

College of West Anglia
Minutes of
The Corporation Board Meeting
Wednesday, 15 October 2025
8.30am – 11:30am
U125, University Centre, King's Lynn Campus

Present	Gill Rejzl	Governor (Chair)	In person
	Dave Clark	Governor	In person
	Jemma Curtis	Governor	In person
	Jan Feeney	Governor (Vice Chair)	Remote
	Paul Gibson	Governor (Staff)	In person
	Rosie Green	Student Governor	In person
	Ray Harding	Governor	In person
	Russel Liddington	Governor	Remote
	Fliss Miller	Governor	Remote
	Sally Mitton	Governor	Remote
	James Nash	Governor	In person
	David Pomfret	Governor (Principal/CEO)	In person
	Carolyn Rand	Governor	Remote
	Joe Solomon	Governor	In person
	Hein Van Den Wildenberg	Governor	In person
	Donna Woodruff	Governor (Staff)	In person
In Attendance	Kerry Heathcote	Deputy CEO/Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality	In person
	Paul Harrison	Vice Principal Corporate Services	Remote
	Rob Petto	Assistant Principal Funding and Performance	In person
	Paul O'Shea	Assistant Principal Student Services	In person
	Clare Pelling	Head of Learner Experience	In person
	Jules Bridges	Head of Governance	In person

No.		Action
1	Apologies Apologies for absence were received from Seb Ivanov, Gemma Standen, Joe Yexley and Cosmina Frunza.	
2	Declarations of Interests The Principal/CEO declared his interest in item 3. Senior Post Holders, the Principal/CEO, Deputy CEO/Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality, and the Vice Principal Corporate Services, plus the HoG declared their interests regarding items 7.4 and 19.3. Interests were declared by staff members, Seb Ivanov, Russel Liddington, and Jemma Curtis in relation to item 14 of the agenda.	
3	CEO Succession Planning <i>Confidential item under Instrument 17(2) of the Instrument and Articles of Government</i> This item was deemed to be confidential.	
	R Liddington joined the meeting at 8.45am	
	The Principal/CEO and Senior Post Holders/SMT left the meeting at 8.45am	
	R Harding joined the meeting at 8.50am	
	The Principal/CEO, and Senior post holders/SMT rejoined the meeting at 9.15am	
4	Governor Recruitment/Appointments The maximum membership for the Board is 21 governors, although the current target composition is 20 governors, to include the Principal/CEO, 2 staff governors and 2 student governors. Currently there are 15 governors and therefore 5 vacancies. Following the successful election campaign the Board was asked to ratify the student governor appointments of Cosmina Frunza, and Rosie Green. The Board approved the appointments.	

The remaining three vacancies are for independent members. The Principal/CEO provided a background of the four candidates seen and interviewed. The Search and Governance committee recommended the appointment of Joe Solomon, James Nash, and Jemma Curtis to join the Board. The appointments were **approved**. It was noted that a search will continue to find a member with an education skillset, which remains a skills gap for the Board.

J Solomon, J Nash, J Curtis, C Frunza, and R Green, joined the meeting at 9.20am

Introductions were made around the room, and everyone was welcomed to the meeting and the Board.

5 **Minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2025**

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2025 were reviewed and **agreed** as being an accurate record of the meeting.

6 **Matters Arising**

The progress arising from the previous meeting were summarised in the progress report and all actions reported had either been resolved or, where appropriate, an update had been provided on progress elsewhere on the agenda.

The withdrawal data has been interrogated, and visuals were provided in the report under agenda item 11. The intention is to systemise the reporting to ensure there are no gaps in the information.

The Corporation was informed that Dave Clark has joined the Board of Directors of CWA Enterprises Limited. Cally Rand is also to be appointed.

VPCS

It was confirmed that the HR data concerning disabled applicants in the last report were erroneous. The data in the HR Annual Report at agenda item 15 had been corrected and the statistical tables reinstated as requested. The college's approach to recruitment of disabled applicants will be part of the forthcoming internal audit.

The approach to the AI Strategy has been reviewed with more information added to clarify context. Conversations continue with SMT and the CLT to develop this further. This will come back to the Corporation meeting to be held in December 2025.

