

Minutes
Corporation Meeting
Governor Meetings

Date 13/10/2025
Time 6:00 PM - 7:00 PM
Location Southport College Campus - Clouds Restaurant

Members Present: Paul Walker (Corporation Chair)
Laura Bell (Independent Governor)
Margaret Boneham (Independent Governor)
Michelle Brabner (Principal)
Kevin Burke (Independent Governor)
Colin Davies (Independent Governor)
Rob Firth (Associate Member)
*Roderic Gillespie (Independent Governor)
*Anita Holt (Associate Member)
Diane Hutchinson (Independent Governor)
*Kashfa Kalim (Independent Governor)
Mo Kundi (Independent Governor)
Claire Moffat-Lonsdale (Independent Governor)
*David Mutori (Independent Governor)
Mike Naden (Independent Governor)
Susannah Porter (Independent Governor)
John Sheldon (Staff Governor)
Elaine Small (Independent Governor)
*Tracey Wood (Independent Governor)

Members Apologies: Alex Barton (Independent Governor)
Andy Bridson (Independent Governor)
Tom Rowe (Staff Governor)

Members Absent: None

In Attendance: Paris Bonwick (Vice Principal Business Services)
Lisa Farnhill (Dir. Governance and Compliance)
Alison McDowell (Vice Principal People and Culture)
Stephen Musa (Deputy Principal)
Paula Smith (Vice Principal Finance)
Rachael Brownhill (Assistant Principal - Learner Development & Careers)
Karen Marsh (Safeguarding Manager) (up to and including item 6.1)
Jodie Marcucci (Safeguarding Officer) (up to and including item 6.1)
Teresa Catterall (Assistant Principal - Curriculum, Planning & Projects)
Jane Rowley (Assistant Principal- Curriculum, Quality, Teaching & Learning)
Shaun Hindle (Assistant Principal-Apprenticeship & External Relations)

***indicates attended via videoconference facilities**

1 - Welcome and apologies for absence

The meeting commenced with a welcome to the safeguarding staff presenting the training. Apologies for absence were noted and accepted.

Item 1 – Accepted

2 - Declaration of interests

No conflict of interest were declared by the members in relation to agenda items.

Item 2 – Noted

3 - Minutes

The minutes from the meeting held on 2nd July 2025 were noted and approved without amendment.

Item 3 – Approved

4 - Review of the previous meeting actions and impact

Members noted that as a short meeting for essential business only, this agenda item was deferred to the next meeting to ensure sufficient time is allowed for strategy and training.

Item 4 – Deferred

5 - Confidential items

Members agreed the suggested redactions, relating to individuals, and commercially sensitive information, should be redacted from the public copy of the minutes.

The Chair determined that the staff pay award had been discussed with the Unions and circulated to staff, therefore was no longer classified as confidential, with staff able to remain present for the review of these items.

Item 5 – Noted

Item 6: Committee Updates

Item 6.1 - Standards Committee

The Committee Chair confirmed that an overview of the work done on 16th September would be presented at the next meeting of the Corporation.

6.1.1 - Safeguarding Training and Annual Report

The Corporation received a comprehensive overview of safeguarding data, projects, staff training and their responsibilities, led by the Deputy Principal, Safeguarding Manager and Safeguarding Officer.

Members were informed that the training being provided was bespoke, contextualised training, supplementing the overall training offer as delivered to all staff, ensuring all staff, and governors received training relevant to their roles, conducted both online and face-to-face. Members were advised that 276 staff members of staff had attend the face-to-face sessions, with training completion rates explained, noting the impact of long term sickness and leave on the data, with the KPI's for 2025/2026 to be amended to reflect that 100% completion of all staff was unachievable.

Following an overview of data and developments throughout 2024/2025, members were informed of the achievement of the Gold F.E. Mental Health Award in conjunction with the Carnegie Centre of Excellence for Mental Health, achieved by only 3% of colleges, as well as a silver award for supporting young carers.

Members were advised trauma-informed practice was a key area of focus for the College, supported by training for staff, with top-up sessions conducted during the summer conference to enhance staff understanding. An outline of CPD topics, support and initiatives, including the involvement of external agencies was outlined, with members given details of the first apprenticeship conference held in February, with over 70 delegates.

Members were informed of different areas of focus for staff and student training and initiatives, contextualised to issues that were prevalent, new and evolving. This included online safety, radicalisation awareness, and mental health support, tailored to address the specific needs of SEG students, supported by specialist external agencies.

