Part 1 Minutes of the Corporation meeting held Tuesday 30th June 2026 at 4.30pm in Conference Room 1, Broadway

Members Present:	Julius Adams	Diana Martin (CEP)
	Liam Butler	Paul Noon (Chair)
	Sally Cornfield	Jason Parker
	Mireille Digard	Liz Sithole (via Teams)
	Paul Hartridge	Sarah Wood (via Teams)

In Attendance: Rachel Corns (Vice Principal)
Gill Darwood (Director of Governance) (DG)
Susanne Davies (Director of IoT)
Debbie Goode (Executive Director Public Affairs and Marketing)
Kathryn Jones (Director of HR)
Louise Jones (Chief Finance Officer) (CFO)

Board administrative matters

1 **Confirmation of quorum**

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

2 **Apologies for absence**

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Wendy Davies, Matthew Collins, Mpathisi Ncube, Nirmal Gupta, Kaynat Ahmad, Simka Rifai and Claire Millard.

3 **Formal thanks to outgoing Student Governor and welcome to new Student Governor**

3.1 The Chair noted that the meeting would have been the final meeting for Kaynat Ahmad, Student Union President, and that he would arrange to follow up with her to present the card and leaving gift on behalf of members. He advised that K Ahmad had been elected as Vice President for FE of the National Union of Students and in this role would maintain a link with the College. Members were also informed that Kaynat had been awarded Highly Commended in the annual Student Governor of the Year awards.

3.2 Members expressed their thanks to Kaynat for her contribution during her term of office and their best wishes for success in her new role.

3.3 The Chair advised that Callum Bonar had been elected as Student Union President for 2026/27 and as such would take up the role of Student Governor from 1st July 2026.

3.4 **It was resolved** to record the Corporation's thanks and appreciation to K Ahmad for her contribution as Student Governor and to welcome C Bonar as Student Governor from 1 July 2026.

4 **Declarations of interest**

4.1 There were no declarations of interest relating to part 1 agenda items.

5 **Minutes of previous meeting held on 16th June 2026**

5.1 The minutes of the part 1 meeting held on 16th June 2026 were confirmed as a true record by members.

6 **Matters arising**

6.1 There were no matters arising from the previous meeting.

Strategic matters

7 **Annual Accountability Statement and Strategic Transition Planning Statement**

7.1 The CEP presented the College's draft Annual Accountability and Skills Duty Statement for the academic year 2026/27 which captured the work planned within the College Operational Development Plan as well as additions around local and regional priorities for NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) and how the College would use mainstream inclusion funding. Members noted that the College had submitted a capital bid to support development of facilities for this provision.

7.2 It was noted that Standards Committee members had considered a first draft version at their meeting held on 5th May 2026. The statement was required to be submitted to the DfE by 31st July 2026. Members considered that the plan represented a comprehensive and accurate statement.

7.3 In addition, the CEP presented the Strategic Transition Planning Statement which was required to be submitted to the DfE by 6th July 2026 and required Corporation oversight. This was an online data collection exercise rather than a statement and had required early projections of provision in relation to T Levels to be introduced from 2027/28.

7.4 **It was resolved** that the Corporation:

- had reviewed the Annual Accountability Statement for 2026/27 and was satisfied that it met DfE requirements and reflected the College's strategic priorities and local skills needs.
- approved the Annual Accountability Statement for 2026/27 and Strategic Transition Planning Statement, for submission to DfE.

8 **Update on Annual Strategic Conversation with DFE/FEC**

8.1 The CEP and the Chair provided an update on the Annual Strategic Conversation held with DfE colleagues, who had been accompanied by the new Deputy FE Commissioner, on 11 June 2026. It was noted that the formal letter setting out the outcomes of the meeting would be circulated to members once received from the DfE.

8.2 The Chair reported that this had been a positive meeting and that it had demonstrated that the College was held in high regard by the DfE. Particular interest had been shown in the College's approach to the progression gateway, as well as English and maths resits. Members noted that a copy of the presentation slides used at the meeting had been made available in the document library for their review.

8.3 **It was resolved** to note the update on the Annual Strategic Conversation with the DFE/FEC.

