

Minutes of the meeting of the Standards Committee held on Tuesday 7th October 2025

GOVERNORS PRESENT: Ben Owen, Chair
Jane Peacock, Vice Chair
Andrew Cropley, Principal and Chief Executive Officer
Joanna Poon
Kit Salt
Andrew Spencer, Staff Governor (Business Support)
Keith Spiers

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Diane Booth, Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality
Louise Knott, Vice Principal: Communications, Engagement and Student Experience
Jane Fishwick, Assistant Principal: Academic, Creative, Community, Digital and Professional Studies (until 18:00)
Sarah Morley, Assistant Principal: Quality and Standards
Nikki Slack, Assistant Principal: Health, Education and Service Industries (from 17:10)
Kirsty Walsh, Assistant Principal: Engineering (from 17:20)
Nic Williamson, Head of English and Maths
Eloise Hopkinson, Head of Governance
Joanna Wilson, Head of Mansfield and Ashfield Sixth Form Centre (from 17:10)

		ACTION by whom	DATE by when
1	<u>APPOINTMENT OF THE COMMITTEE CHAIR FOR 2025/26</u> The committee members were happy to nominate and appoint Ben Owen as the committee chair for the academic year. AGREED: to approve Ben Owen as the Standards Committee chair for 2025/26.		
2	<u>WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u> All committee members were present. Apologies for absence were received from Ella Brookes (assistant principal: inclusion) as she had been missed from the meeting invitation and was unable to attend at short notice.		
3	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u> The chair reminded everyone present to declare any interests that they may have on agenda items to be discussed. Standing declarations were noted.		

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4 **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 1ST JULY 2025**

The minutes were reviewed and it was agreed that they were an accurate record of discussions.

AGREED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 1st July 2025.

There were no matters arising.

5 **ACTION PROGRESS REPORT**

The committee members were happy to note the content of the update provided.

6 **QUALITY IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN (QIAP) UPDATE AND PLAN**

The vice principal: curriculum and quality presented her detailed report, particularly drawing the committee's attention to the following key points:

- The QIAP has been refreshed for 2025/26.
- A Levels is no longer a standalone item within the QIAP as the outcomes for learners were substantially better than predicted. The committee will still receive an A Levels update under the relevant agenda item, and the area will remain a key focus to ensure the improvements are sustained.
- Apprenticeships has also been removed as a standalone item and will be reported on under the teaching and learning success measures. This is due to the fact that the college's performance is now on an upward trajectory and end-of-year outcomes were better than predicted.
- The priorities within the QIAP are now as follows:
 - To improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment across all types of provision (with a sharper focus on adaptive teaching practice, questioning, checking learning, incisive feedback and feedforward, and target setting).
 - To improve the teaching of English and maths.
 - To increase the level of learners' and apprentices' attendance and punctuality.
 - To ensure adult learners benefit from great teaching, a stimulating curriculum and pertinent support that keeps them motivated and to excel (retention, pass and achievement).
 - To ensure learners benefit from the contextualised teaching of technology to develop the essential digital skills to operate effectively in employment and modern society. This priority is new for 2025/26.

In relation to a question in relation to attendance monitoring, the vice principal confirmed that the comparison is against the same point in the previous academic year. 2024/25 finished with just over 84% attendance,

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which was similar to the previous year's final position. However, the vice principal reminded governors that 2024/25 had a larger cohort of hard-to-reach learners and those with barriers to learning. While the college has the same high expectations of all learners, it is natural that some of these barriers will interfere with attendance. However, it is expected that these individuals will show improvement over time, and the college must ensure it continues to set and reinforce these high expectations. In relation to monitoring attendance, the vice principal indicated that a weekly report will be produced from October half term to show anyone whose attendance is declining. This will enable assistant principals and heads of department to act. The governor was assured by this response.

The vice chair noted that the QIAP presented a positive, detailed start to the year. However, she observed that the document still referred to the categories and judgements from the old Ofsted framework, and she questioned when the college would start using the new ones. The vice principal explained that, as 2024/25 was assessed against the old framework, the table at the top of the document will retain these categories for now. The QIAP for 2026/27 will use the new categories as this will show the 2025/26 self-assessment judgements. She assured governors that all policies and procedures have been updated for use this academic year, and the college is now applying the scorecard model and quality judgements from the new framework.

The vice chair also raised a question about adaptive teaching, particularly asking how much of an emphasis there is on CPD to improve this. The vice principal reminded governors of the teaching to the top campaign, the outcome of which is being seen in high grades and improvement of grades. She advised that the college is also launching an adaptive teaching campaign, which will include training opportunities. The assistant principal: inclusion will also be involved in the scorecard reviews and PMRs for those curriculum areas which have the furthest to go in terms of improvement.

The vice principal informed governors that all data dashboards have already been updated to break learners down by disadvantaged postcodes, and the Department for Education visitors were particularly impressed by this when they conducted the health check.

The vice principal went on to provide updates against two key items:

Attendance

The lowest attendance is at the lower levels of study, and a lot is being done to try to improve this, including the continuation of live register reports to ensure that registers are being marked timely and accurately. Furthermore, assistant principals and heads of department will continue to drop into lessons. ILPs and the target setting process have been reviewed, and the first review with each student will now cover their previous experience of education and what their attendance was like at

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school to provide a better idea of their starting point. This will enable improvements to be tracked even where a learner may not achieve high attendance. Attendance chasing will continue, as will the text messages at fixed points to those who are absent from English and maths lessons.

Achievement of English and maths qualifications

Last academic year saw an increase of 40% in the total of students sitting GCSE English in comparison to 2023/24. The percentage of learners that improved their grade decreased from 27.7% in 2023/24 to 22% in 2024/25, marking a three-year decline. Furthermore, the pass rate (86.2%) was 1.9% lower than in the previous year. However, the college has submitted 40 reviews of marking, and 17 of these have gone up by one grade. The vice principal has written to Pearsons to express concern in relation to this, as it reduces confidence in the accuracy of marking.

