



***Minutes of the Corporation Board meeting held on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> July 2025 at 17:00***

**GOVERNORS** Kate Truscott, Chair  
**PRESENT:** Andrew Cropley, Principal & Chief Executive Officer  
 Ben Owen, Vice Chair (until 18:30)  
 Neil McDonald  
 Kudzai Muzangaza  
 Jane Peacock  
 Joanna Poon  
 Edward Rawson  
 Rob Simcox  
 Keith Spiers  
 Paul Wheeler

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** Jonathan Mills, Special Advisor: Employer Engagement  
 Louise Knott, Vice Principal: Communications, Engagement & Student Experience  
 Diane Booth, Vice Principal: Curriculum & Quality  
 Jon Fearon, Finance Director  
 Gavin Peake, Director: IT, Estates & Learning Resources  
 Sian Geeson, Director: Human Resources & Organisational Development  
 Eloise Hopkinson, Head of Governance

|          |  | <b>ACTION<br/>by whom</b> | <b>DATE<br/>by when</b> |
|----------|--|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>1</b> | <b><u>WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></b><br>Apologies for absence were received from Flynn Bainbridge, Arina Borscakova, Nick Butler, David Gillies, Alison Griffiths, Charles Heaton, Theresa Hodgkinson, Kit Salt, Scott Smith and Andrew Spencer. |                           |                         |
| <b>2</b> | <b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u></b><br>The chair reminded everyone present to declare any interests that they may have on matters to be discussed. No specific declarations were made and standing declarations were noted.   |                           |                         |
| <b>3</b> | <b><u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2025</u></b><br>The minutes were reviewed, and it was agreed that they were an accurate record of discussions.<br><br>AGREED: to approve the minutes of the meetings held on 15 <sup>th</sup> May 2025.           |                           |                         |

Signed: Kate Truscott Meeting Chair

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There were no matters arising.

**4 ACTION PROGRESS REPORT**

The board were happy to note the content of the update provided.

**5 SCENE SETTING**

The chair briefly set the scene for the meeting, which was the final board meeting of the academic year. The chair indicated that this had been a very successful one and she was looking forward to seeing even more achievements in 2025/26.

The chair offered sincere and heartfelt thanks to Neil McDonald, chair of the Audit Committee, who was resigning from the board at the close of the academic year. He had provided a very high level of service to college during his term of office, with an outstanding contribution to the life of the college. A lot had changed in the years since 2018, and the college was described as being in a different place largely due to Neil's contribution as a committee chair, chair of the bksb Board of Directors before the sale of that subsidiary company, and his input into the learning company activity. In short, he was instrumental to the college's success.

**6 SPECIAL ADVISOR UPDATE: EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT**

The special advisor to the board provided an update following the commencement of his work, including conversations with senior leaders and a positive meeting with heads of department. His findings had resulted in several recommendations for governors to consider, and he provided governors with a summary of these:

- Variable engagement models  
Employer engagement must reflect the operational realities of different sectors, and this needs to be structured and aligned more efficiently. Agile or project-based small to medium employers benefit from short, flexible sessions or feedback loops. Site-based employers are more suited to structured, in-person employer advisory panels. To better serve both, the college could explore a dual model, with both a core annual curriculum validation session per department and supplementary agile engagement offers throughout the year to break the information down for smaller businesses.
- Panel review and accountability  
Secondly, it was found that there was no formal review process for the employer advisory panels, and there were limited feedback loops with heads of department. To strengthen oversight, he suggested the implementation of an annual review cycle assessing strategic alignment and attendance, quality of employer feedback, and curriculum influence and employer satisfaction. This would hopefully strengthen feedback and employer satisfaction from the employer advisory panels and encourage higher attendance levels at the meetings.

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there seem to be a lot of actions. The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience indicated that it would be necessary to commence the actions quite quickly. If the college intended to have a single employer advisory panel meeting which would present an opportunity to validate the curriculum plan, this would need to take place in November. Certificates and plaques would be rolled out in the first term, and fabrication and welding could perhaps help to produce the plaques. The proposed 'you said, we did' update would be issued termly, with the annual impact report published towards the end of the academic year.

One governor particularly supported the idea of recognising employers' contributions to the college, observing that this could be motivational for them.

