Minutes of the Corporation held 29th June 2026 5pm
Cambridge campus

MINUTES OF THE MEETING

Present
Heather Du Quesnay, Chair
Mark Robertson
Chris Leeding
Jane Mallabone
Darren Tysoe
Richard Tunnicliffe
Lesley Deacon
Jacqueline Prendergast
Yvette Watson
Mariam Abdaoui
Vaishnavi Katta

Apologies
Louise Armstrong
Jo Lancaster
Bradley Dorrington
Frederique Anand
Tim Richardson
Chris Hayward
Gabriella Giuffrida
Michael Farrow-Killick

In attendance Kate Da Costa, Stephen Jones, Laura Kerry

Clerk Emily Baldwin

1.1	Declarations of Interest Apologies for absence
	There were no new declarations of interest. Apologies for absence were noted. Governors asked that their best wishes be sent to Deputy Principal C Hoyes who was unable to attend the meeting, and noted the interim staffing arrangements in place to cover her position in the short-term.
1.2	Minutes of the meeting held on 19th May 2026 and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting of 19th May 2026 were agreed to be a true record of the meeting.

The data provided on staff absences was noted.

1.3	Feedback from College visits, student fora and conferences/training events

Governors gave feedback on College visits and training.

H Du Quesnay and C Leeding had attended the Student Conference. They noted that a number of students had asked for more social spaces at the College. The student governors agreed that this should be a priority. Governors noted that this had been incorporated into the estates strategy as a result of student feedback.

H Du Quesnay had also attended the Higher Education festival of achievement, the apprenticeship PMB and the Animations and Rizing Games exhibitions. C Leeding had also attended a number of PMBs.

It was noted that the Principal had participated in the Big Listen at St Neots, which governor T Richardson had also attended.

2.1	Student achievements video

Governors noted with appreciation the student achievements video, which showcased the wide range of student achievements over the year.

3.1	Principal's Report

M Robertson introduced his Principal's report:

- New funding for inclusion had been secured from the Inclusive Mainstream Fund (IMF) initiative. This would be spent on increased pastoral support staff and attendance monitoring of vulnerable students. Governors asked if there were any specific KPIs associated with the funding. It was confirmed that there were no specific indicators as yet, but reference to how the funds would be spent would be added to the Accountability Statement.
- A record number of students had taken English and/or Maths resits, and exam attendance was generally strong.
- 16-18 applications were higher than the same period last year, particularly for first choice. In response to a governor query, it was confirmed that growth would be funded in the following year under the lagged funding system. It was unlikely that the increase in applications would be sufficient to attract in-year funding.
- It was unclear whether the AoC would be making a recommendation on teacher pay given the current uncertainty on national funding.

- Adult skills funding was being reduced. There was an acute need in the region for construction skills, but there was limited adult funding in this area.
- M Robertson and H Du Quesnay had met with the Chair of the Cambridge Growth Company. In response to a governor query about a new skills academy, M Robertson confirmed that this had been part of their discussion and the College was keen to play a key role in its development.
- The College was expecting a surplus above budget, and a Financial Health grade of Good.
- Staff turnover had fallen, and Governors noted that turnover was particularly low for teaching staff.
- Estates plans were all on track. Potential new major capital plans included a reconfiguration of H block, a new front atrium to the College and a reconfiguration of the LRC, all subject to funding.
- The College was working with a number of the new technical centres of excellence to provide training opportunities as part of the hub and spoke arrangement.
- The annual strategic conversation with the DfE, involving the Chair and the Principal, had been very positive and the letter had been circulated to all Governors.
- The College had a strong presence at the June Arbury Festival.

Governors asked for their congratulations to be passed to Jen Reading, Director of Teaching and Learning Development, who had been awarded Associate status by the Chartered Institute for FE.

Governors also asked for an opportunity to visit one of the immersive rooms when it was in action in the next academic year.