The college has introduced streamed classes by grade in maths and English at Derby Road. This also links to adaptive teaching: it is difficult for teachers to adapt their teaching effectively when there are large gaps between achievements and knowledge, so streaming by grade will help.

In response to a question from one governor, the vice principal advised that it was too early to tell whether streaming the classes had had an impact on attendance. English and maths attendance was tracking at a very slightly higher percentage than at the same point last year, but it was acknowledged that this may be coincidental rather than as a result of streaming.

2024/25 saw a 23.6% increase in GCSE Maths entries in comparison to 2023/24. The percentage of learners that improved their grade increased by 4.6% in comparison to the previous year, and the percentage of learners achieving a grade 9-4 improved by 8.4%. However, the overall pass rate declined by 2.4%; therefore, although there were some improvements, there is still more work to do. The college's GCSE Maths pass rate was 2.1% above the national FE rate, and this was acknowledged as being something to celebrate.

The vice principal confirmed that the college will continue to work with the director of maths at Tibshelf Secondary School and the head of English at Loughborough College. Both have agreed to attend the English and maths scorecard reviews this year. The new toolkit is very focused on driving collaboration, further promoting the fact that these relationships are good practice.

The vice chair advised that providers which stream classes by grade tend to see better results if they place stronger teachers with those students who need the most help, resisting the temptation to have them teach the high-performing groups. As such, she asked how much consideration has been given to how the English and maths teachers have been allocated to each group. The vice principal confirmed that this has been

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done as tactically as possible, but it is difficult as the college needs to consider which staff member is based at which site and take travel into account for teachers who service a number of campuses. Therefore, it is a mix. However, the vice principal explained that those who have been selected to teach English and maths at Station Park and the Old Brewery have stronger behaviour management skills and have been working with these learners for some time. Continuity in staffing has been maintained to ensure the English and maths teachers have already built relationships with the vocational staff and also have some knowledge of the vocational subjects.

One governor asked how closely vocational subjects are linked with English and maths, as he has heard from staff feedback that students struggle to relate English and maths to their vocational course. He questioned how the college promotes the importance of English and maths and avoids the issue of students feeling that they will not use these subjects in their daily lives and careers. In response, the vice principal explained that a different approach was taken to induction for 2025/26. Guest speakers delivered sessions on resilience and focused on 'a fresh start offering a new opportunity'. These sessions were used to promote the fact that English and maths skills are critical for everyday life. She also advised that it can be slightly easier to contextualise English and maths at Functional Skills level than at GCSE. It is more difficult within the streamed classes as they contain a mix of students from different vocational areas. In short, English and maths teachers do contextualise where they can, but this is not perfect.

The vice principal explained that a slightly different approach had been taken in that the English and maths schemes of learning have been shared with vocational teachers so that they know the delivery sequence of the various topics and, where possible, can wrap them into lessons at the appropriate time.

The principal acknowledged that there was still more work to do. He explained that staff are also under pressure to get the students ready for the exams again in May, which can dull their attempts to bring the subjects to life. To address this, in some cases, the college is taking learners out of GCSE and putting them in for other qualifications instead. Furthermore, some students have been enrolled to two- or even three-year GCSE programmes so that they are not preparing for an exam this academic year.

One governor asked how many students realise that they will need to resit English and/or maths if they do not achieve the necessary grades at school. He particularly asked whether this is promoted by schools. The vice principal explained that it is mixed. She also explained that schools will be telling students that they need to achieve a grade 4 and nothing else is good enough, whereas the college has been trying to change this mindset and increase students' motivation and enthusiasm by

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celebrating any improvement (e.g. moving up by one grade). She indicated that reading ability can be a huge issue and has the biggest impact on a lot of students' performance.

When more data is available from the streamed classes, the business support staff governor would like to meet with the vice principal to analyse it as he feels this could reveal some interesting points. The vice principal indicated that she will be working with the head of MIS to look at the data but that she would be happy to involve the staff governor in this activity.

In general discussion, the chair commended the QIAP, indicating that it was good to see apprenticeships on a positive trajectory. He informed the committee that he met with the DfE as part of the health check, and this meeting was very positive.

AGREED:

- to note the content of the report and the updates provided
- to approve the amendments to the QIAP as presented.

7 2024/25 POSITION STATEMENTS AND SAR TIMELINE

The vice principal: curriculum and quality drew governors' attention to the following details:

- The curriculum self-assessment review is a well-established process which commences in August each year. This year's meetings have involved 411 teachers, managers and leaders across 35 departments.
- Heads of department led the meetings and presented key strengths and areas for improvement. There was much debate and challenge, and it was positive to see so many people involved in having their say.
- Six areas have been assessed as 'outstanding' – these are catering and hospitality, early years (16-18), computer science (both classroom-based and apprenticeship provision), performing arts, and media.
- The quality of A-Level teaching has been self-assessed as 'good', and this was evidenced in summer 2025's exam results. However, there is still more work to do to show sustained improvement. The team was very self-critical in the meeting – there is a clear and robust quality improvement plan in place and the whole team is on board to ensure this improvement continues.
- All self-assessment grades are provisional until the close of the ILR, but the vice principal was confident that the overall self-assessment will be grade 2.
- The internal validation meetings will take place in November, following which the draft SAR will be scrutinised by two critical friends and will then go through the Executive, Standards

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Committee, and Corporation Board before being submitted to Ofsted.

- The scrutiny at all levels ensures that the college is being reflective and critical enough in its self-assessment judgements.

AGREED: to note the content of the report.

8 RISK REPORT (RED RAG-RATED ITEMS) – REVIEW OF RISKS WITH STANDARDS COMMITTEE OVERSIGHT

The vice principal: curriculum and quality presented the report, providing an update against the red risks that were not covered elsewhere within the reports already presented or planned for later on in the meeting.

On this occasion, the only such item was hard-to-fill vacancies. The vice principal explained that air conditioning and refrigeration remained the biggest challenge. The college had succeeded in securing two members of staff and was allowing some time for them to settle in before recruiting students. The vice principal informed governors that there were 52 on the waiting list to enrol.

