Minutes of the Corporation Meeting Held on
Tuesday 24 March 2026

Present: Subhaan Ali, Damien Bourke, Phill Brown, Malcolm Bruce, Michael Ginger, Nicky Littler, John Lyne (Chair), Jackie Moores, Jemma Newton, Remell Thompson-Bell

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
25/26.58	**Apologies for Absence**	
	Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to accept the apologies of Simon Boyle, Amanda Bromley, Jonathan Frankham and Atta Ul-Rasool.	**Accepted**
25/26.59	**Declarations of Interest**	
	There were no declarations of interest.	**Noted**
25/26.60	**Minutes of the Meeting Held on 10 February 2026**	
	Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2026.	**Approved**
25/26.61	**Matters Arising**	
	There were no Matters Arising.	
25/26.62	**January Finance Report and Mid-Year Update**	

The Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure reported the following:

(i) a commentary on the January management accounts:
- as at 31 January 2026 the management accounts showed a £559k operational surplus, which was an adverse variance of £120k to the approved year-to-date budget;
- the variance was due to additional staffing costs (with agency and casual staffing costing more than the vacant posts) and timing of non-pay (mainly exams related) expenditure;
- strong cash balances due to multiple unbudgeted grant funding awards, primarily capital;
- College capital expenditure was in line with agreed approvals. £2m in additional funding had been awarded in-year;

(ii) an update on capital projects:
- the contract with ICON for the former Wilko (sufficiency) project had been signed and forecasted costs confirmed by the College's Cost Consultant. The latest forecast included unallocated funds of £502k and contingencies of

£143k. The unallocated funds would be prioritised for costs related to the Wilko project, such as works at Beaufort Road site to convert offices into classroom / exam space, inclusion of an additional immersive screen in the Wilko space and amendments to spaces in the existing T1 space to support optimal use of the space;
- summer 2026 works, to support the expected intake of students in 2026/27, included a number of planned facilitating projects (reported previously) within the agreed £1.5m capital allocations;

(iii) the Mid-Year Budget Update:
- a revised year-end outturn for a surplus of £72k, which represented an adverse variance of £164k to that in the original budget. It was suggested that this would represent a good outturn if this was what the College achieved, with potential for in-year growth funding (subsequently announced in May);
- 16-19 funding remained unchanged, with no confirmation of in-year growth funding received to date;
- Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) Adult funding had increased by £401k, of which £316k related to over-delivery on 2024/25 and £85k related to an increase on the approved budget for 2025/26;
- a clarification to the report that apprenticeship income remained at £2.100m for the year;
- the budget update assumed no in-year funding;
- pay costs were £521k adverse to budget following the decision to increase the in-year pay award and the costs of covering vacant posts;
- non-pay costs were £115k adverse to budget due to indirect costs of higher learning numbers, increased license costs for cyber security and general inflationary pressures, particularly on utility and waste costs;
- the expected outturn was expected to deliver an 'Outstanding' Department for Education (DfE) Financial Health and a cash balance of £8.203m (against a budget of £5.699m). The increased cash was due largely to an increased opening balance.

Governors considered the following issues:

(i) the College would deliver the equivalent of £2.2m in additional provision in 2025/26 and, if in-year funding was allocated as previously outlined, would result in an additional £800k funding to the College in-year. However, it was noted that both a nationwide demographic increase and a better national retention rate was putting in-year growth funding under pressure. A view was expressed that this uncertainty in funding was unhelpful to the College in trying to offer provision to meet demand;

(ii) an offered view that the lower than expected 16-18 funding uplift for 2026/27 was due to the DfE trying to protect in-year growth funding in 2025/26;

(iii) that the Wilko project was proceeding as planned;

(iv) that, with some 400 additional learners expected in 2026/27, the College would need to invest in staffing (both teaching and support staff) in advance of funding to manage this increase. In this regard, it was suggested that the College might need to consider setting a deficit budget in 2026/27 to secure the required staff, with monies expected in 2027/28 or to budget in-year growth funding.

