

MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION MEETING (no.190)
HELD ON 9 DECEMBER 2025 AT 5.30 PM VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Present: J. Booker (Chair), M. Bagley, D. Clayton, S. Collinge, S. Gerrard, W. Johnson (Principal and Chief Executive), A. Jones (part of time), R. Morris, T. Narey, R. Newton-Syms, K. Townsley and R. Wallace.

In Attendance: J. Sherrington (Vice Principal & Deputy Chief Executive)
D. Stewart (Deputy Principal, Education)
S. Price (Exec. Director of Estates and Facilities) (part of time)
A. Gadsdon (Executive Director of Quality) (part of time)
K. Musgrave (RSM) (part of time)
Anne-Marie Nixon (Interim Director of Governance)

127. Chair's Welcome and Opening Remarks

127.1 The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and thanked all members for accommodating the change in time and an online meeting.

128. Attendance of College Management

Submitted: Extract from Section 13 of the current Standing Orders (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes)

128.1 The Corporation noted the contents of the extract, and it was:

Resolved – that: the College Management Staff be invited to attend the meeting.

129. Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence was received and accepted from Mr. Massey. An apology for late arrival was received and accepted from Dr. Jones.

130. Declarations of Interest

130.1 **All members and officers present declared that they had no interests, personal, fiduciary or otherwise in any of the business on the agenda for the public meeting.**

131. Minutes of the Corporation Meeting (no. 189) held on 7 October 2025

Submitted: Minutes of the Meeting held on 7 October 2025 (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2025 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

132. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

133. Estates and Facilities Strategy

Submitted: Report of the Executive Director of Estates and Facilities (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes)

133.1 Ms. Price guided members through the key points of the new strategy before inviting members' questions and comments. During discussion, the Chair highlighted the clarity and detail of the strategy and welcomed the way in which it aligned with the 2030 Strategic Vision.

133.2 With reference to the KPI relating to room utilisation, a member questioned what the current rate was. Ms. Price explained that this was being calculated following an annual audit, although historically the rate was low (at c. 28%). In noting the stretching target, members questioned if this was achievable within the time frame. Ms. Price confirmed that it was a stretching target, but it was important for the College to address underutilisation.

133.3 A member questioned whether the current maintenance backlog would impact capital projects and was advised that it should not, as maintenance costs were met from the operational budget. Ms. Price confirmed that the backlog was decreasing daily and the team was doing more maintenance work in-house. In response to further questions relating to the reduction in external contractors and the additional appointments to the Estates and facilities Team, members noted that success measures would be agreed with partners and stakeholders.

133.4 In noting that the Estates Master Plan was currently being developed, Ms. Price confirmed that she had met with Mr. Narey on 8 December to discuss draft proposals and the current state of the College's estate. Mr. Narey reported that it had been a particularly useful meeting and that they had discussed landscape architecture, particular buildings and aspects of the estate that had reached the end of their useful life. Ms. Price thanked Mr. Narey for sharing his expertise.

Resolved – that:

- a) **the Estates and Facilities Strategy be approved;**
- b) **the Estates Master Plan be submitted to the July meeting of the Corporation for scrutiny and challenge;**
- c) **the Corporation's appreciation of the time spent by Mr. Narey sharing expertise be formally recorded.**

134. Audit and Governance Committee Update and Minutes

Submitted: Draft Minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 11 November 2025 (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes)

134.1 Mr. Wallace as Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee presented the draft minutes of the most recent meeting, drawing members' attention to the items referred from the Committee (included in the agenda pack) and thanking Mr. Bagley for volunteering to join the Committee until a suitable additional member could be appointed.

Resolved – that:

- a) **the draft minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 11 November 2025 be accepted;**
- b) **Mr. Bagley be appointed as a member of the Audit and Governance Committee until a permanent additional member was appointed.**

135. Annual Report of the Audit and Governance Committee

Submitted: Report from the Audit and Governance Committee (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

135.1 Mr. Wallace guided the Corporation through the Annual Report, drawing attention to the impact of poor student governor attendance on the overall attendance statistics for the year. Members noted that the Committee had already proposed, and the Corporation had agreed that from 2025-26, both student governors would be appointed to the Quality and Standards Committee. During discussion, Mr. Wallace

confirmed that the report was a true and accurate reflection of the work of the Committee during 2024-25 and recommended it to the Corporation.

Resolved – that the report be approved and Mr. Wallace be authorised to sign it for submission to the DfE.

