

Minutes of a Meeting of the CORPORATION held on

Wednesday 21st May 2025, 4.00-6.00pm at the College Business Centre

19/25 WELCOME AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting.

There were no declarations of interest.

With the permission of the Chair the agenda was taken out of order.

20/25 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT REPORT: ENRICHMENT

The Duke of Edinburgh Coordinator and students who had participated in the Award joined the meeting. The students gave a presentation on their participation with the Award. Nine students had attended a Gold Awards presentation at Buckingham Palace earlier this month.

A Member commented on the positive impact participating in the Award had had on his child. The Chair reflected positively on her experience of participating in the Award. She commented that it was disappointing that participants were not able to explore more mainland adventures due to the cost.

A Student Governor enquired whether it was a course requirement to complete the Award for Public and Military Services students. The Duke of Edinburgh Coordinator responded that the offer to participate in the Award was open to all students at the College.

The students were thanked for their presentation and the Coordinator and students left the meeting.

The agenda returned to order.

21/25 APPROVAL OF THE NON-CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION MEETING HELD 26 MARCH 2025

The non-confidential minutes of the meeting held 26 March 2025 were approved as a true record.

22/25 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

It was noted that all items were now complete and that item 5 could be marked as fully completed.

The Corporation NOTED the report for Information and Assurance.

23/25 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR 2025/26

The Director of Governance took the Chair for this agenda item and outlined the process for the election of the Chair and Vice Chair of Corporation for 2025/26. Nominations had been sought prior to the meeting and were invited again during the meeting. There were two nominations, Mrs Sara Weech as Chair, and Dr Angela Buckley as Vice Chair. The nominees left the room during the voting period.

Mr Stephen Brookes proposed Mrs Weech as Chair, and Mrs Sandie Paice seconded the proposal. All Members were in favour.

Mr Martyn Pearl proposed Dr Buckley as Vice Chair, and Mr Ken Dueck seconded the proposal. All Members were in favour.

The Corporation ELECTED Mrs Sara Weech as Chair, and Dr Angela Buckley as Vice Chair for the 2025/26 academic year.

The nominees re-joined the meeting.

24/25 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR OF AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Director of Governance reported that the Corporation appoints Committee Chairs on an annual basis. Following the resignation of Mr Graham Barnetson in April 2025 there was a vacancy for the Chair of Audit & Risk Committee. Nominations and expressions of interest were sought from suitably qualified persons and Mrs Jessica Garbett had expressed an interest in the role. Mrs Garbett left the meeting for the discussion of this item.

The Director of Governance reported to Members that Mrs Garbett had served as a Chair of this Committee previously. She added that it was important for Members to be aware that Mrs Garbett had previously served as a Governor from May 2012 – April 2016. She had been appointed for a second term in May 2016 but had resigned in April 2017. Following a four-year gap she was reappointed as a Governor in August 2021. Therefore, Mrs Garbett was nearing completion of two terms as a Governor but that there had been a significant gap between these terms. It was important that real scrutiny was made to the renewal of Mrs Garbett's term which would be considered by the Governance, Search & Remuneration Committee at its meeting in June and a recommendation would be brought to Corporation in July.

The Corporation APPOINTED Mrs Jessica Garbett as Chair of Audit & Risk Committee.

25/25 CHAIR'S BUSINESS/ RATIFICATION OF CHAIR'S ACTION/ GOVERNOR APPROVALS

The Chair paid tribute to Mr Barnetson who had resigned in April 2025.

She drew Members' attention to the Further Education (FE) Commissioner's report regarding Weston College. A detailed report and self-assessment against the recommendations would be considered by the Finance & Resources Committee at their meeting in June. The Chair highlighted the importance of an open and transparent questioning culture. She also reminded Members of the importance of completing their mandatory training.