HoLE

The HE Strategy and Growth plan have been updated and shared with the Performance Review and Quality Committee at the meeting held in September and was considered by the Board at item 11.

HoG

Consideration was given to the score for Risk R023 (capital projects) in the last review however, at that time, there were two emerging issues with ongoing projects that resulted in the score remaining at 12.

All other completed items are to be removed from the report.

HoG

7 **Committee Chairs Briefing Items:**

1 **Performance, Review and Quality**

The Chair of the committee confirmed that there is an improved apprenticeship picture but there are risks associated with the transition of S4PL learners, and the proposed system change to the student portal that are being managed.

A Level provision is in intervention, and the committee has asked for a more detailed action plan. This is a priority focus area for the committee. Adult attendance, leading to poor achievement needs to improve. Faculty changes and a complete review of provision is expected to positively impact.

The HE Strategy and Growth Plan has been updated, and leaders continue to research different initiatives and strategies to achieve increased student numbers.

Applewood Nursery is at capacity and has had a successful year financially and is a valuable resource for the college and the community.

The committee approved the equality, diversity and inclusion policy. The single equality action plan demonstrated high levels of student engagement, inclusion and new initiatives for the year ahead.

2 Audit and Risk

The Chair of the committee reported that ten internal audits have been completed in the 2024/25 academic year, with eight receiving significant (green) assurance, one limited (red) assurance for Health and Safety, and good progress made against the follow up of previous recommendations. It is the opinion of internal auditors for the year ended 31 July 2025 that the college has adequate and effective risk management, governance and control processes in place.

Fourteen internal audits are planned for the 2025/26 academic year. The audit of the procurement of the new finance system is to be moved to an earlier date in this academic year. The audit of Green Skills/Capital Projects received significant (green) assurance with three low risk recommendations made.

The committee was made aware of funding audit concerns, and this was discussed further with the Board in agenda item 13 below.

The committee approved the Anti-Bribery and Corruption, Data Protection, and Data Retention policies and recommends the Risk Management Strategy (under agenda item 17) for approval.

The Corporation was informed of a data breach affecting 66 members of staff that was reportable to the ICO. The college is considering where to better place its DBS arrangements and has challenged the data controls of the third-party holding the data. The college has supported the individuals involved and offered access to an identity check system used to help prevent identity theft and fraud.

3 Finance and General Purpose

The Chair mentioned that the preliminary outturn for 2024/25 is an exceptional surplus position from a reforecast of £261k to £1.2m. The college is reporting a financial health grade of 'outstanding' at 250 points (DfE range of scores recorded as 'outstanding' is >230). The college holds cash balances of £11.3m (£5.2m free cash reserves) which is considered high, but the committee will continue to keep in focus in terms of EBITDA and compliance with the CWA Treasury Management policy to minimise exposure of risk and maximise investment opportunities.

The Chair of the committee commented that the transition of S4PL apprentices is set to conclude at the end of December 2025. The Partnership Management Policy was approved by the committee at its last meeting

It was noted that the committee was supportive of the pay award proposal to be made by the Principal/CEO (under agenda item 14). The updated Reserves Policy was considered and approved by the committee, and they were also made aware of a number of funding audit concerns (discussed under item 13 below).

The New Finance System Task and Finish Group has selected the supplier, and implementation is soon to get underway for go live in March 2026.

4 Remuneration

The Chair of the committee confirmed that the annual appraisals and pay of Senior Post Holders had been reviewed, considered, and completed. The annual report of the committee is presented for approval under agenda item 19.3 of the meeting.

5 Search and Governance

The Chair of the committee reported that the Code of Good Governance Action Plan showed that 22 (96%) of 23 targets have been achieved. The one remaining target has been delegated to the Finance and General Purposes committee and once a cycle of monthly management accounts has been established the action plan can be considered complete and closed.

The External Governance Review Action Plan shows that 15 of the 18 actions have been achieved, 1 action closed, and the 2 remaining actions remain in progress.

The Corporation is asked to approve the Governors' Code of Conduct and the Standing Orders under agenda items 19.5 and 19.4 respectively. The Governor 'Check-in' and Chair 'Check-out' processes have been completed. Both underpin the strong governance opinion of the external governance review. The scores and full commentary arising from the new annual governance self-assessment were shared with the committee. Collective discussion will be held at the November 2025 governors' training/development morning to determine the overall annual assessment of governance performance.

