

Annual Report of the Search and Governance Committee 2024-25

1. Introduction

This report covers the academic year 2024-25 of Wilberforce Sixth Form College Corporation Search and Governance Committee. This annual report has taken a wide remit and cover the full role of the Search and Governance Committee and further to approval, will be published on the College's website and available by request to the Governance Professional.

2. Committee Function

The establishment of the Search and Governance Committee is outlined within the Articles of Government.

3. Powers of the Committee

The powers of the Committee are outlined within the Standing Orders clause 14(d) and set forth within the Scheme of Delegation (9).

4. Membership

Membership of the Committee is in accordance within the Standing Orders, clause 14(d).

The membership of the Search and Governance Committee is carefully structured to draw representation from across the Corporation's various committees and include the Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporation. This ensures a broad and informed perspective on governance matters and this composition brings together a wealth of experience and expertise, enabling the committee to provide well-rounded advice and robust scrutiny in support of effective governance. All governors are regularly invited to join the Search and Governance Committee's membership or attend meetings if they wish to develop oversight of the committee's business.

Members who served on the Search and Governance Committee during the 2024-25 academic year were:

Steve Cook (*resigned 1st April 2025*)
Independent Governor, Chair of Audit Committee, Member of Search and Governance Committee, Member of Remuneration Committee

Alan Foster
Independent Governor, Vice-Chair of Corporation (end of term December 2024), Chair of Finance and General Purposes Committee, Member of Quality and Standards Committee, Member of Search and Governance Committee, Member of Remuneration Committee

Diana Hoskins
Independent Governor, Chair of Quality and Standards Committee, Member of Search and Governance Committee, Member of Remuneration Committee

Patricia Mould (Chair)

Independent Governor, Chair of Corporation, Chair of Search and Governance Committee, Member of Finance and General Purposes Committee, Member of Quality and Standards Committee, Member of Remuneration Committee

Colin Peaks

Principal, Member of Finance and General Purposes Committee, Member of Quality and Standards Committee, Member of Search and Governance Committee

Cllr Denise Thompson

Independent Governor, Member of Audit Committee, Member of Search and Governance Committee, Member of Remuneration Committee (Chair for 2024-25)

Trevor Wray

Independent Governor, Vice Chair of the Corporation (elected December 2024), Member / Chair of Audit Committee, Member of Remuneration Committee

5. Attendance

Over the course of 2024-25 the committee met four times (three scheduled and one "special" EO meeting). Excluding n/a the average attendance for the committee (for all meetings) was 68%. Note: Cllr Denise Thompson was absent on the 06/11/2024 owing to work obligations. The "special" meeting held in November was for interview of the elected parent governor. The five-year attendance average for the committee is 85%.

Table 1 Attendance at Search and Governance Committee Meetings

	16/10/2024	06/11/2024	12/02/2025	21/05/2025	Total	% Attendance
	Scheduled	Extra Ordinary	Scheduled	Scheduled		
Steve Cook	✓	✓	x	n/a	2/3	67%
Alan Foster	✓	x	✓	✓	3/4	75%
Diana Hoskins	✓	x	x	x	1/4	25%
Pat Mould	✓	✓	✓	✓	4/4	100%
Colin Peaks	✓	✓	x	✓	3/4	75%
Cllr Denise Thompson	✓	x	✓	x	2/4	50%
Trevor Wray	n/a	n/a	✓	✓	2/2	100%
Committee Attendance	100%	50%	57.1%	66.7%	17/25	68%

6. Committee Business 2024-25

The Search and Governance Committee has a vital role in supporting and strengthening governance by advising the Corporation on a wide range of governance matters. The committee, with substantial advisory powers, allows for detailed and full discussion before recommendations are made for approval. Its remit includes board composition, recruitment

and re-appointment, Equality and Diversity, training and development of governors, and the ongoing evaluation of governance performance including planning.

The committee's work is both structured and responsive. While its core business is outlined in the Corporation's Annual Cycle of Business, it remains flexible and adaptable to emerging needs throughout the year with updates being brought to the committee by the Governance Professional. This ensures that governance arrangements remain robust, and responsive, and aligned with best practice.

