

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION BOARD**

**THURSDAY 23 October 2025**

**Location:** Boardroom 2, Cauldon Campus / Microsoft Teams

**Time:** 09:30

Present:	Jeremy Cartwright, Chair Hassan Rizvi, Principal & CEO Carmen Gonzalez-Eslava Bernard Kumeta Hannah Molloy Tom Nadin Tony Matthews Marcin Musial Steve Sawbridge David Shufflebottom Jenny Scrivens	In person In person In person In person Remote In person In person In person Remote Remote In person
----------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

In Attendance:	Kay Kavanagh, Director of Governance Andrew Tyley, Strategic Finance Adviser Cath Brierley, Deputy Principal Nova Abela, Chief People Officer Dave Hopley, Assistant Principal Student Experience Leigh Crosby, Executive Director Capital and Estates	In person Remote In person Remote In person In person
----------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------

<b>Pre Agenda</b>	Governors received Safeguarding Training from the Assistant Principal Student Experience
-------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<b>No.</b>		<b>Action</b>
<b>1-6</b>	<b>Confidential Agenda</b> See confidential minutes	
<b>7</b>	<b>Welcome &amp; Apologies</b> The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Rob Fisher, Sally Garratt, Raheel Nawaz, Ben Richards, Eli Bray, Aaron Mollart, Chrissy Pawliszyn and Claire Poole.	
<b>8</b>	<b>Declaration of Interest in any of the items on the agenda</b> The Chair reminded everyone present to declare any interests that they may have in agenda items to be discussed. No specific declarations were made and standing declarations were noted.	
<b>9</b>	<b>Minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2025</b> Governors <b>approved</b> the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2025, as a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.	
<b>10</b>	<b>Action Progress Report</b> Governors noted the action progress report.	
<b>11</b>	<b>Student Voice Update</b> The Assistant Principal Student Experience presented the report, confirming that the 2024-25 enrichment programme continues to be a vital part of the student experience, with all students able to participate.	

Over 20 extracurricular activities are offered, engaging 55% of students. Retention among participants is shown to be 4.9% higher than for students not involved.

The college maintains a strong focus on student leadership through Student Council and Student Voice, following a "You said, We did" approach.

Strategic partnerships continue, with opportunities for students to visit Erlangen and South Africa.

The college remains committed to making enrichment accessible and inclusive for all students.

**Key Steps for 2025–26:**

- Programme launched for the new academic year
- Taster sessions held
- Freshers Festival delivered, with positive feedback from students
- Training provided for student representatives
- Appointment of student governors (Eli and Aaron)

The Board noted the action to profile learners engaged in international programmes, including analysis by gender split and BAME background, as referenced in the report.

## **12 Principal/CEO Report**

The Principal & CEO provided the highlights of the report.

The College continues to remain in a strong position financially with outstanding financial health.

Significant improvements have been seen in learner outcomes across all age groups. Learner numbers stand at 2,661, which is ahead of the business plan.

The impact of collaborations is evident, with increases in apprenticeships and staff training programs. Apprenticeship outcomes are 1.3% above national rates. T Level results reached 100%, marking the first time the college has surpassed national rates.

Recruitment challenges persist, but good progress has been made in construction, STEM, and health & social care. The tutorial model has been incorporated. Gas and plumbing remain areas for improvement.

The college is preparing for an Ofsted inspection, with the toolkit being implemented from 10th November. Key changes include the removal of an overall effectiveness grade, with the expected standard now aligned to the previous 'good' rating. There is increased focus on data. Employer contribution grading has changed, and leadership, governance, and inclusivity are now cross-college measures. Additional information and training for governors will be provided.

Enrolment has shown strong growth this year, with a positive induction process.

A new white paper has been released, supporting curriculum reform. Plans are in place to reintroduce a stepping stone qualification in English and maths. V Levels

will replace some current BTEC qualifications. SEND reform is ongoing, with a draft expected in 2026.

The Chair **asked** if the college data in the report could incorporate a longer time period. **Action:** The Principal & CEO to provide college data from 2019 and include in the next Principal & CEO Report.

Principal & CEO

### **13 TF&R Committee**

#### Management Accounts:

The Strategic Finance Adviser presented the Management Accounts.

The financial outturn was better than forecast in June. The college continues to demonstrate outstanding financial health and is meeting all FEC benchmarks.

An external audit is currently in progress. With some adjustments having been made for the pension scheme.

Governors noted that the college is in a strong starting position for the 2025–26 financial year.

