minutes of Audit Committee of 3rd March 2026

12.0.1 W Davies, as Vice Chair of the Audit Committee, presented the draft minutes of the meeting held 3rd March 2026, noting a number of items were recommended by the committee and therefore included on the current agenda. Other matters considered by the committee had included:

- A presentation by the internal auditors on the on the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023 (ECCTA) which introduced a new offence of Failure to Prevent Fraud applicable to the College.
- One internal audit report on *Key Financial Controls: Cashflow Forecasting & Planning* had been reviewed. This audit had been undertaken at the College's request to identify how forecasting could be made more accurate. The report had given partial assurance, with one high-level recommendation which was being actioned.
- Rolling schedule of audit recommendations had been reviewed in detail, and members had noted a number of outstanding recommendations in the areas of capital projects and health and safety, and had received assurance that these were being addressed. The CFO had also reviewed closed actions to ensure ongoing compliance was being maintained and had highlighted some inconsistency in implementation.
- Internal Auditors' annual benchmarking report 2024/25 had been noted, with overall assurance remaining consistent with the previous three years and broadly in line with the majority of other colleges.

12.0.2 **It was resolved** to note the minutes of the audit committee held 3rd March 2026.

12.1 Performance of external auditors 2024/25 and appointment for 2025/26 accounts

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

12.2 Risk register update

12.2.1 The CFO presented the risk register which had been reviewed by the Senior Leadership Group (SLG) including risk scores and levels of assurance. There had been changes to the net risk scores for the following risks as a result of the review:

- The net risk score for data protection had reduced from 8 to 4 as a result of the successful implementation of a number of the identified actions.
- The net risk score for apprenticeship provision had increased from 6 to 9. Although the actions to improve the approach to apprenticeships were progressing, insufficient impact or improvement on the student experience was seen.

- The net risk score for capital projects had increased from 6 to 12. A number of capital projects were subject to delay including the air source heat pumps, CAT works, plans for relocation of transport technologies and refurbishment of the great hall.

12.2.2 For other risks, good progress was being made and a number of actions were now complete. The Risk Scrutiny Group had met in December to focus on the risk around work experience and a number of further actions were agreed resulting from this review. Although it was agreed that steady progress was being made in this area, updating the work experience policy was subject to delay.

12.2.3 **It was resolved** to note the Risk Management Spring Term Report.

13 Minutes of F&E Committee of 10th March 2026

13.0.1 S Wood, Vice Chair of the Finance and Estates Committee, presented the draft minutes of the meeting held 10th March 2026, noting a number of items were recommended by the committee and therefore included on the current agenda. Other matters considered by the committee had included:

- Pension revaluation report.
- Curriculum contribution analysis 2024/25.
- Enrolment dashboard update.
- Insurance annual report.
- Sustainability report and action plan.
- Risk register review.

13.0.2 **It was resolved** to note the minutes of the Finance and Estates Committee of 10th March 2026.

13.1 Management accounts to January 2026

13.1.1 The CFO presented the management accounts for January 2026, showing the position six months into the financial year against the revised budget. The position showed a surplus of £838k against a budgeted surplus of £324k. Key points were noted as:

- KPIs showed a positive position, with all indicators rated green.
    - Income was adverse to budget by £319k, mainly due to: Apprenticeship income being £315k adverse
    - Other income variances accounting for the remaining difference, with no concerns noted.
- Pay costs were £431k favourable to budget, with savings generated through the costing of vacancies at the point of employee departure and delays between costed and actual start dates.
- Non-pay costs were £295k favourable to budget due to:
    - A VAT creditor write-off of £78k as advised in the audit report.
    - Forecasted supplier payments being higher than actual payments, with timing differences expected to correct by year-end.
- These variances had been incorporated into the revised budget.
- The cash position of £10.2m at the end of January compared favourably to budget by £1.5m, due to:
    - Unbudgeted capital grant receipts within RB1 of £1.0m, assumed to be fully spent in year.

- Savings on supplier payments of £0.5m due to profiling, with full-year payments expected to be made.