9 **Institute of Technology update**

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

Student centred matters

10 **Students at the centre of all we do – annual report**

10.1 Members received a presentation from R Corns, Vice Principal, which highlighted key achievements and developments across the College. Key points included:

- Strong learner numbers across provision, including 5,297 learners aged 16–18, 1,711 apprentices and 4,905 adult enrolments.
- Positive performance indicators, with high retention rates (over 90% for 16–18 and adults) and predicted achievements showing a continued improving trend across all key groups.
- Strong outcomes for Dudley Sixth, with predicted high grades (80% A*–C).
- Good attendance for GCSE English and maths resits (85%).
- Very positive learner survey feedback, with satisfaction for 16–18 learners typically in the high 80% range and adult learners above 95% across key measures such as teaching quality, support and safety.
- High levels of engagement and success in skills competitions, including national recognition, medals and increased participation across a wide range of curriculum areas.
- Notable sporting achievements and continued success in national competitions.
- Continued development of the College's skills agenda, including sector leadership, expansion of partnerships and recognition through national awards.
- Enrichment and wider student experience, including Artsfest, community engagement and charitable activity.
- Strong progress in preparing for the new academic year, with high application and enrolment levels and effective transition planning for new learners.
- Implementation of a new six-week 'DUDLEY' transition programme, including early diagnostics, a focus on progression, and initiatives such as "swap don't drop" to support retention and ensure learners were on the right programme.

10.2 Members raised a number of questions on points of detail from the presentation. In relation to learner survey response rates, it was confirmed that surveys had been undertaken during tutorial sessions, resulting in consistently high response rates, with follow-up undertaken by the Quality team to ensure completion.

10.3 In relation to impact measurement of the new DUDLEY programme, R Corns advised that this would include monitoring of withdrawal rates and learner feedback from "All About You" week. Early diagnostic assessment would also identify a learner's suitability for their chosen programme. The CEP noted that initial advice and guidance provided by schools was not always comprehensive and that the College played a key role in helping learners understand career opportunities within specific sectors.

10.4 Members noted that the DUDLEY programme would continue to evolve in future years and would include incentives such as sector specific rewards for completion.

10.5 M Digard noted that the programme would support team building and a sense of belonging for new learners. The Chair noted that the programme also provided opportunities to enhance enrichment and sporting engagement, and the CEP informed members of the introduction of new DfE enrichment benchmarks for colleges.

10.6 P Hartridge emphasised the importance of ensuring that revised induction arrangements were communicated in a timely manner to all teaching staff.

10.7 **It was resolved** to note the 'students at the centre of all we do' presentation.

11 **Students' Union Termly Report**

11.1 The termly report from K Ahmad was noted, which highlighted a wide range of activity:

- delivery of Students' Union activity from March to June 2026 across representation, community and skills development.
- a successful presidential election and transition to the incoming President.
- ongoing campaigning and representation at local, regional and national level, including engagement with policymakers.
- a broad programme of events and initiatives supporting student wellbeing, inclusion and community cohesion.
- national recognition and sector engagement, including NUS election, EPAS accreditation and highly commended Student Governor of the Year award.
- continued focus on strengthening student voice, leadership development and participation across the College.

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

12 **Safeguarding and Prevent annual report**

12.1 R Corns presented the Safeguarding and Prevent Annual Report, which detailed the following:

- Most new employees continued to be compliant with safeguarding core training.
- The Lead Governor, Matthew Collins, had completed three visits this academic year and the governor safeguarding checklist was completed.
- 3,439 concerns were raised through CPOMS, which was an increase compared with last year (+573), but indicated staff were utilising CPOMs to report their concerns. Not all referrals required in depth action.
- 257 conduct cases, with 168 full suspensions and 61 cooling off suspensions.
- 462 learners supported by the counselling team.
- 207 accessing support through Togetherall, of which 196 were students and 11 staff.
- 5 Prevent referrals, of which 2 had resulted in no escalation to Channel, 1 was at the information gathering stage and 1 awaiting an update from counter terrorism.
- Student wellbeing – the new youth worker had worked both with groups and directly with individual learners potentially at risk of criminal activity. 23 out of 26 of these learners had remained on their programmes reflecting the success of this new initiative.

12.2 R Corns advised that an additional full-time Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) was being appointed to be based at the Brierley Hill Learning Quarter, in order to reflect the growth in student numbers.

12.3 The Chair expressed his thanks to M Collins and S Cornfield for undertaking a recent governor engagement visit with the safeguarding team and expressed Corporation's thanks to the staff who worked in this challenging area.

12.4 Members concurred with the view that Safeguarding and Prevent arrangements in the College continued to be effective.

12.5 **It was resolved** to note the assurance received from the Safeguarding and Prevent Annual Report.