136. Audited Financial Statements for 2024-25, Audit Findings Report, Management Letter and Letters of Representation

Submitted: Reports from RSM and the Vice Principal and Deputy Chief Executive (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes)

136.1 At the invitation of the Chair, Ms. Musgrave presented the Audit Findings Report and Management Letter, highlighting that she had already attended Audit and Governance Committee and had guided the Committee through the detailed report. Ms. Musgrave reported that this had been an extremely clean audit, with only one small error in funding, which had extrapolated to a larger sum. Members noted the way in which extrapolated figures were calculated.

136.2 Ms. Musgrave confirmed that the audit had now concluded, subject to final reconciliation and expressed her appreciation of the support received from the Finance Team in presenting the accounts so well and responding promptly to all queries during the audit.

136.3 At this stage in the meeting Ms. Sherrington drew attention to the audited Financial Statements for 2024-25, which had been considered by Audit and governance Committee and Finance and Resources Committee before this meeting. Ms. Sherrington thanked the RSM Team for their work and advised the Corporation that there were no amendments made to the report. The Corporation was recommended to approve the Financial statements and Letters of Representation and authorise the Chair and Principal and Chief Executive to sign them before submission to the DfE.

136.4 All members confirmed that they had read the detailed reports in advance of the meeting and had no amendments to propose.

Resolved – that:

- a) the Audit Findings Report and Management Letter be approved;**
- b) the audited Financial Statements be approved;**
- c) the Letters of Representation be approved;**

- d) the Chair and Principal and Chief Executive be authorised to sign the Financial statements and Letters of Representation;
- e) the Corporation's appreciation of the work of RSM and the Finance Team be formally recorded.

Ms. Musgrave left the meeting at 5.47 p.m.

137. Risk Management Policy and Risk Appetite

Submitted: Report of the Vice Principal and Deputy Chief Executive (previously considered by Audit and Governance Committee on 11 November 2025 and previously circulated, with a copy attached to the Official Minutes).

137.1 Ms. Sherrington introduced the updated policy and appetite, highlighting that this had been reviewed by Audit and Governance Committee in November and had been recommended for Corporation approval.

137.2 Members confirmed that they had no questions, nor amendments to propose.

Resolved – that the revised Risk Management Policy and Risk Appetite be approved.

138. Finance and Resources Committee Update and Minutes

Submitted: Draft Minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee Meeting held on 26 November 2025 (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes).

138.1 Ms. Collinge guided members through the key discussions at the meeting, highlighting the reports which had been referred to the Corporation for approval. Members noted that the Committee had discussed the Financial Statements, monthly Management Accounts, and the proposed changes to the Financial regulations in detail.

Resolved – that the draft minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee meeting held on 26 November 2025 be accepted.

140. Annual Review of Financial Regulations

Submitted: Report of the Vice Principal and Deputy Chief Executive (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes)

140.1 Ms. Sherrington advised members that this report had been considered by Finance and Resources Committee on 26 November 2025 and had been referred to the Corporation for approval on account of the proposed changes to delegated financial authority limits, particularly in relation to the Principal and Chief Executive. Members noted that the College had been operating significantly below the sector norms for some time and this was having an impact on the number of purchases requiring urgent approval via written resolutions. Ms. Collinge stated that the proposed £100k limit was in keeping with the sector and drew attention to the proposal that all purchases between £50k (Current limit) and £100k would be documented within the monthly management accounts.

Resolved – that revised Financial Regulations be approved the with immediate effect.

Dr. Jones entered the meeting at 5.56 p.m.

141. Governance Self-Assessment

Submitted: Report of the Interim Director of Governance (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes)

141.1 Ms. Nixon guided members through the outcome of the Annual Self-Assessment of Governance, previously reviewed by the Audit and Governance Committee and recommended that the Board review this in light of the College-wide SAR and proposed Leadership and Governance judgement. Ms. Nixon reported that Audit and Governance Committee had reviewed whether to conduct a deep dive into areas which had fewer strongly agree responses than others.

141.2 During discussion, members noted that the questions relating to finance and resources had more strongly agree answers than other areas and suggested that further work needed to be done with governors to address this. Mr. Stewart reported that plans were underway to spend time with governors at an ELT Away Day to ensure that all governors could deepen their knowledge and understanding of performance and priorities and this date would be circulated to governors as soon as possible. Reference was made to the number of governors who had attended the recent Curriculum Planning Day and the positive feedback received.