Governors discussed progress made in the Strategic Implementation Plan. They asked why the objective around improving inconsistencies in marking was still marked as amber, and what actions were being taken to progress this area. K Da Costa said this reflected feedback from students in the learner survey, and that there remained some inconsistencies in the marking of spelling and grammar in certain departments, particularly where there was minimal written work. The College was looking at staff development in this area, and the increased use of T-mail to underline the importance of correcting spelling and grammar.

Governors also asked for more information on student attendance, and whether the College was doing enough in this area to improve attendance. It was noted that the new IMF funding would in part be used to increase resource in this area, particularly to widen the more targeted attendance tracking of some students such as some Level 1 students.

Performance indicators were noted. It was noted that the financial indicators should all be marked as green.

Governors **noted** the Strategic Conversation letter, the KPI framework and the update to the Strategic Implementation Plan.

Corporation **approved** the addition of reference to the IMF initiative in the Accountability Statement.

3.2	Budget 26/27 and 3 year forecast

S Jones introduced the final proposed Budget 2026/27. F&R Committee had reviewed the proposed budget at their meeting on 17th June 2026, and apart from some minor corrections to table headings which had been made, recommended it to Corporation for approval.

Governors noted that the budget included a budgeted surplus of £300k, with a capital budget of £2.4m. The budget allowed for an increase in non-pay costs and a contingency for increased utility costs.

It was noted that the F&R Committee had discussed the appropriate level of surplus, and it was felt that the budgeted surplus reflected a prudent and balanced position.

The Chair of F&R Committee pointed out that the budget was the outcome of a detailed process, involving budget holders. The changes from the previous year had been clearly explained and the presented budget seemed appropriate and prudent.

Governors noted the assumptions in the three year forecast which seemed conservative and reasonable.

Corporation also discussed the financial objectives, and welcomed the reference to the loan which was expected to be taken over by the DfE in order to enable the College to proceed with its estates and infrastructure plans.

Governors **approved** the budget for 2026/27 and the three year forecast.

3.3	Risk Register

S Jones introduced the risk register.

The updated version reflected the bi-annual review which was carried out during the second half of the Spring Term and updated following formal consideration by SMT and Audit and Risk Committee in June 2026.

Governors discussed the addition of a new risk, following discussion at both Learning & Quality and Audit & Risk Committee which had highlighted the significance of the new curriculum reforms to student recruitment, retention, progression and finances. The Chair of the L&Q Committee underlined the significance of the changes to the College, particularly as V levels were smaller qualifications than BTECs which were the main form of qualification currently offered by the College at Level 3. There were concerns about the accessibility of T-levels and the new Level 3 programmes for our students. There were also concerns about the Level 2 changes, including whether they would restrict students' ability to progress. It was noted that there remained a considerable amount of uncertainty about the timescale and content of the curriculum changes, which was raising the risk rating. This would continue to be monitored at Corporation level.

Governors also discussed the risks around cyber-security, noting that it was a net red risk. It was agreed that given the high influence of human error, it was unlikely that the risk would be downgraded to amber. Governors asked if other colleges had been targeted and it was noted that this was the case.

The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee agreed to speak to S Jones outside the meeting to look at increasing the reporting to the Committee and to ensure that the proposed IT infrastructure internal audit also addressed any cyber-security issues.

Corporation **noted** the risk register update.

3.4	Governance update

E Baldwin introduced the governance update.

She reminded Governors that all FE Colleges are required to undertake an external review of their governance arrangements every three years. The review would focus on the effectiveness of governance, including the impact of board behaviours and support for continuous improvement. The College had undertaken a tender process which had resulted in three shortlisted firms being interviewed by a governor panel. The panel had scored all the firms against an agreed set of criteria and recommended Rockborn Management Consultants as the preferred consultant to undertake the review in January-May 2027.

Governors asked whether there were any particular areas that the College wanted the review to focus on. It was agreed that this would be discussed at the Governor Strategy Day.

Corporation **agreed** the appointment of Rockborn Management Consultants to undertake the Corporation's external review in 2026/27.