The vice principal also notified governors that a recent maths teacher vacancy had taken longer to fill than similar roles in the past.

The vice chair raised a question about the Level 5 apprenticeship offered for teaching staff, on which the college works in partnership with NTU. Some people have now completed this course, and the vice chair was interested in knowing what the quality was like and whether this will aid the college in retaining some strong teaching staff members. The vice principal indicated that the offer was working really well, with the university covering the theory and WNC carrying out the assessing. Staff who have been through the qualification have not left the college in high numbers, and many have gone on to take on extra responsibilities. Overall, this offer was proving to be a success, and the committee were pleased to note this.

The chair was pleased to see some progress in relation to recruiting air conditioning and refrigeration delivery staff. He acknowledged that employing staff within that subject area and industry remains a national challenge across sectors.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

9 BALANCED SCORECARD ITEMS AND ANNUAL KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs)

The vice principal curriculum and quality presented a very brief update to explain that all balanced scorecard matters from the previous year had been covered within the other papers, and the 2025/26 balanced scorecard and objectives would be presented at the board meeting on 16th October.

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The chair was pleased to see a high number of green targets within the KPIs, albeit he acknowledged that there were still some niggles in relation to attendance.

AGREED: to note the update provided.

10 A LEVELS MONITORING

The vice principal: curriculum and quality presented her detailed report, and key matters highlighted were:

- The pass rate was 97%. 69.6% of students achieved grades A*-C, which was a substantial improvement on the previous year, when it was 44%. These improvements were as a result of greater focus, including swifter intervention throughout the year, liaising with parents, and relentless attendance chasing. There were also some in-year improvements to the quality of teaching and learning.
- The ALPS grade moved from 8 in 2023/24 to 6 in 2024/25, which is a significant improvement. The vice principal indicated that the focus now will be to ensure this improvement is sustained.
- There are currently 248 learners in Year 12 and, at this stage, they are settling in well. There is a professional atmosphere on the campus, and feedback from learners is that they feel very independent.
- At the end of 2024/25, Year 13 retention (80.2%) was not what the college would have liked, but it was still 11.8% better than at the end of the previous year. Again, the vice principal assured governors that there was a clear quality improvement plan in place to help this improvement to continue.

The vice chair was pleased to note the improvements and successes. However, she raised a challenge in relation to the college taking learners with lower grades onto A Levels, particularly asking how closely the college tracks the value added for these learners to ensure that A Levels are the right course of study. The vice principal assured the committee that recruitment practices have been robust, including interviews with learners to ensure A Levels are a suitable choice. Furthermore, beyond enrolment, the head of sixth form works hard to ensure these learners are on the right course and that they will achieve their qualifications and have every chance to succeed. She indicated that there was definitely a culture of not allowing students to drop an A Level, with interventions in place for all subjects from week one to support learners to secure three A Levels. The vice chair asked whether the vice principal could analyse the destinations of the learners who came in with lower grades to ensure they had a good outcome. The vice principal agreed that the destinations of 2025/26 A-Level students who enrolled with lower entry grades would be specifically analysed and presented to the committee as a standalone dataset in March 2027.

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One governor asked whether the college tries to understand what was done differently to have increased and decreased achievements in specific subjects. The vice principal explained that the data is split by teacher and trends are analysed, along with students' starting points, and is closely monitored. 'At risk' meetings take place at head of department and curriculum area lead level. A key change has been made to the role and focus of achievement coaches, and Year 13 tutorials have moved online to enable them to be delivered to larger groups, leaving more time for the achievement coaches to chase and support students. She also explained that students are strongly encouraged to use the LRC more frequently for independent study. The governor was assured, but he noted that there could be a decline in the grades and overall skills seen as the college takes more students with lower grades on entry.

The chair acknowledged that the sixth form was on a positive trajectory, particularly commending the improvement by two ALPS points in one year.

AGREED: to note the content of the report.

11 **CURRICULUM UPDATES**

The vice principal: curriculum and quality presented a detailed update relating to several matters.

2024/25 exam results

- The GCSE Biology pass rate declined by 3% to 97%, but the entries increased from 17 to 100 in 2024/25. The reason for this drastic increase was that foundation T-Level learners need to study this qualification to support their progression to T Levels in animal care and health. The percentage of learners achieving grades 9-4 declined from 61.9% to 34.7%, so there is more work to do.
- The pass rate for vocational qualifications with external exams or assessments was 78.2%, which marked a decline of 12.7% compared with 2023/24. Electrical had the biggest impact on this outcome, with a pass rate of only 40%, and achievement in this area has been added to the QIAP as a priority for improvement. Despite the reduced pass rate, high-grade achievement across all subjects improved by 4.2% to 46%.
- The pass rate for Level 3 vocational qualifications with external exams or assessments was 94.5%, an improvement of 2.1% compared with 2023/24. Overall high-grade achievement increased by 8% to 66.9%, reflecting the impact of improvements introduced across the college.
- The first cohort of T-Level learners completed their programmes in 2024/25, with a pass rate 100%. Achievement of high grades was at 91.8%, and these exceptional results were noted to be a testament to teachers' and learners' hard work and planning.

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Governors commended the T-Level results, describing these as fantastic and noting that they compared well to the national picture.

One governor asked whether there were lessons to be learned from the excellent T-Level results to improve delivery in other areas. The vice principal explained that each head of department had taken a different approach to teaching and learning within the T-Level qualifications. They had shared practice internally and externally, and the principal was involved to ensure resources were in place where needed and met the required standard. The planning and implementation of the T Levels was done very, very well, as evidenced by the results. The principal agreed, particularly acknowledging the hard work put in by staff and how innovatively they embraced these programmes. However, he explained that it can be very hard to emulate this in areas where there is not the same 'blank slate' as there was when T Levels were first introduced. Nonetheless, sharing of practice is in place across the college, and heads of department and teachers have been empowered to deliver course content in a way that suits the subject area and the learners.