The Chair drew Members' attention to the Supreme Court ruling of April 2025 regarding the interpretation of "sex" under the Equality Act. An update on this from the Association of Colleges (AoC) had been added to the Governor Reading Room. The Chair noted the importance of living the College values of CARE: Collaborative; Accountable; Respectful; Excellent; Sustainable.

A Member enquired whether there was any guidance available. The Director of Governance responded that there was an interim response from the AoC and a new Code of Practice was awaited.

The Chair reported on the Hair and Beauty Show held in March and paid tribute to the fantastic creativity on display and the team work raising achievement. She was also delighted to report that the Principal and the Head of Business Development and International had represented FE at a Buckingham Palace Garden Party, and congratulated Ms Raquel Morisini, Student Governor, who had been shortlisted for the Unloc Student Governor of the Year Award. She reminded Members of the College Annual Awards Day event on 4 July and encouraged Members to attend and celebrate the amazing work of students.

26/25 STUDENT GOVERNOR REPORT

A Student Governor noted that the last Corporation meeting of the year took place after the end of term and asked whether there was a way of changing that. The Director of Governance would liaise with the senior leadership team (SLT) on this point.

A Member suggested 2-year terms for Student Governors. The Director of Governance responded that this was possible under the Instrument and Articles of Government and Standing Orders subject to the duration of course of study.

27/25 PRINCIPALS REPORT INCLUDING STRATEGIC PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

The Principal presented her report including a presentation by SLT on progress on the Strategic Plan. She provided an update on the Department for Education (DfE) Transformation Fund project and confirmation that on 14 May, the DfE had received approval to proceed with the project.

She reported on the College's response to the Devolution consultation following input from a group of Governors. A copy of the response was included in her report. The Vice Chair enquired as to when an outcome was expected on this. The Principal responded that whilst there wasn't a confirmed date it was expected that the matter would move with some speed now. She would be contacting other post-16 education providers on the Island to work together and ensure there was emphasis on education in the Solent region.

A Member enquired whether there would be elections in May 2026. The Principal confirmed that this was the intention. The Member asked whether there was a risk that the region would not be ready. The Chair responded that there was much yet to be confirmed but that it was important for the College to manage and mitigate risks. The Principal added that other regions were moving ahead on devolution before the Solent region.

She also reported on the AoC Audit and Risk Masterclass and provided a national policy update.

The Teaching Staff Governor noted an article in *FE Week* regarding funding and enquired whether this would feed into any changes on pay. He suggested a message to staff informing them that the College were looking into this. The Principal responded that there wasn't national clarity at this point and that there was a fine balance to achieve in sharing information at this stage however she agreed to send a holding message to staff on the issue.

The Senior Leadership Team presented a progress report on the Strategic Plan.

The following questions were raised by Governors:

A Student Governor raised a query regarding the total number of applications and whether this was for all courses or new courses only. The Assistant Principal (Curriculum and Skills) confirmed that the number was for all courses.

The Teaching Staff Governor enquired how the increase compared against targets that had been set. The Assistant Principal responded that there weren't set numbers and the Principal clarified that this was based on contract value and that the College had to achieve contract value. The Teaching Staff Governor noted a 10% increase requirement and the Principal confirmed that this was being exceeded so far. She added that it was also important to consider retention.

A Member sought clarification on the terminology related to Levels. The Assistant Principal responded that Level 6 was degree level. The Member enquired whether the College was creating levels that would act as 'stepping stones' to higher progression. The Assistant Principal responded that Levels 4 and 5 were currently offered in partnership with the University of Portsmouth and that the College was currently in discussion regarding a higher level offering.

A Member enquired whether the College was hoping to exceed its allocation to go for in-year growth funding next year. The Principal confirmed that this was correct and that numbers were still rising. The Member expressed concern that the Department for Education (DfE) may not be planning for demographic growth and argued that there was a risk that the growth payment may not materialise. The Principal responded that in the Island context the College was vocationally dominant and therefore it was critical that the College maintained its offering. She added that the College was not seeing an increase that it could not cope with and that the College would monitor the applications to ensure the volume could be managed across different areas. The Member asked if the budget included the in-year growth payment and the Chief Operating Officer and Deputy CEO confirmed that this had not been included.