– All three financial health measures (solvency, performance and borrowing) were close to moving into the next scoring band, and it was likely that a score of 240 would be reported at the next quarter, resulting in an "outstanding" financial health grade.

13.1.2 The CFO highlighted that the financial health score was expected to move to outstanding and Members noted that the College was accruing cash as part of a planned future capital investment strategy.

13.1.3 The CFO further highlighted the additional burden of financial reporting to the DfE following ONS reclassification of colleges, which was likely to require further resource within the finance team.

13.1.4 The management accounts had been scrutinised at the Finance and Estates committee and recommended to the Corporation.

13.1.5 **It was resolved** to approve the management accounts to January 2026.

13.2 **Revised budget 2025/26**

13.2.1 The CFO presented an updated 2025/26 budget, incorporating all material financial changes since the revised budget was approved in November 2025. The updated position reflected an improvement in overall performance, with EBITDA now forecast at £4.06m and the operating position at £1.07m. The financial strategy targets remained broadly on track, and all key performance indicators continued to show a positive trajectory. There was no impact on loan covenants or on the financial health assessment, which continued to be rated Good.

13.2.2 The principal movements within the updated budget were noted as:

– Reduction in forecast apprenticeship income based on current delivery levels and updated year-to-date performance.
– Favourable reduction in pay costs, predominantly driven by lower pension contribution requirements.
– Increase in repairs and maintenance costs, reflecting essential upkeep and estate priorities.

13.2.3 The CFO noted that the capital budget had been updated and that the College had been selected for a pilot for energy works funded by a grant from DfE. She further noted that the IT spend had been increased by £0.5k to bring forward spend to avoid price increases and supply issues in the summer period, with funds brought forward from planned 2026/27 expenditure.

13.2.4 Members noted that these changes resulted in a prudent but stable financial position at the mid-point of the financial year.

13.2.5 The revised budget had been scrutinised at the Finance and Estates committee and recommended to the Corporation.

13.2.6 **It was resolved** to approve the revised budget for 2025/26.

13.3 **Value for Money/Public Benefit Statement**

13.3.1 The CFO advised that the Value for Money/Public Benefit Statement was one of the four primary regulatory objectives for the Office for Students and required providers to regularly publish clear information about arrangements for securing value for money including data about the sources of income and the way that its income was used.

13.3.2 The statement set out how the College ensured that value for money was prioritised and delivered and the format was unchanged to that used in 2025, with updates to reflect the 2025 financial statements.

13.3.3 The statement had been recommended by the Finance and Estates committee for approval.

13.3.4 **It was resolved** to approve the Value for Money/Public Benefit Statement.

13.4 **Commercially sensitive - Estates and Capital projects update**

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

13.5 **Treasury management policy**

13.5.1 The Treasury Management Policy had been reviewed, and a number of changes had been made to reflect the higher cash balances expected over the next few years in preparation for investment in building estate capacity and improving the student experience. The key changes were noted as:

- Investment in longer-term deposit facilities, in addition to the overnight sweep, provided that investments remained in line with Corporation requirements (para 3.3).
- Updated criteria for investment decisions, including agency rating, liquidity needs, diversification, return optimisation and consideration of environmental track record.
- A new requirement for Corporation approval for any deposits placed with a maturity date greater than six months (previously one month).

13.5.2 The policy had been recommended for approval by the Finance and Estates Committee.

13.5.3 Members noted the importance of ensuring that all investment decisions included checks on sustainability and ethical practice.

13.5.4 The CFO confirmed that the College might explore cash investment platforms to assess whether these could offer improved returns compared with those currently available.

13.5.5 **It was resolved** to approve the Treasury Management Policy.

13.6 **Procurement Policy**

13.6.1 The procurement policy had been reviewed and updates were summarised as follows:

- Reinforcement of the College's approach to sustainability and how this would be incorporated where possible, into procurement activity.
- Update of procurement thresholds in line with Public Contracts Regulations (PCR)
    - Medium procurement ceiling increase from £20,000 to £30,000, and corresponding change to large procurement threshold.

