

Minutes of the Corporation Meeting Held on Tuesday 1 April 2025

Present: Damien Bourke, Simon Boyle, Amanda Bromley, Phill Brown, Malcolm Bruce, Michael Ginger, Nicky Littler, John Lyne (Chair), Mariam Rana, Remell Thompson-Bell, Atta Ul Rasool

Nils Elgar, Clerk to the Corporation

In Attendance: Dave Dobson (Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure), Leon Dowd (Deputy Principal Quality and People), Nicola Welland (Deputy Principal Curriculum)

ACTION

24/25.56 Apologies for Absence

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to accept the apologies of Subhaan Ali, Kirk Cornwall, Jonathan Frankham, Jackie Moores and Jemma Newton. **Accepted**

24/25.57 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest. The Chair indicated that a confidential safeguarding issue would be discussed at the end of the meeting, together with a commercially sensitive issue in relation to sufficiency. **Noted**

24/25.58 Minutes of the Meeting Held on 11 February 2025

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2025. **Approved**

24/25.59 Matters Arising

There were no Matters Arising. **Noted**

24/25.60 Committees' Report

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the Committees' Report. **Noted**

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 4 March 2025. **Noted**

24/25.61 Principal's Report Including KPIs

In the absence of the Principal, the Deputy Principal Quality and People reported the following points:

- (i) performance reviews of all curriculum areas continued;
- (ii) the Annual Strategic Conversation with the Department for Education (DfE) and FE Commissioner focussed primarily on sufficiency. No issues were raised with the College's performance, and the improvements to the apprenticeships achievement rate was recognised;

- (iii) Greater Manchester Institute of Technology (GMIoT):
 - the government had announced that all Institutes of Technology (IoT) would remain in place until 2028. The BBC and Trafford & Stockport College had applied to join the GMIoT;
- (iv) sufficiency:
 - the College was working with the DfE, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and Local Authority on the issue of sufficiency. This would be covered elsewhere in the meeting;
 - the College had been working with the two local post-16 special schools and the Local Authority to agree a curriculum strategy, as none was currently in place. The aim was to agree which specialisms each institution would provide for, which would allow the College to plan for appropriate accommodation;
- (v) funding announcements for 2025/26:
 - an increase in the base rate for 16-18 funding;
 - funding in-year growth at only two-thirds of the expected rate, with no confirmation of allocation. Given this development, the College would need to be careful over in-year growth funding in the future;
 - adult skills funding, where no allocations had been confirmed but there was an expectation that there would be an increase in the adult funding rate and numbers;
 - College allocation of share of £50m of additional funding to 'meet the challenges of teacher retention and recruitment and any other challenges'. The College would receive its allocation in June, but this was not yet known and was not funded into future years. The College would bring to the Board at its meeting on 20 May a proposal for how this might be used;
 - capital funding, where the College had just received its allocation (approx. £1.527m) of Further Education College Condition Funding for 2025/26. This funding would allow the College to prepare for potential summer works;
- (vi) progress against KPIs:
 - retention rates remained high at 96% for 16-18 and 98% for adults;
 - the apprenticeship achievement rate was currently 54%, with a maximum possible of 74% and a target of 69%;
 - attendance was 87% overall;
 - teaching and learning remain strong with no major issues; the current RAG-rated judgement was 'green';
 - staff sickness was 4%;
 - there was a major sufficiency challenge in Tameside for post-16 provision.

Issues considered by Governors included:

- (i) whether the Executive Team were satisfied with the £1.5m in capital monies received from the DfE. It was noted that the College did not have any expectations to the amount of funding it would receive as the funding formula had only just

- been published earlier in the day, which had been linked to student numbers rather than building condition;
- (ii) that the GMCA was due to allocate some £10m in sufficiency funding across nine Greater Manchester colleges and as this was the first time that it would be allocating funding on this scale, its methodology would be of interest.

