

Minutes – Hanham Woods Academy Council

Version: Approved
Meeting Date: Tuesday 9th December 2025
Location: HWA
Time: 5.30pm

AC Members		Attended	Apologies
Jon Gould	Sponsor 1 (Chair)	Y	
Kevin Hawthorne	Sponsor 2	Y	
Patrick Cottam	Sponsor 3		Y
Lisa West	Sponsor 4	Y	
Finlay Porter	Sponsor 5	Y	
Azeem Haroon	Parent Councillor		Y
John Bowman	Parent Councillor	Y	
Nick Tucker	Teaching Staff Councillor		Y
VACANCY	Support Staff Councillor		
In Attendance			
Chris Ballard	Interim Principal	Y	
Rebecca Thorpe	Vice Principal	Y	
Kath Cooper	Senior Principal	Y	
Hannah Wyatt	Clerk	Y	

Date and No	Action	Owner
22.04.25 02	RT to contact CAB to find out more information about their recent community engagement day. Closed	RT
07.10.25 01	CB to consider the use of Governor Hub to provide more regular updates for the Academy Council between meetings. This will be ongoing – Closed .	CB

Item	Description	Action
1	Introductions, Administration, Apologies	
1.1	The Chair welcomed all present. Apologies were noted as above. The meeting commenced at 17:39. Finlay Porter was welcomed as a newly appointed Sponsor Councillor. He introduced himself and outlined his background in safeguarding, charity work and education. Recording of the meeting was noted as a backup to assist with minute-taking	
2	Declaration of Interest	
2.1	No verbal declarations were made.	
3	Minutes of Previous Meeting	
3.1	The minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2025 were confirmed as a true record. Actions were reviewed. The action relating to RT contacting CAB was confirmed as closed.	
3.2	Governor Hub usage was discussed. Feedback was that it appeared logical and workable. CB will begin to upload key documents and updates. For future meetings, the Council will focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) The Raising Attainment Plan (RAP) 	
3.3	ACTION: CB will ask Josh to prepare a suitable reporting pack (“black box”) for councillors with updated key dates and data.	CB
4	Matters Arising	
4.1	The action table above has been updated.	

5	Academy Council Report – Questions from Academy Councillors and responses from CB unless stated otherwise	
5.1	Chair’s update	
5.1.1	JG reported that the recent Academy Scrutiny Committee meeting was successful. Scrutiny members and education experts were satisfied with the progress being made. He commended the collegiate approach developing across staff and SLT.	
5.1.2	KC joined the meeting.	
5.2	Industrial Action – An update	
5.2.1	<p>KC and CB provided an update on union discussions prompted by a question from KH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both NEU and NASUWT retain a live mandate for industrial action until February - CB continues weekly meetings with union reps - No new concerns have been raised for several weeks - Staff report improved trust, transparency and communication. - Curriculum review progress and behaviour improvements are communicated regularly. - Anonymous reporting routes remain available; usage is low due to improved direct communication. <p>The climate is now significantly more settled. If concerns re-emerge, the Council will be alerted.</p>	
5.3	Curriculum Review	
5.3.1	<p>Q: What was the response from staff about the new timetable during the curriculum review?</p> <p>CB reports to have met each curriculum leader individually over the past weeks and has proposed the allocation of a curriculum without a carousel model. Feedback from departments is due shortly.</p> <p>Curriculum leaders strongly favour 1-hour lessons rather than a return to 50-minute lessons. Being as transparent as possible on the compromises that have to be made in terms of content when looking at a broader balance curriculum.</p> <p>The revised model must maintain curriculum balance and equity.</p> <p>Final decisions will be made by end of term to align with Year 9 options in January.</p>	
5.4	Attendance, Inclusion and Behaviour	
5.4.1	<p>The Council discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Persistent absence and the impact of unmet need. • The triangulation of attendance, behaviour and safeguarding data. • The Monday triage system (ranking students 1–5 by concern level). • The importance of coordinated interventions across SEND, attendance, pastoral and RA teams. <p>Attendance surgeries had limited parental uptake and will be reviewed for impact.</p>	
5.4.2	<p>KH conducted a comparative analysis of attendance of students this year as compared to last year. Year 8 showed the largest decline with a 3% decline in every week.</p> <p>Q: Is this a common theme and what is being done about it?</p> <p>CB responded that Year 8 have experienced pastoral inconsistencies and the cohort itself contains a number of complex students.</p> <p>Attendance remains a priority and that there are a lot of factors that can contribute to the statistics and numbers don’t always tell the full story. Need to look at wider issues such as quality</p>	

