Minutes of Full Board

Date: 3rd July 2025 **Time:** 4.30 pm

Location: Itchen College, Colmer building C1

Present:	Mr A Scott - Principal	Mr B Jones - Chair
	Ms S Smith	Mr J Johnson
	Mr M Stancheris	Mr R Parke
	Mrs M Harris-Bridge	Miss C Wilson
	Mr D Batten	Mr M McCauley
	Mrs D House	Mr A Fitt
	Mr T Grant	Mrs S Hammett
In attendance:	Miss F McIntyre - Clerk	Mrs E Barrett - Vice Principal
	Mr M Jones - Vice Principal	Mr D Wade - Vice Principal
Apologies:	Mrs R Stratton - Deputy Principal	Dr C Carpenter
	Mr C Breckenridge	Mrs L Court
	Mr E Unuigbe	Ms S Garner
	Mrs I Henson	Prof D Shepherd

1 Apologies

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received as above.

1.1 The board was informed that Mrs C Lowe has stepped down as a governor due to work commitments.

2 Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

3 Minutes of the last meeting

Minutes of the last meeting were reviewed and the following point was raised and requested to be made clearer:
Page 3 item 4.6 - answer to question regarding out of area applications increase.
Will be changed to the following:

> *The increase in applications from outside the area can be attributed to families moving to that part of the city for employment opportunities at the*

general hospital. Additionally, the basketball academy is significant draw for out-of-area applicants.

3.1 Minutes from the meeting held on 27th March 2025 approved with the amendment above.

4 Chair's report

The Chair's report was circulated prior to the meeting.

4.1 Governors were thanked for their involvement in the appointment of the Principal and congratulations were extended to Mrs Stratton on her appointment. The decision was unanimous from the selection committee. The response from the staff has been overwhelmingly positive. The chairperson also thanked Mr Scott for his advisory role in the appointment of the new Principal.

4.2 Some Governors will be involved in the Vice Principal interviews but not to the same extent as for the Principal position.

4.3 Governors were welcomed to the Colmer building which has been a frequent topic during meetings recently. Mr R Parke was thanked for his key role as Chair of Estates and this meeting marks his final one as he is moving overseas.
The Chair praised Mr Parke's contribution, thanking him for his hard work, dedication, and service to the board.
Mr Parke responded: *"It has been a pleasure, and I've learnt a lot."*

4.4 Governance paperwork is being reviewed to ensure the board remains compliant. As part of this process a scheme of delegation will be created to provide clarity. This is currently in draft form and will be worked on over the next academic year to ensure it is fit for purpose.
The Search and Governance committee have had a focus on succession planning to ensure key knowledge is not lost from experienced board members when they retire or leave. Plans were put in place at the start of the academic year to have deputy roles on Finance and also Growth & Engagement.
Mrs Harris-Bridge will now take over as chair on Finance and Dr Carpenter as Chair on Growth & Engagement. Future succession planning will remain a focus.
Governors were assured that even with resignations there remains an appropriate number of governors though there are vacancies.

4.5 The Chair met with a potential new governor Mr Butterworth, who is the headteacher at Weston. Mr Scott had been tasked with finding another interested Headteacher to replace Mr Brown as it was felt a local headteacher brings good knowledge to the board but also strong links.

S&G committee recommended his appointment to the full board, which was **agreed**.

4.6 Two terms of four years is the usual maximum for governors but a third term is allowable and there are three governors currently in their third term. This is reviewed by Search & Governance and felt to be acceptable due to the skills and knowledge they bring. It also provides the board with stability.

4.7 Governors were reminded they can arrange a visit to the College at any time and to contact RS or FM to arrange. For newer governors, if they speak to the clerk, they can arrange for a more experienced governor to join them.

4.8 The Chair received an email from Jacqui Smith, Minister of State for Skills during volunteer week thanking governors for their work. The Chair wanted to pass this onto the board and acknowledge their work as volunteers.

5 Principal's Report

The Principal took the opportunity to thank Governors for their time and support during the new Principal appointment. Notably Mrs Stratton will be the first woman to hold the role.