The principal indicated that different sectors have a different dynamic, and he raised a question about the potential to use the surveys/forms suggested by the special advisor to encourage employers to advise what they can offer to the college as well as stating what they want from the college. The employer panels are one way of securing employers' commitment to offering work placements, but SMEs struggle to engage with these. In respect of the latter employers, the employer engagement team can be used to help promote the college's need for student placements.

One governor agreed that some very insightful points had been presented and asked the Executive team to expand upon when this would need to be completed. A question particularly put forward was whether the college has the appropriate resources in place to implement these changes in the ideal timescale, in terms of both people and systems. The vice principal explained that the proposals should streamline the activity. There is a well-established CRM system in place, so it will be a case of using this when heads of department are engaging with employers, and not just for apprenticeship engagement.

It was agreed that these proposals would be pulled into an action plan against which governors would receive updates at each board meeting.

AGREED:

- to note the update provided and to endorse the proposed actions
- that the Corporation Board would receive updates against the action plan throughout 2025/26.

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**BALANCED SCORECARD AND ANNUAL KPIS – 2024/25 IN-YEAR**

The vice principal: curriculum and quality presented this report, particularly drawing governors' attention to the following key points:

Attendance

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AGREED: to note the content of the report.

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**QUALITY AND STANDARDS**

The committee chair presented his in-depth report and invited any questions. He noted that many of the items of note from the Quality Improvement Action Plan had been covered earlier in the meeting, but he informed the board of other key points as follows:

- Data relating to intended destinations provided a positive picture. 82.5% of learners recorded a positive intended destination, including 26.4% who stated that they intended to pursue an apprenticeship or full-time employment. Demand for apprenticeships has outstripped supply, particularly in construction, and work was ongoing in relation to 'plan B' options. 91.6% of A-Level learners had recorded a positive intended destination overall, including 73.3% of Year 13s stating that they intended to go to university.
- CPOMS referrals continued to show a year-on-year increase. It was remarked to be a positive thing that staff are using this system, and there was a high level of confidence in it. The increase in referrals was agreed to be worrying but symptomatic of the challenges emerging each year. The committee described this as a 'watershed moment' for the college to consider the support given, i.e. in terms of exam access arrangements. The committee had a good debate about this, ultimately agreeing that the college should be preparing young people for work, which will look very different in terms of support offered. It was agreed that this requires a renewed focus. However, the committee also acknowledged that the teams support learners brilliantly.
- The Careers Strategy was recommended by the committee for approval by the Corporation Board.
- The Terms of Reference were not presented for approval as the committee felt that further changes would be necessary once the new Ofsted toolkit had been published. There had been some movement in respect of the toolkit's release; therefore, it was expected that the Terms of Reference would be ready for September's committee meeting and October's board meeting. One thing that was agreed prior to the approval of the Terms of Reference was for the committee membership to increase to nine members (to align with its current membership). Furthermore, while the level of attendance to ensure quoracy would remain at 40% of members present, this would come with a caveat that a minimum of two external governors must be present.

One governor raised a comment in respect of the Ofsted review, suggesting that this should be included in a strategy day or governor development agenda. It has been proposed that the toolkit will be launched in September 2025. It will not be possible to offer governor

Signed:     *Kate Tricot*     Meeting Chair

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development in relation to this until all the details are known; however, it was agreed that an additional governor development date would be added to the calendar in the autumn term, with the focus being the new Ofsted toolkit and changes to the inspection process.

Head of Gov.

Sept 2025

One governor observed that the Quality Improvement Action Plan continues to go from strength to strength. However, it was noted that the document had grown very large, and it was suggested that some consideration should be given to its presentation. The vice principal: curriculum and quality indicated that additions and updates are always highlighted so that readers know where to focus their attention at each new iteration. However, the document will be condensed at the start of the next academic year as historic elements will be removed. It was agreed that the principal and vice principal would look at the QIAP to see whether it would be possible to shrink it and also to explore a redevelopment of the document, considering that the college would be unveiling a new strategy and vision.