	<p>of teaching, pastoral relationships, literacy and unmet needs especially of PP and SEND-K students.</p> <p>Overall attendance is up from last year but still remains below national levels, acknowledges that it is not where it needs to be.</p> <p>ACTION: CB to bring a full forensic attendance analysis to the next meeting including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year group comparisons • PP and SEND breakdowns • Trust and national comparators • Year 8 deep dive <p>The Council agreed this will be a formal agenda item.</p>	
5.4.3	<p>Q: Are there interventions in place for PP and SEND-K absences?</p> <p>Yes -- PP absences are being addressed through a needs-led, multi-agency approach rather than just focusing on attendance sanctions alone. Students at risk are identified and reviewed weekly through a triage system led by Becca, involving attendance, safeguarding and SEND. Interventions are individualised and may include pastoral support, mental health input or CAMHS referrals to remove barriers to attendance. Progress is monitored, but leaders recognise this is complex, slow work and not a quick fix, particularly where needs are long-standing</p>	
5.4.4	<p>Q: In the report, it states on interventions that 10 have nothing in place. What does that mean?</p> <p>RT and KC respond that the report is an analysis of what support is in place for SEND K and PP students. 10 students have been identified as having no support and so have been flagged to see what can be done. Likely due to the triaging that comes in to prioritise certain cases.</p> <p>Proves the importance of having these forensics or else it would have been missed.</p> <p>Things are moving in the right direction with attendance meetings being separate from behaviour meetings.</p>	
5.5	<p>Staffing and Wellbeing</p>	
5.5.1	<p>CB confirmed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacancy levels are higher than usual but consistent with the context (promotions, curriculum changes, hard-to-fill posts). • MFL remains challenging but internal solutions are being explored. • Recruitment for DT is underway following a declined offer. • Staffing specialism will be rebalanced gradually as curriculum structures stabilise. • There is confidence in being able to fill these vacancies with time <p>KC noted the increase in vacancies creates opportunities for cost-efficient restructuring where appropriate.</p> <p>There is potential for union-written termly updates (if appropriate)</p>	
5.5.2	<p>Q: Is there an update on the roll out of the DofE program?</p> <p>CB reports that James Littlejohn was leading it but has since left. The DofE program cannot be rolled out without a trained staff member to lead it. The school has been given provisional dates by the external expedition company, just on the search for the appropriately trained staff.</p> <p>An Update will follow once trained staff have been identified</p>	
5.5.3	<p>Q: Is there any contact between the Academy Council and the union?</p> <p>JG and KC confirm that this is not required and is unusual/ Staff voice routes already exist via union reps to CLF central structures and that the Academy Council's role is to hold SLT to account rather than to negotiate industrial matters. There are academy members what are in the union and will provide the Council with updates, but the Council in itself holds no negotiating power</p>	
5.6	<p>Link Reports</p>	

