

CITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON COLLEGE

Minutes of the meeting of the Search and Governance Committee held on

Monday 16 June 2025 at 5pm via Microsoft Teams

PRESENT

Mr Mike Hastings (Chair)
Mrs Amanda Tomlinson
Ms Louise Fall
Mr Simon Evans

IN ATTENDANCE

Mrs Alison Buick, Head of Governance

25/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM 1)

Apologies were received from Mr Mark Taylor and Mr John Bradford.

There were no declarations of interest.

26/25 MINUTES (ITEM 2)

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2025 were approved.

27/25 MATTERS ARISING (ITEM 2)

Governors considered the previously agreed actions and noted that all had been completed. Where appropriate, further updates would be given in agenda items for this meeting.

28/25 GOVERNANCE REPORT (ITEM 3)

The Head of Governance referred to her written report and the contents were discussed.

Board Membership, Vacancies and Terms of Office

There were currently five vacancies for independent Governors. Shavante Clarke had recently resigned.

An expression of interest had been received since the last committee meeting and an initial meeting had been held. Unfortunately there had been no further contact with the individual since.

A request to post another social media advert for the vacancies had been submitted. Contact had also been made with the Head of Employer Engagement and Business Development, to try to identify local employers that may be interested in joining the Board. The Principal suggested that information be shared with the college staff to see if this could identify any suitable contacts. Action: Head of Governance.

The Chair noted that he had two local contacts that may be interested so these would be followed up and meetings arranged. Action: Chair.

No funding was currently available via DfE for Governor recruitment.

The Committee noted that there were three Governors whose terms of office would end in the next academic year. They would be considered further at the next Committee meeting in the autumn term.

Skills Audit

As agreed at the last meeting in March, the skills audit had been re-issued. An anonymised summary of results had been provided. Nine responses had been received.

The analysis provided by the Head of Governance showed a good range of knowledge and experience in strategic leadership, understanding accountability and compliance across a broad range of areas. There were no areas with very low scores, which was positive.

Areas identified where greater depth of knowledge may be desirable were finance, HR and building/capital/project management.

A Governor suggested some skills mapping when considering membership for committees, if a new structure was implemented for next year. The Head of Governance confirmed that Governor skills had been considered when drafting initial membership for consideration.

It was noted that finance training for Governors had previously been offered and that this was a suggested topic for the next evening development session in September. This was **agreed**.

Link Governors

This had been discussed at the Strategy Day in May and the final proposals were as set out in the written report. Some updates would be required as two new Assistant Principals had been appointed and Shavante Clarke had resigned. Information would be shared with the Senior Management Team at the next meeting. Some guidance notes would be sent to all involved in due course.

Governance Self-Assessment

A self-assessment would be completed during the summer and reported back to the next meeting. Governor views would be sought. There would also be an update against the recommendations in the external review carried out last year.

The Committee noted the report.

29/25 GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE 2025/26 – OPTIONS APPRAISAL (ITEM 4)

The Committee was aware of previous discussions about the current structure and possible future changes, including the introduction of committees to cover finance and curriculum with a corresponding reduction in the number of Board meetings.

The current and proposed structures were outlined in the written report, together with suggested committee memberships and terms of reference.

Potential advantages and disadvantages were also noted.

In summary the proposals were:

- New Finance and Resources Committee to meet four times per year.
- New Curriculum and Quality Committee to meet at least once per term.
- Existing Apprenticeships Task and Finish and Rail Task and Finish Groups no longer required and provision to be covered via Curriculum and Quality Committee.

- Campus Transformation Oversight Group to continue to end of calendar year, post opening of CLQ. Estates and property matters to become part of the Finance and Resources Committee thereafter.
- Board meetings to be reduced to five per year (September, December, March, May and July).

Governor comments were invited and the following were noted:

- The current make up of the Board suited the proposed changes.
- The timing felt right, with the imminent move to CLQ, the improved financial position and the sharper focus on curriculum matters.
- Committees would allow for more in depth review of key areas.
- Whether a termly meeting for Curriculum and Quality was sufficient.
- That more details of the likely business cycle for committees were needed.
- That Governors needed to trust committees to work effectively within their terms of reference and not expect matters to be duplicated at Board.
- That assurance levels from committees to Board needed to be clear and appropriate. There was a role for Chairs in providing this. Upward flow of information was important.
- That this was an evolution that could be tested and refined.
- Terms of reference needed to be expanded to include a concise description of the purpose of the committees.
- A joint meeting of the Audit and Finance and Resources Committees may be needed in the autumn to review the Financial Statements.
- A policy matrix was needed so that it was clear which policies were for committee and Board approval.
- There was an opportunity to align the changes to a change in reporting styles.

It was **agreed** that the proposal be put forward for Board approval in July 2025.

30/25 BOARD PORTAL (ITEM 5)

An update was given on the work to date to establish a need for a Board portal and how this might be achieved. Governors were aware of the background of this.

The Chair confirmed that he had attended a meeting with the Business and Learning Technologies Manager and Head of IT to discuss the proposed solution. He was happy that it had been designed with the end user in mind, could be used on any device and was on the college domain so had no security concerns. He was happy to support it being rolled out and to be used to test it if needed.

The Principal asked if equipment was to be provided. The Head of Governance thought there may be a need to offer this, especially to student governors.

A Governor asked if IT time could be set aside to support Governors to set up and familiarise with the system. The Principal agreed the need for IT and user support.

It was agreed to test the system with the Chair and Principal and propose that the Board agrees to a roll out from September 2025.

31/25 GOVERNANCE UPDATES

The Head of Governance referred to her written report, which covered the following:

- FE Commissioner's report on Weston College.
- Updates to the AOC Code of Governance
- Supreme Court Ruling on interpretation of 'sex' under the Equality Act 2010.

The Weston report referred to significant governance and internal control failures at the college, leading to large payments being made to the former Principal. There had been widespread press coverage of the issues. The FE Commissioner's report identified 12 recommendations relating to areas such as schemes of delegation, operation of the Remuneration Committee, approval of senior pay rates, payroll processes, Board structure and Governor skills, recruitment and terms of office. The Head of Governance had produced an analysis of the Wolverhampton position against each of these recommendations, to provide assurance that the control framework and operation at this college was effective.

Governors noted the updates provided.

32/25 CONFIDENTIALITY

No items discussed were agreed as confidential.

33/25 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 17 November 2025 date to be agreed.

The meeting ended at 5.55pm.