

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE

Minutes of a Meeting of the Board of Governors held on Thursday 18 September 2025 at 5pm at Paget Road

PRESENT

Mr Mike Hastings - Chair	Ms Louise Fall – Principal and Chief Executive
Ms Dionne Barrett – from 5.55pm	Ms Wendy Harris
Mr John Bradford – on Teams	Mr Darren Shaw
Mrs Jane Carter	Ms Doina Surchicin
Mr Simon Evans	

IN ATTENDANCE

Ms Rachael Aston	Assistant Principal – Quality & Engagement
Mrs Alison Buick	Head of Governance
Mr Paul Davies	Assistant Principal – Finance & IT
Mr Mike Dixon	Assistant Principal – Curriculum
Mr Richard Hewitt	Assistant Principal – Business & Growth
Mr Peter Merry	Deputy Principal and Chief Executive
Mr Anil Sharma – part	Safeguarding & Equality Manager

CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and thanked Governors for attending. Richard Hewitt and Rachael Aston were welcomed to their first meeting since appointment as new Assistant Principals. Introductions were made to all present.

It was noted that this would be the final Governors' meeting at Paget Road and ahead of the opening of CLQ. This was the start of a transformative year for the college.

There was a tribute to Sam Duru, who had sadly passed away during the summer. Sam had been a long standing Governor, appointed in 2021. His enthusiasm for the college and his many contributions to the work of the Board, as well as across other organisations in the city, were noted.

The new governance arrangements for 2025/26 were outlined. The Executive Management Team had prepared papers in the agreed revised style. Those for information would be taken as read and those for decision would be discussed in more detail.

Governors with outstanding annual paperwork were reminded to complete and return this as soon as possible.

It was agreed to take the Safeguarding and EDI items first.

GOVERNOR TRAINING – SAFEGUARDING

The Head of Safeguarding and Equality provided a safeguarding update for all Governors and the following were noted:

- Statutory guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) had been updated for 2025. There had been no changes to Part One of the document. All staff had been provided with a copy and were required to read this. Governors were also required to read this as part of their annual declarations and returns.
- Specific attention was drawn to:

- Robust systems in place at the college for filtering and monitoring of online activity and AI generated images.
- Monitoring of attendance to ensure that concerns were picked up, including for vulnerable students.
- The levels of support across Wolverhampton and the involvement of the College's Safeguarding Team in a variety of city and region wide groups. There was a strong relationship with colleagues at the Local Authority, Police, Prevent Delivery group and Counter Terrorism Unit. This enables advice and guidance to be sought as needed.
- The systems in place at the college for recording and sharing data.
- The arrangements with the local Police for regular meetings and for engagement with students.
- The work of the Safeguarding Link Governor in reviewing the systems and checking the Single Central Record.
- College staff are appropriately trained for Safer Recruitment, with one fully trained person attending each interview panel. All staff were appointed subject to satisfactory references and DBS checks.

A Governor had asked about support for care experienced students. The support in place was confirmed and explained.

01/26 SAFEGUARDING POLICY (ITEM 9)

Safeguarding Policy and Procedures 2025/26

The Deputy Principal and Chief Executive commented that the draft policy had been approved in July 2025, pending the 2025 update to KCSIE. The final version was now presented for approval, having been updated in line with minor amendments to KCSIE and for Governor comments received.

Resolved – that the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures for 2025/26 be approved.

2024/25 Annual Report

The report had been circulated. The Deputy Principal and Chief Executive commented on:

- Two LADO referrals in year.
- The high completion rate for staff training.
- That there was an overall increase in the number of safeguarding referrals, but that the number was relatively stable taking into account the increase in student numbers and the more robust monitoring of potential IT breaches by new staff.
- All safeguarding referrals could be tracked in detail by EDI characteristics, course type and other breakdowns. It was possible to drill the data down into fine detail.
- The overall conclusion that safeguarding was effective.