#### 2024-25 KPIs Year-End:

The Deputy Principal presented the report.

Student allocation was 2147 with a 2325 headcount. Attendance was below the KPI target at 82.4%, primarily impacted by English and maths. This remains a focus area for improvement.

Apprenticeships performance exceeded national averages by more than 1%. Apprenticeship income target was set at 2.5; actual outturn was 2.6. There were three subcontractors this year, with performance between 99–101%. No subcontractors are planned for 2025–26. 95% of learners achieved positive destinations.

89% of staff feel empowered. Staff turnover was 12.8%, remaining under the 13% KPI.

Student numbers reached 2,661, with a peak of 2,761. The college has overtaken the sixth form to become the second largest in Stoke-on-Trent.

The chair **asked** about the attrition levels. The Deputy Principal confirmed that the reasons for attrition are obtained. The college aim to have the 'right course, right learner'. Enrolment continues throughout the year. The Principal & CEO explained that attrition would be around 3%, with 8% being the maximum nationally.

**Action:** Assistant Principal Student Experience to provide market share data, with trends, for the next meeting

Assistant Principal Student Experience

A governor asked if the college had turned any learners away due to high numbers. The Principal & CEO explained that high application numbers, particularly in electrical courses, led to early enrolment and proactive planning around staggered starts. No students were turned away due to capacity.

#### Capital & Estates Report (incl approval)

The Executive Director Capital and Estates presented the report and explained that approval had previously been granted for an expenditure of £310,000 (inclusive of VAT) from the Further Education College Condition Allocation (FECCA). Following the DFE's agreement to retain Block B at Burslem Campus, it was considered necessary to include this block within the tender scope to ensure full compliance across the College estate upon completion of works. To secure best value, tenderers were asked to submit the most cost-effective solution for Block B.

The chair **asked** if the results from the tender had similar costs. The Executive Director Capital and Estates stated that they were within 10% of each other.

The Cauldon Campus is scheduled to become operational on 3rd November. Options for demolition and asbestos removal are still under evaluation, with consideration being given to either a tender process or a variation of the existing contract. The funding for these works will be sourced from college funds. Perimeter fencing will also be installed as part of the project.

Funding for the Advanced Green Skills Project was confirmed in late September 2024. The Board has since approved the project, selected Sterling Services Limited as contractors, and secured planning permission.

Pre-contract work (HV cable termination and site-wide fibre installation) is complete. Construction has started, including mine grouting and civil works. However, commencement was delayed due to waiting for a permit from the Coal Authority for mine grouting and awaiting National Grid approval for a cable diversion.

The completion date is now expected in March 2026 (extended from September 2025). The retention of B Block for at least 12 months will help manage space pressures and ensure learners are not disadvantaged.

**Governors **approved**:**

- The procurement of £700k plus VAT for asbestos removal and demolition works at Cauldon campus as part of the College match contribution to the Cauldon FECTF project (subject to potential inflation variations upon final costings received) and approve delegated authority to the CEO and Principal to award this contract including the use of the seal (if necessary), in consultation with the Chair of the Board
- The contract award to Bell Group for the Fire Door replacements and remediations at the value of £354,755.70 plus VAT.

**Committee Self-Assessment**

The Director of Governance confirmed that the TF&R committee had reviewed their compliance against the Terms of Reference for 2024-25 and all areas were compliant.

**14 CQS Committee:**

**Curriculum & Quality / Teaching & Learning Report**

The Deputy Principal presented the report, providing the following highlights:

- Achievement for Study Programmes 83.7% YTD vs NA 83.4% (+0.3%)



- Achievement for Adults including Tailored learning 88.5% YTD vs NA 87.8% (+0.7%)
- Achievement Overall including Tailored Learning 86.6% YTD vs NA 85.5% (+1.1%)
- The College Apprenticeships achievement 61.4% KPI 63% vs NA 60.5%
- 1092 and 1062 learners took maths and English respectively. 30% improved by 1 grade, with the overall pass rate 1% above national average.
- Study Programmes overall has only 14.7% of learners who do not have an LLDD, need to resit maths and/or English and are receipt of free school meals
- Overall attendance for full time learners is 82.5% vs KPI 88%. ESOL and Foundation Learning are showing concern. Construction has had some staffing issues that has resulted in merging of classes.
- In 2024/25, the College delivered 8 T Levels. National retention is 66% for T Levels College retention is 75.3%. The College target for 2025/26 was 121; however, enrolment has only been 56 which is only 46% of target. Learners who had applied for a T Level on enrolment did not meet the GCSE math and/or English requirement due to lower-than-expected exam grades in the summer series, these learners have joined Level 2 courses and or BTEC L3 courses.
- The execution of the 2025/26 Work Experience plan is well underway. Level 3 students second year students are progressing towards securing work placements by October half term, with 22 placements either in progress or already completed.

