Buckinghamshire College Group

Minutes of the Corporation Meeting held at 5.30pm on 25th March 2026 in Room 3-22, Aylesbury Campus

Governors Present	Martin Tugwell (Chair)	Cathie Prest	Nhyira Djan-Otoo
	Jenny Craig (Principal & CEO)	Chris Oakley	Oreoluwa Adeyemo
	Ian Greggor (Vice Chair)	Iain Brown	Sean Baker
	Adam Poland	John Boyle	Tim Marshall
	Alex Reynolds	Nasim Khan	Victoria Topham
In Attendance	John McGrath (Chief Operating Officer (COO))		
	Hannah James (Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality (VPCQ))		
	Tracey Matthews (Vice Principal Commercial & Partnerships (VPCP))		
	Nicky Ellis (Assistant Principal Student Engagement & Support (APSES))		
	Oliver Roth (Executive Director MIS & Digital Transformation (EDMDT))		
	Ian Harper (Executive Director Business Development (EDBD))		
	Ruth Osgood (Executive Director People & Purpose (EDPP))		
	Anna Smith (Director of Governance (DG))		
Apologies	Amir Khaki	Sarah Mason	Tomas Pukalski

Minute No.	AGENDA ITEM
13.26	**CHAIR'S WELCOME** A video celebrating the term's highlights was shown as governors arrived at the meeting. The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Reflecting on governors' feedback from the last meeting, given the heavy agenda of the December meetings in the business cycle, it was agreed there would be no strategic conversation scheduled for December Board meetings going forward. Apologies were noted. There were no new declarations of interest relating to matters of discussion. The meeting was quorate.
14.26	**STRATEGIC CONVERSATION – SAFEGUARDING** ***Led by Ian Greggor and Nicky Ellis*** Given the continuing increase of safeguarding cases, governors had requested a strategic conversation on the subject to support understanding of the challenges and support provided. The session was an insightful interactive conversation based around 'knowing our students'. The APSES shared a presentation highlighting the increasing challenges young people are facing (nationally, locally and within the College cohort). Governors and Executives then considered real-life (anonymised) College student case studies and were asked to reflect on what actions they might take in each situation. In each case there was then an opportunity for Governors to hear what had happened in each case, in the process gaining greater understanding as to how contextual information gave deeper insight that helped provide context for the situation. Governors were advised that the College works closely with local authorities and the police when it comes to safeguarding cases, with a very positive working relationship ensuring prompt action. Governors received copies of the Continuum of Need (The Continuum of Need - Buckinghamshire Safeguarding Children Partnership) which explains the different levels of need young people and their families may move between when considering the type of support needed. Governors gained valuable insight and enhanced understanding of the increasing challenges and increasing level of support needed to ensure students' safety and continued education. *Given the sensitivity of student case studies referred to in the session, the Student Governors had been asked to join after this session. Oreoluwa Adeyemo and Nhyira Djan-Otoo joined at 6.15pm.*
15.26	**DIRECTOR OF GOVERANCE REPORT**

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	The Corporation received the report of the Director of Governance and **Resolved** to: • **Ratify** the approval of the Estates Committee Terms of Reference. • **Note** that mid-year reviews for the Senior Post-Holders have been scheduled and an assurance update will be circulated to Board members following these meetings. • **Note** the Governor Improvement Plan Update. Progress is positive and governors were again encouraged to utilise their external networks in support of the College's activities, including work experience placements etc. **(Action: Governors)** • **Note** the latest Governor Links and Engagement Record 2025-26 and the results of the survey conducted by link managers which showed the link scheme is adding value and having a positive impact internally. A full review of the scheme, role descriptions and reporting methods will be considered by the Search & Governance Committee for endorsement at the next Board meeting for implementation in 2026-27 **(Action: DG)**. The DG sought ideas from governors on session topics for the next strategy day (in May). It was planned to include time for governors to observe classes as part of the day to gain first-hand experience of teaching and learning. A session on longer term strategy is planned for the October strategy day (as discussed at the October 2025 strategy day). The Vice Chair requested, and it was agreed, a session on governors' responsibilities around health and safety would be included as part of the May strategy day. There would also be an invitation to tour the recently completed decarbonisation project allowing governors to see results of the successful investment.

16.26	**MINUTES AND BOARD ASSURANCE REPORTS**
	The Corporation **Resolved** to:
	• **Approve** the minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 11/12/25. All actions had been completed or were covered in reports for the meeting.
	• **Note** the Board Assurance Report of the Estates Committee meeting held on 28/1/26 and the Board Assurance reports and Draft Minutes of:
	    o Finance & Resources Committee Meeting 4/3/26
	    o Curriculum, Quality & Students Committee Meeting 11/3/26
	
	The Chair invited Committee Chairs to comment, and the following assurances were provided:
	• The Chair of the Finance & Resources Committee reflected on how the committee's membership ensures accountancy expertise from different perspectives. Members are closely monitoring the EBITDA and cashflow alongside maintaining robust oversight of capital projects, finances, the workforce and digital transformation programmes, noting good progress on both.
	• The Chair of the Curriculum, Quality & Students Committee shared a summary of the work conducted at the meeting, including the 'deep dive' into Inclusive Practice. Members had commended the strong relational curriculum, clear impact evidence and strengthened mental health pathways which provide confidence that students are being supported appropriately. Executives were commended for clear reports with well-balanced strengths and areas for improvement.