Progression to Higher Education

- The actual destinations for 2024/25 leavers will not be available until later in the academic year, but governors were briefly informed that 23% of learners who studied Level 3 classroom-based courses and programmes (including Access to HE) have recorded that their intended destination was university. This is roughly the same as in the previous academic year.

2025/26 curriculum plan

- The T-Level offer will remain the same as over the previous two years (T-Level Engineering, Manufacturing, Processing and Control; T-Level Education and Childcare; T-Level Surveying and Design for Construction; T-Level Building Services Engineering for Construction; T-Level Digital Production, Design and Development; T-Level Maintenance, Installation and Repair for Engineering and Manufacturing; T-Level Animal Care and Management; and T Level Health). However, for 2025/26, an assisting teaching pathway has been added to T-Level Education and Childcare.
- T-Level Marketing was intended for 2025/26, but the number of applicants was too low and so this will not run.
- Other than in professional construction (surveying and design) and early years, the college is able to offer alternative Level routes for all T Level subjects.
- The GCSE resit programme, Boost, has been relocated to the sixth form.
- Pre-3 is now called Flourish and has also moved to the Chesterfield Road campus under the business department.

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- The new Roots provision is part of the alternative offer and is aimed at learners who are not yet ready for mainstream education. The aim is to nurture them to re-engage with education.
- The college has reintroduced Level 2 painting and decorating to meet demand, and there are more bespoke '.5' programmes in construction, hairdressing, and catering.
- The college has introduced a vocational health and social care qualification which can be taken as an alternative to studying three A Levels. This is to provide a more flexible offer and is for students who wish to progress to university rather than to a career in health and social care. Students who wish to progress to the latter would be signposted to the health and social care curriculum area to take a qualification offered under that department.
- Two online Access to HE courses have been removed due to declining learner numbers and retention, and part-time Access to HE courses have also been removed due to low retention.
- The Curriculum and Assessment Review update is due in the autumn and will give the college more guidance as to what else to expect from curriculum reform.

The chair questioned how the adult offer might evolve through devolution and whether the college is seeing any risks in terms of the quality of teaching and learning. The vice principal indicated that the college is constantly reviewing its offer to align with EMCCA and national priorities as well as local need. There is more tailored and unregulated learning available, and the college is analysing destinations from this type of provision as success is more about destinations than passing a qualification.

The principal agreed that the college is in a really good place in relation to adult education, and the adult learning team has put in a lot of hard work to boost the offer and ensure people secure good quality and sustained employment. He reminded the committee that, considering the priorities of the devolved authority combined with the move of adult skills from the Department for Education to the Department for Work and Pensions, the focus on getting people into work will be ever more important. The college needs to continue to challenge itself to do more and to do the right thing, ensuring that it is not allowing itself to be held back. He assured governors that the college has made a good impression on senior EMCCA councillors, and he hopes they will feel able to pass on and recommend some of the good practice witnessed during their visits. Currently, he feels that the college is ahead in terms of adult learning and skills.

The chair agreed that there will be more of a focus and challenge in relation to adult skills in future. It was also discussed that there is a need for balance – although some people need to access any job as quickly as

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possible in order to ensure they are engaged in work, more will benefit from being equipped with good quality skills to enable them to provide for themselves and their families in the longer term.

AGREED: to note the content of the report.

12 **OFSTED UPDATE**

The vice principal: curriculum and quality provided a verbal update in relation to the revised Ofsted inspection framework, informing governors that:

- The new inspection framework is very different to the old one – the single-word descriptors have been removed and replaced by scorecard judgements.
- There will be no ‘overall effectiveness’ grade.
- At a whole college level, ‘safeguarding’ will be judged on a two-point scale as either ‘met’ or ‘not met’.
- Also at a whole college level, judgements will be given on a five-point scale against ‘inclusion’, ‘leadership and governance’, and ‘contribution to meeting local skills needs’.
- Provision type judgements will be given in relation to ‘curriculum, teaching and training’; ‘achievement’; and ‘participation and development’. Separate judgements will be given for ‘programmes for young learners’, ‘adults’, ‘apprentices’, and ‘learners with high needs’. These will also use the five-point scale.
- The five-point scale will use the following judgements: ‘urgent improvement’, ‘needs attention’, ‘expected standard’, ‘strong standard’, and ‘exceptional’.
- Ofsted will start under the assumption that the college is at ‘expected standard’, but the college will then have to meet all the criteria within that judgement to be awarded it. If anything starts to exceed the criteria, the inspectors will start to look at this under the ‘strong standard’ judgement; however, again, all criteria will need to be met in order for this to be awarded.
- The approach will now be ‘secure fit’ rather than ‘best fit’.
- It is felt that fewer colleges will meet the ‘exceptional’ judgement and fewer will meet ‘urgent improvement’. In short, it is felt that ‘expected standard’ will be the new ‘good’.
- Nonetheless, the vice principal explained that the bar has been raised significantly for ‘expected standard’, and the new framework is clearly intended to set very high expectations.
- There is more focus on inclusion, which is completely integrated into ‘curriculum teaching and training’, ‘achievement’, and ‘participation and development’ and has been fully woven through these categories.
- Quality assurance processes will look very different to what colleges are accustomed to.

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- Colleges will be given five to six days' notice, and three planning meetings will take place before inspectors arrive.
- The first inspections will only be conducted by the full-time inspection team. These will start from November 2025, and there will be no inspections during the week before Christmas.
- There will be a definite focus on learners with SEND, learners without a Level 2 in maths, learners who are looked after and home educated, and those with high needs and EHCPs.
- The college has already changed its internal processes, documentation and data dashboards to align with and reflect the new framework. PMR meetings have been changed to involve a closer look at inclusion, and more critical friends have been invited to join in the scorecard reviews to share practice and balance judgements as the college start to operate under the new framework and this 'secure fit' approach.
- Ofsted will be reviewing its intervention policies and will release these shortly.