5.1 Finance

- A key responsibility is the approval of the budget, which currently looks positive.
- The college has benefited from additional funding for the National Insurance increase.
- Financial outlook is encouraging, when factoring in inflation and projected growth. The final picture depends on next year's government settlement.
- A 4% pay rise has been offered to the unions.
- The government previously aimed to eliminate multiple small funding "pots" that required bidding—but this has not happened. In fact, there are now more such pots.
- An additional £150,000 in funding has been confirmed for next year, but it is not yet included in the current budget

5.2 Buildings and Infrastructure

- Overheating has been confirmed as a concern in the Colmer Building in a recent report.
- Boiler replacement grant was not approved, but work has already started and will continue over the summer.
- Architects were commissioned to look at the site and have identified potential areas for further development.

5.3 Student Applications & Growth

- Applications remain strong—a total of 2,000 students for the coming year is a realistic target.
- Since the report was written, a further 70 students have been interviewed.

5.4 Local Government and National Education Developments

- Devolution and local government reform is ongoing, but the implications are still unclear.
- Ofsted has not yet published the outcome of its consultation, but a November start for the new inspection regime is still expected.

5.5 Partnership Updates

- The discussions between Lighthouse Learning Trust and Barton have concluded without agreement.
- The UTC development has had no further updates or progress.

5.6 Student Experience & Enrichment

- Work Experience Week saw 900 students participating – a significant and commendable effort.
- Ongoing sporting successes were noted and praised.
- Governors were highly impressed with the range of enrichment activities, and commended the commitment of staff.

5.7 Staffing News

- Steve Perkins is retiring after 44 years of service – an extraordinary milestone.
- The interviews for the Vice Principal (Quality and Curriculum) role will be on Monday next week with eight shortlisted. There was a strong response to the advert.

5.8 Governor questions and comments

Q: Is the Principal's appointment official?

A: Yes, the appointment is official, though no press release has been issued yet.

Comment: congratulations on the enrichment activities – very impressive.

Q: What drove the increase in work experience participation?

A: A strong Work Experience Coordinator, Many placements are now embedded in courses. Provides clarity for students on future career oppurtunity and improves employability

The Chair concluded by thanking the Principal for a comprehensive and insightful report.

6 Approval for Budget

The budget was reviewed in detail by the Finance Committee. The Adult Education allocation was kept low due to initial uncertainty, although this area has performed strongly this year. No exceptional expenditures are forecast; spending remains within expected parameters. Funding for the National Insurance increase has been confirmed and will be received in September.
The nursery is projected to make a surplus. The College's company remains in surplus.

6.1 Governors questions:

Q: What is the predicted surplus?
A: A £557,000 group surplus is projected. This is a prudent estimate, not including potential Adult Education income.

Q: What was the cost of the Principal recruitment process?
A: The cost was £15,000 – within approved spending limits.

Q: What are governor expenses?
A: Expenses governors can claim are accounted for.

Q: Why is there a 10% increase in curriculum costs?
A: This increase allows flexibility in an area where additional investment may be needed.
The aim is to target spending where it will have the greatest impact on students, anticipating higher student numbers and inflation-related costs.
If necessary, these costs can be scaled back to achieve savings.

Q: Energy costs – oil usage is down but gas costs are up slightly?
A: Gas is now the primary source, and it is both cheaper and more efficient.

Q: What caused the change in other grant income?
A: The previous £408,000 Multiply grant has now been replaced by Bootcamps, with a new programme launching in July 2025.

Q: Is there a current focus on maths?
A: No current maths-specific funding or initiative is in place

6.2 Budget approved

7 Three year finance plans

A significant surplus of £900,000 is projected in Year 2 primarily due to the lag funding. This represents additional funding without a corresponding increase in costs.

For 2027/28, student numbers are expected to remain stable, resulting in a projected £500,000 surplus, in line with this year's financial outcome.

7.1 Salary Costs and Staffing

Salary increases of 4% year-on-year have been assumed. No increase in overall staff numbers is expected—there may be natural fluctuations, but staffing will remain aligned with requirements.