Resolved: To note the financial position of the College for the six months to 31 January 2026 (incl. key capital projects). **Noted**

Resolved: To approve the Mid-Year Budget Update (with a revised outturn for a surplus of £72k). **Approved**

25/26.63 **Estates Update, Incl. Sustainability**

Michael Ginger joined the meeting during this item.

The Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure reported the following key points:

(i) the report provided an update on against the 2025 to 2030 Estates and Sustainability Strategy. A key theme of the Strategy was to take steps to support growth in student numbers and to provide a suitable learning environment;
(ii) some 146 additional spaces were created for students for the September 2025 start. Details of the works undertaken across the College estate to provide these additional spaces were provided;
(iii) a further 535 spaces would be created in time for September 2026, after which student numbers were expected to remain relatively static. Details of individual projects were outlined;
(iv) no changes were proposed to the long-term Strategy;
(v) significant progress had been made in the area of sustainability, including the installation of 700 solar panels at the Beaufort Road site as part of the GB Energy Solar Partnership Net Zero initiative. This would help reduce College energy costs once operational;
(vi) an outline investment programme included within the Strategy, based on current priorities, was shared that included refurbishment of Victoria Building stairwells and social spaces, a new High Needs (SEN) building, an 'all weather' pitch, including car park refurbishment, and Victoria Building elevations (cladding).

Governors noted the good progress made in estates and sustainability projects and suggested that the College might consider ways of promoting its recent growth and place in the community.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the Estates Update incl. Sustainability report. **Noted**

25/26.64 **Tuition Fees Policy 2026/27 and HE Tuition Fee 2027/28**

Points reported by the Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure included:

(i) the Tuition Fees Policy was reviewed each year to take into account any changes in government and GMCA funding rules. GMCA funding rules had not been released for 2026/27, but tended to run alongside those of the DfE and so the College's position might need to change depending on any changes that could be required;
(ii) that the HE Tuition fee proposal for 2027/28 (unchanged at £6,185) was set below the threshold for additional compliance requirements.

Governors were content with the College's proposed policies and fees as outlined.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve the Tuition Fees Policy 2026/27. **Approved**

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve the HE Programme Suspension, Termination and Compensation Policy for 2026/27. **Approved**

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve no changes to HE Tuition Fees for 2027/28. **Approved**

25/26.65 **Procurement Compliance and Spend Approvals**

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the Procurement Compliance and Spend Approvals report. **Noted**

The Vice Principal Finance and Infrastructure left the meeting at the end of this item.

25/26.66 **Curriculum 2026/27**

The Deputy Principal Curriculum provided a report on the curriculum that would be offered by the College in 2026/27 and the strategic influencers on this and future provision. Key points included:

(i) how curriculum areas had reviewed current provision, identified areas for growth and innovation, and considered how programmes could evolve to meet emerging sector needs and technological developments;
(ii) how the College would continue to strengthen employer engagement to ensure that curriculum content reflected current industry practice and supported progression pathways for learners;
(iii) the curriculum plan demonstrated how future provision would be aligned with appropriate funding streams, including Study Programmes, Apprenticeships, Adult provision, Higher Education and Tailored Learning. This approach supported sustainable growth, ensured efficient use of resources and

maintained a balanced curriculum offer that met the needs of learners, employers and the wider community;

(iv) the curriculum plan aimed to sustain strong student outcomes, support positive progressions and ensure the College continued to deliver high-quality education and training that contributed to regional economic growth and workforce skills needs.

Governors considered the following issues:

(i) the importance of the College's curriculum plan, which underpinned staffing and estates requirements;

(ii) the introduction of V levels and the popularity of T levels at College. It was noted that the V levels would not offer a like-for-like replacement of BTECs. There was generally little demand for T level courses and there was an ongoing difficulty in finding student placements, which was an integral part of these courses. A view was expressed that V levels would work well for sixth form colleges (including Clarendon), where these would replace vocational A levels but, currently, T levels were generally too demanding of learners. It was reported that in A levels, students could secure a low pass, whereas in T levels learners either passed or failed. It was noted that all but one of the College's T level students had passed in 2024/25;

(iii) what students did who could not do a T level of their choice at the College. It was noted that the majority of learners would find another course to do at College rather than go to another college that did offer their choice of course;