E Baldwin introduced the outcome of the recent governor recruitment campaign to fill two vacancies. The governor panel had interviewed three potential candidates, all of whom the panel felt would make a strong contribution to the governing body and would help address identified skills gaps.

The board currently had one immediate vacancy and one vacancy from October 2026. It was noted that the College's standing orders permitted exceeding the maximum number of governors for a short period where it was known that there was a forthcoming vacancy.

Corporation **agreed**

- appointment of Charity Main as a new Governor to join the F&R Committee
- appointment of Gwen Casazza as a new Governor to join the L&Q Committee
- appointment of Lee Sharmann as a co-opted committee member for the F&R Committee

All appointments were for an initial term of 1 year from September 2026 (and then renewed for three further years), subject to DBS and other standard checks

4.1	Matters for decision from the Learning & Quality Committee

C Leeding updated Governors on the main items of discussion from the Learning and Quality Committee which had met on 9th June 2026, which included:

- a useful demonstration of the student app, which enabled the College to communicate with all students at the same time and link to college systems simultaneously.
- focus on attendance, which the Committee had noted had dropped and was below target. The Committee had discussed the reasons for this, and noted the improved reporting including that of vulnerable groups.
- update on sub-contracting, quality improvement, HE strategy, safeguarding and learner satisfaction survey, as set out in the minutes
- review of Terms of Reference, which had been updated to take account of the focus on CPD and inclusion in the Ofsted framework
- discussion on aspects of student behaviour, which had been an issue that was raised by the Student Governors and would be discussed further outside the meeting

Governors **approved:**

- Terms of Reference

4.2	Matters for decision from the Audit and Risk Committee

D Tysoe updated Governors on the main areas of discussion of the Audit and Risk Committee which had met on 11th June 2026, which included:

- review of Audit Strategy Memorandum for Financial Statements, including a presentation from the external auditor on the approach and fees for external audit of the annual financial statements
- consideration of internal audit programme for 2026/27
- review of whistleblowing policy in light of recent changes to employment law
- discussion of assurance framework and policy framework

Governors discussed the internal audit programme. They noted that the majority of the programme focused on non-curriculum areas, and that assurance of teaching and learning was mainly provided through the work of the Learning & Quality Committee. The Committee would consider future internal audit work covering the processes that underpinned curriculum areas.

Governors **approved**:

- Audit Strategy Memorandum for Financial Statements
- Terms of Reference
- Whistleblowing policy
- Internal audit plan

4.3	Matters for decision from the Finance & Resources Committee

J Mallabone updated Governors on the main areas of discussion of the Finance & Resources Committee which had met on 17th June 2026, which included:

- review of updated pay policy

- discussion of proposal to raise the threshold for contract approval for F&R Committee to above £300k (from £250k) and clarification on approval required for multi-year contracts
- review of health and safety report
- review of DfE letter and dashboard, including FE Commissioner benchmarks
- discussion on updated Estates strategy, which the Committee thought was a particularly strong and comprehensive strategy. The Committee had recommended two changes to the strategy - a reference to the need for more social spaces for students and an explicit link to the College's net zero aspirations, which had been incorporated.

Governors **approved**:

- Pay policy
- Health and safety policy
- Estates strategy
- Change to contracts thresholds as set out in the paper, resulting in amendment to Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation
- Terms of reference

5.1	Corporation workplan

E Baldwin introduced the proposed workplan for 2026/27. Governors noted the addition of the external review which would report to Governors in May 2027.

Corporation **approved** the workplan.

5.2	Any other business

It was noted that the Governor survey would be circulated over the summer period. Governors suggested an additional question be added to the survey on timings of meetings.

Governors agreed that the seal be used for CPCA funding agreements for agreed capital works.

5.3	Self-assessment of Governors' Performance

Governors agreed that there had been good discussion in the meeting and the papers were of good quality. The Chair thanked staff and governors for their hard work and support for the College over the course of the year.

It was noted that it was the last meeting for the two student governors, who were thanked for their contributions to the governing body over the past year.

There was no other business and the meeting ended at 7:00 pm.