Principal /  
VP: C&Q

Sept 2025

The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience presented the updated safeguarding procedures for September 2025. She and the Standards Committee chair explained that the updated Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance for 2025/26 was not available at the point of the committee meeting. However, it was published prior to the board meeting; therefore, the college's process for 2025/26 was available for the Corporation Board to approve. However, governors were asked to note the caveat that some additional guidance in relation to gender questioning children was expected, and this may influence further updates to the college's process if and when it was released. A couple of changes to the college's process were particularly highlighted:

- A paragraph had been added about particular issues faced by care experienced young people.
- The paragraph focusing on IT policies had been amended to include a reference to generative AI

Thanks were given to the chair of the Standards Committee, Ben Owen, who was stepping down from his role as safeguarding link governor. Thanks were given to him for his support. It was confirmed that Kit Salt was stepping into the safeguarding link governor role.

Governors were encouraged to watch the T-Level video which had been uploaded to ShareFile. Some governors had already done so, and they indicated that it was a fantastic video. The vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience agreed that it could be used for marketing purposes, as it included some positive feedback from current students.

As there had been some delays and issues with presenting talking heads videos to recent meetings, governors asked the Executive team to ensure there is a recording available in October. The vice principal:

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curriculum and quality confirmed that staffing resource had been secured to ensure the deadlines could be met in future.

One governor suggested that students could be asked to write about their experiences, and these testimonies could be published on the college's website as case studies for marketing purposes. While it was agreed that this was a good idea, it was noted that young people would be more likely to watch videos when deciding whether or not to apply to the college.

AGREED:

- to note the content of the summary report
- to note the content of the minutes of the meeting
- to note the content of the QIAP report
- to note the content of the combined safeguarding/Prevent, EDI, and priority groups report
- to approve the college's Safeguarding Procedure for 2025/26, as presented, with the caveat that possible further changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education may influence further updates to the college's procedure
- to approve the Careers Strategy 2025-2029, as presented.

Ben Owen left the meeting at 18:30.

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#### **AUDIT AND RISK**

The committee chair presented his report, particularly inviting governors to note the following:

- The internal audit programme was completed in-year, and the committee members were glad to note another year of adequate and substantial assurance. There were no serious – i.e. red RAG-rated – actions emerging from the audits.
- The only cautionary point in terms of the audit plan was a small note that the number of substantial versus adequate outcomes has skewed. The college is expanding in terms of its physical size and student numbers. This means that more people are in place delivering the service, and it is important to work hard to ensure policies, procedures and processes keep up with the college's growth and development. Leaders must ensure that these are continually reviewed to ensure they consistently meet the needs of an ever-expanding college. In addition, the high level of governance needs to be maintained, and governors must also remain ahead of the curve.
- It was noted that Charles Heaton would step into the role of chair of the Audit Committee from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2025.

The committee chair commented that the progress made while he has been a member of the board has been fantastic. All staff, managers and leaders have put in considerable effort put in to achieve the standard

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- to note the content of the minutes of the meeting
- to note the appointment of Charles Heaton as committee chair from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2025
- to note the updated 2024/25 risk register
- to note the Risk Management Strategy 2025/26, as approved by the committee
- to note the internal auditor's progress report
- to note the external auditor's planning memorandum 2024/25, as approved by the committee
- to approve the committee Terms of Reference 2025/26, as presented.

## 10 **FINANCE AND ESTATES**

The committee chair presented his in-depth report, focusing on the following key points:

- The finance director notified the committee of changes to subcontracting arrangements.
  - ATTFE will no longer subcontract for the college, moving forward, as the organisation has now secured its own grant funding from EMCCA.
  - Chameleon had underperformed and so will have a reduction to £100k (with scope for a further reduction in future, if necessary).
  - Qualitrain continued to perform well, and the proposed contract value was £330k.
  - The Inspire and Achieve Foundation had stopped subcontracting with the college and had found a new arrangement.
  - The college was in the process of conducting a quality review with Futures. WNC and Futures have worked together closely over the past few years, and Futures focuses on delivering a National Careers Service programme which focuses on moving people into work. Futures had missed out on EMCCA funding, and the college was looking to protect this offer in Mansfield and Ashfield.
  - White Rose's level of activity was proposed to be retained.
- About 11% of the college's provision is subcontracted, the majority of this within EMCCA.
- The college buys in coaching services from Mansfield Town Football Club and Nottinghamshire Forest Community Trust, which needs to be declared to the Department for Education in line with the funding guidance.
- The college subcontracts two areas of apprenticeship delivery to Nottingham Trent University, namely Level 4 teaching and engineering apprenticeships. The indicative value of this for 2025/26 was £180k.