24/25.62 Key Discussion Topic: Estates Strategy Options, Including Sufficiency and Sustainability

The Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure reported the following:

- (i) the Estates Strategy and Sustainability Strategy had been combined into a single document;
- (ii) the that Estates and Sustainability Strategy demonstrated the considerable number of works undertaken over the past few years;
- (iii) the College was now essentially at its capacity;
- (iv) the Strategy included an outline investment programme that was both prioritised and costed;
- (v) that the College's accommodation for high needs provision would need to be developed in conjunction with the local authority rather than the DfE;
- (vi) that approval was being sought from Governors to spend £1.5m in capital grant monies (to be received in 2025/26) over the summer period in accordance with the Estates and Sustainability Strategy, as required. Cashflow considerations would need to be carefully considered if the College was not to receive its capital funding allocation until later in the next financial year.

Governors considered the following issues:

- (i) that the Estates and Sustainability Strategy, as drafted, represented a good piece of work;
- (ii) the priority expenditure for the £1.5m in capital funding. It was noted that this was a complex issue as there were a number of interrelated works and management wanted to ensure the efficient and effective sequencing of works;
- (iii) whether there had been any changes to the Sustainability Policy, for example the target date of 2038 for being carbon neutral. It was noted that there had been no changes to this key target.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the Estates Strategy Options, incl. Sufficiency and Sustainability report.

Noted

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve the Estates and Sustainability Strategy 2025 – 2030.

Approved

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve the Sustainability Policy.

Approved

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve the expenditure of up to £1.5m in capital grant monies, in accordance with the College's Estates and Sustainability Strategy.

Approved

24/25.63 January Finance Report and Mid-Year Update

The Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure reported the following:

- (i) January management accounts:
 - the Corporation had set a budget in 2024/25 for an operating deficit of £352k, before pension costs (FRS102);
 - as at 31 January 2025 the management accounts showed an operating surplus of £669k, a favourable variance of £421k to the approved year-to-date budget;
 - the overall financial health grade of the College was planned to be 'outstanding' in 2024/25;
 - cash was expected to remain strong (£6.5m) to the year-end;
- (ii) Mid-Year Update:
 - 16-19 funding had increased by £160k;
 - high needs funding had increased by £342k, due to higher than planned learners that required additional support. Additional staffing was recruited to support these learners;
 - income for apprenticeships provision had been increased to £1.900m from £1.750m to reflect the in-year forecast;
 - income for loans and tuition fees had been increased by £191k to reflect in-year recruitment;
 - pay costs were £618k adverse to budget following the decision to increase the in-year pay award, investments made in additional posts and increased employer National Insurance costs;
 - non-pay costs showed an increase of £488k due to recruitment, increased learner numbers (for example, materials and exam fees) and general inflationary pressures;
 - they year-end cash balance was forecast to be £6.508m against an original budget of £5.930m;
 - the Further Education Capital Transformation Fund (FECTF) for Project A (Brickwork and Animal Management) and Project B (Motor Vehicle) was complete with £35k project contingency remaining within the overall £11.740m budget.

Governors considered the following issues:

- (i) the theoretical increase to employers' National Insurance. It was noted that this was £166k, with the College budgeting to receive half this amount by way of grant funding from the DfE;
- (ii) that it was pleasing to see that a surplus outturn (£156k) was now forecast over the budgeted £352k deficit. It was noted that the Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure considered the forecast surplus of £156k to be a fair year-end outcome, with the possibility that this could increase further;

- (iii) that the Mid-Year Update represented an exercise in managing risks given ongoing uncertainty in funding.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the January Finance Report.

Noted

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve the Mid-Year Update with a revised outturn of a £156k surplus – versus an original budgeted £352k deficit before pension costs.

