

Minutes

Strategic Transformation Committee

Governance 2024-2025

Date	11/02/2025		
Time	17:30 - 19:00		
Location	Microsoft Teams		
Present	Nasim Khan (NK)	Chair	
	Paul Miller (PM)	Vice-Chair	
	Amanda Priem (AP)	Governor	
	Susan Kingman (SK)	Governor	
	Keith Smith (KS)	Ex-Officio, CEO	
	Shane Woodhatch (SW)	Chief Financial Officer	
	Jo Withers (JW)	Chief of Business Strategy	
	Tim Hulme (TH)	Chief Operating Officer	
	Alex Denley (AD)	Chief Technology Officer	
	Yaseen Akhtar (YA)	Managing Director - West London IoT, Business Growth, Skills and Partnerships	
Clerk	Perry Perrott		
Note Taker	Nataliia Tymkiv		

Agenda

1 - General disclaimer statement at start of meeting:

The meeting was recorded for the purpose of minuting.

2 - Apologies for absence

PP confirmed that all members were present.

3 - Declarations of Interest

No declarations had been received in advance, and none were declared in the meeting.

An official complaint received about the late distribution of meeting papers was noted. The complaint stressed that the delay in receiving documents was hampering the ability of members to review and prepare for discussions effectively. It was requested that this concern be raised with the Chair of Corporation and the Chief Executive to ensure timely distribution of materials in future meetings.

4 - Minutes of the last meeting dated: 4 November 2024

The minutes of the 4th November 2024 meeting were approved.

5 - Actions from last meeting

The committee noted the updates on the actions from the last meeting.

NK had a query for YA about the increased marketing for Higher Education (HE) enrolments in January. YA explained that the planned January starts for construction areas were not pursued due to changes in qualifications, which would have resulted in legacy qualifications for students. This decision was made to ensure quality for the students. PM raised concerns about the economic implications of not starting these areas, to which YA responded that they were looking at other ways to ramp up recruitment later in the year.

PM also inquired about the WLIoT (West London Institute of Technology) and their enrolment figures. YA explained that while the DfE (Department for Education) could not disclose information about other IoTs, they were in close contact with local London IoTs and were working collaboratively.

The committee emphasised the need for an informal network to explore comparative IoT strategies.

SW provided an update on the expenditure for Barrow Hall, confirming that the budget was set at £1.1 million with a potential additional cost of £500,000 due to it being a Grade 2 listed building. SW assured the committee that they were finalising the scoping exercise and would report back once costings were available. SK and PM reiterated the importance of staying within budget and being informed of any overruns.

ACTION 1: Prepare a comparative analysis of IoT strategies and informal discussions with other IoTs to understand their plans for the next committee meeting. - YA

6 - Apprenticeships

The Committee was presented with business plan apprenticeships, summarising the prepared by JN.

Currently, the College holds 1% of the Greater London Authority (GLA) apprenticeship market share, with 2% of full-time students progressing into apprenticeships. Apprenticeships contribute £2 million in revenue, accounting for 2% of the institution's total income. The goal is to increase revenue to £5-6 million over the next seven years, with growth driven by aviation, food & drink manufacturing, and digital apprenticeships (Amazon Web Services (AWS) engagement). Public sector partnerships will also be expanded to access additional levy funding.

A key element of the strategy is enhancing the delivery model through hybrid and online learning. A Learning Management System (LMS) is being considered to facilitate scalable online learning, improve tracking and assessment, and streamline operations.

A Governor questioned whether the growth target was ambitious enough and whether projections should consider GLA market share and evolving government priorities, particularly in AI and digital skills. JW confirmed alignment with regional workforce demand, highlighting gaps in apprenticeship provision, particularly in food & drink and aviation engineering.

KS emphasised aligning apprenticeship expansion with government's "five key missions," recommending a formal review of how the curriculum aligns with emerging policy and funding incentives.

A Governor inquired about the investment to date and the timeline for approval. JW confirmed that the main investment had been in a new Head of Sales and that the timeline for full approval might push back some plans but would not compromise the overall strategy.

JW also addressed the necessity of launching the new Learning Management System (LMS) by September, highlighting that despite the initial investment, the LMS would result in operational efficiencies and cost savings by replacing the current E-portfolio system.

JW emphasised that this investment would directly benefit the technical apprenticeship work and larger employers, although it might delay some restructuring plans.

PM inquired about provisional approval for the LMS before a full business plan review by the committee. JW confirmed the cost to be a couple of hundred thousand pounds with ongoing annual licence fees, and PP clarified that a full tender procedure was required due to the total cost being around £500,000 over three years. JW assured that the procurement process had already begun.

ACTION 2: Finalise the business plan for apprenticeship programmes and present it at the next committee meeting before seeking Full Corporation approval. - JW

7 - Project Ambition

The Committee was presented the proposal to acquire and refurbish Uxbridge Library. DM emphasising that the project is a high-priority initiative aligning with multiple strategic objectives. These include accommodating demographic growth, improving student experience, and optimising space usage at the Uxbridge campus by relocating Sixth Form students.

PP clarified the decision required from the committee, stating that this meeting was responsible for approving the strategic case for the acquisition before it moved to the Finance & Resources Committee (F&R) for financial due diligence. If approved at both stages, it would then proceed to Full Corporation approval.

DM reiterated the need for additional space, explaining that applications for the next academic year were already 40% higher than the previous year, reinforcing the urgency of the expansion. The relocation of 530 students from Uxbridge would free up classroom capacity for other high-demand courses. DM stressed that without this expansion, the college would struggle to accommodate growth, impacting both the student experience and future enrolment.

