

Solihull College & University Centre

Corporation Meeting

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 8th October 2024
4.00pm – 7.00pm Blossomfield Campus.

Present	Barbara Hughes – Chair of Corporation Paul Assinder – Chair Designate Christine Abbott Megan Bacalla – FE Student Governor Tasleem Chaudary Sarah Horton-Walsh Rebecca Gater – Principal & CEO Helen Kinghorn Ravi Kumar Tony Lucas – Vice Chair of Corporation Graham McKean Mehreen Mirza Amirun Nehar Cheryl Pidler Donna Poole – Staff Governor Harrison Thompson
In Attendance	Heather Hunt – Deputy Principal and CFO, Pete Haynes – Vice Principal HR & Student Services, Sam Bromwich – Director of Corporate Governance, Risk & Compliance, Lee Jamieson – Vice Principal Quality & Curriculum, Linda McLaughlin – Assistant Principal Quality and Innovation, Adam Thomas – Director of Student Services (for one item)
Apologies	Nancy Buckley - Vice Principal Business Growth, Skills & Partnerships, Tina Taylor – Senior Governance Officer (minute taker)

1. Welcome and Announcements

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted in the absence of the Senior Governance Officer the meeting was being recorded on Teams.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted for Nancy Buckley and Tina Taylor.

3. Declarations of Interest

The Principal and CEO declared a conflict of interest under item 6.1C as the Director of the GBS Institute of Technology (GBSIoT).

4. Membership Update

Membership changes.

The Corporation **NOTED** the membership changes as detailed within the Summary Membership report.

The Chair provided an update about the resignation of the HE Student Governor, assuring the Corporation that there are no negative concerns related to this change. It was noted that the HE Student Voice Officer role is being advertised and the successful candidate will be invited to assume Student Governor responsibilities as part of their role. **A governor asked why a recently newly appointed governor was not in attendance**, and an update was provided.

Appointments

The Corporation received the recommendation from the Search and Governance committee to appoint Susie Annett – External Member (Corporation) and Dave Nanda – Full Member.

Discussions took place relating to the vacancy on the A&R committee for a member who is a Financially qualified. The Corporation were asked to consider appointing Dave Nanda who had the relevant qualifications to become a member of the committee.

The Corporation **RATIFIED**: Susie Annett – External Member (Corporation) and Dave Nanda – Full Member effective 1st November 2024. The appointment is for a term of one-year, and it is expected that this would extend for a term of 3 years.

In addition, it was **APPROVED** to appoint Dave Nanda to the Audit & Risk Committee effective 1st November 2024.

5. Chair's Action & Use of College Seal and Chair's E-Signature

A copy of the Use of the College Seal and Chair's E-signature report was circulated for information and **NOTED**.

The Chair informed of the following Chair's actions since the last meeting which were detailed within the report.

- RMF Contract Variation
- IoT Collaboration Agreement
- RSM Additional Work which was approved as a Chair's Action by the Audit & Risk committee Chair.

The Chair's Actions were **RATIFIED**

6. Minutes and Actions Log of the Previous Corporation Meeting 23rd May and 26th June 2024 & Confidential Minutes 26th June 2024.

The previous minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 23rd May 2024 and 26th June 2024 and confidential minutes of 26th June 2024 were received and **APPROVED** as a true record. The Chair's signature will be added to the minutes.

6.1 Matters Arising (verbal)

An update was given on matters arising:

6.1a Business Travel, Expenses, and Benefits Policy

The policy was shared, with no significant changes except for an increase in subsistence rates to reflect inflation.

A governor raised concerns about the financial burden on staff, particularly younger members, due to higher insurance premiums for using personal vehicles for business.

Potential solutions were discussed. Further discussions covered HMRC fuel rates and reimbursement processes and governors discussed travel outside the region for non-executive staff and its impact on operational costs and logistics.

With there being no further comments or questions, governors **APPROVED** the policy.

6.1b IoT Collaboration agreement

This item was shared for information and approved under a Chair's action under item 5. The Corporation **NOTED** the information provided.