141.3 A member questioned the ability to create a governors' forum on Team Engine so that governors could record events and interaction in the College as well as share training notes etc. and Ms. Clayton stated that

this was possible and undertook to demonstrate more functions of Team Engine with governors.

Resolved – that:

- a) the report be approved;
- b) further discussion of the areas for further development take place in the New Year;
- c) Ms. Clayton arrange to demonstrate more of the functions of Team Engine with governors.

142. Quality and Standards Committee Update and Minutes from 25 November 2025

Submitted: Draft Minutes from the interim Director of Governance (previously circulated and copy attached to Official Minutes)

142.1 Dr. Jones guided members through the key points discussed during the meeting before inviting members' questions and comments. A member queried the percentage rates for the roll out of checkpoints for 2025-26 and Ms. Nixon undertook to clarify this position with the report author. During discussion members noted the progress made last year and that there had been detailed scrutiny and challenge during the meeting.

Resolved – that the minutes of the Quality and Standards Committee Meeting held on 25 November be accepted.

143. Annual Review of Committee Performance

Submitted: Presentation from the Deputy Principal, Education (made available during the meeting and copy attached to Official Minutes)

143.1 Mr. Stewart commenced the presentation by reporting that 2024-25 had seen the highest overall achievement rate (for FE education and training) in the College history to date, drawing attention to the following key points:

- Pass rate had increased (4.6%)
- Retention rate had increased (0.5%)
- Achievement had increased (4.6%)

143.2 Members noted that pass, retention, and achievement were all now above national rate and there was a positive 3-year trend for pass and achievement. With reference to retention, Mr. Stewart advised members that overall, FE retention had improved by 0.5% and all levels were now above national rate. Mr. Stewart explained the reasons

why there had been a slight dip in Level 2 retention compared with 2023-24, confirming that the quality of reporting had improved significantly. Mr. Stewart highlighted that the retention target for 2025-26 was 95% and was currently 99.3%. members noted that if retention hit target and pass remained the result would be achievement of 88.3% (which would be an improvement of 1.2%).

- 143.3 In turning to pass rates, members were advised that whilst overall pass rate had increased by 4.6%, further development was needed to ensure that Entry Level qualifications improved further. further Mr. Stewart reported that there had been a deep dive into Entry Level, which had resulted in the College stopping subcontracted Entry Level provision.
- 143.4 During discussion of FE achievement, Mr. Stewart confirmed that achievement had improved by 4.6% and all levels were now above national rate, with significant improvements made at Levels 2 and 3.
- 143.5 With reference to 16-18 and 19+ FE, members noted that for 16-18, pass and achievement rates had improved significantly, and all metrics were now above national rate. Whilst 19+ pass and achievement had significantly improved, the metrics were slightly below national rate on account of a dip in retention. There were clear action plans in place to address this.
- 143.6 Members' attention was drawn to the headline data for inclusion and Mr. Stewart confirmed that pass and retention rates had improved when compared with 2023-24 and learners with an EHCP achieved better than learners without (+5.4%). Similarly High Needs learners' pass, and retention rates had improved when compared with 2023-24 and learners with High Needs Funding achieved better than their peers (+6.8%).
- 143.7 During discussion of GCSE outcomes, members noted that these subjects remained a challenge nationally and for the College, Maths results had improved, but English was lower than the previous year.
- 143.8 In turning to Apprenticeships, Mr. Stewart confirmed that this area continued to perform well, with a positive three-year trend in achievement with headline 24/25 achievement 12.9% above national benchmark. The College was the best performing land-based college for apprenticeships (based on published 23/24 data) and the best performing college for apprenticeships in the Northwest (based on published 23/24 data). Mr. Stewart drew attention to the awards received for Apprenticeships in 2025.
- 143.9 Members noted the headline HE data as follows:

- In-year completion rose from 81.98% to 87.99%, (+6pp)
(indicating stronger progression, improved module completion, and more effective academic support)
- Postgraduate completion improved from 81.74% to 90.91% (+9.2pp)
- Undergraduate completion increased from 82.03% to 87.38% (+5.1pp)
- Despite a smaller cohort, withdrawals had decreased in absolute numbers (34→ 29) and improved slightly proportionally (4.68% → 4.52%).

