



MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION BOARD MEETING
HELD ON FRIDAY 17 OCTOBER 2025 IN THE EXCHANGE BOARD ROOM / VIA MICROSOFT
TEAMS

PRESENT:

Mark Allanson	Chair of the Corporation Board
Catherine Hill OBE	Vice-Chair of the Corporation Board and Chair of this meeting.
Dr Fazal Dad CBE	Principal and Chief Executive
Michael Lee	Staff Governor (Business Support)
Ridwaan Omar	Member
Darren Ratcliffe	Member
Nathan Rogan	Member
Ojan Rohani	Member
Faris Saiyed	Student Governor (FE)
Clare Shaw	Staff Governor (Academic)
Taiyab Sufi*	Member
Bryan Welch	Member

IN ATTENDANCE:

Cheryl Dunn	New Governor
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

* indicates attendance via Microsoft Teams

The meeting started at 14:00 and was quorate.

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and extended a special welcome to Cheryl Dunn (Ref Item 7(i)), Faris Saiyad, new FE Student Governor, and to Taiyab Sufi joining via Teams.

There followed roundtable introductions.

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Asif Ali, Ram Gupta, Paul Morris, Arif Patel, and David Swift.

2. DECLARATION OF CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

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 MEETING HELD 4 JULY 2025

The Board agreed that the Minutes of the Corporation Board meeting held on 4 July 2025 were true and accurate.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Matters arising had either been completed or would be covered by Items on the Agenda.

It was AGREED that Item 07(i) be taken first, but for the purposes of these Minutes, Items are recorded in Agenda order.

5. CHAIR'S MATTERS

The Chair of the Corporation Board reflected on the morning Seminar session where there had been an update and training for Governors on KCSIE 2025 and a report on Safeguarding which was done very well at the College. The Chair remarked that the Safeguarding remit and Team were larger than he realised and he asked that his thanks be shared with the Team.

This session was followed by an overview of the journey to the new Strategy and a look at the culture of the College now that the Strategy was in place. Attendees participated in several activities to establish what was the College culture now, and what needed to change, be strengthened or added to support the culture to deliver on the new Strategy. The Chair tasked the Executive Team with taking this work forward.

The Principal and Chief Executive had delivered an update on the new Ofsted Toolkit, highlighting the changes to future inspections and a strong focus on inclusion, and the Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality shared the remarkable achievement of delivering the Animal Care course, from inception to students and animals in the classroom, in 16 weeks.

The Executive Director: Student Support and Experience provided an update on Launchpad and informed members that the facility was now oversubscribed, students attending regularly and the first cohort would be transferring into mainstream College from January 2026.

The Chair congratulated the College on being awarded Skills provider of the Year at the BIBA awards and thanked the Vice-Chair and Lead Skills Governor for supporting the College at the event.

Governors were thanked for completing the 2024/25 Governor Self-Assessment survey and the Chair was pleased to read about all of the ambassadorial opportunities that members had to promote the College and its growing reputation as the College of Choice. Feedback suggested more student/staff voices and spotlights on topics in meetings to bring the data to life, so to speak, and in an effort to raise the profile of Governors and increase their exposure to staff and other areas of the business, the Chair encouraged Governors to attend a Quality Summit or arrange a Learning Walk. The Chair also invited members to think about holding a meeting in their place of work and invited offers, and finally, the Chair informed members that he planned to meet with each of them again in 2026. The Director of Governance would follow up on these actions.

ACTION: Director of Governance

6. PRINCIPAL AND CHIEF EXECUTIVES REPORT

The Principal had provided a comprehensive Report for his Item and added his thanks to all staff and students, thanking the Board for their support throughout the academic year, and all that they continue to do focusing on improvement and the future.

The Principal highlighted the following:

- 16-18 achievement was 89.3%; 19+ achievement 91.2% and overall achievement 89.9% marking 4 consecutive years of high achievement and progress. This was a very positive

picture and thanks to all staff at all levels who worked as a Team to provide students with the best learning experience.