The annual update of the register of interests has been completed. Governance attendance is positive at 89% (agenda item 19.1 refers). The Corporation was made aware that the AoC Code of Good Governance adopted by the Corporation on 3 July 2024 has since been reviewed and updated. This will be uploaded to the governance portal. Finally, governors were made aware that further to an FE Week probe into college publication of Board and Committee minutes CWA routinely publishes its minutes and these are kept up to date on the college website.

HoG

R Liddington left the meeting at 9.50am

8 Principal's Strategy Report

The Principal/CEO confirmed that the outcomes of bids for Construction Technical Excellence Colleges have now been announced. West Suffolk College and the Bedford College Group have been successful. Bedford College Group holds the National Construction TEC. CWA has communicated its desire to partner in a hub and spoke model. Other TECs in waves 2 and 3 are set to be announced imminently but potentially a fewer number of TECs than in the first round. CWA is likely to have an interest in Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing, and Health and Adult Social Care TECs.

Following government reorganisation, adult FE, careers, apprenticeships and Skills England have all moved to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), aligning skills and employment. HE, FE and careers and those aged 19 years and younger remain with the DfE. The Minister for Skills, Jaqui Smith, is now working in DWP and the DfE. Changes could be positive for the college and the sector but there is turmoil, and uncertainty with changes in accountability. Relationship development with DWP will be important.

Several significant policy developments were referenced at the recent Labour Party Conference, ahead of a post-16 White Paper due to be published later this month and the Board asked that this is shared with members when released.

HoG

9 Strategic Targets 2024/25 – Final Review

Progress against all strategic targets for the 2024/25 academic year have been reviewed. The Principal/CEO highlighted the positive and negative performance outcomes for governors to note/discuss.

A governor suggested that the 'Good' Ofsted results should have been noted in the executive summary as a positive. Regarding the negatives in the report, governors acknowledged the comment that economic pressures and student anxiety has impacted our ability to meet work placement/experience targets and questioned by how much and asked for an explanation of the issues. The Principal/CEO confirmed that the target was not missed by much but economic pressures such as employer NI contributions have affected the confidence of some employers who have paused staff recruitment, resulting in less interest in work placements. There are also some students who are just not able to take on a placement despite the support provided by the Careers and Development Team to secure suitable placements for young people.

Noting that strategic 4.2 was green at the last review and then downgraded for this review to amber it was not clear from the commentary why good progress had been made throughout the year and then the final review showed the target behind. It was acknowledged that the indicators for the final review should have been adjusted to report that the target had either been met or not met by the year end. This will be corrected for future end of year reports. Regarding 4.2, sickness absence however, it appears that ongoing monitoring

throughout the year had not been sufficient and improved reporting/monitoring is a focus for the team this year. Governors will discuss how the strategic plan and reporting can be refreshed at the November training/development morning.

Finally, it was noted that target 4.3 has been reviewed for the 2025/26 strategic plan to achieve an annual 2% reduction in carbon, opposed to the 4% target set in previous years that has consistently not been achieved.

10 Learner Voice 2024/25

The report highlights the positives and areas for development that have emerged during the 2024/25 academic year.

The opening of the 'red gate' has been a recurring request from students and under supervised access, the gate is now open at the start of the day, and feedback from students has been extremely positive. In summary, many of the issues raised by students in the year have been actioned so it was a strong year in terms of response to the learner voice.

11 Performance Data and KPIs 2024/25 (Emerging Outcomes)

In addition to the pack of papers the updated HE Strategy was circulated to members ahead of the meeting for discussion. The Deputy CEO/Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality confirmed that the strategy has been stalled but the aim to reverse the trend of declining student numbers is still the intended strategic direction. There is confidence that a validation partnership will be signed off, hence why the updated strategy remains in draft. It was agreed that tracked changes will be applied between this, and the next iteration of the strategy so that members can see any substantive change.