7.2 Income Forecasting

Income projections are based on expected student numbers, using recent trends in growth. Adult Education income has been kept low due to the unknown nature of the work.

7.3 Governor questions:

Q: Will international student income remain static?

A: Yes, due to limited homestay capacity, it is difficult to expand significantly. The current balance is appropriate, avoiding operational strain. For future income generation, the focus will shift to longer stay international students, who bring greater stability and higher fees. Short-term "Taster" programmes, particularly from the Chinese market, pose a risk due to instability.

Q: Can you explain the Yarrow Heights arrangement?

A: The former St Mary's College has been sold to a private company operating in special education. They subcontract the educational provision to Itchen College. The College charges £11,500 per student. It is estimated that Yarrow Heights draws down approximately £60,000 per student in total funding.

Q: How many Yarrow Heights students will there be next year?

A: Nine students are expected in the next academic year.

7.4 Three year financial plans: approved

8 KPI's update

The current strategy was developed from the existing strategic plan, with the aim to report against key outcomes by 2026.

A status overview is provided in Section 5:

Green indicates areas performing well.

White reflects items not yet confirmed or implemented.

Red denotes areas that are not on track or unmet.

There is a good amount of green showing the progress that has been made.

8.1 Attendance continues to be a national issue. While improvements are being seen, this remains consistent with wider national trends.

8.2 Governor questions:

Q: Do we keep a register of persistent absentees?

A: Yes, reports can be generated.

A small number of students often have a disproportionate impact on overall attendance figures.

These students are being actively supported through difficulties to help them achieve qualifications.

Q: Is staff attendance monitored?

A: Yes, staff attendance is tracked and reported to the Growth and Engagement(G&E) Committee.

Q: What is the status of the net zero target?

A: The net zero goal is aspirational and originated from a previous government policy. Progress is ongoing but not yet clearly defined.

9 Reports from committee Chairs

9.1 Finance Committee

Nursery and company performance was reviewed. Both remain profitable.

Cashflow is projected to dip below the threshold temporarily due to planned capital works. This is all planned within existing cashflow projections, with a return above the threshold expected by year-end.

The grant application for boiler funding was submitted but not successful.

Accounts and expenditure lines were scrutinised and all spending is in line with expectations.

9.2 Estates Update

Snagging and outstanding issues remain in the Colmer building, with Project Managers handling a claim for additional costs from Stepnells. A meeting is scheduled for tomorrow.

Overall, Colmer building is a successful addition and will be a long-term asset to the College.

Boilers and heating systems are being replaced this summer and will be complete before students return.
Toilet refurbishments are underway, currently focused on boys' facilities, carried out by the in-house estates team.
An architectural study has been completed to support long-term site planning.

9.3 Curriculum & Quality (C&Q)
The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) reviewed. Value-added data identified a gender gap, prompting discussions on attendance strategies and data use.
Destination report was reviewed; governors urged a focus on reducing the 'unknown destinations'.
T-Level update: Health enrolments are expected to reduce next year.
The new FE Dashboard allows for benchmarking. Training will be provided once live.
Student survey results were very positive, with ongoing issues identified as food, buses, and lack of social space. Parent survey also received positive feedback, with some concern about class cancellations.
A governor requested the Principal weekly updates to be circulated to all governors going forward.

9.4 Growth and Engagement (G&E)
Adult and Community Education reached 3,500 learners, delivering a wide variety of contracts.
Skills Bootcamps achieved above-national employment outcomes.
Strong performance in practical courses, such as cookery, which often leads to further learning.
Student Wellbeing has been enhanced with the appointment of a new wellbeing practitioner and strengthened safeguarding.
Successful Careers Week took place, with positive feedback from governors in attendance.
Internal Women’s Day saw 180 participants.
Work experience success already reported (900+ placements).
UCAS launch and welcome events are in the planning stages.
The risk register will be aligned more closely with the strategic plan. Discussion on how to improve committee engagement with college events. Noted that AI is evolving rapidly – being closely monitored.