- GCSE maths and English exam resits circa 300 students.
- High Needs student achievement was 94%.
- Apprenticeships actual achievement at 69.2%, was significantly above the national target and in a strong position, yet there is more to do.
- Higher Education remained a critical area to improve and consolidate. Student achievement for 2024/25 was 81%.
- Managers continued to work with employers to ensure the curriculum offer was fit for purpose and students developing the right knowledge, skills and behaviours for the workplace.
- Student recruitment and FE had exceeded the target, and HE had a shortfall. Apprenticeship numbers had made a good start and needed to continue, to achieve the target.
- Launchpad provision introduced to support young people locally and address a national priority. Early success shows 8 out of 12 students had already reintegrated back into College provision following a programme of study up at the centre, with many more to follow in January 2026.
- The College commenced its first cohort of Level 1 Animal Care teaching and was extremely successful in recruiting 21 students. Plans were being developed to work with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council to explore the Witton Park site to offer Level 2 and Level 3 qualifications.
- Finances remained outstanding and thanks extended to the Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services and Team for managing the Colleges finances effectively.
- Capital, and the campus projects had completed over the summer. Governors had the opportunity to see the developments and refurbishments for themselves over lunch.

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

7. ITEMS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY GOVERNANCE PANEL

7.(i) Succession planning and Appointment of new Governor

The Director of Governance introduced this report and reminded members of the Board and Committee vacancies:

- 2 External Board Member vacancies
- 1 Policy and Resources Committee vacancies
- 0 Remuneration Committee vacancies
- 0 Learning and Quality Committee vacancy
- 1 Audit Committee vacancy
- 0 Student Voice Committee vacancy
- 0 Governance Panel

The Governance Panel had previously identified the need to recruit someone who had recent experience of working in a College, of HE, and ideally, increase female membership. In its October meeting the Governance Panel discussed an expression of interest from a potential candidate, Ms Cheryl Dunn. The Panel considered that Ms Dunn would be a good fit with existing membership, enhance the skills set and increase diversity. Ms Dunn had a strong background in HE and it was thought that this would benefit the HE delivery at the College. The Panel discussed the position, and, as there were no current vacancies on the Learning and Quality Committee, the Chair of the Panel and Corporation Board said that he would step down from this Committee, therefore making a vacancy and allowing for the appointment of Cheryl Dunn as an independent member of the Board and Learning and Quality Committee.

The Chair would, as is the prerogative of those in this position, be permitted to attend any of the Committees as Chair of the Corporation Board.

The Governance Panel recommended that Ms Cheryl Dunn be appointed as a Corporation Board member and member of the Learning and Quality Committee for a period not exceeding 3 x 3-year terms per the Corporations Instrument and Articles.

The Board **APPROVED** the Government Panel recommendation that Ms Cheryl Dunn be an independent member of the Corporation Board and member of the Learning and Quality Committee.

7.(ii) New Policy on Independence of the Director of Governance

The Director of Governance reminded members that the Corporation Board adopted the Association of Colleges (AoC) Code of Good Governance (the 'Code') from 1 August 2024. The Code recommended that Colleges have a policy on the independence of the Governance Professional (GP). Independence being vital for strong governance, which was crucial for informed decision making and leads to better outcomes for the College and its students.

The Governance Panel had considered the Policy in its meeting 6 October and agreed that it was a good policy, well written and made explicit the role of the Corporation Board in ensuring the independence of the Director of Governance was protected.

The Chair enquired if being 'independent' excluded the GP from other roles within the College and the Director of Governance said that it would depend on what the other role was as one would need to consider the capacity to take on another role and to avoid any conflicts of interest. The Principal and Chief Executive shared that the previous postholder had another role within MIS where there was no conflict and added that they had Administrative Support. The Director of Governance said that she was aware of other GPs who had additional roles and responsibilities in, for example, compliance, FOIs, legal.

The Board **APPROVED** the Policy on the Independence of the Governance Professional.

7.(iii) Updates to the Instrument and Articles of Government

The Director of Governance explained that the Instrument and Articles of Government set out the regulatory framework within which Blackburn College as a Further Education College and Corporation operated. It was a legal document and important that it was correct.

The Instrument provides for the constitution of the Governing body of the College and the Articles for the functions and responsibilities of the Governing body.