The Teaching Staff Governor left the meeting at this point.

The Chair commented that the Governors required more information on starting point and target in the presentation. She added that a strategic update would be most helpful in October or November.

A Member enquired what mechanism there was for keeping this under review. The Principal responded that this was through the Balanced Scorecard and Key Performance Indicators (KPI).

A Member commented that there appeared to be a lot of apprentices dropping out and enquired whether some work had been done to look at why this was happening. The Assistant Principal responded that there had been considerable work in this area and achievement was improving. The focus was to be on increasing the number of apprenticeships in general with short term apprenticeships to build a foundation from which progression could be made. She added that there had been external reviews in this area and that this area would be a focus for the Curriculum & Quality Committee.

The Chair commented that it would have been helpful to have a copy of the presentation in advance of the meeting.

The Corporation NOTED the report and was ALERTED to updates in the following areas:

- Capital DfE Transformation Fund Project;

- Response to the Devolution consultation;
- AoC Audit and Risk Masterclass; and
- AoC national policy update.

28/25 3AS REPORT CURRICULUM & QUALITY COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Curriculum & Quality Committee presented the Committee's 3As report. She alerted Members to the importance of providing feedback for events such as Governor Contact Day to ensure that evaluation is meaningful. She drew attention to the changes to Gatsby benchmarks, reported on the Performance Improvement Progress Report and the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Report. She noted the value of the Pupil Level Annual School Census (PLASC) Report for future planning. She reported that the Committee had spent some time considering learner and parent/carer surveys and how these could be improved. She reported on the regular safeguarding and equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) monitoring that the Committee received. She drew attention to the Draft Accountability Statement 2025/26 which was recommended for approval and the Draft Costed Curriculum Plan for which there was further work to do but that the College was ahead of the curve on this. She also drew attention to the recommended Student Recruitment and Marketing Strategy and a proposed change to the Committee's Terms of Reference (ToR) to increase the number of members to enable co-options as well as an additional meeting per year to deal with the volume of business.

The Chair of Corporation paid tribute to the work of the Committee, the enormous amount of work it was undertaking and the impact of this.

The Corporation NOTED and was ALERTED to:

- The draft non-confidential minutes of the meeting held 30 April 2025;
- Changes to Gatsby benchmarks and the recommendation to appoint a Designated Lead Governor for Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG); and
- Governor Contact Day feedback and comments regarding the response rate necessary for meaningful feedback.

The Corporation NOTED and was ASSURED on:

- The non-confidential minutes of the meeting held 5 February 2025 and that they were APPROVED as a true record by the Committee;
- Monitoring of actions and Matters Arising to April 2025;
- Progress made on the Draft Costed Curriculum Plan 2025/26;
- The Performance Improvement Progress Report;
- The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Report;
- The PLASC Report;
- The Learner Survey and Action Plan;
- The Parent/ Carer Survey and Action Plan;
- The Termly Safeguarding Report;
- The Termly EDI Report and APPROVED next steps and actions for EDI Objectives; and

- The Annual Review of Committee Effectiveness and plans for the Self-Assessment Review against the FE Code of Good Governance.

The Corporation APPROVED:

- The Accountability Statement 2025/26;
- The Student Recruitment and Marketing Strategy; and
- The Annual Review of the Committee's Terms of Reference.

29/25 ACHIEVEMENT RATES 2023/24 NATIONAL COMPARISON

The Assistant Principal (Curriculum and Skills) presented an analysis of the College's achievement rates for 2023/24. She reported that the College's overall achievement rate for 2023/24 demonstrated a stable trend when compared to national performance benchmarks and the College's own prior year results with the overall achievement of the College at 85.8% (0.3% above the national average for General Further Education colleges) and the same overall achievement rate as 2022/23. She drew attention to areas where the College's position was not where it would be wished to be and efforts to make progress in apprenticeships, construction, motor vehicle.