The chair advised that feedback from the pilots is that the standards to reach 'exceptional' are very, very high.

Governors were reminded that a dedicated development session had been arranged to take place over Microsoft Teams at 18:00 on Monday 3rd November. This session will be recorded so that those governors who are unable to attend can still watch it.


AGREED: to note the update provided.

13 **PERFORMANCE REPORT – DATA ON A PAGE**

The assistant principal: quality and standards introduced this item, particularly drawing the committee's attention to the following data:

Education programmes for young people

- Overall attendance (85.9%) is 1.5% below the position reported in October 2024. Retention (97.7%) is 0.2% below the position reported in October 2024 but is still 8.8% above the national average. The progress score (0.00) is the same as was reported in October 2024.
- Vocational attendance (86.7%) is 2.3% lower than in October 2024. The vocational progress score is 0.00, which is the same as was reported in October 2024.
- English attendance (79.5%) is 0.9% below the position reported in October 2024. The English progress score is 0.00, which is the same as was reported in October 2024.
- Maths attendance (78.7%) is 2.3% below what it was in October 2024. The maths progress score is 0.00, which is the same as was reported in October 2024.

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Adult learning programmes

- Direct delivery attendance (85.6%) is 3.6% below the position reported in October 2024. Retention (96.9%) is 1% above the position reported to the committee in October 2024. It is also 4.7% higher than the national rate of 92.2%. The direct delivery progress score, at -0.00, is slightly better than was reported in October 2024 (-0.33).
- Subcontracted delivery retention (92.5%) is 0.6% lower than in October 2024 but is still 0.3% above the national rate. Achievement (70%) is 18.2% below the position reported to the committee in October 2024 and is 16.8% below the national average.
- Community delivery retention (93.3%) is 6.7% below October 2024's position but is 1.1% above the national average. Achievement (83.3%) is 4.2% below the percentage reported to the committee in October 2024 and is 3.5% below the national average.

Apprenticeships – direct delivery

- Attendance (91.1%) is 2.4% above the position reported in October 2024. Retention (79.3%) is 2.5% below the position reported in October 2024. Achievement (9.8%) is 0.2% below October 2024 and 44.8% below the national rate.
- Recording of 20% off-the-job training (26.1%) is 2.6% above what it was in October 2024. Recording of six hours of off-the job training (7.6%) is 0.7% below what it was in October 2024.
- Reviews in the last three months (58.8%) shows a decline of 23% against the position reported in October 2024.

Data in relation to learners with high needs and free school meals was not available at the point of the meeting deadline.

BAME

- Attendance (87.7%) is 0.3% below the percentage reported in October 2024. Retention (98.8%) is 0.7% above the position reported in October 2024. The progress score is 0.00, which is the same as at this point in 2024.

At the date of the meeting, no scorecard reviews had yet taken place in 2025/26.

In response to a query from the chair, it was confirmed that the variances shown within the report are against the data which was presented to the Standards Committee at this same point last year (i.e. October 2024).

One governor asked whether the drop in learners having had reviews was due to a lapse over the summer. The assistant principal confirmed that it is partly as a result of annual leave and holidays. However, reviews

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in building services and air conditioning and refrigeration were put on hold somewhat to allow the focus to be on teaching as preparing learners for their endpoint assessments has been the priority. In summary, there is a narrative and no risk in relation to this decline at this stage. This was noted with assurance by the committee.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

14 **2024/25 IN-YEAR EXCEPTIONS REPORTS**

The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience presented her detailed combined report.

Safeguarding and Prevent

- At the 2024/25 yearend, safeguarding referrals were almost 1,000 above the same point in 2023/24.
- Quite a lot of these related to attendance concerns. This increase was partly because the college introduced an indicator into its registers which enabled non-attendance of high-risk learners to be flagged to safeguarding. This often generated three or four concerns per day as the team would receive a notification for every instance of absence through the day. The vice principal explained that she does not see this as a negative occurrence as it means that the team can take the necessary actions quickly.
- Referrals to external agency were largely in line with the previous year.
- There were 13 Prevent concerns, one of which went all the way to a Channel panel. No further action was taken as a result, but this was the first of the college's concerns to be escalated to Channel.
- Child-on-child/student-on-student sexual harassment almost halved in 2024/25 compared with 2023/24, and it is felt that this was due to the tutorial work relating to informed consent and sexual harassment and violence.
- However, drug and alcohol-related concerns almost doubled, and concerns around family breakdown and dynamics also increased. The college saw more honour-based abuse concerns than it had ever seen before, and one of these resulted in a young person being removed from the family home.
- Concerns relating to suicidal thoughts/ideation and mental health and wellbeing doubled compared with 2023/24.
- External sexual harassment and violence concerns increased, primarily due to concerns on public transport, and these complaints were largely made by females. The bus companies willingly worked with the college to identify perpetrators, and incidents were escalated to the police where the victims wished to do so.
- Progress against the safeguarding development plan was also presented for governors' attention. Safeguarding was subject to

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an internal audit in 2024/25, so the college did not conduct its own safeguarding audit during that academic year. Student-related safeguarding received a clean bill of health with only a couple of minor recommendations issued. These related to safer recruitment and have been actioned.

- The vice principal made governors aware that the HR director is now the deputy senior designated safeguarding lead and is picking up all staff concerns. The college also recruited an additional member of staff to the safeguarding team over the summer.

