



M Blake joined the meeting at 8.35am

## **6 CWA Website Annual Review**

The Head of Marketing and Communications highlighted that the report confirms a decrease in website traffic (7.8% in users year on year) but what, and is, replacing some of this traffic is the referrals through LLMs (Large Language Models) such as ChatGPT and/or other AI systems. HubSpot enables the college to count those numbers but data for the whole year is not yet available but will be reportable this time next year. The number of LLMs will not directly replace the number of lost website traffic however visitors will be 'warmer' leads as they will be more informed and more accurately navigated to the information they have searched for.

HubSpot has been used for social media management, website chatbot, email marketing, and integrated with EventBrite (used for event management). The team is working with the CIS department to fully integrate college data into HubSpot to enable mapping of the whole user journey and remarketing to existing customers. The integration has been built and will then be subject to a period of testing. Time has been used with the provider to develop workflow automation, personas, and BRAGP rating in preparation of when the full data sync is live the team will be able to access, analyse and report.

It was further reported that the college website will be updated driven by an updated CMS (Content Management System) which will improve navigation, and search and filtering tools. Work will start in the coming months ready for September intake. AEO (Answer Engine Optimisation) and SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) will both be considered as part of the website upgrade project to enable a question/prompt set up which will inform the LLMs to respond.

Governors asked if GDPR safeguards have been put in place throughout the project as data is being moved and used differently. Working with the college DPO, Data Sharing Agreements, due diligence checks and data protection impact assessments have been completed, and the CIS department has carefully helped and managed the automated retention/destruction of data once input in accordance with GDPR policies and legislation.

The Chair asked if prospective students would be able to ask the website to give them a choice of courses available to them based on their interest input and give them a comparative offer with other colleges. HubSpot will give the college the intelligence to know the prompts that are put into LLMs that return CWA in the result and advanced reporting will be available as HubSpot continues to be developed. Finally, governors were interested to know how much HubSpot was being utilised, and it was confirmed that there are currently four members of the marketing team using it daily but once the full data integration is complete, every member of the team will be HubSpot users.

M Blake left the meeting and P Smith joined the meeting at 8.45am

## **7 Subcontractor/Partnership Activities Update**

The report highlighted the major variances between target and actual outturn which in the main are due to a facility provided for 19+ ASF (Adult Skills Funding) CPCA learners to participate on the King's Trust programme that was not required and the ratio of 16-18 and 19+ learners on the same programme.

It was confirmed that the transition of S4PL learners is complete and the learners who remain with CWA had successfully completed their apprenticeships. The final financial reconciliation remains outstanding but would be completed in the coming weeks. Lessons have been learned from the delivery of this national apprenticeship provision and complex compliance requirements, and it is unlikely that the college will engage with specialist (niche) national partners in future.

In summary, partners are performing well with two taking further enrolments in year. The 19+ non-devolved target number for Pilot IMS has been exceeded with more cohorts to start later in the year. With no headroom available in this allocation the college is exploring how further starts for this age group can be funded.

Governors were informed that the Subcontractor Management Standard is due for reassessment this year and internal auditors have been appointed to carry out the audit against the standard over 26 and 27 May 2026. The team will be completing a 'light touch' procurement exercise with subcontractor partners in the 2027/28 academic year and governors agreed this approach.

P Smith left the meeting at 9.00am

## **8 Management Accounts – January 2026**

It was noted that the forecast year-end figures in the report reflect some known funding and cost changes that have emerged during the year but do not match the numbers falling out of the detailed recast budget in the next agenda item. The full year forecast column in the income and expenditure table (2) will be updated to reflect the recast budget and associated commentary for the Corporation meeting to be held on 25 March 2026.