Members were then given a full outline of the responsibilities of Governors in relation to safeguarding, including understanding legislation and college policies, ensuring their effectiveness, and promoting a strong safeguarding culture. This included highlighting the importance of the mental health and well-being of staff and students. Challenges faced over the past five years, locally and nationally were detailed, providing an outline of the College's response and available support to the contextualised needs of students and staff.

The safeguarding team addressed issues such as online harm, cyberbullying, and the impact of social media on mental health, emphasising the importance of educating staff and students about these risks. The discussion emphasised the college's safeguarding culture, and the strategic leadership responsibilities of the College Governing Board. Members were assured the safeguarding policies and procedures were reviewed by those best placed to understand the legislation, as well as the local issues, to ensure compliance with legislation as well as positive impact from the implementation of effective practice.

The training and report presentation concluded with details of initiatives to be implemented in the next academic year. Members were assured of their appropriateness by being evidence based, focusing on areas of increasing needs, reiterating the importance of knowing students and advocating for professional curiosity to ensure early identification of support needs. Members were advised that students had responded to a survey about mental health and wellbeing, receiving a summary of the outcomes. Members noted the responses had revealed that access to supportive staff and quiet green spaces were crucial for their well-being, therefore initiatives for 2025/2026 would ensure these were prioritised in staff training, and the utilisation of wellbeing initiatives such as the Happiness Project. Members noted that technology also supported in identifying areas of concern, being reminded of the Smooth Wall technology used, with examples given of searches flagged by the software.

Members asked about the biggest risks, capacity of the team, clarifying the emergency and high-risk concerns alerted all members of the team for the most efficient response. Members expressed concern over the number of issues faced by young people, and volume of interventions, however, confirmed they felt reassured that the support the college provides ensures this is an area of strength within the organisation.

Item 6.1.1 - Resolved: The Corporation resolved to note the training and accepted the assurances provided by the annual report.

Standards Items for Approval

6.1.2 KPI's and Targets for 2025/26

Members were reminded that the KPIs and Targets for 2025/26 had been presented in the Strategy Event earlier, outlining the proposed changes and rationale for the updates. Assurances over the thorough and detailed review by the Standards Committee was provided, with an additional meeting held to ensure time was allowed to ensure the targets set were realistic and achievable. Members were encouraged to read the minutes and impact statements from the meeting to be assured by the Committee's scrutiny ahead of the recommendation.

Item 6.1.2 - Approved: The Corporation resolved to accept the recommendation of the Standards Committee and approved the updated targets and KPI's for 2025/2026

6.1.3. Teaching and Learning Strategy

The Teaching and Learning Strategy was highlighted as a key area of focus during the Standards Committee meeting, met with positive feedback. The Committee advised the Corporation that their review indicated this would positively impact staff and student engagement, supporting the achievement of the targets.

Item 6.1.3 - Approved: The Corporation resolved to accept the recommendation of the Standards Committee and approved the Teaching and Learning Strategy.

6.1.4. Complaints Policy 25/26

Members noted that the Complaints Policy had been reviewed and was recommended by the Committee, with subsequent questions and comments circulated by email addressed. The Board was assured that the additional points raised did not impact the content of the policy or Committee recommendation, and were related to clarification in some areas, particularly around Board level complaints. The Committee assured the Corporation that the policy was robust and would be supported by an annual assurance report to be presented in December, evidencing implementation and effectiveness.

Item 6.1.4 - Approved: The Corporation resolved to accept the recommendation of the Standards Committee and approved the Complaints Policy.

6.1.5. Safeguarding Policy

Members were reminded that the Safeguarding Policy had been updated and approved in July, however, had been reviewed again to ensure compliance with the statutory guidance, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025, which had been released after approval. Members were informed a subsequent review against the updated guidance, established it did not introduce any further changes to the policy; however, the policy was now amended to reflect changes in staffing and responsibilities.

Item 6.1.5 - Approved: The Corporation resolved to accept the recommendation of the Standards Committee and approved the updates to the Safeguarding Policy to take account of changes to the management team.

6.1.6. Policies updated to reflect staffing changes

Members were advised that a number of policies were not yet due for review, having been recently updated and approved, however, required amendments to reflect the new management structure and changes in roles and responsibilities.

The Corporation was asked to approve these minor amendments to ensure the policies reflected the organisations current staffing structure.

Item 6.1.6 - Approved: The Corporation resolved to accept the recommendation of the Standards Committee and approved the updates to existing policies to ensure they reflected the updates to the College management team.