5.6.1	<p>KC provided an update on a recent trust review which is now on Governor Hub.</p> <p>A Pupil Pursuit was conducted as part of the review, supported by RT, where trust colleagues followed identified students through their timetabled lessons to experience learning from the pupils perspective. This was reported as a highly effective process, enabling leaders to triangulate evidence and gain alignment on strengths and areas for development. The review identified a need to improve the effectiveness of student passports, which are currently overly detailed and not always accessible for classroom practitioners. Further work is required to review the format, content and method of communication to ensure key information is clear and usable.</p>	
5.6.2	<p>Findings also highlighted the importance of relational practice, with student voice indicating that positive relationships with teachers significantly impact engagement and behaviour. These themes will inform the forthcoming INSET day, with a focus on practical strategies including consistency, body language and positive reinforcement.</p> <p>KC also reported on ongoing Behaviour Hub activity, including comprehensive audits and involvement from the Local Authority Safeguarding Team. This work is nearing completion and will inform the academy's behaviour strategy moving forward.</p>	
5.7	SLT Changes	
5.7.1	<p>CB reported that in light of recent staffing changes the leadership structure has been reviewed. The Assistant Principal team has been expanded to increase leadership capacity with a successful appointment of JH to the Assistant Principal role from January. Recruitment is underway for his previous post with the intention of having 3 Assistant Principals in post by next term.</p> <p>The revised structure is expected to strengthen leadership capacity across the academy. Further updates will be provided at the next meeting. It was noted that link governor roles may require adjustment following these changes. Updates will be shared via Governor Hub.</p>	
5.8	Succession planning	
5.8.1	<p>JG reports that he was asked to continue as Chair temporarily and that the role will be filled properly followed by formal succession planning.</p> <p>KC outlined the trust's process for identifying future Chairs and the possibility of external candidates. Councillors will have the chance to express interest in the new year. A handover/shadowing period will be arranged.</p>	
5.9	Project Culture	
5.9.1	<p>RT gave a presentation on Project Culture. Slides can be found on Governor Hub.</p> <p>The project uses staff feedback and data to inform targeted improvement, with strong links to behaviour and attendance. Danny, who leads the project, has been closely involved and staff engagement has been high. Staff have responded positively to the findings, with openness and transparency identified as key strengths. Leaders emphasised the importance of maintaining momentum to ensure improvements are sustained.</p>	
5.9.2	<p>The Council discussed how findings from Project Culture will inform the forthcoming INSET day, which will focus on refining and aligning existing systems rather than introducing new initiatives.</p>	

	<p>Leaders emphasised the importance of staff understanding the rationale for improvement work and being involved in shaping next steps.</p> <p>It was confirmed that Project Culture is not currently referenced in the Academy Improvement Plan (AIP); however, this will be updated to reflect the work, recognising the AIP as a live document.</p> <p>CB acknowledged the effort and work staff and leaders put in to understand the academy and how this has lead to the ability to drive change from a holistic and well-informed perspective. Staff are more likely to be onboard when they understand where the changes are coming from.</p>	
5.7.2	<p>Q: How is the message going to be communicated to parents</p> <p>CB confirms that a direct communication will be issued to parents strengths, areas for development and next steps. This will be issued as a Principal update, separate from the regular newsletter, and will invite open dialogue. A range of mechanisms are already in place to gather parental feedback, including surveys and in-person meetings, and there is a desire to better capture positive feedback as well as concerns.</p> <p>Challenges in securing parental attendance at forums and meetings were highlighted, although recent parent information evenings and school events have generated strong engagement and useful feedback. Leaders identified this as a strength to build upon and agreed to continue offering multiple routes for parental engagement, while ensuring communication remains purposeful.</p>	
5.7.3	<p>The importance of clear advertising of events and ensuring communications are framed positively was emphasised by KC, recognising that negative experiences can deter parental involvement with LW further emphasising the impacts of word of mouth between parents. KH and LW feedback how HWA is moving in the right direction and that they find the in person talks really helpful and engaging.</p>	
6	Policies	
6.1	The Council approved the SEND Policy (noted on Governor Hub)	
7	Matters for the COAC/Board	
7.1	Plans to be made for an immersion day before 2027. Aside from that all is well.	
8	AOB	
8.1	The meeting closed at 19:25.	
8.2	<p>Meeting dates: 27th January 26 (previously 20th) 10th March 26 16th June 26</p>	

Actions to carry forward:

Date and No	Action	Owner
09.12.25 01	CB will ask Josh to prepare a suitable reporting pack (“black box”) for councillors with updated key dates and data.	CB