

WORKERS EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION (“WEA”)
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
 Thursday, 20 March 2025
 via Teams Videoconference



REDACTED MINUTES

Present:	John Widdowson	Trustee (Chair)	JW
	Geoff Layer (from 4.1.1)	Trustee (Vice Chair)	GL
	Kevin Doyle	Trustee (Treasurer)	KD
	Cathy Armor	Trustee	CA
	Christine Grant (from 4.1)	Trustee	CG
	Jamey Johnson	Trustee	JJ
	Robin Cook	Trustee	RC
	Stephanie Mason	Trustee	SM
	Matthew Pointon	Trustee (President)	MP
	Ron Marks (to 4.1.1)	Trustee (Deputy President)	RM
Observing:	Colin Finlay	On-boarding Trustee	CF
	Amanda Woodvine	On-boarding Trustee	AW
In attendance:	Simon Parkinson	CEO/GS	SP
	Kathleen Formosa	Director of Governance and Purpose	KF
	Navjot Johal	Director of Learning	NJ
	Preeya Searle	Director of Curriculum, Quality & Safeguarding	CM
	Shaun Tyndall	Chief Finance Officer	ST
	Ray McCowan	Director of Contract Relationships	RMc
	Magda Laurman	Governance Manager	ML
	Rachael Dartnell	Governance Manager	RD
Clerk:	Julie Isted	Head of Governance	JI

1.0	WELCOME, APOLOGIES AND QUORUM
1.1	The Chair opened the meeting at 10:35, welcoming observers/ on-boarding Trustees Colin Finlay and Amanda Woodvine and others in attendance.
1.2	Apologies were received in advance and accepted from Malcolm Grady and Tracey Irving.
1.3	The meeting was confirmed quorate, and business proceeded.
2.0	DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
2.1	No declarations of interest were recorded.
3.0	REPORT OF THE CHAIR
3.1	JW presented Paper 001: Reporting the Actions Taken on Behalf of the WEA Since the Previous Meeting . This paper was taken as read. CG joined the meeting at 10:37.
4.0	CEO/GS REPORT
4.1	SP reported on the latest strategic developments. The final budget and the revised strategy will be presented to Trustees at the July Board meeting. GL joined the meeting at 10:49.
4.1.1	In response to Trustee questions: - WEA expected that it would be financially reimbursed due to its classification as a public sector body in response to National Insurance increases for employers. However, confirmation in writing had yet to be received.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - WEA had to continue to diversify its income streams as part of its new strategy. - RMc encouraged proactive lobbying in other areas such as health and social care where WEA had a positive contribution to make.
5.0	EXECUTIVE REPORTS
5.1	<p>EDUCATION PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD (Paper 002) Paper 002 was taken as read. NJ explained the data contained in the report was extracted from ILR matrix 21/02/25 and reflected the R06 mid-year position. The report had been received by the Education Committee at their March meeting.</p> <p>Outcomes for learners overall across all provision and funding types have improved by 4.7% since the 2023/24 R06 position. Enrolment trends (as at 12 March 2025) were noted (Paper 002a).</p>
5.2	<p>The Director of Contract Relationship Management’s report to the Education Committee (Paper 002b) was taken as read. RMc explained his report provided an update on progress with the 9 MCA contracts and the ESFA contract for the half year RO6 review period to the end of January 2025.</p> <p>Curriculum planning improvements were explained by RMc. Performance report year to date, movements between Quarters 1 and 2 and a summary of activity stream targets were noted.</p>
5.2.1	The education reports were accepted by Trustees.
5.3	REPORT OF THE CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
5.3.1	<p>(Paper 003) P6 management accounts and (Paper 003a) Reforecast P1-P5 actuals plus P6-12 forecast were taken as read. ST presented the P6 management accounts. The next reforecast would take place after P8. The reports were accepted by Trustees.</p>
5.3.2	<p>Charity SORP in financial reporting (Paper 003b) was considered by Trustees. ST presented the DfE and Charity SORP overview. The paper set out recommendations endorsed by the Finance & CR Committee at their March meeting, taking a risk-based approach to balancing WEA’s duties, obligations and responsibilities as a charity which was currently funded almost exclusively by public funds, but which had ambitions to substantially diversify its funding streams within the next three to five years.</p> <p>The recently released College Handbook 2024 had sought to remove many of the ambiguities and “grey” areas that WEA had historically relied upon to continue use of the Charity SORP. ST reported that the ESFA had responded informally to a request for guidance on this matter, advising that WEA could continue to use Charity SORP at its own risk.</p> <p>In answer to Trustee questions, ST stated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The paper would be updated and recirculated to Trustees to clarify the similarities between SDI’s and colleges in terms of charity law. ACTION: ST to update paper and recirculate - The Board could reconsider their position on SORP in the future. <p>KD emphasised the primary driver for the recommendation was WEA’s charitable purpose. Trustee’s APPROVED the Finance & CR Committee’s recommendation to Board to continue to follow SORP in its charity reporting.</p>
6.0	GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENT
6.1	<p>Governance Handbook (Paper 004): KF reported that the Nominations Committee had recently approved the introduction of a new governance handbook for Trustees and Committee Members. Handbooks had been a recommendation as part of the Stone King governance review in July 2024. The software used to produce the document would enable</p>