9.5 Audit Committee
External auditors presented their annual plan. The risk register was reviewed.
Final internal audit report gave reasonable assurance on cybersecurity.
A follow-up meeting will be held in autumn to conclude the two outstanding audits.
Discussion held around future auditing needs with the removal of the internal

auditors. A framework was presented to demonstrate current controls and identify additional areas for full oversight coverage.

9.6 Search & Governance (S&G)
Succession Planning Updates:

- Finance Committee: RP stepping down; MHB to take over.
- G&E Committee: TG stepping down; CC to assume role.
- Other committees are being reviewed to ensure succession planning is in place.

9.6.1 Estates has previously been a sub-committee but S&G proposed to make a full committee. The Articles and Instruments do not need to be amended for this change.   Vote: approved.

9.7 RSS Committee
Mr Jones has decided to step down as Chair to avoid any perception of a conflict of interest arising from their close working relationship with the Principal.
TG will now chair the RSS committee.

10 Governance Matters:

10.1 Terms of Reference for approval
Approved

10.2 Calendars of business for approval
Approved

10.3 Meeting schedule for 2025/26
Noted.

10.4 End of year governor review
Want to ensure there is a process for improvement, review and feedback. The Chair will arrange a time to call all governors individually to have an informal chat. Any emerging themes will be reported on in the Autumn term. Came from external review recommendation to have a review process.
The review of the Chair is carried out by the S&G committee.
The review of the Clerk is undertaken by College as an employee.
The S&G committee decided that review of the committee chairs was not necessary as they were mindful that everyone is a volunteer. There is governor oversight and BJ attends most meetings.

10.5 Governors were requested to complete the self assessment and skills audit section of Trust Governor so this can be the basis of the governor SAR for next academic year. The skills audit will be used for considering future governor recruitment.

Action all governors

10.6 A scheme of delegation has been drafted as part of the governor SAR for this year from a recommendation in the external governance review. This will be looked at over the next academic year and adjustments made to the document and also committee terms of reference to ensure full coverage of requirements.

11 Policies

It has been a long process to rebuild the College's Health & Safety approach following the departure of the previous coordinator last year. Health & Safety requirements have grown in complexity, and an external consultant has been engaged under a service level agreement to support the process.
The new H&S policy was developed from scratch and is now considered to reflect the College's current needs and responsibilities.

The following points were made:

- MJ is now handing over H&S responsibilities to DW, aligning with his wider Finance remit, given H&S implications on expenditure
- DW will act as the H&S link for the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).
- The Site Team will serve as the on-site H&S liaison.
- The new policy is comprehensive and includes embedded links to relevant guidance and resources.
- It will act as both a reference document and training support.

11.1 Governor Questions

Q: How do we ensure staff understand the content of such a lengthy policy?
A: All staff receive H&S training and are expected to refer to the policy as needed rather than read it in full. Line managers help staff access and apply relevant parts. Staff are encouraged and supported to report H&S concerns.

Q: How confident does DW feel in taking this on?
A: He reported he has already met with the consultant and received training recommendations and confirmed he understands the scope and responsibilities of the role.

Q: Can elements of this be delivered through online training?
A: Yes, staff already complete statutory online training. Different roles will require

different policy sections, and training is tailored accordingly.

Q: Is training completion tracked?
A: Yes, completion is tracked and monitored.

Q: Is there a clear line of accountability between the Principal and governors?
A: Yes, the lines of responsibility are clearly defined.

Q: Which committee will receive the annual H&S report?
A: The G&E Committee in the autumn term for the previous academic year.

Further comments on policy will be sent to DW via email. **Action CW**

11.2 The policy was acknowledged as thorough and well-constructed.

11.3 Policy approved.

12 Impact and Action Review

12.1 Impact:

- Approve budget and three year financial plans
- Questions on all areas of agenda
- Challenge on policy
- Creation of Estates Committee

12.2 Actions

- add this

13 AOB

13.1 Governors were informed that a Report on Burnley College is an interesting learning point on governance.

13.2 A governor recommended the Jamie Oliver Dyslexia program to give understanding of the issues.

Meeting concluded at 615pm and was quorate at all times.