Networking break – following this break the meeting was recorded (audio only) with agreement from all present	
17.26	**STUDENT AND STAFF GOVERNORS' REPORTS** **<u>Student Governors' Report</u>** The Student Governors had sought feedback from students across all campuses on feeling part of the College community. From the sample of responses, students care about the College community and want more opportunities to help shape its future, feel more connected, more involved and with improved communications. Reflections were shared following attendance at a recent AoC student network meeting with the suggestion of an annual event being organised to bring all students from the three campuses together. The Chair reflected that communication appeared as a common theme, with it also being highlighted in by the Staff Governors report and the parent survey results. It was agreed this would be a topic for a strategic discussion **(Action: DG on planning)**. The student governors were asked if they could give some advice on what types of clubs and societies students might like to see: it was also noted that there may be benefit in looking at connections with local groups in the community as well as within the College.

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	The EDMDT sought clarity of the types of communication requiring improvement. It was felt routine logistics (timetabling etc.) are clear through Student Space but communication about upcoming changes and developments could be improved.
18.26	<u>**Staff Governors' Report**</u> The Staff Governors reported that feedback from colleagues was that communication has improved, and staff appreciated more opportunities to give feedback. Concerns remain around workload (and misalignment with pay). It was noted that some staff lack confidence when approaching large groups of students and there was a request for stronger management presence during busy student periods. Several positive curriculum activities taking place were highlighted. Reflecting on the Ready, Respectful, Safe (RRS) approach, it was noted that staff had received training and support on this. The Principal informed the meeting of the expansion of the RRS rota, with staff now identifiable in purple high-vis jackets to ensure a more formal approach with increased visibility. In response to students congregating outside classrooms and mid-floor spaces, furniture is being relocated to make the ground floor communal areas more welcoming. In terms of staff confidence, one of the Link Governors shared that his link Faculty Director had praised the Leadership for Learning programme, providing consistent expectations, shared processes and structured induction for managers. The Chair noted that the Staff Governors' perspectives would be explored further in shaping discussion during the communication session at a future strategic discussion.
19.26	**KPI REPORT** The report showed a snapshot of progress against the agreed KPIs with more detail available in the Executive reports. Notably, 36% of KPIs are on track to achieve and 39% are at amber. 42% have shown improvement since the last period and 46% are stable, noting very little decline. The Chair asked how governors could support the team in terms of work placements and Cornerstone employers (noting this was a KPI showing as red). It was confirmed (as reflected in the Governance Improvement Plan) governors using their networks to help the team engage with employers was highly useful. The VPCP and EDBD offered to circulate details of Cornerstone Employers and Course Champions for governors to then introduce any connections to the team **(Action: VPCP/EDBD/Independent Governors)**. The EBDB noted a governor had introduced him to Biffa who have since actively supported students and agreed to become a Course Champion.
20.26	**PRINCIPAL'S REPORT** The Principal explained the lengthy report reflects the significant volume of national and local FE activity, including SEND and qualification reforms. The College is well-connected with excellent networks, county partners, and regional collaborations, which should strengthen its position for future capital projects and adult skills funding. The Chair reflected on the importance of Treasury backing of the Oxford-Cambridge corridor, the positive role FE colleges have to play in support of that ambition. He welcomed the College's active involvement in the FE grouping that has been established in response. It was agreed the Audit & Risk Committee would review FEC expectations in terms of Board assurance processes and provide assurance to the Board in due course **(Action: Audit & Risk Committee).** The Chair also reminded the Board that the next External Board Review would be conducted in 2026-27. The Corporation **Noted** the report and the latest Health & Safety Report.
21.26	**WORKFORCE REPORT** The EDPP briefed governors on the latest workforce data noting encouraging progress against the action plan that had been developed with the benefit of a Corporation Strategic Discussion. Turnover, vacancies and staff absences are all reducing as strengthened recruitment and wellbeing initiatives are taking effect. Diversity remains strong but early-career retention and high-vacancy hotspots and highlight the need for continued action on onboarding, succession planning and long-term stability.
22.26	The Corporation **Resolved** to: • **Note** the latest workforce data and action plan update • **Approve** the Pension Scheme Discretionary Policy 2025-28