At the final meeting of each academic year, the committee reflects on its performance and recommends a forward plan of business to the Corporation for the year ahead. This annual review enables self-assessment by members, consideration of any necessary changes, and provides assurance to the Corporation that it can continue to fulfil its responsibilities.

Throughout the 2024-25 year, the committee has:

- Advised the Corporation on the recruitment and appointment of governors.
- Agreed plans to address board vacancies and ensure the Corporation remains fully constituted and effective.
- Reviewed the Corporation's skills audit to identify gaps and ensure a broad and balanced range of expertise is maintained.
- Recommended actions and training to address identified development needs.
- Undertaken reviews of board composition and succession planning.
- Monitored governance performance, including monitoring of diversity and inclusion.
- Scrutinized governance KPIs and recommended actions to the Corporation approval.

7. Corporation Recruitment, Re-appointment and Planning

Resignations

During 2024/25, the Corporation received one resignation from an independent governor.

Recruitment

The Corporation is committed to promoting equality and diversity, ensuring that all appointments are made on merit while also addressing identified skills gaps and areas of underrepresentation on the board. Vacancies are actively promoted through a range of channels, including the College's website, direct communication with parents and carers, and outreach to local employers and partners.

In line with the Search Procedures, applications for Independent and Parent Governor roles are reviewed by the Search and Governance Committee, who invite shortlisted candidates for interview to assess their suitability and eligibility. Where multiple candidates are considered, the committee makes a recommendation based on merit and with regard to enhancing board diversity. Staff and Student Governors are elected by their peers, in accordance with the Instruments and Articles of Government, before being formally appointed by the Corporation. Appointments made by election are subject to eligibility requirements.

Applications and Interviews

During 2024-25 the committee received one parent governor application, conducted one interview with one governor being successfully appointed:

06/11/2024

Parent Governor Appointment - Audit Committee Vacancy:

Parent governor was elected through self-nomination, and eligible for appointment.

Successful interview with the committee on the 6th November 2024 and appointed for a two-year first term on the 4th December 2024.

In addition to the successful appointment above, the Corporation also approved the appointment of a Teacher Staff Governor on 6th October 2024 for a period of two years further to the election of a member of staff to the role.

Vacancies

As at the year end (31st July 2025), the Corporation had the following vacancies:

4 x Independent Governor vacancies

2 x Student Governor vacancies – *to be filled each academic year (autumn 2025)*

Re-Appointments

During 2024–25, the committee reviewed the re-appointment of two Independent Governors, both of whom had served their first term of office. In making its recommendations, the committee considered several factors, including attendance at both committee and Corporation meetings, individual contributions and performance, the current committee structure, and the outcomes of the recent skills and background survey. While the standard term for re-appointment is four years, this may be adjusted based on individual circumstances or at the committee’s recommendation.

Name	Status	Re-appointment Outcome
Paul Waltham	Independent Governor	2 Years
Trevor Wray	Independent Governor	4 Years

Succession Planning

On the 16th October 2024, the committee developed and recommended a revised succession plan to ensure the Corporation maintains strong and effective leadership over time. The plan outlines the Corporation’s approach to succession planning and includes identifying and supporting leadership development and recruitment strategies. This updated succession plan was formally approved by the Corporation at its meeting on 4th December 2024.

8. Corporation and Committee Self-Assessment

The committee received the Committee Chair Appraisal Outcomes from 2023-24 at the meeting on the 16th October 2024 and made recommendations to the Corporation on the Corporation Self-Assessment activities for 2024-25:

- The Corporation self-assessment activity.
- The Committee self-assessment activities.

Over the course of the year, the committee also received and recommended the following:

- Corporation Performance Indicators 2024-25
- Corporation Attendance Report 2023-24

9. Training and Development

On the 16th October 2024 the committee received the Corporation training records and skills audit and made the following recommendations to the Corporation;

- Governance Training and Development Plan for 2024/25 including priorities for governors.
- Training and Development Policy & Mentoring Policy

The committee received the governors skills audit results in February 2025 and from this review, agreed a plan of action to strengthen skills scores through recruitment strategy.