One governor asked whether the decline in some of the statistics is symptomatic of a transitional change within society as a result of the impact of the COVID lockdown on the early secondary school experience of young people throughout 2020-2022. The vice principal indicated that the college is definitely still seeing the impact of lockdown, as so many young people missed out on two years of social growth and forming peer relationships. As a result, last year, the college amended its datasets to separate bullying concerns from those relating to peer relationships, with the latter including low-level, immature peer interactions and minor fallouts rather than outright bullying. It was agreed that it would be interesting to see the data over the next couple of years to explore whether there is a tangible link, as students who will be progressing to the college in 2027 and 2028 had a comparably normal secondary school experience.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

- The vice principal presented a progress update against the action plan, which also includes updates against the Community Engagement Strategy as there is a significant amount of overlap.
- The expected revised guidance on gender questioning children did not arrive over the summer, but the college changed its processes last year to reflect the interim guidance.
- The family learning programme has been launched and is being promoted in schools and around the local community.
- The relational/trauma-informed approaches that were piloted in health and social care last academic year are being rolled out in hair and beauty and English and maths. CPD has been provided for these teams, and mentoring has been provided for the heads of department, funded through the Virtual School.
- The college has signed up to the Attachment Research Community (ARC), which is a national trauma-informed research community. The self-assessment has been completed.
- The college also signed up to the AoC Mental Health Charter in late 2024/25.
- The summary of EDI concerns, when compared with 2023/24, shows increases in relation to sexual harassment and violence

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(external to the college), bullying/peer relationships, and online abuse. These increased by 33, 45 and 15 respectively.

- Some of the outcomes for priority learners show quite significant gaps, particularly pass rates for those with high needs or EHCPs, care leavers, and young people in foster care, supported housing and residential care. The vice principal issued the caveat that there are small numbers of individuals within these categories, and one student makes a big impact on the data. Reasons for the gaps in pass rates are being explored, but there is certainty that this relates to English and maths rather than vocational pass rates. The KPIs for this academic year reflect the fact that a key focus is to improve pass rates for priority learners.
- Attendance for supported housing continues to be of significant concern, and the college is working with the virtual school and the YMCA. It may also be possible to fund a programme for the YMCA's NEET residents through the Youth Guarantee project. It is hoped that this would have a positive impact and encourage these learners to get engaged in something.
- The gap in pass rates for ethnic minority students has now been closed, and these students were ahead of college averages in 2024/25.
- The publication of the Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance for 2025/26 was delayed, but there were not many changes in the final guidance. The document has been sent to governors, and members were reminded to email the head of governance to confirm once they have read this guidance. The vice principal will present her annual safeguarding update to the board in October as part of governors' mandatory training.
- The safeguarding and EDI development plans were presented to the committee, and the vice principal confirmed that the safeguarding and EDI link governors had also seen these. The plans have also been through the relevant steering groups.
- New additions to the safeguarding development plan for 2025/26 were the GRIT programme and completing the ARC self-assessment and implementing resultant recommendations. Furthermore, the challenge in relation to supported housing remains, and this work needs to continue.
- Within the EDI action, new additions include the Cities of Sanctuary, which is linked to work to support refugees and asylum seekers; work relating to the AoC Mental Health Charter; and an action to implement neurodiversity training for all staff and leaders across the college.
- Year-to-date safeguarding data showed 421 safeguarding incidents referred through CPOMS at the time of writing the report. By the date of the committee meeting, this had increased to 495. This level of reports was similar to the previous year.

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- In addition to the above, there had already been 221 contacts with external agencies, and the team had attended 18 social care meetings. These reflected a slight increase on the previous year.
- Attendance continues to behind a significantly high number of referrals, but this considered to be positive as it shows that concerns are being reported.
- There are only four young people on a Child in Need Plan plus a further one closed, which is significantly fewer than in previous years. However, there are seven students and one unborn child on Child Protection Plans. Particularly in relation to the latter individual, the college is heavily involved in supporting the learner concerned.
- There are currently 96 care experienced young people and 65 young carers enrolled to the college.
- There has been an increase in the number of students who were home educated or in alternative provision, with 188 currently enrolled.
- There has also been a significant increase in students with ECHPs or who are likely to be categorised as high needs, with 244 EHCPs and almost 300 students who may be in the high needs category. As a comparison, the vice principal explained that the college ended 2024/25 with 220 students in the high needs category.

The vice chair asked whether those who were formerly home educated are aged 16+ or whether the college has been receiving enquiries from young people (or parents of young people) in Key Stage 4. The vice principal indicated that the college does receive a number of enquiries as to whether it offers provision for 14-16-year-olds who have been home educated. She reminded governors that the college did offer this provision in the past but stopped, largely due to concerns about being able to safeguard that age group on such a large campus as Derby Road. Therefore, all individuals included within the college's statistics are 16+. The vice chair questioned whether there might be pressure from the community to start offering 14-16 again. The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience confirmed that the Executive team has this conversation fairly regularly, but the thought of accommodating this age group still makes her nervous due to the safeguarding challenges.

The vice chair asked whether it might be possible to offer something online, but both vice principals expressed the concern that the young people would not engage sufficiently well with online provision. The vice principal: curriculum and quality also said that she would have quality concerns.

It was discussed that a lot of the Flourish learners have been home educated, as many young people now are. It was noted to be another

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'hangover' from COVID that more and more parents are choosing to educate their young people at home.

- Continuing with her report, the vice principal drew governors' attention to the fact that the 'raising the flag' movement has resulted in some young people expressing unacceptable views in class, causing an unpleasant working environment for other students and staff members. One young person has been removed from the college as a result of using racist language. A subgroup of the EDI Steering Group will look at how to positively challenge these views and educate people. The college needs to promote the positive impact that asylum seekers and refugees can have on the community, and celebratory events and guest speakers are being looked into.
- There have been no changes to the safeguarding and Prevent risk register – this is likely to remain the same until at least Christmas.
- The proposed safeguarding and EDI KPIs were:
 - To reduce the attendance gaps for all care experienced and those open to social care by 5% and, where the gap is less than 5%, reduce the gap so that attendance is in line with the college average.
 - To improve the retention of young people in supported housing by 20%.
 - To reduce NEETs by 1.5% in respect of the following categories – those in receipt of FCM, those who are high needs, and those who are care experienced.
 - To reduce the number of bullying/peer relationship related issues.
 - To improve the pass rates of all priority groups, in particular care experienced young people, young people open to social care, and those with high needs.

