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MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION MEETING HELD ON 23 MARCH 2026 AT 4.00 PM IN T108, THE BOARD ROOM, THE ROUNDHOUSE

Present: Andrew Cochrane (Chair), Simon Allsop, Richard Blackmore, Ranjit Singh Dol, Andrew Dymond, Stuart Ellis, Guy Hodgkinson, Jane McNeil, Jill Matthews, Mandie Stravino OBE, Anju Virdee

In attendance: Jo Clifford, Aaron Denton, Heather Kelly, Melanie Lanser, Brian Malyan, Rose Matthews (Clerk to the Corporation)

PART ONE - GENERAL MINUTES

35/25-26 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Alan Brady, Sue Bradley and Nikol Daskalova.

Officer apologies were received from Rob Bamford.

36/25-26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, CONFIRMATION OF ELIGIBILITY AND QUORUM

All members were eligible, the meeting was quorate and there were no new declarations.

37/25-26 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2025

RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2025 were formally approved as a true and accurate record.

38/25-26 MATTERS ARISING

26/25-26 The Clerk confirmed she had uploaded a copy of the SAR presentation to Team Engine.

39/25-26 THE POST 16 LEVEL 3 AND BELOW PATHWAYS (FE AND SKILLS WHITE PAPER GOVERNMENT RESPONSE REGARDING V AND T LEVELS)

The Chief Executive presented a strategic policy update on the Post 16 Qualification Reform, which included the Government’s response to the consultation. The update covered the confirmation of V Levels alongside A Levels and T Levels, the removal of large applied general qualifications, and the implications for accessibility at Level 3, particularly for disadvantaged learners.

The requirement for providers to submit a strategic transition plan, signed by the Accounting Officer was outlined, and the sector-wide frustration that consultation feedback had not been reflected in the final policy position was highlighted. Members also noted the confirmation of a 0.55% increase in 16–18 funding rates, continued funding inequity with schools and higher education, and the potential impact on teacher recruitment and retention and social mobility.

Action Date

Rick Blackmore (RB) asked how employers would realistically be expected to understand and navigate the reformed qualification system, given its increasing complexity. It was acknowledged that work was underway to develop explanatory materials for multiple audiences, although clarity remained limited while policy detail continued to evolve. **He asked if EMCCA were doing a mapping exercise, similar to that happening in other regions.** It was unknown if this was happening in this region.

Simon Allsop (SA) asked if there was any more detail around the strategic transition plan. At this point there was not, but it was hoped this would form part of the Accountability Agreement and the annual strategic conversation.

Governors how the Board could respond to this and questioned what mitigation would be possible if applied general pathways were removed without accessible alternatives, and whether this risked reducing progression to Level 3 and higher education. The Chair summarised the discussion by noting that, while policy intentions appeared positive, the delivery was unclear, funding was insufficient, and there was a real risk that social mobility outcomes could worsen rather than improve. **Members agreed that the College would need to focus on mitigating impact rather than influencing policy, which was now largely fixed.**

RESOLVED: The Corporation discussed and accepted the presentation.

40/25-26 SEND REFORM PROPOSALS

The Vice Principal of Student Experience and Inclusion delivered a detailed update on the SEND reform proposals, including the planned reduction in Education, Health and Care Plans and the introduction of Individual Support Plans for a significantly larger cohort of learners.

It was explained that accountability for planning, delivery and review of support would increasingly shift from Local Authorities to colleges, without confirmed additional funding. The VP-SE highlighted the likely increase in workload, the need for specialist expertise, the potential for increased complaints and legal challenge, and the long-term phased implementation of reforms over approximately ten years.

The Chair asked who would deliver the Individual Support Plans (ISPs). It was explained specialist staff would need to be recruited with the expertise to deliver at the scale proposed. **Members also questioned the implications for staff workload and wellbeing. It was confirmed that the College did not currently have capacity to deliver the model at scale and that this represented a significant organisational risk, both from a financial and reputational perspective.**

The need for accurate information sharing from schools was also raised and how far in advance this would be available to enable the College to prepare.

Governors also questioned what would happen to funding if EHCP numbers reduced but learner need remained, and whether colleges would become legally accountable for disputes previously managed by Local Authorities. It was acknowledged that funding redistribution remained unclear and that the risk of increased complaints and tribunals would need to be closely monitored. **Members agreed that these risks should be clearly reflected on the corporate risk register.**

Simon Allsop asked about the College's relationship with the schools and city council and if anything more could be done now. It was explained meetings were held and engagement took place.

Reflections concluded that further education colleges were resilient and whilst it was somewhat alarming at this stage, the sector would adapt.