10. Governance

Code of Governance

It is a requirement for all College Corporations to follow at minimum, one Code of Governance. Wilberforce College Corporation adopted the AoC Code of Good Governance for English Colleges on the 1st January 2024 and annually reviews its compliance against the adopted Code via its Excellence in Governance Plan. Compliance against the adopted Code is reported within the Annual Members' Report and Financial Statements (see Statement of Corporate Governance and Internal Control).

External Review of Governance

The [Skills for jobs](#) white paper set out various reforms to strengthen governance. Under new funding agreement requirements from 2021-2022 onwards, FE corporations, sixth-form college corporations and designated institutions must:

1. have an external governance review every three years
2. have an annual governance self-assessment
3. share the results and associated actions with the department when so requested.

The Corporation recognised the importance of independent evaluation of governance effectiveness and commissioned Governance4FE to complete the review during the autumn term of 2022/23. A full report was received by the Corporation on the 25th January 2023 with a presentation by the reviewer. A summary of the outcomes of the review are published on the college website for perusal and compliance against this requirement was reported within the Annual Members' Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2023. Further to the review, an action plan was agreed and integrated within the Excellence in Governance Plan in March 2023 and the committee monitors progress against the action plan. The next external review has been agreed to be completed in 2025-26.

Excellence in Governance Plan and Governance Key Performance Indicators

To support the Corporation's commitment to upholding the highest standards of governance, the Search and Governance Committee undertakes annual reviews of both the **Excellence in**

Governance Plan and the **Governance Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**. These two mechanisms are interlinked, forming a continuous cycle of strategic planning, performance monitoring, and improvement.

The Governance KPIs provide a structured framework for assessing progress against previously agreed performance indicators. They serve not only as a retrospective evaluation of governance effectiveness over the past year but also inform forward planning by identifying areas for development and setting measurable targets for the year ahead.

Complementing this, the Excellence in Governance Plan is reviewed each spring term. This review enables the Committee to make informed recommendations to the Corporation regarding both short-term priorities and longer-term strategic objectives. The plan includes a detailed assessment of compliance with the adopted governance Code and, since 2022/23, incorporates actions arising from the external review of governance. This ensures that the Corporation's governance practices remain aligned with sector best practice and regulatory expectations.

In 2024-25, a formal review of the Governance KPIs took place in October 2024, with a mid-year update in February 2025 to ensure ongoing oversight and responsiveness. The review of the Excellence in Governance Plan was completed on 12th February 2025, resulting in recommendations that shaped governance priorities for 2024–25 and beyond.

Together, these two governance tools—planning through the Excellence in Governance Plan and performance assessment via the Governance KPIs—create a robust and dynamic governance cycle.

Corporation Equality and Diversity

The Corporation is committed to promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) across all aspects of its governance and operations. The Search and Governance Committee plays a central role in ensuring this commitment is upheld through its responsibility to monitor EDI data annually, assess its implications, and recommend appropriate actions where necessary.

Equality and diversity considerations are embedded within the Corporation's recruitment strategy, particularly in relation to the identification and appointment of new Corporation members. The Committee ensures that EDI principles are actively considered during the recruitment process and at the point of making recommendations for appointments, helping to foster a governance body that reflects the diversity of the community it serves.

At its meeting on 21st May 2025, the committee undertook its most recent review of Corporation EDI data. This review provided an opportunity to evaluate current representation, identify any emerging trends or gaps, and consider whether further action or strategic adjustments were required. Where disparities or areas for improvement are identified, the committee is empowered to make recommendations to the Corporation to address these, ensuring that equality and diversity remain a dynamic and responsive element of governance planning.

Through this ongoing oversight, the Search and Governance Committee ensures that EDI is not only monitored but actively supported through informed decision-making and strategic interventions. This reinforces the Corporation's commitment to inclusive governance and continuous improvement.