The principal commented on the data challenge created by being inclusive, and he indicated that it is really important for governors to be aware of this. One of the roles of the board is to set the educational character of the college, and it would be really beneficial if governors could formally agree within a minuted meeting that they would be happy for the educational character of the college to continue being so inclusive. This would mean that, when the college is inspected, the board and the Executive can stand together. He would like this to be an agenda item so that there can be a discussion acknowledging the challenge but agreeing that this is the best thing to do for the college's community. The chair indicated that helping people is in the DNA of Further Education, with colleges being anchor institutions in their communities, and he would be in support of the principal's request. The vice chair agreed with this sentiment but raised a note of caution that the college must be able to evidence the positive impact of what it is doing, not just through data but through case studies. Case studies will reflect these successes in a way that basic data cannot.

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AGREED:

- to note the content of the update provided
- to approve the safeguarding action plan and KPIs for 2025/26
- to approve the EDI action plan and KPIs for 2025/26.

15

ALS (ADULTS) REPORT

The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience presented this new report, explaining that the requirement had arisen as a result of an audit recommendation. The Audit Committee had requested that the information be presented to the Standards Committee.

The report exhibited the number of disability declarations received from learners aged 19+ who do not fall within high needs or have an EHCP.

Last year, the college received 1,000 declarations for a SEND need and claimed support for around a third of these. Most of claims were made retrospectively. Removing blank entries (where the exact support need has not been disclosed) and 'other' medical conditions (where it is unlikely that specific support would be needed) leaves 918 declarations, with the majority of these relating to autism spectrum disorders, dyslexia and mental health.

This analysis suggested that the college was not being as proactive as it might be in matching these declarations at enrolment to an assessment of what each individual might need, above and beyond a smaller class size, to enable them to access learning effectively. This may not necessarily be in-class support – it could be adaptations to resources or the provision of equipment, which can form part of the claim for funding support. The vice principal recommended that she and the assistant principal: inclusion carry out more work on this to look at how the college might match the declarations more effectively with the assessment and provision of support, with a focus on the main areas of declaration. She suggested that she would then bring a progress update back to the Standards Committee in late spring 2026, when she would hope to see greater parity.

The chair asked what the total of the Adult Skills Fund, and it was confirmed that this was almost £7m in 2025/26. The chair also asked how much of the ALS was covered through the Adult Skills Fund last year, and it was confirmed that this was less than £100k.

The chair indicated that other colleges are having similar conversations and that this was a prudent piece of work, albeit it is a challenge. It was discussed that apprentices are another challenge in respect of ALS, particularly as apprentices are often less inclined to disclose a need as they are worried that this might impact or endanger their job.

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The principal explained that there is a challenge as adults tend to be enrolled very quickly and additional needs are not always identified. He indicated that the college had just approved the creation of a post to support this work, and the vast majority of adult provision had been brought into the enrolment process alongside 16-18s, which should help in relation to identifying support needs.

Governor welcomed the vice principal's suggestion that there should be further analysis, and it was agreed that the college must keep track of this.

AGREED: to note the content of the update, particularly that an update will be presented in late spring 2026.

16 **CEIAG – OUTCOMES OF THE PEER REVIEW ACTIVITY WITH CHESTERFIELD COLLEGE**

The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience presented the outcomes of the peer review.

EMCCA has introduced the Careers Impact Review, the first stage of which is a self-assessment process involving employees across the organisation. The second stage involves going through the outcomes of this as part of a peer review. The college carried out the self-assessment in the early summer. This involved a fairly broad approach with a significant number of people, including heads of department, teachers of classroom-based learning, the vice principal: curriculum and quality, and the assistant principal: quality and standards. However, as the college did not ask individuals to focus on those questions or areas about which they had the most knowledge, some scores were probably lower than they would have been had a more directed approach been taken. Some other colleges tailored this more precisely, with teachers only answering curriculum questions, for example. The vice principal explained that, therefore, the college would review the approach this next year.

The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience and the careers and employability manager visited Chesterfield College to take part in the peer review. They found this very useful, particularly the insight into what others are doing and the sharing of practice which this made possible. At the end of the process, EMCCA produced a report and action plan for the college.

The vice principal explained that the key priority from this action plan will be to develop a shared careers approach across the college. There are now dedicated careers links in place to explore how careers can be embedded into curriculum delivery, and a Gatsby benchmark review is being carried out within each area to inform an individualised development plan per area.

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In addition to this, EMCCA has introduced a triage service in relation to careers and has split schools and colleges into tiers, depending on the strength of their careers service. The college has been placed in the 'thriving' tier; therefore, this will be very light touch, with relevant meetings between the college and EMCCA only taking place twice a year.

The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience recently attended a strategic careers workshop hosted by the AoC, outlining the government's national strategy in relation to modern work experience. At the moment, this is being developed within schools, and the ambition is to give young people five days' work experience between Years 7 and 9 and then another five days in Years 10 and 11. The discussion during the workshop was how this modern work experience process might work within an FE setting. There will be a three-tier approach depending on the age group of the young people, but the concern is that there is not a 'one size fits all' level that can be applied to college students. The vice principal agreed to provide updates as and when possible.

The principal advised that one of the devolved authority's priorities is to have a 'single front door' for work placement, and he is trying to persuade the other D2N2 principals that this should be the colleges. Colleges already have employer links in place and understand barriers to employment, and it would be really positive if EMCCA would agree.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided

17 **EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT**

The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience presented an update against the yearend milestones for 2025/26, along with the employer survey results and an update in relation to the LSIP.

Key highlights relating to the milestones were as follows:

- The Mansfield and Ashfield Business Network continues to go from strength to strength. A successful awards evening was held in March, and the college is appointing a specific events role to work with MABN and the college, including organising business learning company events with the students and to also tie in with the events element of the Mansfield Ambition Exchange.
- The college's new website will be launched on 11th November and will contain significantly improved employer facing content.
- Towards the end of October, the college will launch an AF Switchgear Academy at the Gene Haas Centre.
- One frustration this year was that the implementation of the Skills Builder framework into Pro Monitor was not possible due to a technical incompatibility. However, Skills Builder has agreed that the college can develop something itself using this framework but in a way that will integrate with systems. It is now just a case of waiting for capacity to arise within the IT team. The

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first round of curriculum planning meetings has taken place, and heads of department were all able to confidently talk about how they were embedding the framework.