RESOLVED: The Corporation accepted and discussed the implications and agreed the risk register would need to be updated to reflect the proposed changes.

CFO

21/05/26

41/25-26

HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE, INCLUDING POLICY REVIEW

The Corporation received the Health and Safety Annual Report for 2024–25 and the Health & Safety Work Plan for 2025–26, providing the Corporation with assurance that DCG continued to meet its statutory duties under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and associated regulations.

The report outlined key achievements and performance during 2024–25, compliance status across core statutory areas, Trends in accidents, incidents and RIDDOR cases, Progress with estates compliance, fire safety and risk management and priorities and operational objectives for 2025–26.

The Chair asked if all were reassured the Corporation were complying with their health and safety obligations across all campuses. It was confirmed the College were satisfied they had the policies and procedures in place to show they were safe and the annual report set out the College's approach which did follow the guidance from the Health and Safety Executive.

The DCEO explained one of the updates related to the recruitment of an additional post to support with Martyn's Law.

Stuart Ellis asked if future reports could expand on the acronyms at the beginning of the report. This would be incorporated in the future

RB

21/05/26

Jane McNeil (JM) said she felt any questions she had, were covered in the reports in terms of ongoing actions, particularly around compliance with training, but she could clearly see that was being followed up.

She questioned the relative ratio between students and staff for the reported accidents, particularly when reflecting on Landbased courses more than some of the others and said the only possible contradiction that she could think is if students and staff were having disproportionately more accidents. She said couldn't see that in the report.

RB

21/05/26

Governors asked how often the College carried out exercises to test, for example, through a business continuity exercise, what the health and safety implications could be.

It was explained the College carry out fire evacuation tests and have completed desktop business continuity/incident exercises, but the new post will enable this to happen more regularly and carry out actual exercises as opposed to desktop ones.

RESOLVED: The Corporation approved the Health and Safety Annual Report 2024-25 and Workplan for 2025-26 and the last Health and Safety update report.

They also accepted the internal review carried out on the Stress Management Policy.

42/25-26

SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENT UPDATE, INC;

- **ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25**
- **LATEST SAFEGUARDING UPDATE FOR 2025-26**
- **PREVENT RISK ASSESMENT ANNUAL REVIEW**
- **FILTERING AND MONITORING ANNUAL REVIEW**

Members received the Safeguarding Annual Report 2024-25 and Work Plan for 2025-26 which provided assurance the safeguarding practices remained robust.

They also received the Prevent update and discussed the Annual Report and current update, along with the Prevent Risk Assessment and Filtering and Monitoring review.

Governors asked how the College tested whether training was embedded in practice rather than simply completed, and how assurance was gained that staff felt confident in recognising and escalating concerns.

It was highlighted that the Staff Governor's Safeguarding team were critical in this respect and lead others less familiar, particularly in relation to the College's reporting system CPOMs.

The Chair went on to ask how the College is assured its understood.

Everyone had a good understanding and this was tested through patterns of reporting, audit activity, incident reviews and inspection outcomes and people have a good understanding of who to go to, with a culture of support rather than reprimand.

RESOLVED: The Corporation:

- **approved the Annual Safeguarding Report for 2024-25 and work plan for 2025-26;**
- **accepted the latest Safeguarding update for 2025-26;**
- **approved the Prevent Risk Assessment Annual Review;**
- **accepted the Filtering and Monitoring Annual Review.**

43/25-26

REPORT FROM THE CURRICULUM PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 10 MARCH 2026

The Chair presented the report of the Curriculum and Performance Committee held on 10 March 2026.

Members noted strong improvements in A Level progress, applied general performance and outcomes for disadvantaged learners, alongside excellent GCSE Maths performance. Attendance and retention trends were reported as improving, and external benchmarking remained positive.

Governors asked during the Committee meeting what factors were driving sustained improvement in teaching quality, and were advised that clearer expectations, improved teaching practice and stronger learning environments were key contributors.

An internal review had taken place of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and HE Bursary and Hardship Policy – which had both undergone

minor changes but which required the Corporation's approval. The Positive Behaviour Policy had been approved by the Committee.

RESOLVED: The Corporation approved the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and HE Bursary and Hardship Policy.

44/25-26 REPORT FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE HELD ON 2 MARCH 2026

The Committee Chair presented the report from the Curriculum Performance Committee held on 2 March 2026.

The Committee reported that it had considered the College's external audit arrangements and was satisfied that appropriate assurance continued to be provided to the Board with this in mind they recommended the Corporation extend the appointment of RSM as external auditors, for one year to June 2027 – which will be the maximum extension before going out to competitive tendering. **JM asked if the Committee would be asking the team to recirculate to ensure a fresh pair of eyes.** It was explained the team had changed throughout their term and the College had the addition of new internal auditors which provided a fresh perspective.