Governors were pleased to note the excellent data and commented on the worrying increase in homelessness. The Head of Safeguarding and Equality agreed.

Wolverhampton was the 26th most deprived city, was very diverse and had a range of challenges, including levels of homelessness. It was confirmed that the college would assess a young person's risk of harm regardless of their background.

A Governor commented on the increase in IT breaches and asked if any patterns were emerging, and what cyber security controls were in place. It was confirmed that none of the breaches were terrorism related or had reached any reporting thresholds. A new member of IT staff was in post and was picking up a range of issues, so the approach was more robust this year. Firewalls and other security measures were

picking up attempts to access certain sites. The college had access to data to see which types of students were responsible for the issues picked up.

There was a short discussion about students recruited via partner organisations. Some did have criminal convictions, so risk assessments were completed and there was liaison with Police and Offender Management teams as necessary.

The Head of Safeguarding and Equality commented on the excellent safeguarding culture in place at the college.

02/26 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (ITEM 10)

2025/26 EDI Policy

The Deputy Principal and Chief Executive confirmed that the policy had been thoroughly reviewed and that there were minimal changes.

A Governor noted that the Public Sector Equality Duty required the college to set an overall objective and asked where this was referenced. It was confirmed that this was in the Annual Report, and this is published on the website, but acknowledged that the policy may need to make this clearer. It would be reviewed at the next publication. Action: Head of Safeguarding and Equality.

Resolved – that the EDI Policy for 2025/26 be approved.

(Head of Safeguarding and Equality left at 5.40pm)

03/26 APOLOGIES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM 1)

Apologies were received from Mark Taylor, Amanda Tomlinson and Abi Chesterton.

04/26 MINUTES (ITEM 2)

It was **resolved** that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2025 be **approved**.

05/26 MATTERS ARISING AND ACTIONS (ITEM 3)

The first four items would be picked up in reporting during the new year. The disability offer via Wolverhampton Wanderers Foundation enrichment programme had been confirmed in an email in July 2025.

06/26 CHAIR'S ACTIONS (ITEM 4)

There were no Chair's Actions to report.

07/26 CORRESPONDENCE (ITEM 5)

None.

08/26 COLLEGE STRATEGY (ITEM 6)

The Principal and Chief Executive shared the final version of the Strategy document on screen. Much work had been done to prepare this, taking on board all feedback which Governors were aware of. Content was closely aligned to the published Accountability Statement.

A new set of college values was proposed:

Collaborative
Ownership
Welcoming
Commitment

There were a few pieces of data to be finalised and to the College Strategy, and the document would be launched with staff and published to the college website.

The Principal and Chief Executive shared the college performance measures and indicators that underpin the College Strategy.

A Governor commented that it was good to see the finalised document and that it had incorporated inputs from a variety of stakeholders. How the Board would monitor this in future now needed to be considered. The Principal and Chief Executive agreed and confirmed that reporting would be through the future Committee and Board meetings. There would also be consideration of how the strategy was embedded into staff appraisals moving forward.

A Governor noted that the revised Board report template would help with linking the strategic aims to the reporting. There was a focus on SEND and inclusion in the new Ofsted framework, so reporting also needed to cover this.

Resolved – that the College Strategy was approved.

09/26 CLQ AND PROPERTY (ITEM 7)

CLQ Update

The Deputy Principal and Chief Executive gave a brief update and showed a selection of recent photographs.

Handover was due to start on 19 September 2025. Dates for different aspects of the handover, workstreams and opening were explained. Furniture installation had started. Work was ongoing on the specification of the performance space. Discussions on this were continuing with the council.

(Dionne Barrett arrived at 5.55pm)

Naming of the CLQ Campus

For reasons of confidentiality, the discussion of this item has been minuted separately.

College Property Strategy

The Deputy Principal and Chief Executive gave a short update. The Property Strategy had been presented at the previous meeting in July and had been updated since.