The heads of terms prepared by the vendor London Borough of Hillingdon are based on the sale of the freehold at a purchase price of £4.2 million, validated by Redbook prepared by Lambert Smith Hutton in October 2024.

Two refurbishment options were presented:

- Full Refurbishment (£6.8M): Includes major mechanical and electrical upgrades, full compliance, and four new science labs.
- Basic Refurbishment (£3.6M): Retains existing infrastructure with necessary safety and functional upgrades.

Both options would provide a safe and operational facility, but option two offered a more cost-effective approach.

The two costs containing the paper are based upon a full specification and conversion and adaptation, including the creation of four science labs.

TH explained that Option Two was the most cost-effective and operationally viable solution, as it ensured full regulatory compliance and functionality while keeping initial capital expenditure lower. TH outlined the project's impact on student flow, classroom allocation, and staff resourcing, confirming that the Sixth Form Centre would allow Uxbridge campus facilities to be repurposed for vocational courses, which had been struggling with space constraints.

TH expressed confidence in delivering the project by September 2026, assuming no significant delays or unforeseen issues.

A Governor raised concerns about contractor selection and budget control, asking whether a fixed-price, time-bound contract could be secured to prevent cost overruns. TH explained that procurement would follow a two-stage design and build approach, engaging contractors early to refine costs before finalising contracts. The Committee was reassured that strong project management measures—including liquidated damages clauses, retention strategies, and cost control mechanisms—would be in place to minimise financial risks.

A Governor questioned whether the inclusion of science labs was necessary at this stage, suggesting the space might be better used for additional classrooms to accommodate future growth. Another Governor raised concerns about the limited increase in student capacity (560 total) and asked whether repurposing the lab space could enhance classroom availability. DM acknowledged the trade-off between specialised facilities and general

Addressing operational risks, it was noted that projected student numbers were carefully modelled to ensure long-term sustainability, assuring the committee that the building's capacity (560 students and 30 staff) adhered to fire safety regulations, limiting further expansion within the existing structure. TH also explained that timetabling and room usage had been optimised to maximise space efficiency without compromising the learning experience.

SW presented the financial case, noting the total project cost to between £7.8 million and £11 million.

SW noted the payback period of 7 and 5.3 years for Options 1 and 2 respectively.

SW assured the committee that the institution's financial position could support the acquisition without undue strain, with funding planned through institutional reserves and external financing. Initial cost projections had decreased, making the investment more viable than expected.

SW highlighted key financial risks, particularly inflation in construction costs, and outlined a two-stage design and build approach to refine costs before contracts are finalised. SW emphasised that fixed-price contracts would be sought to prevent overruns.

SW confirmed that F&R Committee would conduct financial due diligence, ensuring long-term affordability.

KS noted the implications of rejecting the proposal, emphasising the importance of having a clear contingency plan. It was acknowledged that rejecting the proposal would leave limited alternative expansion options, given space constraints at Uxbridge College and rising student demand. If expansion was not pursued, the institution would need to shift its focus to optimising student experience within existing facilities, which could limit growth opportunities and impact learning conditions.

In response to Governor's question regarding sustainability, it was noted that sustainable materials and energy-efficient systems would be prioritised to align with the institution's broader sustainability commitments.

A formal vote was conducted, with no members voting for the 'no go' option.

Option 2 was carried, with the decision to progress to the Finance and Resources (F&R) committee for a detailed financial review before presenting to the Full Corporation by end of March.

KS emphasised the need to scale out the Project Ambition at Uxbridge alongside the Uxbridge Library project to ensure affordability and operational feasibility.

The Committee was assured that the due diligence and approval process would be expedited to meet the project timeline.

RESOLUTION: The committee agreed to recommend Option 2 for be carried forward, delegating the detailed review of the financial case to the F&R committee.

ACTION 3: Develop detailed refurbishment specifications for the Option 2. - TH

8 - Fuzzy Logic

KS provided an update on the status of negotiations with Fuzzy Logic, stating that discussions had stalled due to the high price, resulting in the deal being withdrawn. Fuzzy Logic was attempting to keep negotiations open, but no further progress was expected.

KS noted that alternative options for delivering the required capacity would be explored, with further details to be presented in the next Committee meetings.

ACTION 4: Explore alternative options on delivering the capacity and report back to the committee. – KS, AD

9 - Acquisition Opportunities

KS discussed the importance of horizon scanning to identify potential acquisition projects.

KS emphasised the need to consider government fiscal policies and potential budget cuts, which could impact acquisition strategies.

KS proposed exploring commercial opportunities, such as short courses, to diversify income streams and support strategic goals.

KS also highlighted the importance of developing services around recruitment and employment support, aligning with government priorities.

KS mentioned ongoing discussions with national colleges to create a three-college solution for food manufacturing, involving Kirklees, Malton College, and their institution. This initiative aimed to address industry needs and create a national solution. Additionally, KS noted ongoing discussions with a local school about potential mergers and a confidential conversation with Brunel University regarding potential collaboration opportunities due to their operating difficulties.

10 - Immersive Learning

AD provided an update on immersive learning, noting that the Fuzzy Logic deal was withdrawn, but alternative plans were being developed. A supporting paper had been presented, outlining strategic decisions needed to build in-house capabilities and potentially run immersive learning as a business entity. AD aimed to present a structured approach at the next Board meeting.

NK highlighted the importance of immersive learning and its potential integration with the Library Project, emphasising the flexibility of the two-step process, allowing for adjustments based on future needs, such as immersive learning spaces instead of labs.

11 - Any Other Business (AoB)

No additional business was raised during the meeting.

12 - Dates of the next meetings

The next meeting was confirmed for 19th May 2025 via Teams.