

College of West Anglia
Minutes of Finance and General Purposes Committee
Wednesday, 1 October 2025
8:30am – 11.00am
Remote Meeting, via TEAMS

Present	Hein Van Den Wildenberg Cally Rand David Pomfret Paul Gibson Joe Yexley	Governor (Chair) Governor (Vice Chair) Governor (Principal) Governor (Staff) Governor
Attending	Paul Harrison Kerry Heathcote Rob Petto Jenny Quaif Paul Smith Jules Bridges	Vice Principal Corporate Services Deputy CEO/Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality Assistant Principal Funding, Performance and Projects Head of Finance Head of Employer Liaison, Partnerships & Commercial Training Head of Governance

No.		Action
1	Apologies for absence There were no apologies for absence. The Chair of the committee welcomed Paul Gibson to his first meeting.	
2	Declarations of Interests There were no items of interest declared.	
3	Election of Vice Chair The committee nominated and appointed Cally Rand as the Vice Chair of the committee	
4	Minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 June 2025 The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2025 were reviewed and agreed as being an accurate record.	
5	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 Head of Finance will take up the offer from the governor with treasury management expertise when time permits. New governors have been added to the Board of CWA Enterprises Limited. Cally Rand is also to join its membership, and the company secretary will file the necessary forms with Companies House. All other completed items are to be removed from the report.	 HoF VPCS HoG
6	Property Steering Group Update The last meeting of the Property Steering Group was held on 30 June 2025. The committee received an overview of the agenda items discussed and an update on current capital build progress.	
P Smith joined the meeting at 8.35am		

7 Subcontractor/Partnership Activities Update

It was reported that the 2025/26 plan remains unchanged to that previously reported. The year-to-date position is unknown as enrolment processes are still taking place. The report confirmed the R13 partnership performance return for 2024/2025 with only achievement income outstanding.

There are 42 apprentices planned to be transitioned to Solutions 4 Polymer Limited (S4PL), as the funded provider, by the end of September 2025. A further 13 apprentices are about to enter gateway for End Point Assessment [EPA] and will be fully complete by 31 December 2025. At this point CWA will no longer have a contractual relationship with S4PL. The college is restricted in terms of provision which can be delivered via subcontracting on certain funding streams. There are nuances to this, but this is broadly 25% measured on learner numbers per funding stream. The Chair asked for future reports to include the percentage that it subcontracts although it was noted that CWA is well under the level of tolerance, confirmed in the TEAMs chat at c.14% of the relevant ASF learners.

HoELP&CT

8 Partnership Management Policy

The policy has been reviewed and updated brought about by several factors such as replacing references to the ESFA with the DfE, incorporating feedback from audit, changes in DfE funding and compliance regulations, some changes in terminology, and general document housekeeping. In addition, at the end of this academic year CWA will resubmit and be audited against the subcontracting management standards (3-year cycle) so the updates to the policy consider and incorporate these requirements. Tracked changes had been applied to the document which the committee considered and **approved** the policy as presented.

P Smith left the meeting at 8.45am

9 Preliminary Financial Results 2024/25

The committee received the preliminary full year figures for the year ending 31 July 2025 based on the R13 return, subject to audit.

The Head of Finance commented that the 2024/25 year had been challenging given the uncertainties around in-year growth funding and late notifications however the outcome is an exceptional surplus position from a reforecast of £261k to £1.2m. This has resulted in the college reporting a financial health grade of 'outstanding' at 250 points (DfE range of scores recorded as 'outstanding' is >230). The main variances were detailed in the report under sections 3.2 to 3.6 with lots of smaller balances that make up the main variances, including restructuring costs of £128k.

The committee was reminded that the accounts are subject to audit and there are some statutory reporting adjustments to be made to the accounts such as pension figures. Members asked management, given previous remarks by external auditors, about a review for impairment (previously treated as an unadjusted difference), in relation to CWA Enterprises Limited (£400k) and the Tower Block Roof repairs which could be up to £126k in the fixed asset register. The Vice Principal Corporate Services and the Head of Finance confirmed that this is being considered. Any impairment adjustment affects the bottom line but not the financial health assessment. Members indicated support for such impairment review.

VPCS/HoF

Appreciating that some of the detail was reported under item 3.2 of the report, members asked for clearer reporting where for example variances are above forecast because of natural growth, or due to one-off transactions. The Chair concurred suggesting that the report to the Corporation details how much of the positive difference versus the last update was due to true surprises such as unexpected income received or due to prudent estimates of expenditure items. These suggestions were accepted and will be considered for reporting to the Board, and future reports to the committee.

VPCS/HoF

As at 31 July 2025 the college holds cash balances of £11.3m (£5.2m free cash reserves) which governors considered to be high but will continue to keep in focus in terms of

EBITDA and compliance with CWA Treasury Management policy to minimise exposure of risk and maximise investment opportunities. The Head of Finance commented that Treasury Management Specialists previously contacted have approached the college again with a proposition that the college will explore. It was further suggested that the HoF also investigates the opportunity to invest overnight which was agreed would be considered.

HoF

The Chair of the committee mentioned that the table in the management accounts shows several lines that are better than budget yet the contribution table (section 6) it is difficult to reconcile where figures are less than budget. The Head of Finance will investigate and report back to the committee at the next meeting to be held in November 2025.