HoF

The report presented an early view of the college's financial performance and position. At the end of January 2026 the accounts show,

- the current budget being outperformed primarily due to the increased 16-19 income (not known at the time of budget preparation)
- the financial health rating is 'outstanding' at 250 points, 240 points being the start of the rating.
- Refectories are ahead of their budget at £61k which is the best position it has been for quite some time
- The cash position is good at £10m with some expectation of grant monies received in advance to be spent by 31 March 2026. However, CWA recently received £2m reimbursement of grant claims made to CPCA in respect of the Green Skills Academy building so the cash position will be higher, likely for the remainder of the financial year.
- Improved profitability of 8.5% on actuals year-to-date
- Contribution is still a work in progress (as detailed in agenda item 10 below)

The variances reported had been considered and taken forward to the recast budget in the next agenda item.

Finally, it was commented that study programme recruitment is encouraging and should lead to in-year funding increases, but this is still subject to change and the quantum of in-year funding not yet agreed (subject to affordability). It was recognised that a positive increase in student numbers, however, does impact the college's cost base.

## **9 Recast Budget and Revised Mid Term Financial Plan**

The revisions to budget track some significant changes to the operational and financial profile of the college that have emerged during the year.

In summary it was reported that the recast budget,

- Improves the overall surplus by £631k, with the highest positive impact being the increase in study programme income from CWAs share of the £160m funding announced by the DfE
- Generates a £938k surplus and 'good' financial health (top of the bracket at 230 points)
- Includes the 4.5% pay increase award to staff, paid in November 2025 and backdated to the start of the academic year (originally budgeted at 4%)
- Allows for a £200 differentiation in the bottom 16 spine points of the support pay bands from 1 April 2026 that have been compressed by increases in the national living wage over the past few years.
- Accounts for the reduction in the employer's pension rate from 21.8% to 18.8% effective 1 April 2026
- Has been used as a basis to revise the colleges MTFP which generates 'good' financial health in each of the next four years but challenges profitability. The minimum cash balance per the plan is £9.5m.

- Includes support grant for NIC employer contributions up to 31 March 2026 however it has since been confirmed that this support will continue for 2026/27 which will impact the final 4 months of this year and the next year MTFP.
- Utility costs show a favourable adjustment based on a recent review but given the current concerns and conflict in Iran this is likely to impact the MTFP as 95% and 93% of electricity and Gas for this financial year has already been purchased. A £50k provision has been allocated for the remainder of the purchasing required.
- Includes no assumption for 16-18 in year growth funding as DfE affordability is unknown

A pessimistic approach has been made in preparing the MTFP, especially regarding 2026/27 which currently shows a deficit. Unknown items and prudent approach to omit items could however swing a considerable surplus and as the work to draft the 2026/27 budget begins this will bring more insight.

In summary, the following assumptions in the MTFP were highlighted to governors

- 2026/27 Study Programme funding (£27,650m) is based largely on 2025/26 learners and these have been projected forwards based on the understanding of demographic growth and an estimate of funding rate inflation.
- There is no confirmation of the TPS grant (worth £950k) income in the current financial year
- No contribution of Employer's NIC grant for 2026/27 and subsequent years but a £314k increase to 31 March 2026, allowed for in the revised budget
- A plan is currently being made with regards to staffing requirements to support the new maths and English conditions of funding. 8FTEs is still the same as what was presented at budget preparation, and this is felt to be at the high end of requirements.

Other areas non funding related

- The rate of inflation has been based on the bank of England at 2.1% but this has since increased to c3% in last couple of weeks, so the MTFP is to be adjusted
- A provision has been made for a 2.1% pay increase (cost approx. £629k) but an assessment of affordability would be made prior to being proposed

It was agreed that the MTFP would be updated in terms of the TPS Grant, Employer's NIC grant assumptions and include it with the recast budget for presenting to the Corporation at the meeting to be held on 25 March 2026 with a clear statement that the MTFP is not a worked up 2026/27 budget but a prudent indication of what is known at this time.

VPCS  
HoF

## 10 Contribution Analysis

The January 2026 management accounts (agenda item 8) shows that the college contribution for the six months (to January 2026) is 40% against 39% in the budget.

The previously identified issues causing errors in the contribution figures are still to be resolved. The implementation of a new finance system has taken priority and the disparity between the treatment of English and maths in the curriculum planning data versus the management accounts has not yet been addressed. The issues will resume a priority following the implementation of the new finance system.

