



MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION BOARD MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 14 MARCH 2025 IN THE EXCHANGE BOARD ROOM / VIA MICROSOFT
TEAMS

PRESENT:

Catherine Hill OBE	Vice-Chair of the Corporation Board and Chair of this meeting.
Dr Fazal Dad	Principal and Chief Executive
Massoud Akbari	Student Governor (FE)
Asif Ali	Member
Ram Gupta	Member
Michael Lee	Staff Governor (Business Support)
Andrea Machell	Member
Nadeem Memon	Member
Ridwaan Omar	Member
Arif Patel	Member
Chelston Phillip	Student Governor (HE)
Darren Ratcliffe	Member
Ojan Rohani	Member
David Swift	Member
Taiyab Sufi*	Member
Bryan Welch	Member

IN ATTENDANCE:

Jennifer Eastham	Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services
Rachel Tarplee	Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality
Nicola Clayton	Executive Director of Business Development and External Engagement
Matthew Robinson	Executive Director of Student Support and Experience
Sarah Horeesorun	Director of Governance
Liam Doherty	Director of Quality Innovation for Item 1.

* indicates attendance via Microsoft Teams

The meeting started at 14:00 and was quorate.

1. WELCOME AND PRESENTATION ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting including Taiyab Sufi joining via Teams, and extended a special welcome to Asif Ali and Ojan Rohani, two new Governors, as this was their first full face to face Board meeting. There followed roundtable introductions.

The Chair reminded members that the Agenda items had been discussed and scrutinised by the relevant Committees or had been considered in draft at the last Board meeting with the final versions proposed for approval at this meeting.

The Chair invited the Director of Quality Innovation to deliver a presentation on Artificial Intelligence (AI).

The Director of Quality Innovation explained the history of AI and used AI in his presentation slides.

The presentation covered how AI works, how it is being used now and what it means for the future of FE.

The Board thanked the Director of Quality Innovation for an interesting presentation.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from the Chair of the Corporation Board, Mark Allanson, from Governors Clare Shaw and Steve Waggott, and from Associate Board member, Nathan Rogan.

The Chair advised those in attendance that should members of the Corporation Board become aware of any potential conflicts of interest, they should be disclosed at the earliest opportunity during the meeting.

3. MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION BOARD MEETINGS HELD ON 6 DECEMBER 2024

The Board agreed that the Minutes of the Corporation Board meeting held on 6 December 2024 were accurate.

4. MATTERS ARISING

There were no new matters arising, the Board having noted the status of actions from the previous meetings.

5. VICE-CHAIR'S MATTERS

The Chair provided a verbal update and shared with members thoughts on recent events and visits to the College.

A presentation on Marketing had been delivered at recent Committee meetings and members commented on the positive improvement, especially on social media engagement and associating with trusted brands to influence decision making and improve reputation amongst students, schools, parents, families, employers, and communities. The focus was on making Blackburn College 'The College of Choice'.

6. PRINCIPAL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVES REPORT

The Principal had provided a comprehensive Report for his Item and added that the Ofsted Report had been finalised, confirming an overall assessment of Good and highlighting four areas that were Outstanding. This was a definite improvement on the last visit. The College would continue to build on this and make all aspects of the College experience exceptional.

The Principal thanked the Board for their support and all that they continue to do, as their unrelenting focus on improvement and the future sets the tone and culture of the organisation, and the continuous push to be exceptional is appreciated.

The Principal highlighted the following:

- A Blackburn College student had won the Hospitality and Tourism Student of the Year Award.
- In the approach to the business end of the year, staff were working harder than ever to support students to take over 2300 GCSE resits. This would require the suspension of FE teaching for five mornings to accommodate the whole college undertaking to support the students taking the exams.

- Apprenticeships were expected to make an improvement on last year's overall achievement.
- HNS continue to make good progress, and the Principal shared that he had recently had a very positive visit to the internship project with Asda.
- The Annual Strategic Conversation with the DfE would take place on 13 May whereby representatives from the Department visited the College and talked to the Executive Team and Chair of the Corporation Board about aspects of the College including, quality, skills, finance, and governance.
- Working with Jobcentre Plus, the Gateway to Blackburn College had supported jobseekers to complete a 12-week training programme including elements of CV writing and job interview preparation, and a 3-week work placement. The programme had been successful in boosting confidence, experience and skills and some participants had been taken on by the College or added to a list to provide cover during absences.
- Another successful initiative was the Mums In Data delivered in partnership with BwD LA. This retrained unemployed females to secure work in the digital sector.
- The first CyberFest event attracted over 660 visitors to the College to participate in activities for all ages, engaging the community in cyber and digital experiences and promoting related opportunities now and in the future.
- Lots of uncertainty in the sector due to Government changes, new policies, delayed funding announcements, spring Spending Review and the Curriculum Assessment Review.
- Unions continued to push for pay increases.
- The County Combined Authority was in place and a Mayor to be appointed by April 2026.
- FE student applications were up. Widespread challenges with HE.
- Meet the Principal meetings with groups of students and another with staff were useful opportunities to discuss any issues and share positive stories.
- The new Head of MIS would start the following week. MIS was the engine room for data, and it was important that data was accurate, submitted on time and right first time.