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contract, and he assured governors that Vaughndale handles contracts in the £2m-£7m range. The company was aware that it was in the running for both contracts, and managers have expressed confidence that they can do both. The work required is quite different between the two projects, so the company can allocate labour and subcontractors appropriately and project manage both builds.

The finalised written resolution for the new lease of the building neighbouring the existing Station Park campus was also presented for information. Governors were made aware that this had met with sufficient approval to be passed, so the college was able to move forward with the leasing of the site.

Governors noted the progress made and how much the college has expanded in recent years.

AGREED:

- to approve the appointment of Vaughndale as the main contractor for Portland Square
- to approve the appointment of Vaughndale to replace the roof and windows at Chesterfield Road
- to note that the written resolution received a majority vote in favour of leasing the site neighbouring Station Park.

### 13 **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

In the absence of the committee chair, a member of the committee delivered the chair's report.

The committee had an in-depth discussion about the proposal to implement a salary sacrifice scheme for higher paid VBSS employees. This voluntary scheme would provide flexibility for some individuals to top up their pensions, and the committee members were happy to recommend this to the board for approval.

One governor agreed that this was a good idea, but leaders must ensure that the message is clear as to who the scheme is for, as employees on lower pay will not be able to access it. The HR director agreed that this will be made this clear in communications about the scheme. On this basis, governors were happy to approve the implementation of the new pension scheme for higher paid VBSS roles.

The committee noted the continued focus on staff recruitment and retention and progress made in respect of hard-to-fill posts. There was a positive update and discussion in relation to the balanced scorecard, and the committee extended thanks to the HR team for their hard work.

It was also noted that mandatory training compliance had progressed further. However, there had been a slight decline in the staff survey response rate – this was subject to a lengthy debate, and governors agreed that low survey response rates are also a national trend across

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- The HR director had applied for the gold Armed Forces Covenant on the college's behalf, and it was confirmed that this application had been successful.
- In September, members of the FE commissioner's team will visit the college to undertake a health check of apprenticeship provision. The outcomes and recommendations emerging from this visit will be reported via the Standards Committee. This visit was suggested at the Annual Strategic Conversation with the Department for Education. The letter summarising the key points from the ASC was provided for governors' information.

In relation to the Gene Haas launch, one governor particularly commented on a video which the college had shared via LinkedIn. This involved an interview with a Formula 1 driver, and the governor stated that it was really positive to see this reach. Governors agreed that they enjoy seeing how the college's social media accounts are conducted, and they commended team for this activity. The principal agreed, indicating that there is not only a great social media presence but that the posts also tend to focus on student-related issues rather than corporate updates.

One governor was particularly pleased to see that the college had been awarded the gold Armed Forces Covenant. He explained that most employers stop at the silver award, so to have the gold is incredibly positive and is something to be proud of. This governor was thanked in turn for the support he had provided throughout the process.

The chair indicated that, for her, the student and staff awards events were a particular highlight. She was very pleased to hear the stories and speeches at these events, and she recommended that her fellow governors attend the 2025/26 events if they can.

AGREED: to note the content of the update.

## 15 **STRATEGY DAY FEEDBACK, FINDINGS AND OUTCOMES**

Following the strategy day in June 2025, the vice principal: communications, engagement and student experience presented the proposed revisions to the mission, vision and values. These will be launched in August.

The new vision will be: "At the centre of prosperous and ambitious communities, where our extraordinary team build powerful collaborations to create transformative and inclusive learning opportunities that equip students, employers and partners with the skills, knowledge and resilience to thrive in a rapidly changing world."

The new mission will be: "To be the college our community needs us to be."

Signed: Kate Troc Meeting Chair

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- to approve the appointment of Corey Spencer as a full member of the Corporation Board and Workforce Development Committee.

**18**      **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The principal thanked governors for their kind messages over the recent period, particularly the chair for her personal and professional support. He also thanked the Executive team for managing the college and upholding standards during his recent absence.

**19**      **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was agreed as Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2025 at 17:00.

It was agreed that confidential matters would be recorded separately.

The meeting closed at 19:30.

Signed:     *Kate Tricot*     Meeting Chair

Date: 16/10/2025