13 Standards Matters

13.1 **Minutes of the Standards Committee held on 5th May 2026**

13.1.1 P Noon, as Chair of the Standards Committee, presented the draft minutes of the meeting held on 5th May 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.
- Progress against the Operational Development Plan.
- Data dashboard review undertaken and changes agreed.
- Risk register monitoring.
- Quality assurance of partnerships and subcontracted provision.
- Quality, Teaching, Learning and Assessment report.
- Compliments and complaints analysis.
- Safeguarding and learner conduct report.
- Careers Strategy presentation.

13.1.2 **It was resolved** to note the minutes of the Standards Committee held on 5th May 2026.

13.2 **Freedom of Speech Annual Report**

13.2.1 S Davies presented the Freedom of Speech Annual Report and advised that it provided assurance that the College was meeting its statutory duties in relation to freedom of speech. Members noted that the College had robust policies and practices in place which aligned with sector expectations, Office for Students registration conditions and the requirements of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act.

13.2.2 The report highlighted that, during the 2025/26 academic year:

- All external speaker requests had been approved
- No freedom of speech complaints had been received
- A clear audit trail had been maintained in relation to requests and decisions
- Freedom of speech considerations had been appropriately balanced with safeguarding and Prevent responsibilities
- Freedom of speech requirements had been embedded within governance oversight, curriculum delivery and research ethics arrangements.

13.2.3 Members noted that the College had recently updated its Freedom of Speech Code of Practice and would continue to monitor emerging regulatory requirements, including the introduction of new Office for Students complaints mechanisms.

13.2.4 The Chair noted that the freedom of speech requirements were driven predominantly by higher education regulation but that the College remained mindful of wider safeguarding and radicalisation risks within the borough

13.2.5 **It was resolved** to approve the Freedom of Speech Annual Report 2026.

14 Audit Matters

14.1 Minutes of the Audit Committee held on 9th June 2026

14.1.1 L Butler, as Chair of the Audit Committee, presented the draft minutes of the meeting held on 9th June, 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:

- Internal Auditor's sector update and emerging risk radar – this had informed the committee's consideration of risk management and the internal audit plan.
- Internal audit progress report.
- Rolling schedule of audit recommendations.
- Risk management termly update.

14.1.2 The Chair expressed thanks to members of the Audit Committee for the level of assurance provided to the Corporation as a result of their detailed work.

14.1.3 **It was resolved** to note the minutes of the Audit Committee held on 9th June 2026.

14.2 Plan for external audit of 2025/26 accounts

14.2.1 L Jones presented the external audit plan provided by Bishop Fleming which covered the audit of Dudley College of Technology and Transformational Technologies Partnership Limited (TTPL).

14.2.2 The key points were noted as:

- Materiality was based on 2% of income.
- Significant risks addressed by the audit would cover a number of standard areas including management override of controls, fraud in income recognition, pension assumptions, accounting for capital projects and capital grant funding, and in respect of TTPL only, going concern.
- The interim audit would take place week commencing 10 August with the main audit taking place weeks commencing 5 and 12 October.
- The proposed fee represented a 3% increase on the 2024/25 fee and was considered to represent value for money.

14.2.3 The report also provided updates on a number of key areas for the sector including College Accounts Direction 2025/26, FEHE SORP changes, College Financial Handbook and VAT treatment following a recent case at an FE college.

14.2.4 The external audit plan had been reviewed by the Audit Committee and was recommended for approval.

14.2.5 **It was resolved** to approve the plan for external audit 2025/26 accounts.

14.3 **Fraud and irregularity annual report 2025/26**

14.3.1 The CFO presented the Fraud and Irregularity Annual Report for 2025/26, noting the Corporation's responsibility, under grant funding agreements and contracts with the DfE and WMCA, to maintain an adequate system of internal control to ensure compliance and to prevent and detect irregularities and suspected fraud, including theft, bribery and corruption. This included maintaining an effective and proportionate counter fraud strategy covering awareness, prevention, detection, investigation and sanction, including seeking redress where appropriate.

14.3.2 It was noted that the College fell within the scope of the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023, which introduced a new corporate offence of 'failure to prevent fraud', making it a criminal offence for large organisations that failed to prevent fraud committed by employees or agents for the organisation's benefit. The College was taking a range of measures to address the associated risks, which would form the focus of fraud prevention activity over the following 12 months.

14.3.3 The annual risk assessment of fraud and irregularity reviewed all key risk areas, provided commentary on the existing control framework designed to prevent fraud, and identified any further actions required. The full risk assessment was available in the Document Library of Convene for those who wished to review further detail.

14.3.4 The report had been considered by the audit committee and recommended for approval.

14.3.5 **It was resolved** to approve the fraud and irregularity annual report 2025/26.