The LSIP report was attached for governors' attention. The vice principal indicated that the college would be keeping a close eye on this as it was likely that the introduction of EMCCA since the LSIP was first published would bring about some changes.

Penultimately, the vice principal informed governors that the college has agreed to implement a senior level post to oversee engagement with employers and the connection of these relationships to curriculum offers, design and delivery.

Finally, governors were reminded that the college has been working with NTU on a joint employer offer. The university has a complex structure to navigate and there have been some delays, but the project is now getting very close to enabling joint conversations to take place with employers.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

18 **LEARNER VOICE**

The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience presented her report in relation to two exit surveys.

The apprenticeship exit survey had a low response rate, so the results do not present a true picture. The areas with the most apprentices – construction and engineering – had the lowest response rate to the survey, and this is something to work on. However, results were largely positive. The main issue was the impact that training was perceived to have had on apprentices' personal performance. There was good news in terms of outcomes: 48.4% of the respondents gained employment with their current provider; 15.8% had received a salary increase; 7.4% had been promoted; and 20% had progressed to further study.

The main exit survey had a much better response rate of 2,289. On the whole, results were really positive, with the college falling into the top two quartiles in all but two questions. These related to learners' English skills improving and being contacted in relation to an absence. Even though the college was not in the top two quartiles in respect of these questions, the position had still improved since the last survey. Students were most satisfied with being able to keep themselves safe online, professional standards, and the encouragement they receive to take responsibility for their own learning. Compared to other colleges, students being able to access wider learning opportunities was the college's biggest strength. This was good to know as the college works hard on providing enrichment opportunities. Overall perception had improved, showing a 4% improvement in the percentage of students that would recommend the college to a friend. 97% of respondents agreed

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that WNC was a good college. The breakdown by directorate shows that engineering students are the least satisfied overall, with only 90% agreeing that the programme has met their expectations.

It was discussed that, during the health check visit, the DfE highlighted apprenticeship learner voice as something on which the college needs to focus. Thought will be given to how this can be improved.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

19 **PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT ACTION PLAN AND POST-SUMMER UPDATE**

The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience presented her report.

This year's parent information sessions are starting soon. 46 of these took place last year, and the college saw an impact in terms of conversion from these sessions – it tended to be 3% higher than the college average.

Curriculum teams hold 'meet the tutor' events at application stage and undertake a significant amount of transition work for those who might find it the most challenging to access college.

The 'Welcome to West Notts' e-booklet has also been issued this year. This has generated 5,383 views, 2,500 active users, and 20,343 event counts (clicking the links within the booklet, such as the calendar or uniform expectations). The average time spent on each link was 20 seconds.

When providing the last parental engagement update, the vice principal was hopeful that the college may be getting close to introducing an app for parent. However, the only company that was willing to provide such an app for an FE college has withdrawn from this market. The computer science head of department has developed an email notification system for his students, and the vice principal was able to inform the committee that it may be possible to roll this out across the wider college.

The proposed action plan presented no significant changes from last year.

AGREED:

- to note the content of the update provided
- to approve the proposed action plan for 2025/26

20 **COMMUNITY PLEDGE 2025/26 – UPDATE AGAINST PLEDGES**

The vice principals presented their report, which informed the committee of progress made against the pledges. It was noted that the curriculum changes had been detailed and discussed throughout the meeting via the other reports. However, items of note that had not been mentioned were:

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- The college was considering introducing Level 2 apprenticeships within early years.
- The degree-level social work programme had been launched via NTU and would link to the college's Level 3 provision.
- The Mansfield Ambition Exchange launched in September, and the first networking meeting took place there on 25th September.
- Work has commenced on the Portland Square site.

AGREED: to note the progress against the actions within the Community Pledge 2025/26.

21 COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE 2025/26

The head of governance presented the updated Terms of Reference, which included all updates requested during the previous committee meeting, as follows:

- Clause 4.8 to be modified to refer specifically to curriculum and teaching and learning complaints.
- The Terms of Reference to state that the committee will, 'continue to scrutinise the Ofsted standard implemented and adapt to this.'
- In relation to link governors, the Terms of Reference to ensure that these essential areas are reflected and tight reporting mechanisms are in place.
- Amendments to the membership and quoracy (a minimum of two external members to be present) were approved by both the committee and the board in summer 2025 and have also been incorporated into the document.

Governors were invited to discuss whether any further updates were necessary and whether any further detail was needed in relation to the Ofsted inspection framework. It was noted that this detail had never been included in the Terms of Reference before, and that the conversation in June had been along the lines of acknowledging that the committee should remain flexible and aware of any changes to the framework.

If they did not require any further changes, governors were invited to recommend the Terms of Reference to the Corporation Board for approval.

The vice chair suggested that SEND should be more prominent within the Terms of Reference, and it was also agreed that there should be a greater focus on inclusion. The principal indicated that there is scope to reflect the Ofsted framework within the Terms of Reference, and it was agreed that the vice principal: curriculum and quality and head of governance would work together to implement these changes. It was agreed that the head of governance would then circulate the new version of the Terms of Reference to all committee members via email so that feedback could

Head of
Gov. / VP:
C&Q

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be given and approval could then be sought from the Corporation Board. To get this in place as quickly as possible, it was agreed that every effort would be made to finalise this by Thursday 9th October.

AGREED:

- that the Terms of Reference would be developed further and circulated to the committee for feedback
- that approval would be sought from the Corporation Board once a final version had been agreed by the committee.

22 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There were no items of additional business.

23 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

This was confirmed to be Tuesday 2nd December 2025 at 17:00.

The meeting closed at 19:30.

Signed: _____  _____ Chair

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