6.1c IoT Decision making paper

The Corporation was asked to approve the IoT decision-making processes as outlined in Appendix 1. The recommendation specified whether decisions should be approved by the Principal and CEO on behalf of the Corporation or if approval by the Corporation itself is required.

A governor inquired about the documentation covering material transactions outside of property. The Deputy Principal and CFO explained that the relevant rules have been removed from the collaboration agreement, and further clarification from the IoT is needed. She assured governors that governing board members of the IoT will have access to these transactions for approval.

The Corporation **APPROVED** the IoT decision making recommendations as outlined in Appendix 1.

6.1d CFFR July 2024 & Commentary

The items were shared for information as linked documents on the agenda. An explanation to the reports were provided by the Deputy Principal and CFO. She informed governors the CFFR was approved at the Corporation meeting in June however there were some changes to the commentary since the meeting. Governors were assured that no changes were made to the figures that were approved at the last meeting.

The Corporation **APPROVED** the final version of the CFFR July 2024 and commentary.

6.2 Actions

The actions of the previous meeting on 26th June 2024 were reviewed and an update provided.

Governors were reminded that outstanding training must be completed. The Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) guidance is available on the Hub. Governors were urged to read the guidance and confirm its completion by signing. **ACTION**

The Vice Principal for Quality & Curriculum provided an update **following a governor's inquiry regarding Safeguarding actions.** The safeguarding referral data has been refreshed, improving visibility of key trends and areas of concern. Mental health has been identified as a significant focus area, with several initiatives underway to address related challenges. Collaboration with an external provider is being explored to enhance support for these efforts.

Personal development coaches have been appointed to meet individually with all 16-18-year-old students across the region who are tailoring their sessions based on safeguarding referral data to address specific student needs. Particular attention will be given to schools or groups facing highlighted issues. While the safeguarding action has been marked as resolved, it will remain under ongoing review.

6.3 Top Key Risks

The Top Key Risks report was received, and a detailed update was provided and discussed in detail.

A governor inquired about plans for another desk exercise related to the Business Continuity Plan. The Deputy Principal and CFO confirmed that plans are in place for a “switch off” mock cyber-attack to evaluate the college's response. Following an audit recommendation, phishing training software will be implemented at the college.

It was identified that the top risks were not displayed correctly on BoardEffect, leading to confusion regarding their order of importance. A corrected version will be uploaded to BoardEffect. **ACTION**

The Principal and CEO presented information about a proposed new risk, explaining that the Executive Management Team (EMT) agreed it constitutes an area of concern. The mitigations

for the top risks are aligned with this new risk, and discussions were held regarding the inclusion of attendance in the risk considerations.

The top key risks were **NOTED**.

7. Committee Minutes

The committee minutes were shared for information:

- Remuneration Committee 07.05.2024.
- Audit & Risk Committee 18.06.2024
- Financial Oversight Group (FoG) 05.06.2024 & 24.06.2024

The remuneration committee minutes were not shared with non-governors and the Staff and Student governors due to confidential reasons.

8. Principal's Introduction & Update Report

The Principal and CEO's report was circulated and provided a start of year update about key areas of the College, and update about progress against the strategic plan. A detailed explanation to the report was provided noting the following key points.

The Quality Team completed lots of work around inspiring inductions an update was provided. There was a video to share however due to technical difficulties, it was not possible. A copy will be uploaded to BoardEffect for governors to see. **ACTION**

General behaviour among students has been good and positive compliance with lanyard requirements and related protocols has been noted.

A draft of the strategic plan update was presented, outlining past achievements and future priorities for the next six months. Governors were urged to review the document carefully ahead of discussion and approval. Following the October half term, a survey will be distributed to confirm their review and approval, as well as to gather feedback. **ACTION**

A governor expressed concerns about the strategic plan being published on the website which details low achievement rates. The Chair acknowledged the concern, noting that it had also been raised with Ofsted and emphasised that the publication is in the interest of openness and transparency.

An update was provided regarding changes to the EMT following the long-term absence of a staff member. The Principal and CEO informed changes were effective immediately for an interim basis until the staff member returns.

Linda McLaughlin, Assistant Principal for Quality and Innovation, will take on the role of Quality and Curriculum lead, while Lee Jamieson will step into the role of Business Growth, Skills & Partnerships lead. Further updates were provided regarding changes to the management team since the start of the year.