The Chair thanked the Principal and Chief Executive for the comprehensive Report and further updates.

7. ITEMS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

7(i) Appointment of External Audit Service

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services introduced this Item seeking approval for the appointment of Beever and Struthers as the External Auditors of the College's Financial Statements for the year ending 31 July 2025.

Based on the experience for 2023/24, content of the accompanying Report and recommendation from the Audit Committee, the Board **APPROVED** the appointment of Beever and Struthers as the regularity auditors to undertake the Financial Statements Audit for the 2024/25 year-end.

7(ii) Risk Register 2024/25

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services talked the Board through the Report informing them that no new risks had been identified, and two risks were RAG rated as being 'Red'.

The Risk Register had been considered by the Audit Committee at its February meeting.

The Board **APPROVED** the February 2025 Risk Management Report.

8. ITEMS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

9.(i) Management Accounts to 31 January 2025

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services provided an update on the financial position, operating position, and budget to date.

The Policy and Resources Committee had considered the Management Accounts in the February Committee meeting and recommended these to the Corporation Board for approval.

A member of the Policy and Resources Committee added that it was a credit to the College that it managed to retain an Outstanding financial position given the external pressures. The Chair echoed these sentiments and thanked the Finance Team and everyone across the College for their hard work to achieve this. The Board supported these comments.

The Corporation Board **APPROVED** the Management Accounts.

9.(ii) College Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2024/25

The Vice-Principal Finance and Corporate Services explained that the proposed KPI targets for 2024/25 were based on those within the Strategic Plan for 2022-2025. Discussions at both the Policy and Resources Committee and Learning and Quality Committee had led to revisions to some of the proposed targets to reflect the actuals achieved in 2023/24.

The Corporation Board **APPROVED** the KPI targets and Report.

9.(iii) Strategic Plan Operating Statement update February 2025

The Board noted the targets for the Annual Operating Statement 2024/25 and performance on these so far as set out in the Report and attached Appendix.

The Board **APPROVED** the Strategic Plan Operating Statement Report as recommended by the Policy and Resources Committee.

9(iv) Financial Regulations 2024/25

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services explained that the Financial Regulations set the control environment under which the College's finances were operated and how they were governed. Normally, the Financial Regulations were reviewed biennially. However, with the ESFA about to become part of DfE and the new Procurement Act, a mid-term review had been necessary to include the updates. These were detailed in Appendix A with all of the changes marked up using tracked changes. The majority of the changes were minor.

The Policy and Resources Committee had prior consideration of this Report and recommended it to the Corporation Board for approval.

The Corporation Board **APPROVED** the proposed amendments to the Financial Regulations pending the action above being checked.

9(v) Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech

The Policy and Resources Committee had considered the Colleges' current Code of Practice on the Freedom of Speech and the Code remained fit for purpose.

The Code would be reviewed again when the implications of the Freedom of Speech legislation were realised.

The Corporation Board **APPROVED** the Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech as recommended by the Policy and Resources Committee.

9. ITEMS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE GOVERNANCE PANEL

The Director of Governance introduced this Report and informed members that since writing the Report Andrea Machell had resigned from her position as a member of the Corporation Board. The Chair presented Andrea Machell with flowers and a card from the College and Corporation Board, and letters from the Chair of the Corporation Board, and Principal and Chief Executive. The Corporation Board thanked Andrea for her support and wished her well.

Continuing, the Director of Governance reported that there were now two vacancies on the Corporation Board and the Board was looking to encourage female members to increase diversity.

Catherine Hill and Taiyab Sufi were not in the room or on Teams for the following discussions.

As per the Succession Planning Policy, the Governance Panel considered the re-appointment of one Governor and one Co-Opted member whose terms of office were due to end 31 March and recommended to the Board that they both be reappointed.

The Governance Panel agreed with the Audit Committee to appoint Taiyab Sufi as the Chair of the Audit Committee.