HoF

## 11 Funding Position and Data Control

It was reported that the 2025/26 16-19 Study Programme recruitment was 3607 at the key R04 point. This is potentially c.£350k in-year growth funding but will be offset by other adjustments so it is anticipated that the increase will not exceed £110k and is of course subject to DfE affordability. This level of recruitment will drive a growth of around 200 learners in 2026/27, which would attract c.£1.5m learner growth funding but wider factors that will affect the 2026/27 allocation are not yet known. It was further noted that there is optimism that the retention factor (2-year lagged funding model) and programme cost weighting factor are still unknown and deferred to be announced imminently. The overall funding position therefore is predicted to be more favourable than projected. If announced in time this is to be reflected in the MTFP to be presented to the Corporation at the meeting to be held on 25 March 2026.

APFP&P  
VPCS  
HoF

Adult recruitment has been strong with some allocations already over-delivered. Consequently, income assumptions have been increased from £1.747m to £1.833m at reforecast. In summary, the four separate allocations show,

- Non-Devolved (DfE) Adult Skills Fund - Currently around 75% and expecting to achieve around 100% of allocation
- Non-Devolved (DfE) Free Courses for Jobs - Currently over-delivered and seeking funding via Norfolk to cover this
- CPCA Adult Skills Fund - Currently around 99% and expecting to achieve around 110% of allocation
- CPCA Free Courses for Jobs - Currently over-delivered.

It was reported that the independent consultant has now commenced work to evaluate the college's position and options to secure designation as a specialist land-based provider and the associated funding uplifts. If this cannot be substantiated it was noted that this would negatively impact the eligibility to claim the associated funding/specialist weighting.

Due to the funding position, all FCFJ recruitment it was confirmed, is now paused and CPCA ASF is likely to be paused before Easter. Over delivery of CPCA ASF in 2025/26 will reduce available funding in 2026/27.

C Rand left the meeting at 9.40am

It was confirmed that apprenticeships are on course to achieve the £3m budget target. Apprenticeships are funded via two streams, non-levy procured and levy/digital accounts. Recruitment against non-levy procured is now closed so this allocation now exists purely to fund existing eligible learners through to completion. There are a small number of apprentices under this funding, all of whom have completed since the last funding return so the position against this allocation will soon be finalised. Earnings via levy/digital accounts are not subject to allocations. Access to levy is controlled by the levy paying employers, while access to digital accounts (for non-levy paying employers) is controlled by a reservation system on instigation of each individual apprenticeship.

Advanced learner loans is a slightly decreasing income line largely due to the FCFJ growth and eligibility for learners to draw down adult funding which takes some of those learners out of scope for having to take out an advanced learner loan. So, whilst FCFJ income is up, loan income is down.

Regarding maths and English condition of funding the college is not yet compliant with the 2.5% tolerance, but it is expected that this will be achieved, however if unsuccessful governors were informed of the risk to funding in 2027/28 (based on being 0.77% over the tolerance would impact 0.35 of current funding, c.£50-£60k).

In January 2026, CWA commenced six Skills Bootcamps, four funded through CPCA, delivered at the Wisbech campus, and two funded by Norfolk, delivered at the King's Lynn campus. There are 80 learners who have accessed these courses and while income is dependent on outcomes, £150k income is anticipated. In summary with Norfolk, it took approximately six months from bidding to delivery whereas with CPCA application is through grant funding submission which is a more expedient 'bidding' process.

Finally, it was reported that CPCA has now confirmed an in-year sampling process for their funded provision for 2025/26 to be completed with all providers. CWA has received its sample and is in the process of collating the required evidence for this process. There is confidence that no issues are anticipated to arise.

## **12 School of Nursing Studies and Green Skills Development**

Since writing the report it was noted that an offer of employment had been made for the Specialist Health and Social Care Careers Coordinator post, but the candidate has since withdrew their acceptance, so this is out to advert again.