- Update to PCR values from 1 January 2026.

– Requirement to store contract variations and termination letters within the central contracts register.
– Definition of risk profile classification.

13.6.2 The policy had been reviewed and recommended to Corporation by the Finance and Estates Committee.

13.6.3 In response to a question from Members, the CFO agreed to clarify the basis on which the College operated its Starbucks-branded coffee shop.

13.6.4 **It was agreed** to approve the Procurement Policy.

14 **Commercially sensitive - IOT update**
This matter is the subject of a separate and confidential minute.

Governance and compliance matters

15 **Governor engagement activity – updates**

15.1 The DCG presented an update on recent and planned governor engagement activities. Reports following two engagement sessions, one focusing on SEND and one on the quality of education, were included in the report. A further session on Digital Innovation and Sustainability had taken place on 10th March.

15.2 A programme of all scheduled engagement activities was provided and Members who were not already allocated to specific sessions were invited to express interest in joining sessions.

15.3 **It was resolved** to note the governor engagement activity update.

16 **Governance Assurance Map**

16.1 The DCG introduced the Governance Assurance Map, developed to provide the Corporation with a clear view of how assurance, regulatory responsibilities and policy oversight flowed across the governance structure.

16.2 The map highlighted that, under the current Scheme of Delegation, all statutory policy approvals sat with the Corporation, including many operational or compliance-level policies that could safely be delegated to the appropriate Committee. Delegation would strengthen scrutiny, improve assurance and free Corporation time for strategic oversight.

16.3 It was further proposed to update agenda cover-sheet "purpose" labels, replacing the current "for approval /for information" with clearer governance-aligned categories such as '*for assurance*', '*for scrutiny*', '*for recommendation*' to provide members with a clearer indication of what was required of them.

16.4 The Corporation endorsed this approach and agreed that a revised Scheme of Delegation and updated governance assurance map be brought to the next meeting for approval. Terms of reference for the committees would then be revised to reflect these changes for the commencement of the next academic year.

16.5 **It was resolved** to endorse the governance assurance mapping and policy delegation.

17 **Quality Improvement Plan for Governance**

17.1 The DCG explained that the Governance Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2026 set out a focused programme of activity designed to strengthen the Corporation's effectiveness, assurance and strategic oversight. The plan identified seven priority areas aligned to regulatory expectations, strategic risk and the College's long-term ambitions, each with clear actions, success measures and target dates to support transparent monitoring through the annual cycle of business. The key priorities were:

- Strengthening stakeholder engagement so that employer and community insight more clearly informed strategic discussion, challenge and decision-making.
- Further developing the strategic link programme to deepen governors' understanding of curriculum, professional services and strategic risks.
- Enhancing the Corporation's preparedness for Ofsted through targeted governance development and ensuring documentation clearly reflected expectations relating to inclusion, wellbeing and impact.
- Formalising succession planning for key roles to secure continuity, future leadership capacity and alignment of skills to strategic needs.
- Introducing an annual governance assurance map to improve strategic focus, reduce duplication and ensure that sources of assurance were clearly linked to key risks and delegated responsibilities.
- Commissioning an external review of governance in Autumn 2026 to provide independent assurance on effectiveness and to inform future development priorities.
- Strengthening oversight of sustainability, resilience and strategic risk, including assurance linked to ISO 14001 and alignment with the Cyber Governance Code of Practice.

17.2 M Digard suggested that the word 'environmental' be removed from the action plan in relation to sustainability.

17.3 **It was resolved** to approve the Quality Improvement Plan for Governance 2026.

18 **Any Other Business**

18.1 A question was raised about whether the College had any direct involvement with OpenAI. It was noted that the College accessed AI functionality through Microsoft Copilot under its existing Microsoft licensing arrangements.

19 **Date of next meeting**

19.1 The next meeting of the Corporation would be held on 1st May 2026 (development event).

The part 2 meeting was the subject of separate confidential minutes.

The meeting closed at 18.57 hours.

Approved by members at the Corporation Meeting held 16th June 2026