There were 4 key recommendations:

1. Respond to Local Skills Needs and Accommodate Growth
2. Campus Equality and Immediate Wellington Road Maintenance
3. Optimise Space Utilisation, Reduce Running Costs and Decarbonise
4. Review Leasehold Premises and Complete Disposal

It was planned that progress would be monitored through the new Finance and Resources Committee.

A Governor asked whether future student needs had been anticipated. It was generally expected that numbers of students with lifelong and life limiting conditions would increase, so the strategy needed to reflect how their needs would be

accommodated. The Deputy Principal and Chief Executive noted that this would be covered in the section on considering wider college growth. There was already much liaison with the Council about support for high needs students and this would continue. The high costs of placing students out of area were noted so it was in the Council's interest to place students with the college if their needs could be met.

The Chair commented on the football partnerships with Wolves Foundation and Bilston Town, and the facilities at Wellington Road. It was confirmed that all aspects of the use of pitches had been reviewed as part of the strategy update.

Resolved – that the Property Strategy was approved.

Paget Road Disposal

For reasons of confidentiality, the discussion of this item has been minuted separately.

Property Leases and Break Clauses

For reasons of confidentiality, the discussion of this item has been minuted separately.

10/26 COLLEGE REPORTS (ITEM 8)

Principal's Update

The written report noted some recent external updates on Ofsted, the FE Commissioner and ministerial changes, as well as internal updates such as the staff survey, recent performance and the introduction of CORE.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Chair asked about the UK Modern Industrial Strategy and the TEC prosperity deal, which had been covered in recent media. These could present opportunities for the college. The Deputy Principal and Chief Executive noted that they had been considered. The college was already involved in the Innovate UK Project.

The Chair noted that there was a new Defence TEC planned and asked if the college was considering it, given the presence of several large companies in this industry located in Wolverhampton. The Principal and Chief Executive did not plan to bid for this as the college's delivery in defence was currently low. Future TECs for Health and Digital may be released and considered.

Curriculum and Innovation

2024/25 Student Outcomes

Governors noted the GCSE and A Level outcomes for summer 2025.

For A Levels, the pass rate had risen to 87.8%. High grades (A and B) were at 24%, with 10 of 13 subjects showing improvement.

A question had been submitted regarding the data tables and the level of information provided. It was confirmed that the college had the detailed data and that it had been summarised for the meeting. Further details could be provided at the Curriculum and Quality Committee.

For GCSE Maths, high grades (4 to 9) had improved by 2% to 14% and for English high grades had improved by 1% to 18%. Pass rates were 97% for Maths and 95% for English. The improvement seen in English was strong especially given the increased number of exam entries. There were still high numbers of students needing to do re-sits.

Overall achievement data would be available for the next meeting.

Questions and comments were invited.

The Chair was pleased to see a positive set of results. A Governor asked for more data on Maths and English to be provided to the Curriculum and Quality Committee, such as progress students made when taking GCSEs multiple times.

There was a discussion about the wrap around care provided to students and the impact of the Progress Coaches. These staff had supported mental health and resilience for students.

It was confirmed that staff focus on improving A Level results would continue this year. The number of students able to achieve their first choice of university was very good and the variety of HE destinations was diverse.

Business and Growth *Apprenticeship Performance*

This report gave an overview of apprenticeship performance for the academic year 2024/25, with a focus on key performance indicators from the Apprenticeship Accountability Framework that had been in place for 18 months.

Of particular note was the increase in predicted achievement of 10% to around 60%, which was excellent progress. It was also reported that the number of withdrawals and the number of apprentices past their planned end dates had both reduced. Apprentice satisfaction was at 94%, so was much improved.

A Governor had submitted a question asking if there were any particular subject areas with hotspots of concern. The Assistant Principal Business and Growth commented on some legacy issues from Covid for apprentices on longer programmes and also some challenges in hairdressing and other small businesses due to Government changes to National Insurance. Staff were carefully reviewing and monitoring the impacts. Electrical was the main area with apprentices past their planned end dates. A new assessor was now in post, and this was expected to add capacity to get apprentices to Gateway and EPA more quickly.