(iv) the end of 14-16 provision at College, including Elective Home Educated GCSE Maths and English students, at the end of 2025/26. It was noted that there were currently only 15 14-16 students in College. This had been the subject of consultation, with no concerns expressed from other providers (schools);

(v) the concern voiced in the report that the College was likely unable to offer multiple level 2 pathways and groups (offering clear progression plans). However, this was subject to information on level 2 pathways coming from the DfE;

(vi) that effective careers advice was critical;

(vii) a view that the report was an impressive piece of work.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the Curriculum 2026/27 report. **Noted**

25/26.67 <u>Principal's Report</u>

The Principal reported the following points:

(i) the focus for the term leading up to Easter was on teaching, learning and assessment and on supporting learners to be ready for final assessments. Planning for 2026/27 was well underway, with timetabling due to start;

(ii) the College was waiting for the Ofsted inspection report for its Initial Teacher Education provision to be published. The excellent work of Jennie Arnold (College nominee) and Victoria Birchwood (Teacher Education Manager and shadow nominee) was acknowledged;

(iii) the College had submitted a bid to become a Technical Excellence College for Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing. The bid was supported by the GMCA, local authority, employer and potential partners. Only four were expected for the country, so bids would be highly competitive;

(iv) Key Performance Indicators:
- retention remained high at 95% for all learners: 94% for 16-18 and 97% for adults;
- the current apprenticeship achievement rate was 42%, with a maximum possible of 71%. The College target was 68%, which represented an 8%-point increase on 2024/25;
- attendance was challenging for a minority of learners. The College had a minimum expectation set by level, such as 85% at level 1 and 92% for A level;
- staff turnover was 10%, compared with 17% in 2024/25. While staff left for a variety of reasons, strong pay awards over several years had meant that the College was now highly competitive amongst general further education colleges in Greater Manchester;
- the sickness absence rate was 2.3%, which was lower than in previous years and the national average (although the latter was currently being reviewed);
- the focus for the term ahead was to retain students and to support them to achieve (including high grades) and to ensure they progressed onto further study or into work / apprenticeships.

Governors were content with the report as presented. It was reported that the College had taken part in the Greater Manchester Skills Competitions and had achieved some excellent results. The Chair indicated that the College had hosted the finals of the Health, Social Care, Early Years and Anatomage competitions, which he attended. Representatives from Anatomage had travelled from Italy to attend the event. Jemma Newton and Joanne Beresford were congratulated on their work in organising this very successful event.

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

25/26.68 **<u>2025/26 Quality Improvement Plan Update</u>**

The Deputy Principal Quality and People reported the following points:

(i) following the completion of the Self-Assessment Report for 2024/25, progress was being reported against the resulting Quality Improvement Plan for 2025/26;

(ii) at this stage the report showed a significant amount of items RAG-rated 'amber', because these items would not be concluded until the year-end;

(iii) there were fewer subject level issues in 2025/26 due to the success of previous Quality Improvement Plans;

(iv) key areas reported included:

- leadership and governance:
  - improving GCSE Maths and English remained a key priority for senior leaders;
- curriculum, teaching and learning:
  - good progress had been made to support a small minority of staff to improve aspects of their teaching to ensure learners are making at least the expected progress in their lessons;
- achievement:
  - good progress was ensuring that improved outcomes were on track for L2 AAT, L2 and L3 Year 1 Animal Care;
  - improvements were being made towards securing high grades on Year 1 L3 Animal Care and Business Management, Electrical and Plumbing;
  - areas that would continue to be a focus included A Level retention and progress / value added, GCSE Maths and English, Springboard
- participation and development:
  - attendance: overall = 84.6%; 16-18 = 84.1% (86.6% excl. M&E); 19+ 88.5%.