The College's Instrument and Articles were last updated 6 May 2022. They were due for timely review and, in light of recent changes and advice, needed updating to ensure compliance and to remain fit for purpose.

Explaining further the rationale for updating the documents, the Director of Governance explained that the DfE wrote to the sector in June 2025 regarding governance matters and advised Corporation Boards to amend their Instrument and Articles in relation to quoracy and student voting. Eversheds Sutherland, who advised the sector and College on legal matters, had followed this up with specific advice on amendments which were reflected in the proposed changes.

The External Governance Review in Spring 2023 suggested that the Instrument and Articles be updated when timely to do so.

The proposed amendments to the Instrument and Articles were highlighted in the attachment and included those changes mentioned above, plus improved consistency and strengthening of the content on freedom of speech.

The Vice-Chair asked if there were specific changes proposed that the members should be aware of and the Director of Governance highlighted that the need to sign the minutes of meetings had been replaced by group consideration/approval of minutes at subsequent meetings, and also that student governors were now permitted to vote on financial matters.

The Board thanked the Director of Governance for completing the diligent exercise to review and update the documents.

The Corporation Board had the power to update the Instrument and Articles under Article 25 and were reassured that none of the proposed changes would have an impact on others or change the College's exempt charity status.

The Corporation Board **APPROVED** the proposed changes to the Instrument and Articles of Government.

8. ITEMS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY AUDIT COMMITTEE

8.(i) Risk Management Annual Report 2024/25

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services summarised the risk management activities listed in the Report. The year commenced with the usual challenges regarding recruitment numbers and ensuring financial stability. The key risks during the year were largely unchanged from previous years.

The Board was reassured to know that a series of controls and monitoring arrangements had been put in place to minimise and mitigate against the impact of the risks within the Report.

The Board **APPROVED** the Risk Management Annual Report 2024/25 as recommended by the Audit Committee.

8.(ii) Risk Register 2025/26

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

Set out at Appendix Two was the heat map which provided a visual representation of all the risks mapped against the risk matrix. This was intended to support members in ensuring that key risks could be easily identified.

The Risk Register had been considered by the Audit Committee at its September meeting where it was agreed and recommended to the Board.

The Board **AGREED** the Risk Management Report.

8.(iii) Audit Committee Annual Report 2024/25

The Annual Report of the Audit Committee for 2024/25 was received and provided a summary of the activity that had taken place relating to the financial year under review, in line with the Post 16 Audit Code of Practice (ACoP) [College Financial Handbook from 1 August 2025] and included how the Audit Committee had performed against its Terms of Reference. The Report had previously been considered by Audit Committee at its meeting on 16 September 2025 and would be submitted to the DfE with the final accounts.

It was confirmed that the Audit Committee had met its obligations during the year.

On the recommendation of Audit Committee, the Board **APPROVED** the Annual Report of the Audit Committee for 2024/25 and noted that it would now be signed by the Chair of Audit Committee.

8.(iv) Regulatory Audit – Self Assessment Questionnaire

The Vice Principal: Finance and Corporate Services introduced the Report and talked the Board members through the requirement to make a statement on regularity, propriety, and compliance with the annual Financial Statements. The completed questionnaire attached to the Report had been considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 16 September 2025 and once approved by the Board would need to be signed by the College Accounting Officer and Chair of the Corporation Board before submission to the External Auditors as part of their year-end work.

The Board thanked the Vice-Principal and Director of Governance for completing the questionnaire as it involved a large amount of work.

The Board **APPROVED** the Regularity Audit 2025 - Self-Assessment Questionnaire and this was signed by the Principal and Chief Executive and Chair of the Corporation.

9. ITEMS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

9.(i) DRAFT Management Accounts – Year end position 2024/25

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services confirmed the surplus, that the College cash balances remained healthy, and all bar the Debt Service Ratio, FE Commissioner metrics continued to be met. Additional income had been generated in year. Financial Health remained as 'outstanding'.

This Report had been considered by Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 22 September 2025.

The Board **APPROVED** the Management Accounts for the period ending 31 July 2025 (pre-finalisation), as recommended by Policy and Resources Committee.