Noting that FE is the pipeline for HE, governors wondered how and if our HE strategy is aligned with HEI strategies and questioned what flexibility UcWA would need to be able to respond and deliver. Interestingly at the recent Labour Party Conference government is scrapping the old goal of getting 50% of young people into university and replacing it with a new target. The new ambition is for two-thirds of young people by age 25 to achieve higher-level skills through university, further education or a 'gold standard' apprenticeship. The anticipated White Paper will bring some clarity and will influence our strategy; lifelong learning entitlement, reintroduction of maintenance grants for example that will need to be factored into the next iteration of the strategy. So, whilst our HE strategy is under scrutiny the board is also keen to keep oversight of the financial impact of HE performance. The idea of a task and finish group was suggested and agreed that this would be given some thought. Governors asked to understand the difference between, and the value of, a validated or franchised model when considering partnering opportunities with HEIs. What is UcWA's USP, what gaps do we have, and where do we see ourselves adding value? When partnering we need to be clear what are we about, and what are we not about. Finally, the Chair added that the strategy remains ambitious and would like assurance of how the ambitious student numbers will be achieved and how UcWA will deal with not just competition but collaboration, marketing and growth.

The Board was informed that A Level provision is in intervention further to the disappointing 2024/25 results. This was shown in the heatmap shared with the board as 'red' and has been assessed as a 4 (Inadequate). An action plan has been shared and presented to the Performance Review and Quality committee with five high priority, and one medium priority target identified on the quality improvement plan further to the recent externally led APR scrutiny visit of this provision. Changes in management will positively impact and another externally led APR visit, in addition to the usual quality business cycles of APRs, will be held toward the end of the academic year to ensure good distance travelled. The Chair asked why the Corporation was not aware that A Level results were predicted to be so poor and shared concern for the student experience and achievement. Predicted grades are notoriously unreliable (28-30% accurate) however development feedback from mock exams appears to be the crux of the issue. The whole mock process will be subject to extensive review together with timetabling. The Performance Review and Quality committee has this provision as a focus area and will scrutinise the improvement planned. The Chair asked that the Board is kept informed and is given the assurance that the plan will achieve the very best for our students.

DECO/
VPC&Q

By way of update governors were informed that, bar two areas, retention outturn was better than the previous year. Entry Level English Functional Skills (71% to 60%) and adult retention dropped by 0.5%. Other updates:

- 16-18 retention is up by 2.8% on last year at 87%, the pass rate is up by 3% to 86% and achievement is up to 2.2% to 75.1%
- Adult learners pass rate is up by 12.4% to 86% and achievement is up by 4.8% on the last report to the Performance Review and Quality committee but the final outcome is still to be confirmed
- Retention on Partnership provision slightly declined
- The pass rate has increased by 4.9% at 96%
- Achievement increased by 5.2%, now 87%
- Retention on apprenticeships is up by 7.3% and achievement is up by 6.6%
- All maths and English (aside from Entry Level Functional Skills) achievement is ahead of national rate

It was noted that late/updated/verbal information to the Board will be avoided where possible and provided for effective review, ahead of the meeting.

Regarding the strategic target concerning student withdrawals, an analysis of the data has been completed and where the reason for withdrawal has been categorised as 'other/unknown' this has been investigated to glean more intelligence as to why students leave. It was noted that 744 students had withdrawn in 2023/24 compared to 935 in 2024/25 and 7.4% of those had moved into employment, which is a positive destination.

From a strategic point of view the Deputy CEO/Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality has secured a prison education service contract. The SLA has been signed covering the whole of the East of England (21 prisons).

Governors asked for an explanation (executive summary) of the final student outturn data once available. The 70% apprenticeship retention target was noted to be well below other national targets and governors wondered why this was the case. The CWA accountability measures for apprenticeships are all green and 70% for this area of provision is considered to be a challenging sector target. Regarding the withdrawal data governors asked to see the data filtered by faculty together with the percentage of enrolled/learner numbers. Acknowledging that behaviour can impact attendance and retention, governors asked if there was an understanding of the causes/issues. Every withdrawal is subject to a three-stage robust process. Every learner would be assigned as 'purple' status (perilous) at risk of leaving and support, help and intervention is put in place to help the student stay on programme and succeed.