A Member enquired as to the reasons for poor achievement. The Assistant Principal responded that there had been unstable staffing, particularly in motor vehicle in the last year, and some initial poor attendance. The Member enquired what steps had been taken to resolve these issues. The Assistant Principal responded that individualised approaches were being taken for each curriculum area effected. There were recruitment challenges in particular areas such as construction and market supplements were in place to address.

There was some discussion regarding recruitment challenges and efforts to address. A Member enquired whether the College conducted exit interviews. The Assistant Principal confirmed that was the case. She gave the example of the electrical department where two long-standing members of staff were retiring. A Member enquired to what extent there was competition with HTP Apprenticeship College. The Assistant Principal confirmed that this would be a factor in some areas though not in construction as this was not an area delivered by HTP. The Member enquired whether pay was similar across the two colleges. The Assistant Principal responded that she believed the College's pay was slightly higher than HTP.

In response to a query from a Member it was noted that whilst the College did not have the multiple local competitors that a college on the mainland may have but that there was the additional challenge of the Island context in attracting non-Island based candidates.

In response to a query from a Member regarding staff benefits offered, the Principal confirmed that a range of staff benefits were provided. The Chair noted that the report noted overall stability but that there were areas of intervention such as construction and motor vehicle that required focus and monitoring by the Curriculum & Quality Committee.

The Corporation NOTED the report, was ASSURED on actions taken to improve achievement rates and ALERTED to areas for improvement.

30/25 MONTHLY FINANCE REPORT – MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS AND FORECAST

The Interim Director of Finance presented the Management Accounts to March 2025. The key points were as follows:

- The forecast surplus for 2024/25 has increased by £325k from the initial budget to £476k, although £200k is due to the write-off of old provisions for funding clawbacks/ repayments;
- The March forecast has improved by £85k from the February forecast. This is associated with additional 16-19 year old in-year growth. There has been considerable growth across the sector such that the ESFA has only funded in-year growth at 66% of typical funding levels (and that is after 100 learners are left unfunded). The College has previously provided for the additional consumables and staffing cost of these learners such that now the growth has been confirmed this has increased the forecast. The ESFA has also announced a 3.78% increase in the unit rate for 2025/26 and the College has received its provisional allocation. The allocation letters plus a forecast grant income is provided in appendix 9 highlighting approximately a £2 million increase in 16-19 year old funding for 2025/26;
- Cash held at 31 March 2025 was £5,583k with £602k committed to capital projects (including £500k of Invest to Save Funds) and £3,083k of debt. Uncommitted cash after payment of wages early in the following month and timing of income versus expenditure in the current year is approximately £3.4 million;
- All banking covenants are currently forecast to be achieved;
- Performance against Financial Strategy KPIs is provided in appendix 8.

There was some discussion noting the impact of the rise in National Insurance particularly on contracts and cuts to adult skills funding.

The Chair noted the importance of a prudent cautious approach going forward and commended the understanding provided of all the current issues.

A Member commented that he was aware of demographic challenge expected but did not see evidence of this yet. The Assistant Principal (Education, Progress and Student Support) drew attention to the PLASC Report and clarified that the projection for demographic challenge was expected in approximately 9-10 years' time.

The Corporation NOTED and was ASSURED on the Management Accounts to March 2025.

31/25 SELF-ASSESSMENT OF MEETING

The Chair invited any comments regarding the meeting to be submitted to her by email due to time constraints and needing to adjourn for a SLT, staff and student confidential part of the meeting.

She thanked Members noting the focus on strategy and finance, and commending the student presentation. She added that she was confident in the College's governance noting the importance of undertaking a thorough assessment against the FE Commissioner's recommendations regarding Weston College.

The Student and Staff Governors departed the meeting as well as the members of the SLT.

32/25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 9 July 2025

33/25 ANY OTHER BUSINESS (CONFIDENTIAL)