14.4 **Internal Audit Plan 2026/27**

14.4.1 Following consideration by the audit committee, the following areas were proposed for review in 2026/27:

- Planned and Reactive Maintenance Arrangements (February 2027)
- Employer Engagement Framework (February 2027)
- Learner Number Systems (April 2027)
- Key Financial Controls: Month End and General Ledger (November 2026)
- Fraud and Bribery Compliance Framework (January 2027)
- Follow-up (April 2027)

14.4.2 Members noted the proposed audit fee for 2026/27 which was in line with the contract and considered it represented value for money.

14.4.3 The CFO advised that, at the request of audit committee members, the plan for the following year would incorporate Payroll and Business Continuity.

14.4.4 **It was resolved** to approve the Internal Audit Plan for 2026/27.

14.5 **Confidential - Internal auditors' performance in 2025/26 and re-appointment for 2026/27**

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

15 **Risk management summer term report**

15.1 The CFO presented the Summer Term Risk Management Report and advised that the Senior Leadership Team continued to monitor progress against the College risk register. Members noted that both the Standards Committee and Finance and Estates Committee had scrutinised those risks falling within their respective remits.

15.2 The risk register provided an overview of the strategic risks facing the College. Members noted that good progress had been made in implementing mitigating actions, with many actions either completed or progressing as planned. However, some risks remained subject to factors outside the College's direct control and, where appropriate, risk scores had been increased to reflect ongoing concerns.

15.3 Particular focus remained on capital projects and partnership-related risks. Members noted that, whilst a number of capital projects had been completed and had enhanced the student experience, some larger projects had experienced delays. These delays had been attributed in part to staffing capacity, together with challenges relating to project costing. Interim support had been put in place within the Estates team to assist in bringing projects back on track.

15.4 In relation to specific projects, members noted that:

- The replacement of heating and chilling systems at the CAT Centre was now progressing through a defined project plan, with implementation scheduled over the summer period.
- Development of the air-source heat pump project continued, with replacement valves installed during the Easter break and testing of their effectiveness underway.
- Plans and costings relating to the Transport Technology relocation and refurbishment of the Hall were under review to determine the most effective delivery approach.

15.5 Members also considered risks associated with partnership working, particularly where these were linked to capital developments. The key areas of focus remained the Dudley Higher Education and Skills Centre and the relocation of the Skills Shop, both of which continued to experience delays arising from external partner dependencies. The College remained fully engaged with partners to seek resolution of these issues.

15.6 It was further noted that an alternative site had now been identified for the Skills Shop which was considered to offer improved accommodation. Planning for the relocation was ongoing, including consideration of temporary accommodation arrangements. Members also noted that a recent ministerial visit to the Skills Shop had generated positive publicity.

15.7 The Chair commented positively on the work of the Audit Committee in overseeing risk management and noted that the approach of allocating detailed scrutiny of risks to the relevant committees continued to operate effectively.

15.8 **It was resolved** to note the assurance provided by the risk management summer term report.

Policies and procedures

16 **Learner financial support policy**

16.1 D Goode advised that the revised Learner Financial Support Policy had been considered in detail at the Finance and Estates Committee, and since then the College had received confirmation from DfE that the income threshold for specified benefits had now been removed.

16.2 Members noted that for 2026/27, eligible learners would receive a free meals allowance of £5.25 per day, compared with the DfE funding rate of £2.66 per day. Members noted that, whilst the DfE had increased the further education rate for the first time to match that provided to schools, the College continued to fund a significant additional subsidy through its bursary allocation.

16.3 Members discussed the operation of the free meals scheme, including the extent to which it supported healthy and nutritious food choices. It was noted that whilst learners could not be required to purchase specific food items, there were opportunities for the College to actively encourage healthier choices through its catering offer and engagement with all learners.

16.4 Discussion took place on how the College might further promote healthy eating, sustainability and informed food choices across the wider learner population. The importance of gathering learner feedback on the catering offer was discussed. During the discussion, S Wood shared examples of work undertaken within the university sector to educate students and staff about healthy eating, sustainability and locally sourced food, and offered to share good practice with the College. The CFO and CEP agreed to take this forward as an action.

16.5 **It was resolved** to approve the Financial Support and Guidelines 2026/27 Policy.

Governance and compliance matters

17 **Minutes of the DAT/DCT Strategic Liaison Committee meeting held on 10th June 2026**

17.1 The Chair presented the draft minutes of the meeting held on 10th June 2026, noting that the committee had received a detailed updated on Schedule 4 projects and areas of collaborative work between Dudley College and Dudley Academies Trust. He noted that the projects being worked on were gaining traction with good progress made.