The Chair adjourned for a break at 10.50am. The meeting resumed at 11.00am

12 Preliminary Financial Results 2024/25

In summary the Vice Principal Corporate Services confirmed that the college has achieved outstanding financial health for the second year running and is reporting significant cash balances and a bottom-line surplus of £1.2m surplus against forecast of £261k. CWA has impaired the carrying value of CWA Enterprises in the colleges balance sheet (c.£400k) and impaired the costs associated with the repairs to the Tower Block Roof. These transactions will affect the bottom line but not the financial health as neither are cash transactions. The first draft of the financial statements is currently being drafted, and it is proposed that these impairments are processed in the 2024/25 financial year.

The Chair noted that the staff cost as a percentage of income ratio remains high and asked for assurance that there is not complacency and it remains in focus. The Vice Principal Corporate Services confirmed that this remains in focus, and the rationale is understood in a meaningful way.

R Liddington rejoined the meeting at 11.05am

Governors were encouraged to see Applewood Nursery flourishing, financially and for the community. There is appetite for growth and continuous improvement. The level of loss around catering facilities is not a concern and is balanced between supply and demand.

Noting that the contribution schedule (point 6) shows an overspend on payroll of £750k but a £52k adverse variance on the profit and loss account and more work to unpick this is being completed for the Finance and General Purposes committee. Governors wondered if the cash in hand KPI set at 25 days is too prudent given that CWA has more cash in hand. It is felt however that if a financial crisis were to happen the 25 days is a good window to put things in place and would help the college to manage its deposits and generate income.

13 **Funding Position and Data Control**

The 2024/25 final return is due tomorrow. There are no surprises and at the point of concluding funding audits there are a few amendments to resolve. There are two outstanding issues, there is a likely clawback (£27k) around how the college has applied the vulnerable bursary funding and how Additional Learning Support (£54k+£30k) has been attributed for 19+ learners. The DfE will rule on these two points which may result in an MLP (Management Letter Point) and/or a funding adjustment.

Student numbers for 2025/26 are up by 300 learners but at the census point this may be closer to 100+ learners. If the college enrolls 100 learners beyond allocation, CWA would be eligible for in-year growth. The funding rules are that the first hundred additional learners would not be funded, second hundred fully funded and 50% funded for every learner after that, subject to affordability.

Confidential item under instrument 17(2) of the Instrument and Articles of Government
This item was deemed to be confidential.

14 **Pay Award Proposal**

Confidential item under instrument 17(2) of the Instrument and Articles of Government
This item was deemed to be confidential.

F Miller left the meeting at 11.30am

15 **HR Annual Report 2024/25**

Governors had previously highlighted their concern of the recruitment of disabled people, and it was confirmed that the data previously reported was erroneous. There remains, however, some concern on the number of applicants who are not open to disclose a disability at application as 86 had not responded, which was high and surprising but the same levels accepting interviews was seen for those either with, or without a disability.

Governors did raise concern of the number of days lost by those in dispute with the college (733 days) and governors asked what is being done to expedite the process and could the college be more assertive in concluding matters quicker. This will be taken back to the team as this does seem out of line. The top reason for absence is stress, depression and low mood. Governors wondered if this involved a small number of staff or if this was a college-wide trend. There appears to be no emerging pattern however if the 733 days lost from those in dispute with the college were removed from the stats what proportion would be attributed to short term absence and would this category still be the highest? The age groups of this category will also be filtered and details of the findings shared with governors.

VPCS

VPCS

Finally, it was noted that there has been a 10% growth in the number of FTE staff recruited and governors asked if this was pro rata to the increase in student numbers. It was confirmed that the student body grew more than 10% last year. Furthermore, governors wondered if there was a risk of an ageing workforce. The team is trying to implement a succession plan and developmental opportunities for younger staff and governors asked if the college has a Workforce Development Plan and it was agreed that this was a good proposal moving forward.

VPCS

S Mitton left the meeting at 11.50am

16 **Gender Pay Gap Report – March 2025**

The Gender Pay Gap (GPG) report fulfils the College's reporting responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. The headline results are unsatisfactory with the CWA GPG mean 15.83% and median 22.00% being high compared with the national median (13% for 2024) and is poor against other Eastern Region FE colleges.

Governors considered the reasons for this situation acknowledging the structure of the workforce with a preponderance of females in lower paid, part-time roles (especially LSOs

supporting High Needs provision). There are some positive developments, however, where the pay gap has stopped increasing in the last two years and the proportion of females in the College Leadership Team has increased. In-sourcing of cleaning and student catering will also affect benchmark comparisons.