The Assistant Principal commented on the impact of employer engagement work. Cohorts had now started with Bentley Motors and Morgan Sindall. He also noted ongoing CPD for staff.

Quality and Engagement *2024/25 Complaints Report*

The college received 121 complaints during 2024/25. This was an increase on the previous year, partly attributed to encouragement of learner voice by the college. However, the number of complaints as a proportion of the overall number of students was low. All complaints were robustly reviewed and only eight outcomes were appealed. 117 of the 121 were RAG rated as low. Most were dealt with in departments, with only two needing Human Resources (HR) support.

A Governor had submitted questions, including one about extended deadlines to respond. It was stated that 28 of the 121 complaints were staff related, of which 26 went to HR. 18 of the 26 needed longer than ten working days for a response.

2024/25 EQA Summary

The 89% positive outcome rate from External Quality Assurance (EQA) samples at the time of writing confirmed the robustness of the college's internal quality assurance mechanisms processes. This high success provided objective evidence to the Board that assessment decisions were reliable and valid, and that internal quality assurance mechanisms were highly effective.

A Governor had submitted some questions, and in response the Assistant Principal Quality and Engagement confirmed that the largest awarding body used by the college was Pearson. It was acknowledged that there had been some maladministration cases, but it was further explained that the college had identified issues itself and notified the Board. Regardless of this, it was still recorded as maladministration. The college had reviewed its processes to make improvements.

2025/26 Enrolment Headlines

Data was shown on screen. The key headlines noted were:

- Youth enrolment was marginally above target. There were several areas of growth, but the largest increases were in automotive, business, carpentry/joinery, health & social care and hospitality.
- There was a brief explanation of the impact of these numbers on future funding. There was significant upside risk for growth in the next year, with youth numbers at CLQ and also in apprentices.
- There were 258 learners with EHCPs, of which 97 were in the Futures provision and 161 in mainstream curriculum.
- The apprenticeship target to the end of October was 170. Currently there were around 170 leads with hope that most would convert to enrolments. Areas of growth were Level 2 carpentry, Level 2 manufacturing and Level 3 polymer processing. It was expected that the quarter one target would be met.
- There were currently 1,039 adult enrolments against a target of 2,203. However, this was only week 2 of adult enrolment, enrolments would continue throughout the year and the financial values attached varied depending on the course and its funding. There were no concerns at this stage.

People

2024/25 Staff Survey Outcomes

The survey had been completed in June 2025. The participation rate was 44% so not as high as desired. External benchmarking data had recently been received so would be reviewed.

There was a shift to more positive outcomes overall. Increases in positive responses were seen in communication initiatives, as well as in staff feeling more informed about the College's performance and developments. There was also a strong uplift in staff feeling inspired to take pride in their work and strive for excellence. Some areas held steady, including clarity around roles and continued confidence in safeguarding arrangements. However, a few areas require attention, such as perceptions of progression opportunities and access to professional development, which saw a decline in positive responses.

11/26 HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT (ITEM 11)

The annual report provided a full overview of the college's Health, Safety, Environmental, and Fire (SHEF) performance for the academic year 2024/25. It highlighted continued progress in embedding a strong safety culture across all

campuses, driven by proactive leadership, staff engagement, and enhanced systems.

There were no specific concerns to be highlighted.

The Deputy Principal and Chief Executive noted that a former employee had made a report to HSE. The college had responded, and no further action had been deemed necessary.

12/26 FINANCE (ITEM 12)

The Assistant Principal Finance, IT and Commercial provided an overview of the management accounts for July 2025 and shared a presentation on screen.

It was noted that KPIs for EBITDA, current ratio, gearing and the FE Commissioner's indicators all showed strong performance for 2024/25.