The Chair thanked the Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services and her Team for their work on managing the College finances effectively.

9.(ii) Management Accounts – period ending 30 September 2025

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services provide a verbal update to the Board.

9.(iii) Human Resources Annual Report 2024/25

The Principal and Chief Executive presented the Report and talked through the headline information.

The College continued to support and develop staff, with a view to succession planning, and sought feedback from leavers to inform decision making and approach.

The Principal informed members that the new Executive Director of People and Culture was in post and getting established.

The Board **APPROVED** the Human Resources Annual Report 2024/25.

9.(iv) Modern Slavery Act (re: Board Statement)

The Board **APPROVED** the Statement as proposed in the Report and recommended by the Policy and Resources Committee in its meeting on 22 September 2025.

The Statement would be signed by the Principal and Chief Executive as Accounting officer and would be published on the College website to ensure continuing compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015. The statement was duly signed by the Principal and Chief Executive.

9.(v) Going Concern Statement

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services presented the Report. Board members discussed and confirmed that there were no material uncertainties leading to significant doubt about going concern and confirmed that going concern be assumed when preparing the Financial Statements, with a statement to this effect included in the Financial Statements.

The Board **APPROVED** the Going Concern Statement as proposed in the Report and recommended by the Policy and Resources Committee in its meeting on 22 September 2025.

9.(vi) Scheme of Delegation

The Director of Governance introduced this Report and highlighted the key changes proposed to the attached Scheme of Delegation and explained that the changes were identified in the annual review of each Committees Terms of Reference.

The Board **APPROVED** the proposed changes to the Scheme of Delegation as recommended by the Policy and Resources Committee in its meeting on 22 September 2025.

10. STAFF GOVERNOR'S REPORT

The Staff Governor (Academic) presented on behalf of both Staff Governors present and highlighted the :

- Staff end-of-year celebrations in July were fantastic, and staff appreciated the pay award/voucher and thanked the Board.
- Many employers had been in to the College sharing experiences, informing the curriculum content and latest skills required by industry.
- Students had already been on quite a few educational trips funded through the enrichment funds and many more were planned.
- Foundation students had been on work placements and work experience and feedback from employers remarked upon the students' professionalism and enthusiasm.
- Nibbles and Scribbles would be opening again shortly with an extensive new range of items. Including greeting cards.
- Succession planning was very positive with some staff embarking on PGCEs
- Students spoke highly of the Launchpad provision.

The Chair thanked the Staff Governors for the update.

3.08pm Bryan Welch joined the meeting.

11. PERFORMANCE AGAINST COLLEGE KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- (i) 2024/25 – pre-finalised
- (ii) 2025/26 – proposed targets

11.(i) 2024/25 – pre-finalised

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services introduced the pre-finalised KPI Report for the period ending 31 July 2025 and explained that the year-end accounts and ILRs were in the process of being finalised so could change the final position. The final Report would be tabled at the December meeting.

The Board **APPROVED** the pre-finalised Key Performance Indicator Report for the period ending 31 July 2025.

11.(ii) 2025/26 - proposed targets

The Vice-Principal Finance and Corporate Services explained that the proposed targets were based on the outcomes listed in the previous Item.

The Board **APPROVED** the proposed Key Performance Indicators for 2025/26.

12. STRATEGIC PLAN

12.(i) Strategic Plan 2022-2025 – Annual Operating Statement – Progress at 31 July 2025

The Vice-Principal: Finance and Corporate Services introduced this Report which provided an update on progress to 31 July 2025.

The detail was supplied in Annex A and the Board noted the position and that the total performance for 2024/25 would be reported to the December Board.

The Board **APPROVED** the Strategic Plan Operating Statement Report.

12.(ii) Strategic Plan 2025-26 Proposed targets

The Board noted the proposed targets for the Annual Operating Statement 2025/26 and that, similar to the KPI Reports earlier on the Agenda, that the proposals would go back through the Committees before coming to the December Board meeting.

The Board **APPROVED** the Strategic Plan Proposed targets 2025-2026

13. RECRUITMENT UPDATE

The Board agreed that this Item and student recruitment had been covered by the Principal's Report Item earlier on the Agenda.