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	<p>updates to be made easily by the governance team. A local advisory panel handbook was also in development. Trustees were asked to review the handbook and feedback any comments for improvements or suggestions. KF thanked JI and RD for their work to generate the handbook.</p> <p>The Chair asked that the recently published AOC report on governance reviews be circulated to the Board for information. ACTION: JI to circulate AoC report</p>
6.2	<p>Local Advisory Panels (LAP) Development - KF explained WEA was a natural point of LAP review. 12 out of 15 LAPs were currently active with the governance team now supporting approximately 80 volunteers. KF reminded Trustees they were welcome to observe any LAP meeting. All Trustees were welcome to feedback their views.</p> <p>SP reminded the Board that LAPs had been implemented in autumn 2023 as part of a process of governance reform in response to the changing landscape of education in England.</p> <p>In response to a Trustee’s question, KF explained the highest performing LAPs were engaging with local commissioners, using their networks and bringing their knowledge into the LAPs for the benefit of their local area.</p> <p>The review would take place in the next reporting round with recommendations to Trustees in July. All LAP members would be invited to feedback their views as part of the review process.</p>
7.0	REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT: WEA COUNCIL
7.1	<p>MP spoke to Paper 005: Report of the President: WEA Council. He highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The CEO’s report to Council on successful campaign and policy engagement. SP had reported that the WEA had hosted its first open lecture on "Misinformation," a free event to the public and had received positive feedback. The session acted as a pilot for future open lectures, and more were planned. - Work on an updated Branch Handbook, supported by active Branch members, was ongoing, with Navjot Johal, Director of Learning, set to present the final draft to the Council before publication. - Katie Shaw, Head of Charitable Purpose, presented plans for the WEA Conference on June 11, 2025 at the Royal College of Physicians in London. The theme was to be “Learning for Life: Shaping Tomorrow Together”. The event would have a mix of keynote speeches, panel discussions and workshops, with an awards event in the evening. The Council supported the outlined plans for Conference. The Standing Orders Committee would oversee business matters linked to Conference. Marianne Open, Senior Membership Specialist, detailed the transition to a more inclusive membership model, extending rights to all learners, staff, members, and volunteers. - Chris Butcher, Senior Public Policy Manager, shared progress on the forthcoming Impact Report. The final publication was projected to be in May/June 2025. - Julie Isted, Head of Governance, provided a Local Advisory Panel update. Contract Relationship Managers (CRMs) and LAP Leads/Deputy Leads joined briefing sessions in January to give feedback on the agenda and workplan for the spring round of meetings. - Council and formal elections would be addressed at our next Council meeting in June. - The Council had no formal recommendations for the Board but wished to express its support for the WEA Annual Conference plans that were presented and commended the progress made by WEA staff. <p>Both SP and MP shared that it had been a very positive Council meeting.</p>
8.0	COMMITTEE REPORTS
8.1	Paper 006: Committee Reports were taken as read . The Chair of each committee was invited

to raise any additional points:

Audit and Risk Committee

CG reported decisions on tendering the external audit in 26/27 and internal audit this summer were to be considered by the Committee. Trustees **accepted** the consolidated risk register and heat map summary.