The Audit Committee advised that progress against the internal audit plan remained on track and that no significant control weaknesses had been identified. The Committee had also reviewed the College's approach to fraud risk and noted the introduction of new regulatory expectations in relation to fraud prevention and detection. Assurance was provided that management was taking appropriate steps to evidence controls and Board oversight in this area and it was suggested a chart be included in reporting to see where there was evidence of compliance.

An internal review had been undertaken of the Anti-Money Laundering Policy and the Committee recommended this be accepted.

RESOLVED: The Corporation accepted the Audit Committee Report and;

- **approved the one-year extension of the External Audit Contract to June 2027;**
- **accepted the Anti-Money Laundering Policy.**

45/25-26 STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Corporation considered the Strategic Risk Register and noted the current assessment of principal and emerging risks. Members were advised that cyber security continued to be identified as the College's principal strategic risk, reflecting both the external threat environment and the potential operational and financial impact of a significant incident.

Assurance was provided that mitigations remained under active review and that risk ownership and reporting arrangements were clear.

The Corporation noted that apprenticeship funding compliance remained a key risk area, informed by the outcome of the recent Department for Education funding audit. While the audit had confirmed that the identified funding error was not material, members acknowledged the importance of continued vigilance in relation to funding rules and regulatory compliance, particularly where guidance was complex or subject to interpretation.

The Board was assured that management actions had been implemented to strengthen controls and that the risk rating appropriately reflected the current level of exposure.

Members also noted that wider system and policy risks, including those arising from qualification reform and SEND reform, would continue to be monitored and reflected through the risk register as proposals developed.

RESOLVED: The Corporation approved the Strategic Risk Register and confirmed that it provided an appropriate and accurate reflection of the College's current risk profile.

46/25-26

REPORT FROM FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE HELD ON 11 MARCH 2026

The Corporation received and noted the report from the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee.

Members were advised that the Committee had considered the College's financial position, including income and expenditure (as part of the Period 6 Management accounts), cash flow, and the medium-term financial outlook and was satisfied that the College continued to operate within its approved financial framework.

The Chair reported that the Committee had given detailed consideration to the capital report, including progress against the approved capital programme and the prioritisation of investment to support the College's strategic objectives. Capital projects were subject to appropriate scrutiny, governance and value-for-money considerations, and that affordability and deliverability continued to be monitored closely. The Committee recommended the Corporation approve the Further Education College Condition Allocation (FECCA) – at a value of £2,374,477 and historic FECA Broomfield capital grant to the value of £1,110,377. Planned works includes:

- o Access/ Security Projects £261, 369
- o H&S and Fire Safety Projects - £251,607
- o IT infrastructure enhancements - £312,000
- o Broomfield Hall - £1,360,000 (FECA = £1,110,377, FECCA = £249,623)
- o Ground Estate/ground improvements - £1072,488

The Committee had also considered treasury management arrangements, including cash balances, borrowing and compliance with covenants and regulatory requirements. Members were advised that the Committee was satisfied with the robustness of treasury management controls and the continued prudence of the College's approach to managing financial risk given future challenges around inflation and Government strategy.

Sub-contracting Performance was outlined and Members approved withholding the £100k performance incentive until funding allocations were clear. The approach for 2026-27 was outlined.

A procurement tendering exercise had been undertaken in relation to the Catering Contract which is due to end on 31 July 2026. The Committee recommended the Corporation approve the contract be awarded to Aramark for a period of three years with the option to extend by up to five years.

The Gender Pay Report was shared, which presented a gap of 6.9% which was an improvement on last year. The Committee recommended the Corporation approve the Gender Pay Report for publication.

A review of policies had been undertaken, the Committee reviewed three policies with substantial changes and recommended the Corporation approve the Maternity, Neonatal, Paternity, Adoption and Shared Parental Leave Policy, the Annual Leave Policy and the Redundancy Policy.

Members were asked to note an internal review had been undertaken of the Conflict of Interest Policy & Guidelines, the Disciplinary Policy & Procedures and the Sexual Harassment Policy & Procedures which resulted in no changes.

The Chair of Audit questioned the dilapidations and asked when that would crystallise into cash. He was informed the College were still trying to justify the valuation which related to the Johnson building and they were seeking some specialist advice.