The term of office of the Chair of the Corporation Board, Mark Allanson, was due to end on 31 March. Mr Allanson was appointed on 1 January 2016 and will have completed ten years as a Governor at the College at the end of his term. Per the Corporations Instrument and Articles, a Governor would usually serve three times three-year terms, unless that is, they take on the role of Chair or Vice-Chair, or if there are exceptional circumstances.

The Governance Panel discussed the College's position and future, whereby the College was developing a new three-year Strategy and vision for the future, and the Chair's role was pivotal in delivering both the Strategy and steering the future direction.

The Governance Panel therefore proposed that the term of office for Mark Allanson be extended by one year to end on 31 March 2027.

The Corporation Board **APPROVED** the recommendations of the Governance Panel and:

- Taiyab Sufi as Chair of the Audit Committee.
- reappointment of Catherine Hill OBE and Ian Brown and that their term of office be until 31 March 2028.
- the term of office for Mark Allanson, Chair of the Corporation Board Office be extended to 31 March 2027.

Catherine Hill OBE returned to the meeting.

10. STAFF GOVERNOR'S REPORT

The Staff Governor highlighted the main points within the Staff Governors Report including mention of many employers coming into College, the successful student trips to Bali and Fiji, and some concerns around staff recruitment, succession planning and the desire to increase the number of Apprentices in Business Support areas.

The Chair thanked the Staff Governor for the update.

11. CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services provided additional detail to that contained within the Report, including the:

- Construction Barn had been completed.
- Partial Renewal of the heating system pipework in the Beacon Centre would be completed by 31 March 2025 and there was some discussion of why, what, and how the pipework had deteriorated and was being replaced. Once completed the checking of the pipework would be part of the routine cycle of maintenance.
- Boilers in the Elizabeth building had been commissioned and once installed and working would remedy the heating issues.
- A list of potential summer works was being developed and work on bids and costings.

The Board noted the content of the Report and thanked the Vice-Principal for the update.

12. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

The Chair approved Minutes from the following Committees were received for information:

- i) Student Voice Committee 29 January 2025
- ii) Governance Panel 29 January 2025
- iii) Learning & Quality Committee 6 February 2025
- iv) Audit Committee 25 February 2025
- v) Policy & Resources Committee 3 March 2025

The Chair canvassed the members for any additional comments on the meeting Minutes supplied for information. No comments were made.

13. SUBCONTRACTING ACTIVITIES

This Report provided the Board with an update on Subcontracting Activities and reminded Governors of their responsibilities, including having oversight of Subcontracting activity.

The College was in the third year of subcontracting out 16-18 funding for the delivery of 16-18 BTEC Sports provision with Blackburn Rovers Community Trust.

The College continued to closely manage the subcontract to the subcontracting standard requirements as required, reporting to Governors through the Learning and Quality Committee, Policy and Resources Committee and the Audit Committee.

The Board noted the content of the Report provided for information.

14. HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) UPDATE AS AT 31 JANUARY 2025

This Report provided a summary of core HR data for the period 1 August 2024 to 31 January 2025 with the detailed data to be found in the Appendix.

15. SAFEGUARDING TERM 1 REPORT

The Report provided Board members with information on safeguarding arrangements across all aspects of the College provision and provided assurance that effective structures and processes were in place.

The Chair stressed the importance of reading this Report, the Safeguarding Policy and other Appendices as the Board and its members had responsibilities to ensure Safeguarding was effective.

The Board received this Report for information.

16. ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT – MID YEAR POINT

This Report had been considered by the Learning and Quality Committee on 6 February 2025.

The Board received this Report for information.

17. HEALTH AND SAFETY UPDATE

This Report had been discussed by the Policy and Resources Committee in its 3 March 2025 meeting and provided the Board with information on the key health and safety activities during 2024/25, legislative changes and key health and safety risks.

The Board received this Report for information.

18. NET ZERO CARBON - UPDATE

The Report had previously been considered by the Policy and Resources Committee on 3 March 2025 and provided an update on activities and progress towards Net Zero goals.

The Board received this Report for information.

19. LANCASHIRE COLLEGES HEADLINE BENCHMARKING 2023/24

The Report provided the Board with an update on the headline financial position of the Lancashire Colleges. The analysis attached to the Report showed comparison figures for the last three years.

The Board received this Report for information.

20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair canvassed members for any other business and the Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality announced that the College had just won the Lancashire Skills competition category for Early Years. The Board passed on their congratulations.

21. REVIEW OF THE MEETING

The Chair canvassed members for feedback on the meeting and all agreed that it had been a good meeting, covered everything on the Agenda and dealt with the right issues at a suitable level.

The Chair thanked all attendees in person and on MS Teams for their contributions to the meeting.

22. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Friday 4 July 2025 at 2pm.