HoF

Finally, members recognised the improved commercial income which is up by £126k in the main due to the efforts of Applewood Nursery to bring about an exceptional positive financial performance which should not be understated. Refectory income continues to make a loss albeit significantly improved on previous years so is moving closer to a profit position whilst balancing this with meeting both supply and demand and affordability of food options for our learners. The Chair noted that another line of commercial income (farm lease) had also performed better than budget in the year. CWA had rented the farm buildings in the year as well as the land, thus attracting additional income.

10 Pay Award Proposal

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

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

The report confirmed that there are four contracts with a value of £100k to £500k. The details of which were included in the report. It was noted that single payments more than £1m is a nil return, within the reporting period (12 May to 12 September 2025).

12 Funding Position and Data Control (Outturn 2024/25 & Headline Figures 2025-26)

The committee was informed that 2024/25 income, while not final, was expected to be within a small margin of budget (specifics detailed in the report). The R14 return is 23 October 2025 when income will be finalised.

The committee was informed that funding audits (RSM income testing and DfE full funding audit) are progressing well. There is a concern with the DfE full funding audit regarding vulnerable bursaries, where it appears that CWA has supported learners beyond the scope of this bursary, with a potential exposure of c.£27k. We await the DfE to consider the colleges approach with best intentions and spirit of the guidance and affirm if funding will be clawed back.

The other aspects of the audit are largely closed except for ALS claims for 19+ learners which remains open with RSM UK Audit LLP. The extent of funding exposure could be £40-50k but could cause CWA to drop out of the 97% threshold for that allocation stream which would have a further £30k impact so could increase the exposure to as much as £70-£80k.

These two outstanding audit points are due to be concluded in the next week so an update to governors would be available for the Corporation meeting to be held on 15 October 2025.

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

13 Reserves Policy

The updated policy was shared with committee members highlighting the most significant changes made in sections 5, and 9. The target levels of free reserves required have been changed from between £3.5m and £5.0m to between £4.5 and £5.5m. This reflects the expanding expenditure base of the College. The new range allows CWA to operate for 44 to 60 days, which is broadly the same as in 2024/25. It was noted that reserves will

be reported to the committee on a quarterly basis. Tracked changes had been applied to the document which the committee considered and **approved** the policy as presented.

14 **Strategic Targets Progress Review 2024/2025 Final**

The dashboard report shows the final progress position against the 9 strategic targets monitored by this committee. In summary this confirmed that four targets have been achieved, three made good progress, one was behind target, and one target was not achieved. It was noted that the target to achieve 4% net carbon reduction (behind target) has been changed for the 2025/26 strategic plan and the target not achieved was further to pausing work with NCC following the collapse of the devolution deal and will not be achieved next year either.

The Chair noted that the commentary against strategic target 4.9 should be updated to reflect that the Corporation did receive the AI strategy in July 2025.

HoG

15 **Any Other Business**

The Head of Governance asked the committee to consider moving the future November meetings of the committee to a week later as the third week tends to coincide with the AoC Annual Conference that the Principal/CEO and/or other SMT members attend. The committee agreed and future schedules (starting 2026/27) would look to accommodate this. In addition, the November 2025 and March 2026 meetings of the committee will be moved to online (via TEAMS). Calendar invites will be updated and sent.

HoG

HoG

The Principal/CEO was asked to comment on the PM announcement yesterday for FE to get an extra £800m next year as the 50% University Target will be scrapped, as well as the broader recognition of the FE sector. It is unusual for the sector to get such or any recognition by the PM which is hugely positive. There was an announcement a few weeks' ago that skills would be separated out of the DfE and pushed into the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) which could result in duplication and bureaucracy but more importantly, increasingly, skills are being seen by this government as key to delivering many of their manifesto's commitments.

Growth and productivity are important for this government and to achieve this they will need to back the skills agenda with FE at centre stage to deliver this. The PM made some strong statements, £800m for FE and a commitment to support Technical Excellence Colleges which are moving at pace with wave 2 likely to be released imminently and soon after wave 3. The more the FE sector is recognised, the more it is likely to be regulated, and reference was made that the sector will be held to account through Ofsted as well as new regional improvement teams in FE to support colleges. The White Paper will come out later this month. The other stand out statement made was to ditch the 50% of young adults into higher education target but aim for two-thirds of young people to get higher-level skills, either through university, or a 'gold standard' apprenticeship by age 25. On the whole the announcement has been received positively.

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

Chair

- The transition of apprentices to S4PL is set to conclude at the end of December 2025
- The Partnership Management Policy was approved by the committee.
- The preliminary forecast 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).
- There are some statutory reporting adjustments to be made to the accounts such as pension figures and potentially accounting for impairments around CWA Enterprises Limited and repair works for the Tower Block Roof.
- 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 CWA Treasury Management policy to minimise exposure of risk and maximise investment opportunities.

- The committee was supportive of the pay award proposal made by the Principal/CEO which will be presented to the Corporation at the meeting to be held on 15 October 2025.
- The committee was made aware of three funding risks relating to vulnerable bursaries, ALS and specialist weighting of land-based provision. An update will be provided to the Corporation at the meeting to be held on 15 October 2025.
- The committee approved the updated Reserves Policy.

17 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Wednesday 19 November 2025 at 8:30am (Remote, via TEAMS)

It was noted that the Principal/CEO will be attending the AoC Conference in November and therefore extended his apologies for the November meeting of the committee.

HoG

Meeting ended at 10.15am