Strategic Ambition 1

An update about attendance rates were confirmed as 16–18-year-olds: 84%, Adults: 85%, Apprenticeships: 96%, higher education: 93%. There are some attendance data issues, concerns raised regarding the accuracy of attendance data due to ongoing issues with the ProSolution software and a detailed explanation was provided regarding the efforts to resolve the issues and ongoing risk management.

Strategic Ambition 2

There was an update about recruitment noting a change to the numbers in the paper which had already been circulated. 16–18-year-old enrolments are currently 8% higher than last academic year. Enrolments are 7% above the funding allocation. Enrolments stand at 5,671 (slightly adjusted from the previously recorded 5,715). Governors were directed to the live data on enrolments which is available on the governor's dashboard.

An update was provided on other areas exceeding targets and the challenges this presents, paying particular attention to apprenticeship rates.

Governors were informed about the 42-day enrolment timeline that begins when learners enrol and how it is critical in relation to the impact on funding and financial targets for the college. Focus groups will be conducted following the autumn survey to investigate learners experiences at college during the first 42 days, and the factors behind their choices to attend Solihull rather than another college.

An overview of the Education Village, a joint venture with RMF and the Combined Authority, aimed at addressing workforce needs for the British Horse-Riding Association was provided. An update was provided about the qualifications that learners can achieve upon completing the course associated with the Education Village initiative.

Strategic Ambition 3

An update about pay award is covered under the confidential item 15.

Strategic Ambition 4

The "Dear Accounting Officer" letter was received for information. This letter includes information about the Secretary of State for Education's decision to transfer the current functions of the Education and Skills Funding Agency into the Department for Education.

Strategic Ambition 5

Good progress is being made regarding the Property Strategy and an update will be provided at the Corporation meeting in November.

Governors Comments and Questions

In depth discussions took place regarding application numbers and conversion rate to enrolments and how the trends are changing. Governors questioned whether the college is increasing market share in a growing market or maintaining it. Clarification was sought on whether students are being lost to competitors, particularly in Business and Computing and discussions took place regarding numbers of applicants on those courses.

A governor expressed surprise at the computing program being below target. Concerns were raised regarding potential curriculum gaps, particularly in cyber security and tech sectors where growth is strong. Discussions explored whether the college's computing courses are failing to attract students or if competitors are drawing them away.

The Chair inquired about courses which are at risk of not running due to low enrolment numbers. Discussions on the availability of resources, including teachers and classroom spaces also took place.

A governor emphasised on the importance of monitoring programs next year to avoid creating a skills gap. Suggestions were made to enhance marketing efforts and increase awareness around the underperforming programs to address potential issues early.

Target performance was discussed, it was acknowledgment that certain areas are performing well and are above target. A request was made for regular reports on student retention to monitor risks, especially concerning space constraints that may lead to unexpected losses. The Principal

and CEO confirmed that retention data will be included in the live dashboard for ongoing visibility, alongside regular report updates.

Discussions on A Level offerings took place. Following a question regarding the A Level pilot program, governors were informed of potential risks, such as student dropouts from the A level scheme, which could impact group sizes. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) agreed to proceed with running the A-levels regardless of concerns about group size to ensure the pilot's success, indicating that there are currently no major concerns in this area.

Discussions took place on the increase in job opportunities in specific subjects, highlighting the importance of aligning educational offerings with labour market to avoid future issues.

The Chair requested an update about Higher Education enrolment targets. In response, the Principal and CEO confirmed that the Head of HE & Research and the Vice Principal of Quality & Curriculum are collaborating with an external consultant to review the curriculum strategy aimed at increasing enrolment numbers. It was noted that the decline in Higher Education enrolment is not unique to the college; many colleges across the network are experiencing similar challenges year after year.

9. Greater Birmingham & Solihull Institute of Technology (GBSIoT) Termly Report

In a change to the order of the agenda items the update was presented under item 9.

The Vice Principal of Quality & Curriculum presented the item in detail. The report provided the Corporation with GBSIoT updates which are aligned with the approved GBSIoT Decision Making Paper, operational updates and support services to GBSIoT supplied by Solihull College & University Centre. A number of papers were shared for information as linked documents.