Governors considered the areas that had been RAG-rated ‘red’:

(i) Year 13 A Level retention, which stood at 69.4%. It was noted that the majority of these students had left the previous year (during their Year 12), due to struggling with workload and mental health, with many transferring to a level 3 vocational qualification. Strengthened quality checks for the current Year 12 had led to fewer withdrawals and a retention that was currently 96.8%. An improved pastoral service, focussed on mindset and providing holistic support, was expected to improve the retention rate in 2026/27. It was noted that retention in A levels was an issue nationally;

(ii) attendance in Springboard of 67.1%. It was noted that this cohort were the furthest away from education, often having been home schooled, excluded or previously on a reduced timetable. The target was for overall attendance to improve from 71.8% to 80%. However, the overall attendance figure masked individual attendance successes, where students were achieving higher attendance rates at College than at their previous school. It was suggested that an alternative target might be ‘the proportion of students meeting their individual attendance targets’. It was noted that this cohort used to be spread across all areas but now they were grouped together, which was having a positive impact.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the 2025/26 Quality Improvement Plan Update. **Noted**

25/26.69 **Scheme of Delegation**

The Clerk to the Corporation reported the following points:

(i) one of the recommendations of the External Governance Review (April 2024) was to update the College's Scheme of Delegation;
(ii) the draft Scheme of Delegation presented for consideration represented a complete re-write and was now more closely aligned with the Corporation's Articles of Government;
(iii) the Scheme of Delegation set out the existing delegations to the Corporation and Principal as outlined in the Articles of Government. It also set out the delegations made to the Corporation's committees (Audit, Remuneration and Search). Finally, it set out a number of proposed further delegations that were permitted to be made to the Principal.

Governors were content with the delegations set out in the Scheme of Delegation as outlined in the Articles of Government. Focussing on the further delegations proposed to the Principal, it was agreed that it was important for the Board to retain responsibility for approving the Tuition Fees Policy and associated policies to ensure appropriate oversight of this area of activity on behalf of students.

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to approve the Scheme of Delegation, subject to the amendment identified above, for review by the Internal Audit Service. **Approved**

25/26.70 **Update on Governor Engagement and Development Activities**

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

(i) 04.02.26 – Meeting with Ofsted Inspector as part of inspection of the College's Initial Teacher Education provision – Malcom Bruce, Michael Ginger, John Lyne;
(ii) 11.02.26 – Clarendon College Art Exhibition – Jonathan Frankham;
(iii) 23.02.26 – Ofsted Webinar on Renewed Inspection Framework' – Remell Thompson Bell;
(iv) 26.02.26 – AoC Masterclass Strategic Governance – From Operational to Influential – Remell Thompson-Bell;
(v) 04.03.26 – AoC Masterclass – Building Effective Chair, Principal and Director of Governance Relationships – Remell Thompson-Bell;
(vi) 10.03.26 – AoC Northern Chairs' Network Meeting – John Lyne;
(vii) 12.03.26 – AoC Masterclass – Succession Planning: Because Brilliant Leaders aren't Immortal – Remell Thompson-Bell.

Prior to the Board meeting there was a Governor Learning Visit to the Old Street Campus to see the College's ESOL and Adult and Community Education provision. This had been attended by Phill Brown, Nicky Littler, John Lyne, Jackie Moores and Remell

Thompson Bell. A view was expressed that it was clear that staff met were passionate about their work. It was also felt that the building was an excellent facility for the College's staff and students that allowed less confident students to access College provision.

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

25/26.71 **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

The Clerk to the Corporation reported that the Seal of the Corporation had been used on one instance:

- 25.02.26 – Wilko – Contract Documents for Tameside College Sufficiency Project (incl. JCT 2016 Design and Build Contract) with ICON Projects Limited.

The Clerk also formally reported the following, which was signed as a Deed with Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council and reported verbally at the previous meeting:

- 06.02.26 – Wilko – Licence to Occupy and Carry Out Works (with Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council).

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the use of the Seal of the Corporation. **Noted**

(iii) Interim Report on Governor Attendance 2025/26

Resolved: The Board of Governors resolved to note the Interim Report on Governor Attendance 2025/26 (78%). **Noted**

25/26.72 **Review of Effectiveness of Meeting and Identification of Emerging Risks**

No new risks were identified within the item.

25/26.73 **Time and Date of Next Meeting – Tuesday 19 May 2026**

The Clerk reported that there would be a Governor Development Session on Tuesday 28 April (6.00pm)

Minutes formally approved by the Corporation:

Chair **Date**