17.2 **It was resolved** to note the minutes of the DAT/DCT Strategic Liaison Committee held on 10th June 2026.

18 **Minutes of the Search Committee meeting held on 23rd June 2026**

18.1 P Noon, as Chair of the Search Committee, presented the draft minutes of the meeting held on 23rd June 2026, noting a number of items were recommended by the committee and therefore included on the current agenda. Other matters considered by the committee included an update on Corporation membership, outcome of the recent skills audit and member recruitment activity.

18.2 **It was resolved** to note the minutes of the Search Committee held on 23rd June 2026.

19 **Appointment of new member and reappointment of existing members**

19.1 Recommendations from the Search Committee held on Tuesday 23rd June 2026 were considered.

19.2 **It was resolved:**

- To appoint Gemma Linsley to the Corporation, subject to satisfactory references and DBS clearance.
- To re-appoint Julius Adams for a second term of office commencing 8th November 2026.

20 **Governor engagement activity updates**

20.1 The DG provided an update on recent and planned governor engagement activities. Four engagement sessions had taken place and the reports for these activities had been provided:

- Digital Innovation
- Personal Development
- Employer and Skills Development.
- Safeguarding

20.2 A further session had taken place prior to the meeting on risk management and cyber security. L Butler reported that this had been a very insightful session which had provided members with assurance in these areas of the College's operations.

20.3 The DG advised that further engagement activities would be co-ordinated during the autumn term.

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

21 **Committee business plans**

21.1 The DG advised that the business plans set out the proposed programme of business and reports for the following Committees during 2026/27.

- *Standards Committee* – following the Standards Committee meeting held 5th May 2026 one amendment had been made to remove the HE Access and Participation Statement, which was no longer a requirement of OfS.
- *Audit Committee* – considered at the meeting held 9th June 2026 and recommended for approval
- *Remuneration Committee* – considered at the meeting held 13th May and recommended for approval

21.2 The plans aligned to the Governance Assurance Map agreed by the Corporation and reflected the Committees' responsibilities as set out in their Terms of Reference.

21.3 **It was resolved** to approve the business plans for 2026/27 for Standards Committee, Audit Committee and Remuneration Committee.

22 **Corporation meeting calendar and College event calendar 2026/27**

22.1 The DG advised that the schedule of all governance meetings had been planned for the year and was provided. Once approved, calendar invitations would be sent out to members for the relevant meetings.

22.2 Also included was the College Calendar for 2026/27 which contained key dates for the academic year. Members were encouraged to attend any of the cross-college events and activities, and 'hold the date' markers would be sent for key events.

22.3 **It was resolved** to approve the Corporation meeting calendar for 2026/27.

23 **Committee terms of reference for 2026/27**

23.1 The DG advised that the committee terms of reference for Search Committee, Remuneration Committee and DAT/DCT Strategic Liaison Group had been reviewed and recommended by the relevant committees for approval. Any changes to the previous versions had been tracked for ease of reference.

23.2 **It was resolved** to approve the committee terms of reference for 2026/27 for Search Committee, Remuneration Committee and DAT/DCT Strategic Liaison Group.

24 **Chair's performance review 2026 and board self-assessment process**

24.1 The DG advised that a confidential and anonymised performance review of the Chair of the Corporation was undertaken in the previous year to evaluate leadership effectiveness and inform future development. This was undertaken to address one of the recommendations of the external review of governance and was aligned to the recommended approach to Chair appraisal published by the FE Commissioner in 2025.

24.2 The Remuneration Committee had recommended that the same approach to annual appraisal be undertaken at the end of the current academic year, the anonymised results of which would be presented to the Corporation in the autumn term. Members were asked to respond to the survey when issued over the coming weeks.

24.3 **It was resolved** to approve the Chair's performance review 2026 and board self-assessment process.

25 **Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair for 2026/27**

25.1 **It was resolved** to appoint Paul Noon as Chair and Wendy Davies as Vice Chair for the 2026/27 academic year.

26 **Any other business**

26.1 There were no items of other part 1 business.

27 **Date of next meeting**

27.1 The next meeting would be the Strategic Development Event to be held on Friday 18th September 2026 at 11am. The location would be confirmed.

Senior Managers and Staff Governors left the meeting.

The Part 2 business of the meeting was recorded in separate confidential minutes.

Approved at the Corporation Meeting held 17th November 2026.