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23.26	**FINANCE AND RESOURCES REPORT** **<u>Financial Update</u>** The COO reported a generally positive financial position, with the College successfully mitigating cost pressures, maintaining income growth, and expecting to achieve an in line or slightly above targets for operating surplus/EBITDA%. However, sector-wide funding challenges remained. Rising agency costs (particularly required for English, Maths and Construction), and continued space pressures at Aylesbury mean careful planning around recruitment, curriculum delivery and future funding allocations remains essential. Query was raised as to whether rising student demand would create space constraints at Aylesbury and require capping numbers. It was confirmed that capacity pressures in construction workshops will necessitate caps unless capital funding is secured from the Construction Skills Capacity Fund and in that context, members endorsed the tender due to be submitted in April. Art and Design and SEND accommodation will also require review due to increasing pressure and this will be reviewed separately after the Construction bid is submitted.
24.26	**<u>Capital Projects Update</u>** The COO confirmed the successful completion of the decarbonisation project and Governors will be invited to view the facility at the May strategy day. The first phase in the Aylesbury campus refurbishment is reviewing the Reception and Student Services area as an essential part of the initial welcome to the campus. The Vice Chair emphasised the importance of the work being taken forward within a framework of agreed critical success factors: these would be shared in due course **(Action: COO)**. Query was raised on whether consideration had been given to external landscaping and the COO offered to discuss ideas with the governor outside of the meeting **(Action: COO)**. Largely for the benefit of the staff and student governors, the COO confirmed that the new build contract has been signed and construction has now started on site with an expected completion by March 2028. The Principal confirmed a 'breaking ground' ceremony is being organised and another tour for governors will be held in due course.
25.26	**<u>Digital Strategy Roadmap Update</u>** The EDMDT reported that the rollout of upgraded hardware for online exams had presented challenges initially due to the technical complexity, but these issues have now been resolved and multi-factor authentication for students has been implemented very smoothly. Work is progressing on a longer-term digital roadmap and the link governor for digital and cybersecurity has been invited to the meeting with the service provider to refine plans. Governors welcomed the clear direction of travel. Discussion took place regarding digital capability variances. In querying whether age demographic has any correlation with digital capability, it was noted that many industry-expert staff joining the College are highly skilled in their field but may not have digital experience required in a teaching environment. Also, it was noted that whilst students are confident on their mobile phones, they can be less familiar with computers and tools such as Teams. Both groups are adapting well and targeted support for those who need it most is helping to gradually build overall digital capability.
26.26	The Corporation **Resolved** to: • **Note** the Management Accounts for February 2026 and the 2026-27 budget headlines • **Approve** entering into a tender process for the Aylesbury Campus phase 1 refurbishment • **Note** the Digital Strategy Roadmap Update
27.26	**CURRICULUM, QUALITY & STUDENTS REPORT** The VPCQ reported on the key messages in the report following scrutiny at the recent Curriculum, Quality & Students Committee meeting. The streamlined and more accessible Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is broadly on track. It was noted that the simplified QIP had been developed to improve clarity on the key actions required in the short term. Rapid improvement through the intensive care process is delivering promising results (e.g. courses which previously had below average achievement rates responding well to improvement action plans).

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	Curriculum planning is underway in line with the Buckinghamshire Economic Growth Plan and Local Skills Improvement plan (LSIP). The new Teacher Development Framework should make professional development more focussed on individual needs. It was noted that the first Ofsted reports under the new assessment framework have now been published providing colleagues with the opportunity to understand how it was being applied. It was also noted that the team is working well with inclusion high on the agenda. The VPCP added that the recent City & Guilds apprenticeship review for Plumbing had been very positive, with assessors finding no issues. This was enabling the backlog of assessments to be addressed. The Corporation **Resolved** to **Note** the report and the simplified Quality Improvement Plan 2025-26.
28.26	**DATE OF NEXT MEETING** 8th July 2026 *(Strategy Day 7th May 2026)* The Chair thanked the Student and Staff Governors for attending and the meeting moved to confidential business. *Oreoluwa Adeyemo, Nhyira Djan-Otoo, Adam Poland and Alex Reynolds left the meeting at 7.45pm.*
29.26	**CONFIDENTIAL ITEM** The Corporation **Resolved** to: • **Approve** the confidential minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 11/12/25 • **Note** the confidential minutes of the Estates Committee meeting held on 28/1/26 The Chair thanked all for attending. The meeting ended at 7.45pm.

AGREED ACTIONS:	ACTION OWNER
1. (a) Governor Networks: Independent Governors reminded and encouraged to utilise external networks by making introductions to support work experience placements, Cornerstone Employer and Course Champion engagement. (b) VPCP & EDBD to circulate Cornerstone Employers and Course Champions requirements.	(a) Independent Governors (b) VPCP/EDBD
2. Link Governor Scheme: review including role descriptions and reporting methods to be considered by Search & Governance Committee prior to Board endorsement.	DG/S&G Committee
3. Strategy Day Programme: to include sessions on governors H&S legal responsibilities and optional tour of decarbonisation project. Future strategic discussion on communication to be scheduled.	DG drafting programme/ scheduling
4. FEC Expectations: Audit & Risk Committee to review Board assurance processes and provide assurances to the Board in due course.	DG/A&R Committee
5. Aylesbury Campus Refurbishment: Report on critical success factors to be shared in due course. COO and VT to discuss external landscaping ideas outside of meeting.	COO

Approved as an accurate record of discussion: 8th July 2026