Approved

24/25.64 Curriculum 2025/26

Key issues reported by the Deputy Principal Curriculum included:

- (i) the 2025/26 curriculum reflected ongoing national reforms, particularly at Level 3, where the government had paused the defunding of certain qualifications, allowing broader options to remain alongside A Levels and T Levels;
- (ii) T Level uptake remained low both nationally and within Greater Manchester (around 5% of Level 3);
- (iii) at Level 2 and below, phased reforms from 2025 to 2028 would reshape technical, academic, and essential skills qualifications. Within Maths and English, weekly delivery hours would increase from two to three (with the potential for four in Maths), supported by targeted intervention sessions. Concerns exist on space and staffing capacity;
- (iv) the academic offer was seeing the introduction of Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs);
- (v) Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and community learning provision continued to grow. Provision was being reviewed to align with local offers and avoid duplication;
- (vi) Tailored Learning (community-based provision) was thriving, with over 1,760 learners engaged across 10 off-site locations, particularly in disadvantaged wards;
- (vii) the Higher Education Strategy focused on growing provision in skills shortage sectors such as Engineering, Digital, and Teacher Education, and a collaboration with the Open University on a Nursing Associate Degree Apprenticeship to meet the needs of neighbouring NHS Trusts;
- (viii) employer and stakeholder engagement remained strong. Examples of this included: (a) the College working with the Local Authority to support care-experienced and NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) learners through initiatives like the Tameside Futures Internship; and, (b) partnerships with employers and networks were informing new digital curriculum offers and flexible adult learning.

Governors considered the following issues:

- (i) that the presentation demonstrated the complexity of the College's provision
- (ii) that it was good to see that the College was focussing on a few key areas in its HE provision, which demonstrated how

- the College was responsive to skills needs and could set up a tailored provision;
- (iii) the potential financial impact of the reduced tolerance (5% to 2.5%) as a condition for funding for Maths and English. It was noted that this change should not impact the College as it had maintained a tolerance of no more than 1.5%;
 - (iv) the impact of the focus on T-levels and defunding of other Level 3 qualifications. It was noted that some students who previously would have done a BTEC qualification would now likely have to do an apprenticeship because the T-Level qualification would likely prove to be too demanding;
 - (v) that while curriculum planning in itself was complex, the associated exercise to room and timetable all students was extremely complicated.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the Curriculum 2025/26 presentation. **Noted**

24/25.65 Update on Governor Engagement and Development Activities

Michael Ginger left the meeting during this item

The following Governor development and/or engagement activities that had taken place since the last Board meeting were reported:

- (i) 12 February – Meeting with Dave Dobson re. College finances – Remell Thompson-Bell;
- (ii) 25 February – DfE / Further Education Commissioner Annual Strategic Conversation – Malcolm Bruce, John Lyne, Jackie Moores;
- (iii) 27 February – Attended High Education Academic Standards Committee – Michael Ginger;
- (iv) 4 March – Attended Careers and Employability Day
- (v) 18 March – Governor Development Session – Subhaan Ali, Damien Bourke, Simon Boyle, Amanda Bromley, Phill Brown, Malcolm Bruce, Kirk Cornwall, Jonathan Frankham, Michael Ginger, Nicky Littler, John Lyne, Jackie Moores, Jemma Newton, Remell Thompson-Bell and Atta UI Rasool;
- (vi) 24 March – AoC Audit Committee Masterclass – Amanda Bromley, Remell Thompson-Bell and Tom Wilkinson;
- (vii) 1 April – Governor Learning Visit re. SEND and ALS – John Lyne, Remell Thompson Bell.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the update on Governor Engagement and Development Activities. **Noted**

24/25.66 Items to Note

(i) Chair's Action

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note that no Chair's Actions had been taken since the date of the last meeting. **Noted**

(ii) **Use of the Seal of the Corporation**

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note that there had been no use of the Seal of the Corporation since the date of the last meeting.

Noted

(iii) **Interim Report on Governor Attendance 2024/25**

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the Interim Report on Governor Attendance 2024/25 (80%).

Noted

24/25.67 **Confidential Items**

These minutes are confidential as they contain: (i) commercially sensitive information; and, (ii) personal information.

24/25.68 **Time and Date of Next Meeting – Tuesday 20 May 2025**

The Chair reported the next Board meeting would be on Tuesday, 20 May (to be held via Teams).

Minutes formally approved by the Corporation:

Chair

Date