The current financial health score was outstanding, reflecting much work over a long period of time, as well as the ongoing success of partnership arrangements. Borrowing as a percentage of income would reduce further with the disposal of Paget Road, helping to sustain the positive health score in future years. Work was still needed to reduce pay as a percentage of turnover. Staffing remained under review as there was a need to ensure staffing was appropriate for increased student numbers.

Governors were pleased to see stable finances after a number of years of uncertainty. Questions were asked about how the college would change its approach from being prudent to targeting future opportunities. Responses included that capital grants received were supporting investment in facilities and continued cash growth. There was a need for an investment strategy for this to continue and to grow returns. Financial resilience, as well as growth and development, was important.

Resolved – that the Management accounts to July 2025 were approved.

13/26 PARTNERSHIPS (ITEM 13)

For reasons of confidentiality, the discussion of part of this item has been minuted separately.

Payments had been made to DBS in line with the contract.

An extra allocation from WMCA for Bootcamps in April to July 2026 had been confirmed.

There had been no progress with the previously discussed business case for logistics work with WMCA.

Arrangements for the football academy had been finalised with Wolves Foundation.

There were ongoing discussions with the Grand Theatre about a partnership and a Memorandum of Understanding had been drafted. Further details were set out in the written report. The partnership aimed to enhance the performing arts curriculum and to provide real life work experiences to students. Board approval was being sought to continue discussions. Further details would be brought back at a future date.

Resolved – that Governors approved the plan for ongoing discussions to develop a partnership with the Grand Theatre.

14/26 GOVERNANCE MATTERS (ITEM 14)

Committee Minutes

The minutes of the following recent meetings had been circulated:

- Audit Committee 25 June 2025.

The Board of Governors received the committee reports.

Board Agenda Plan 2025/26

A draft Board agenda plan for 2025/26 had been included with the papers. It would be used as the basis for drafting agendas for each meeting year, but would remain flexible to allow Governors and the Executive Management Team to change items as necessary.

Resolved – that the Board agenda plan was approved.

Committee and Group Membership 2025/26

The final agreed Committee and Task & Finish Group memberships for 2025/26 were included as an appendix to the report. These would be kept under review as and when new Governors are appointed.

Resolved – that the Committee and Group Memberships for 2025/26 were approved.

Committee and Group Terms of Reference 2025/26

The draft terms of reference for each of the Board Committees and Task & Finish Groups were included as appendices to this report. Governors were asked to consider and approve these.

Resolved – that the Board approved the Committee and Group Terms of Reference for 2025/26.

Link Governors for 2025/26 and Report

Link Governors for 2025/26 had previously been agreed and were shown in an appendix to the report. Also provided was a short document outlining the purpose of the link governors' scheme and a short template report to be completed by Governors after each visit. Governors were asked to submit completed reports to the Head of Governance so that activities were recorded and can feed into the agreed annual report.

Resolved – that the link governor plans for 2025/26 were approved.

Board attendance 2024/25

The summary of Board attendance for 2024/25 had been provided for information. Governors were reminded that the attendance target was 80% and that apologies should be sent to the Head of Governance in advance if possible. Board attendance was required to be published in college statutory accounts.

Resolved – that the Board attendance for 2024/25 was noted.

Review of Instrument and Articles of Government

A small amendment had been made to the quorum section in the Instruments following an update and advice from AOC, as noted in the written paper.

Resolved – that the amendment to the Instrument and Articles of Government was approved.

Annual Review of Confidential Items

Minutes deemed confidential in 2024/25 had been reviewed. These related to all matters discussed at CTOG and Remuneration Committee and to some aspects of Board reports. It was not proposed to change the status of any of these minutes, so they would remain confidential.

Resolved – that there would be no change to the status of reports deemed confidential in 2024/25.

15/26 CONFIDENTIALITY (ITEM 11)

It was resolved that the following reports would remain confidential:

- **CLQ and Property Update**
- **Aspects of the Partnerships Update.**

16/26 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING (ITEM 12)

Board of Governors – Thursday 11 December 2025, 5pm at Wellington Road.

The meeting ended at 7.20pm.