14. HE STRATEGY UPDATE

The Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality provided a verbal update on progress of activities within the HE Strategy/OfS B3 Action Plan.

The Board appreciated the challenges and thanked the Vice-Principal: Curriculum and Quality for the update.

15. ACCOUNTABILITY AGREEMENT/LOCAL NEEDS DUTY UPDATE

The Executive Director of Business Development and Employer Engagement informed members that the Accountability Agreement had been uploaded to the portal and would be put on College website 1 December 2025. Targets and activities within the new College Strategy support delivery of the Accountability Agreement.

The College continued to work in partnership to deliver on projects in hospitality, digital and cyber, and to meet the skills needs in the LSIP.

The Board thanked the Director of Business Development and Employer Engagement.

16. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT IMPACT REPORT

The Executive Director: Student Support and Experience introduced this Report that included case-studies and examples of curriculum enhancement and enrichment activities, demonstrating high levels of engagement across the College, contributing to personal development and to the student experience.

The Board thanked the Executive Director for the interesting Report.

17. MATHS AND ENGLISH IMPACT REPORT

The Executive Director: Student Support and Experience reminded members that the purpose of the Success Centre was to engage those students who failed to engage with these subjects at school, who needed to resit their GCSEs, and who would benefit from different styles and approaches to learning.

The Board thanked the Executive Director: Student Support and Experience for this Report.

18. CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE

The Board noted the content of this Report having seen the developments for themselves on an earlier campus visit and updates included in other Agenda Items.

No comments were made.

19. MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS

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

- i) Audit Committee 16 September 2025
- ii) Policy & Resources Committee 22 September 2025
- iii) Governance Panel 6 October 2025

The Chair canvassed the members for any additional comments on the meeting Minutes supplied for information.

20. REGISTER OF INTERESTS

The Director of Governance thanked Board members for completing the Register of Interests declarations and informed the Board that the annual exercise to update the College Register of Interests 2025/26 was complete.

Members were reminded of their responsibility to declare any potential conflicts of interest at each meeting.

The Board received this Report for information.

21. SUBCONTRACTING ARRANGEMENTS FOR 2025/26

This Report provided the Board with the Subcontracting arrangements for 2025/26 and had been discussed at the Policy and Resources Committee meeting on 22 September 2025. The Committee were satisfied with the arrangements in place.

The Board noted the content of the Report.

22. OVERSEAS VISITS ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

The Report had previously been considered by the Policy and Resources Committee on 22 September 2025 and confirmed that no overseas business trips or, trips funded through the Research and Scholarship Committee/Staff Development had been made by staff, students, or Governors in 2024/25. There were educational trips to Bali, Fiji, Aruba, Barcelona, and Malawi.

The Board received this Report for information.

23. NET CARBON ZERO

The Report had previously been considered by the Policy and Resources Committee on 22 September 2025 and provided an update on activities and progress towards Net Zero goals.

The Board received this Report for information.

24. HEALTH & SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

The Report provided information on the key health and safety activities during the academic year 2024/25. The full report was supplied and contained detailed information on incident statistics, legislative changes, audits, and inspections. The Report and attachments had been considered in depth by the Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 22 September 2025.

The Board received this Report for information.

25. VALUE FOR MONEY REPORT 2024/25

The Report was produced to update the Governors on purchasing activities for 2024/25 and provided the priorities and objectives for cross-College procurement in 2025/26 to ensure delivery of Value for Money. The Report was received for information having previously been considered by the Policy and Resources Committee on 22 September 2025.

The Board received this Report for information.

26. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS 2024/25

The Report was for information and had been considered by the Policy and Resources Committee on 22 September 2025. The Report provided the Board with analysis of the volumes and types of FOI requests received in 2024/25. The tables that supported the Report provided data on compliance with regulations and response. No data breaches had been reported to the Information Commissioner's office.

The Board received this Report for information.

27. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair canvassed members for any other business. There were none.

28. 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.

29. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Friday 5 December 2025, 2-5pm.

Members of Staff left the meeting ahead of PARTII.