RESOLVED: The Corporation accepted the report and:

- **Approved the proposed capital project expenditure as outlined above.**
- **Endorsed the sub-contracting approach for 2026-27.**
- **Approved the Catering contract be awarded to Aramark for a period of three years with the option to extend by up to five years.**
- **Approved the Gender Pay Report for publication.**
- **Approved the following policies:**
 - **Maternity, Neonatal, Paternity, Adoption and Shared Parental Leave Policy**
 - **Annual Leave Policy**
 - **Redundancy Policy.**

47/25-26 GOVERNOR APPOINTMENTS/TERM APPOINTMENTS

Jane McNeil and Richard Blackmore's terms of office had been reviewed, taking into consideration their attendance and the wider value they bring to the Board. This had been discussed at their recent annual governor review meetings. It was proposed the Corporation approve that both Jane and Richard be approved for a further two years, taking Richard's term to 24 March 2028 and Jane's to 31 August 2028.

RESOLVED: The Corporation approved the new term of office for Jane McNeil and Richard Blackmore.

Following a recruitment search for an additional Audit Committee member through Peridot Partners, interviews had taken place carried out by the Chair and Vice Chair, with input from the Chair of Audit Committee.

It was proposed that Robert Pritchard be appointed as a governor and would join the Audit Committee, with effect from 1 April 2026 for a term of two years.

RESOLVED: The Corporation approved the appointment of Robert Pritchard for a terms of two years from 1 April 2026 – 31 March 2028.

48/25-26 STRATEGIC REFLECTION, INCLUDING LINK GOVERNORS

A strategic discussion followed, focusing on social mobility, employer engagement and economic conditions. Members reflected on reduced employer recruitment, increasing financial pressures on SMEs, and challenges associated with LSIP engagement.

Governors asked how the College could continue to evidence its contribution to economic prosperity in this context, and whether corporate KPIs might need

to evolve to reflect external policy-driven risks beyond the College's control. It was agreed that this should be kept under review.

Governors reported on their recent link visits, which provided assurance on achievement of the College's strategic priorities.

12/01/26 and 16/03/26 – Landbased and Sustainability Link Visit

The Clerk feedback on the report provided by Sue Bradley in her absence. During the most recent visit they covered the implications of the qualification reform and SB was assured this had been factored in. Applications for September 2026 showed an upward trend across all areas – highlighting a challenge if projections continue. Sustainability developments were shared including the cross college initiatives, Equine reached the final of the Green Gown Awards. They discussed the annual sustainability staff survey and the sustainability champions. It was proposed that JC be invited to the next Curriculum Performance meeting to update governors on the sustainability work.

Clerk 22/04/26

25/02/26 – Inclusion and SEND Link Visit

Anju Virdee reported on her link governor visit on 25 February, which focused on Inclusion. The visit provided insight into SEND provision, learner support and progression, particularly for learners with complex needs. Assurance was provided regarding the quality of support, staff commitment and the effectiveness of employer engagement for supported internships. The visit also highlighted challenges associated with evidencing progress for learners with low prior attainment and the potential impact of forthcoming SEND reforms on staff capacity and resources.

11/02/26 – Derbyshire Chairs and CEOs meeting

Andrew Cochrane reported on attendance at the Derbyshire Chairs and CEOs meeting on 11 February. The discussion had focused on shared sector challenges, including funding pressures, audit and compliance issues, employer engagement and policy reform. The meeting provided an opportunity to share intelligence, strengthen collaboration across local colleges and consider joint approaches to influencing and risk management.

RESOLVED: The Corporation accepted the oversight of governors from the link visits and how this supported the College in achieving its strategic goals.

49/25-26 FE COMMISSIONER LETTER

The Corporation considered the letter from the Further Education Commissioner. The Clerk confirmed assurance against the requirements for strong and effective governance, including leadership arrangements, board assurance frameworks, induction and review processes. Members noted that the College was referenced positively in national best practice publications for English and maths.

RESOLVED: The Corporation accepted the FE Commissioner letter and were assured of governance practices.

50/25-26 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

The CFO shared the KPIs, which had already been presented at the Curriculum Performance Committee.

The final 2024/25 Curriculum KPI's are now completed based upon the R14 hard close and the KPI setting flowchart has been applied to derive the target

KPI's for 2025/26, along with the financial targets which were agreed as part of the 2025-26 Financial Plan.

Members were asked to note there were a couple of minor changes relating to how HE student voice is measured and the Corporation KPI measure for apprenticeships did not match with the SLT KPI and it is proposed these are aligned.

SA asked if there were any property KPIs and where they were reported.

It was explained they formed part of the Estates Strategy, progress toward which is presented annually at the Corporation Strategy Day and then monitored through FRC.

RESOLVED: THE Corporation accepted the closedown of the 2024-25 KPIs and approved the target KPIs for 2025-26.

51/25-26 CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

There were no consent agenda items brought forward for discussion. The agenda items for approval had already been discussed as part of the main agenda.

The staff and student governor left the meeting.

The meeting finished at 6.40 pm