Education Committee

In the absence of the Chair, PS reported that WEA was to respond to Ofsted’s consultation about forthcoming changes to the inspection framework due to commence November 2025. It was possible, under the proposed new framework, WEA would be judged across eight different categories.

Finance and Capital Resources

KD highlighted the Expenses Policy and Credit & Purchasing Cards Policy, circulated to Trustees for information (Annex 2). This was **noted**.

People Committee

CA reported on the EDI strategic proposals ‘WEA Represents’ presented to the People Committee. Part of the strategy included the establishment of staff groups that would be aligned to specialise areas. Colleagues from across WEA would be invited to join the staff groups via expressions of interest. WEA Represents would focus on three areas: Continued professional development; Curriculum; and Data.

The Director of People, Culture and Strategy had updated the People Committee on how the TOM was being embedded throughout the organisation. This was a particular focus for the Committee.

Scotland Board

SP reported on a productive and positive meeting. The Committee was focussed on working across WEA for the benefit of both Scotland and England. RC reported that as the roles of Convenor and Vice Convenor were to be reconsidered, links to establish and reenergise Scottish membership remained a topic for discussion.

Nominations Committee

Trustees **approved** updated terms of reference (Annex 1) for the Committee to include governance development. It was noted, governance effectiveness and governance action plan progress would now be overseen by this Committee.

The following individuals were **approved** for Committee membership subject to all satisfactory on-boarding checks: AS (WEA Council) and EB (F & CR).

GS explained that to encourage leadership development and to succession plan effectively, it was proposed that all committee members, including appointed lay members, may be considered for the position of vice chair of their committee by exception. The appointment of a vice chair will usually be a Trustee, however, in the case of any lay member appointment to a vice chair role, the appointment should be for an initial term of 12 months which, subject to review, may allow them to continue in the role for the remainder of their term of office.

If appointed, certain matters would still only be exclusively dealt with by Trustees such as matters relating to safeguarding or incident reporting. After consideration, Trustees

APPROVED this recommendation.

It was **noted** that Vice Chair appointments would be overseen by the Nominations Committee in collaboration with the Committee chair.

SP stated it had been a very positive round of Committee meetings, acknowledging support from Committee Members and their breadth of experience.

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9.0	QUARTERLY SAFEGUARDING REPORT (Paper 007)
9.1	Trustees accepted the report presented by CA. PS reported how WEA involved a number of different agencies and support mechanisms to support the diverse needs of learners.
10.0	QUARTERLY HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT (Paper 008)
10.1	The Board accepted the report presented by RC. ST reported that the H&S strategic committee and the H&S committee proposed to become one committee to streamline tasks, subject to Committee endorsement.
11.0	MINUTES OF THE 12 DECEMBER 2024 MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND MATTERS ARISING
11.1	Papers 009 and 009a: Minutes of the 12 December Meeting of the Board of Trustees and Matters Arising were presented to the Board for approval and review . The Board approved the minutes from the meeting and noted all matters arising.
12.0	ANY OTHER BUSINESS
	No matters were raised.
	The Chair thanked attendees.
	The business of the meeting concluded at 13:19
Upcoming meeting dates:	
- Wednesday, April 30, 2025 – Joint Board/LT Strategy Meeting (NCVO, London) 10:30 – 16:00	
- Thursday, July 10, 2025 – Board of Trustees meeting (NCVO, London/Hybrid) 10:30 – 15:30	