Governors were informed that all documents were included in an accessible folder on BoardEffect should they wish to review them at any time.

The report was **NOTED for information, understanding and decision making by governors.**

10. Annual Safeguarding and Prevent Report & Policy Update

In a change to the order of the agenda items the update was presented under item 10.

The Director of Student Services joined the meeting and presented the report in detail highlighting the key points within the annual report.

The Annual Safeguarding and Prevent report 2023/2024 were received which provided an essential update for Governors on Safeguarding and Prevent at the college and key changes to KCSiE including the Prevent Position Statement.

Following a governor question regarding early intervention, the Director of Student Services provided an explanation to how they manage a safeguarding concern which is identified prior to the learner starting college.

The Chair asked whether the changes to the "My Concern" records already been implemented. The Director of Student Services confirmed changes have already been made. The team has been working on this aspect since 2018, including recording the rationale behind decisions. The guidance in place has felt outdated, and this process is helping bring it back in line with current practices.

Discussion focused on the legal status of individuals turning 18, when they are considered adults and no longer fall under child safeguarding laws. The college continues to support these students through its "vulnerable adults" safeguarding policy to ensure their well-being.

Discussion on the impact of lockdown, specifically speech interruptions in students took place. It was noted that, at the start of the year, the safeguarding team observed a shift in referrals.

The Safeguarding Link Governor expressed satisfaction that her concerns were addressed, particularly regarding consistency of risk assessments across all sites and gaps in staffing have been filled.

Governors **APPROVED** the following policies:

- Safeguarding Young People and Vulnerable Adults Policy 2024-2025
- Prevent Policy 2024-2025

The Director of Student Services left the meeting.

11. Quality & Curriculum Update

The Vice Principal for Quality and Innovation presented the update.

11.1 Quality Improvement Strategy and Cycle for 2024/25.

An explanation on the key changes within the report were advised. A copy of the Quality Improvement Cycle for 2024/25 were received for information. Governors were asked to approve the Quality Improvement Strategy 2024/25.

The Chair highlighted that several governors have participated in the self-assessment panels and emphasised the importance of governors' engagement in the outlined cycle of activities. Governors were encouraged to participate in focus groups and learning visits to enhance their involvement.

Discussions lead onto the Quality Report and governors were directed to the Governors dashboard to review the quality report. **Following a request from the Chair** and further discussions about the quality cycle, it was agreed to prepare an update about the results of the deep dive into core areas for the Quality Report and the quality cycle to present at the Corporation meeting in December. **ACTION**

The Corporation **APPROVED** the updated Quality Improvement Strategy and Cycle for 2024/25.

11.2 Curriculum Plan 2024/25

The Curriculum Plan 2024/25 was shared and **APPROVED**.

11.3 Achievement Interim Report 2023/24

The interim Achievement 2023-24 report was received and a detailed explanation to overall achievement was confirmed. A copy of the Maths and English achievement report will be uploaded to BoardEffect. **ACTION**

The achievement figures will be included in the annual self-assessment, with a verbal update about these figures scheduled to be presented at the Corporation meeting in November. **ACTION**

The Chair Designate stressed the importance of recognising successes but noted that more attention is needed on the challenges faced by schools and courses in need of attention. To ensure the Corporation stays informed, the Chair Designate recommended including a standing report at each meeting to discuss these issues and assess the effectiveness of current measures. He also suggested considering the involvement of heads of schools in these discussions to enhance understanding and support ongoing improvement efforts. **ACTION**

The report was **NOTED for information, understanding and decision making by governors.**

11.4 Evaluation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy

The Evaluation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment policy was received and a detailed explanation about the changes was provided.

Following a comment from a governor regarding the effectiveness of the teaching and learning coaching, the Assistant Principal for Quality and Innovation provided an explanation about the role of coaches. She emphasised the importance of ensuring that coaches are adequately briefed on teaching the correct skills and achieving the desired outcomes.

A governor inquired about the existence of quality measurements for coaching, specifically regarding percentages. The Assistant Principal for Quality and Innovation responded to say internal targets and achievement goals for coaching are in place. Specific targets are set for schools, especially those receiving intensive support, and these are monitored through the Quality Improvement Plan (QiP).