The Chair **asked** for more data over the last 7+ years, to show trends. The Principal & CEO explained that Ofsted will look at a 3-year trend. Curriculum reforms came in 2019-20, portfolio assessment moved to tests/exams – which brought down national rates.

A governor **asked**, concerning T Levels, how the college compares to other colleges. The principal & CEO explained that some learners have been moved onto other courses that didn't get good enough grades. A marketing campaign for T Levels for next year is underway. Increasing T Levels remains a focus.

#### Safeguarding Update

The Assistant Principal Student Experience presented the Safeguarding Annual report for 2024-25.

The safeguarding framework remains robust and effective. There were 632 safeguarding concerns reported, representing a 24% increase on the previous year. This rise reflects both an increase in learner numbers and a strong culture of reporting concerns.

Enhanced staff training and new CPD opportunities were implemented. All staff have completed safeguarding training.

The Single Central Record (SCR) is audited termly.

Policies have been updated to reflect current best practice. The wellbeing team, including mentors, recorded 2,967 interventions. 869 counselling sessions were delivered.

Mental health remains the most prevalent concern. There were 10 cases of child-on-child abuse. 27 concerns were raised for looked-after children. 121 concerns were reported in September alone, an 83% increase on the previous year. Additional resources have been allocated to address this rise, which is attributed to increased learner numbers and a positive reporting culture.

The majority of the increase in concerns relate to new students, with September and October typically being the busiest period.

92% of learners reported feeling safe. 95% felt the environment was inclusive

A recent external review confirmed a strong, embedded safeguarding culture and robust procedures. Some areas for best practice development were identified.

There were no questions.

#### Committee Self-Assessment

The Director of Governance confirmed that the CQS committee had reviewed their compliance against the Terms of Reference for 2024-25 and all areas were compliant.

## **15 Policies**

### 1. Financial Regulations

Minor amendments have been made to the financial regulations.

The limit for delegated approval has been increased from £100,000 to £500,000, with an intermediate level set at £150,000 for the TF&R Committee.

Approximately 34 transactions occurred during the year, the majority relating to capital projects. 10 transactions were between £100,000 and £150,000. 24 transactions were between £150,000 and £500,000. 2 transactions exceeded £500,000. Typically, 5-10 will fall into these thresholds moving forward.

A governor **asked** why the thresholds for approval were being changed give that the instances of likely approval being needed will be reducing. The Strategic Finance Adviser the changes were made following a survey of other colleges, which indicated that previous approval levels were low. The new limits are intended to reduce the need for special meetings or written resolutions and reflect typical practice in other colleges.

Governors **approved** the Financial Regulations.

### 2. Learner Safeguarding Adults at Risk and Child Protection Policy

The Assistant Principal Student Experience presented the updated policy, confirming that it had been recommended for approval by the CQS committee.

Updates include incorporation of statutory guidance (Stoke-on-Trent partnership template), expanded definitions, a dedicated section on sexual harassment (OfS requirement), and enhanced filtering and monitoring protocols. The policy aims to ensure a safe, inclusive, and responsive environment.

Governors **approved** the Learner Safeguarding Adults at Risk and Child Protection Policy.

3. Harassment, Bullying & Victimisation (Staff)

The Chief People Officer explained that the Harassment, Bullying & Victimisation Policy had been strengthened to ensure compliance with the college duty on sexual harassment. The policy has been recommended by the TF&R committee for approval.

Governors **approved** the Harassment, Bullying & Victimisation (Staff) Policy  
All approve.

TF&R Committee Terms of Reference & Corporation Scheme of Delegation

The Director of Governance explained that following the approval of the Treasury Management Policy and the updated Financial Regulations, both the TF&R Committee Terms of Reference and the Corporation Scheme of Delegation had been updated as required.

Governors **approved** the TF&R Committee Terms of Reference & Corporation Scheme of Delegation

**16 Any Other Business**

A copy of the Ofsted Toolkit was provided to governors.

The Principal and CEO stated that, as funding is available for free job-related courses to address skills needs, the College may request board approval for adult subcontracting provision. Further details will be presented to the Corporation if needed.

**17 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

The next meeting is due to be held on Tuesday 16/12/2025 at 09:30

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at: 12:30