R Liddington left the meeting at 11.55am

The report was **approved** by the Corporation for publication on the college website and for submission to the Government Equalities Office, to be included on their website.

VPCS

17 Risk Management Strategy

The three-year strategy has been updated for 2025-2028. A summary of the changes was provided together with a tracked changes copy. A governor suggested that the financial and budgetary impacts (cost and funding) section of the 'impact scoring guide' appended to the strategy is reviewed as the college is c.£40m, a higher level of income than when the strategy was established. The Corporation agreed and subject to this review and amendment **approved** the Strategy presented.

VPCS/
HoG

18 Risk Register Review

The risk register has been updated by risk owners since the last meeting of the Corporation. In summary Risk R008 has decreased from 9 (amber) to 6 (amber). Risk R016 has increased from 12 (red) to the maximum score of 16 (red). A new risk R029 (LynnSport redevelopment) has emerged and has been added to the register.

It was noted that the justification arrow for Risk R016 should indicate up, not down. Governors suggested that A Level provision in intervention, and succession planning for the Principal/CEO be added to the register. In addition, the description of Risk R026 is to be reviewed as this was considered narrow.

HoG

19 Governance

1 Governor Attendance 2024/2025

Board attendance during 2024/25 decreased by 8% compared to the previous year, even with offering hybrid meetings enabling many governors to attend virtually. Overall, however (including committee attendance) the average has remained the same as the previous year at 89%.

2 Governor Check-In Summary Report

The Chair held 'check-in' meetings with every governor in September 2025. The emerging themes and action points arising from those meetings were summarised in the report. The Search and Governance Committee will track and monitor the progress of the action plan. The Chair intends to link the arising action plan with the governance annual self-assessment at the November 2025 training/development morning.

3 Remuneration Annual Report 2024/25

The annual report of the Remuneration Committee had been considered for the 2024/2025 academic year at the committee meeting held on 8 October 2025. The report is a requirement of the AoC's Senior Post Holder Remuneration Code and the Code of Good Governance. The report was **approved** by the Corporation and is to be published on the governance pages of the college website.

HoG

H van den Wildenberg and R Harding left the meeting at 12.00pm

4 Standing Orders

The review of the Standing Orders has captured several minor amendments to reflect current practice and replace out of date references. Tracked changes were applied and a summary of the changes were detailed in the report. The Corporation **approved** the Standing Orders as presented.

HoG

5 Governors' Code of Conduct

The review of the Governors' Code of Conduct has been completed to update references to funding and other regulatory bodies. A summary of the changes made were detailed in the report and for transparency tracked changes was applied to the document. The Corporation **approved** the Governors' Code of Conduct as presented.

HoG

6 Application of the College Seal

It is a requirement of the CWA Instrument and Articles of Government that a record is maintained of all applications of the Corporation seal. Since the last report to the Board in July 2025 the seal has been applied nine times. The details of which were recorded in the report.

7 Applewood Nursery Annual Report 2024/25

Applewood Nursery has enjoyed a profitable year. The financial report in April 2025 showed a 7% increase on forecast income for the nursery. At the time of writing (September 2025), confirmation of the financial outcome for the year was unknown. However, based on the data available, Applewood made a profit in excess of £100k (c.£112k) in the 2024/25 academic year.

The team are incredibly proud of their achievements in the year. The report details an overview of the 2024/25 achievements and team success. The nursery is fully subscribed with waiting lists for the baby room. There are currently 84 children on roll; 21 babies, 22 toddlers, and 41 pre-school children. There is a strong 3-year growth trend with 17% increase in enrolments since September 2023. The Board extended their thanks and congratulations to the team.

8 Learning Walks – Feedback

The learning walks and college activities that governors have been involved in since the last meeting of the Board were provided in the report.

20 Any Other Business

The Principal/CEO mentioned the positive governor check-in meetings held and the responses received for the check-out the Chair process. He extended collective thanks and congratulations to the Chair and the Board for a positive governance performance in the year.

21 Date and Time of Next Scheduled Meeting

Wednesday 17 December 2025 at 8:30am, U125, University Centre, KL

Meeting Ended at 12.05pm