The Chair commented that CWA had worked closely with the QEHLK delivering associated nursing apprenticeship provision within the School of Nursing Studies. Now that the hospital has taken the decision to deliver these in-house how is CWA filling the void? There are several opportunities such as with the Apollo project and every opportunity is being systematically explored and developed, the details of which were in the report. There are a few sticking points with some potential partners to develop the provision/offer but there is assurance that the team is maximising the provision and staffing with maximum impact.

One of the key issues is with the DWP who used to send referrals through to CWA, but the two Apollo funded posts have now ceased and referrals have stopped. This part of the development is now being picked up by the Head of the School of Nursing Studies.

The Principal/CEO commented that the development and delivery of Level 3 Senior Support Worker apprenticeship provision could be a game changer and several other developments to get commercial value, with increased financial viability. There are much wider benefits in having the facility in terms of reputation. The Principal/CEO is working with the Senior Medical Officer to produce a promotional piece about the School of Nursing Studies and the wider provision of the college which will be used as a case study in their 2026 annual report.

It is proposed that the Anglia Training Centre will relocate to the new Green Skills Academy at Wisbech, but governors questioned if this would disadvantage students in terms of travel/access. It was confirmed that there was no suggestion that the move would disadvantage students and once ATC had relocated this would help facilitate some additional apprenticeship provision at the King's Lynn campus.

**13 Contracts £100k-£500k & Single Payments >£1m**

The report confirmed that there is one contract with a value of £100k to £500k. The details of which were included in the report. Single payments more than £1m between 1 November 2025 to 19 February 2026 was a nil return.

**14 F&GP Risk Register Review**

The financial risks monitored by the committee had been filtered out from the corporate risk register and these were detailed in the report. Since the last review only one risk (R023, capital projects) has moved from a residual score of 12 (red) to 8 (amber) as many of the capital build projects had completed.

It was noted that Risk R025 (EBIDTA improvement) would be considered as the 2026/27 budget is prepared and other reassurances emerge. Noting that risks are considered in terms of financial impact governors asked how/if opportunities are factored into budget and forecast preparation. The college doesn't hold a register of opportunities, but where opportunities emerge these are considered but wouldn't necessarily be built into the budget or a recast unless there was certainty that it would materialise.

**15 Strategic Targets 2025/26 – Progress Review**

A review of the seven 2025/26 strategic targets monitored by the committee has been completed. In summary 1 target has been achieved, 4 have made good progress, and 1 reasonable progress. It was confirmed that there is a strategic target in the strategy to track the progress of the implementation of the new finance system. This is monitored by the Task and Finish Group and the Corporation.

**16 Any Other Business**

There were no other items of business.

**17 Chair's Items for Briefing to Corporation**

- The CWA website review showed a 7.8% drop in traffic, with LLM (AI) referrals increasing; HubSpot integration and a CMS-driven website refresh are underway with GDPR safeguards implemented

Chair

- Subcontractor performance is broadly strong. The S4PL transition is complete, and the Subcontractor Management Standard audit is scheduled for May 2026
- January 2026 management accounts show strong performance: outstanding financial health, improved cash position (boosted by £2m CPCA reimbursement), and increased 16–19 income driving favourable variances.
- The recast budget improves the surplus to £938k, reflecting increased study programme income, updated pay awards, pension rate reductions, and revised utility cost assumptions. The MTFP remains prudent with some uncertainty for 2026/27.
- The funding outlook is broadly positive: strong 16–19 recruitment (potential in-year growth), strong adult allocations (some over-delivery), apprenticeship income on target, Skills Bootcamp delivery underway, but with some DfE factors still pending confirmation.
- The School of Nursing Studies is developing new opportunities after QEHLK moved provision in-house, including progress on Level 3 Senior Support Worker apprenticeships.
- The Anglia Training Centre is proposed to relocate to the new Green Skills Academy at Wisbech.

## **18 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 17 June 2026 at 8:30am (Meeting Room, Principal's Suite, KL)

Meeting ended at 10.25am