143.10 Mr. Stewart concluded the presentation of HE data by stating that Postgraduate withdrawal rates dropped from 2.61% to 1.82%; the proportion of First and Upper Second-Class honours awards had been sustained year on year, rising marginally from 23% to 24% and there had been an increase in Upper Second-Class awards. The key area for focus was reducing interruptions across both levels.

143.11 In acknowledging the progress made, a member challenged the accuracy of the data, particularly for 2024-25 and sought assurance that the improvements were as good as the report showed. In response, Mr. Stewart explained that after difficulties in 2023, College managers had conducted a deep dive and had made significant improvements in collecting and reporting data. Mr. Stewart stated that a key focus in 2024-25 was added value and for 2025-26 the focus was on consolidating growth.

143.12 With reference to the removal of subcontracted Entry Level provision, Mr. Stewart confirmed that this decision had taken in advance of the results and had been based on quality and financial sustainability.

143.13 A member highlighted the need for the Board to recognise the significant efforts made to secure the turnaround and improved outcomes and members agreed that it was important for staff to know that their hard work was recognised.

143.14 In concluding the discussion a member sought clarification of interruptions in HE and was advised that managers had increased scrutiny and challenge in the authorisation process to ensure that the process was more robust and that the numbers authorised did not increase any further.

Resolved – that the presentation be approved and circulated to the Corporation after the meeting.

144. College Self-Assessment Report 2024-25 and Quality Risk Assessment 2025-26

Submitted: report of the Executive Director of Quality and Performance (previously reviewed by Quality and Standards Committee on 25 November 2025 and previously circulated to the Board, with a copy attached to Official Minutes).

144.1 All members confirmed that they had read the detailed report in advance of the meeting and the Chair invited members' questions and comments. Members queried the proposed grades in section 2.3 highlighting that the Quality and Standards Committee had agreed that Leadership and Governance and Inclusion should be graded as Expected Standard. Mr. Gadsdon apologised for the error and undertook to make this amendment before the finalised document was submitted.

144.2 During discussion Mr. Gadsdon stated that other than this change, there had been no further amendments to the document since Quality and Standards Committee on 25 November. There would, however, be a final data check before submission. Mr. Stewart highlighted the benefit of arranging a meeting for governors to go through the document in more detail in the New Year and suggested that this take place as part of the ELT Toolkit Day on 14 January 2025. Members welcomed this suggestion and undertook to confirm attendance.

144.3 A member questioned the statement that too few learners were progressing to the second year of some programmes. Mr. Gadsdon reported that further data was needed to analyse this further, although this related to Level 3 2-year programmes, where progression to year 2 on some programmes was not where the College wanted it to be.

144.4 A member challenged the Expected Standard for Inclusion, rather than Strong Standard and was advised that this was a cautious SAR as there had not been any full inspections using the new Framework and managers were aware that the bar for Strong Standard was high.

Resolved – that the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Risk Assessment be approved, subject to the amendments identified in paragraph 2.3 of the SAR report being made and a final data check.

145. Curriculum and Assessment Review

Submitted: Report from the Deputy Principal, Education (previously considered by Quality and Standards Committee on 25 November 2025 and previously circulated, with a copy attached to Official Minutes)

145.1 Mr. Stewart advised the Corporation that this report had been referred for information and to ensure that governors were kept informed of the proposed changes. Members noted that the consultation period would end in January and that the College was responding in its own right, as well as in association with Landex. Mr. Stewart assured members that senior managers were conducting an impact assessment of the proposed changes and undertook to keep all members informed of the outcomes.

Resolved – that the report be accepted and members be kept informed of the outcomes of the consultation process and the College’s own impact assessment.

Mr. Gadsdon left the meeting at 6.37 p.m.

146. Annual Review of the Committees’ Terms of Reference

Submitted: Revised Terms of Reference for the following Committees: Audit and Governance, Finance and Resources, Quality and Standards and the Appointment Panel for Senior Postholders prepared by the Interim Director of Governance (previously considered by the relevant Committees and previously circulated with a copy attached to the Official Minutes).

146.1 Ms. Nixon reported that these Terms of Reference had been updated and reviewed by the Committees and recommended for Corporation approval. No amendments were proposed.

Resolved – that the revised Terms of Reference for the following Committees: Audit and Governance, Finance and Resources, Quality and Standards and the Appointment Panel for Senior Postholders be approved.

At 6.39 p.m. the Corporation moved to the Confidential Agenda.

Anne-Marie Nixon,

Interim Director of Governance

16 December 2025