The Principal & CEO noted a significant positive change in the perception of the teaching and learning team over the past year and the level of feedback received reflects a notable improvement in the team's impact.

The policy was **APPROVED**.

12. Bids and Projects including termly KPI report

The Vice Principal Quality and Curriculum presented the report and an update about the current position of bids and projects was provided. The Termly Bids and Project update report was shared for information and a detailed explanation was provided.

Discussions took place concerning the funding and selection criteria for students with international work placements, with particular focus on whether specific courses were being targeted. One governor expressed surprise at the limited number of bids and projects submitted and emphasised the need for further financial data before approving them. A brief explanation of the process was provided during the meeting. **ACTION**

With there being no further comments or questions the following new projects were **APPROVED**:

- The Higher Technical Education Skills Fund with total project costs of £856,000 all of which is grant funded.
- The submission of the Turing Scheme bid for the 2024-2025 academic year, which outlines a plan to provide 65 students with international work placements in Italy, Albania, and Spain of £116,156.

13. Subcontracting Policy and Termly Update

Governors were asked to approve the Sub-Contracting Policy for 2024/25, which has been aligned to the Department for Education's (DfE) "Subcontracting funding rules for post-16 education and training (excluding apprenticeships) 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025". The policy reflects the changes to the ESFA as previously notified in the "Dear Accounting Officer" letter.

With there being no comments or questions the Sub-Contracting Policy for 2024/25 was **APPROVED**

The subcontracting termly update was presented and provided governors with an update about the Subcontracting plans for 2023/2024 and 2024/2025, and a detailed explanation was provided.

In-depth discussions were held regarding the contents of the report, and assurance was provided on the points raised. A governor requested clarification on the revised subcontracting plan for 2024/25.

The report was **NOTED for information, understanding and decision making by governors.**

The FE Student Governor left the meeting.

14. Governance Items

14.1 Verbal feedback from Search & Governance Committee 01/10/24 & GDD 28/09/24 including Governance SAR and EBR Action Plan

The Chair highlighted the following points that arose because of this item.

14.2 Approval of the AoC Code of Good Governance

The Corporation were asked to note the contents of the AoC Further Education Code of Good Governance and to adopt this Code recommended by Search and Governance Committee (S&G).

Governors reviewed the AoC Code of Good Governance and its principles during breakout sessions at the Governors Development morning. The Director of Corporate Governance, Risk & Compliance explained that at the recent S&G committee meeting, a governor had inquired about potential alternatives to the AoC Code before making a recommendation to the Corporation. Discussions concluded that other options were not suitable for a further education (FE) establishment.

With there being no further comments, the Corporation **APPROVED** to adopt the AoC Code of Good Governance with effect from October 2024.

14.3 Approve Financial Oversight Group (FoG) Terms of Reference

The report outlined the revised terms of reference following a comprehensive review. The Director of Corporate Governance, Risk & Compliance provided a detailed explanation of the report, offering background on the factors that prompted the review of the terms of reference. It was further noted that the number of meetings will increase to three times per year to ensure that the Finance Oversight Group (FoG) receives regular termly updates and the next stage is to agree members for the core membership. **ACTION**

The Corporation **APPROVED** the revised Financial Oversight Group Terms of Reference.

15. CONFIDENTIAL

15.1 Pay Award

CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES NOT FOR PUBLICATION

16. POLICIES

The Vice Principal of HR & Student Services presented the report on Children in Care and Care Leavers (CIC/CLs). **Following a question from the Chair**, an update was provided on the increase in Children in Care and Care Leavers (CIC/CLs) at Blossomfield Campus, along with any potential resource issues associated with this rise.

The policy for the Education of Children in Care and Care Leavers policy was reviewed and **APPROVED**

Governors were invited to nominate themselves for the two positions of Link Governor for Children in Care and Sustainability. **ACTION**

17. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

There were no items discussed


18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items discussed

19. FUTURE DATES

Dates were confirmed as per the agenda.

The meeting concluded at 7.20pm

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Hughes".

signed:

Dated: 26/11/2024