Policies amended were:

- Managing Allegations Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy
- Malpractice and Maladministration Policy
- Careers Policy
- Personal and Academic Learning (PAL) Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy

6.2 - Resources Committee

It was advised that the Committee Chair would provide a full update at the next Corporation meeting, confirming that they had two items for approval, a Tuition Fees policy and a recommendation relating to the pay award, with the process and reasons for expediting this to October, from the previously planned timing of December, outlined.

Members noted the Principal would provide a full update of progress with Staff Pay Award negotiations, with the Corporation Chair highlighting their discussions around the importance of closing the pay gap with competitors by offering competitive pay packages to attract and retain the best talent for the benefit of the students.

6.2.1 - Tuition Fees Policy

The Corporation noted the policy update removed all references to the ESFA, and took account of the changes to staffing, roles and responsibilities.

The recommendation of the Committee was accepted, and the policy was approved.

Item 6.2.1 - Approved: The Corporation resolved to accept the recommendation of the Resources Committee and approved the updates to the Tuition Fees Policy.

6.2.2 - Staff Pay Award

Following clarification of the approval process and rational for presentation in October, to ensure tentative approval in time for December payroll, the Principal presented a summary of the differentiated pay award offer recommended to the Resources Committee. The Corporation was informed that in line with previous years, the proposal was for the academic year 2025/2026, therefore included a request to approve backdating of the award to the start of the academic year.

Members were given details of the proposal, noting the offer aligned the support staff increase with the Association of Colleges (AOC) recommendation of 4%, confirming benchmarking data indicated support staff pay remains in line with staff in other colleges, whilst recognising the need to consider a higher award for teaching staff, due to the pay gap with other institutions. Members noted that at the time of the Resources Committee meeting, figures were indicative, with consideration being given for an award in the region of 5%-6% for teaching staff. Members were advised of discussions within the Resources Committee meeting, which encouraged the closing of the teaching staff pay gap as far as was possible, asking that affordability is balanced with the need to reduce risks relating to staff retention linked to pay.

The Principal advised the Corporation that after the meeting, in line with the request of the Committee to explore options for a differentiated award to present to the Unions, the Vice Principal Finance undertook the task of financial modelling, which concluded that fully closing the gap would require an additional £1.6 million, potentially risking the College's financial stability. Consequently, a 6% award for teaching staff was identified as the highest affordable option. Members were assured that this would maintain the College's good financial health throughout the financial plan, also enabling the introduction of a new pay scale for those at the top of their current scale. Members were advised that the additional scale increment would benefit approximately 17 teachers that were at the top of their pay scale, resulting in a 9.9% pay increase for the most experienced teaching staff. To support with understanding the financial impact, a document was tabled, outlining the impact of the recommended award on the financial plan. The Corporation asked if the costings included on-costs, with assurances provided that these had been prudently calculated. Members were informed that affordability was modelled using the College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR) to ensure financial health would be maintained throughout the financial plan.

The Principal confirmed in line with the endorsement by the Resources Committee, this offer was put to the Unions, with the Union Management Forum meeting discussions summarised. Members noted the offer was well received, with Unions agreeing to ballot their members on the offer, noting it was subject to Board approval. To ensure transparency and fairness to all staff, the Principal advised that she circulated details of the offer directly to all staff ahead of the Union balloting their members.

Members indicated support of the offer, confirming their approval of the recommendation, adding that comparative to their own sectors and workplaces, the offer seemed generous, particularly when taking into account other recent increases, whilst acknowledging the pay gap with competitors and teachers in schools.

The approval process was clarified, with members being advised that their approval was conditional, based on the outcome of the Union Ballot and the Resources Committee having time to review the financial viability of the offer in detail at their meeting in November. In summarising, the Principal confirmed that pending approval, the pay award is expected to be implemented in December and backdated to 1st August, allowing staff to benefit from the rise and backdated pay before Christmas.

Staff and SPH's offered to withdraw whilst the Board considered whether the all-staff award should also be applied to Senior Post Holders, however, it was agreed that any decision relating to SPH pay would be discussed separately, after the meeting of the Remuneration Committee. Noting the requirement for Board approval, it was agreed that it may be presented for Board approval by Written Resolution, to allow the SPH

award to be paid in December, however, suggested that if it was thought the proposal needed to be discussed with the Board, agreed it may be necessary for the SPH award to be processed in January, after the December 17th Corporation meeting. Members agreed the timing and approval process would be dependent on the Remuneration Committee recommendation and should be made by the Chair in conjunction with members of the Remuneration Committee at their December meeting.

Item 6.2.2 - Approved: The Corporation resolved to accept the recommendation of the Resources Committee and approved the staff pay award, with a 4% increase for support staff, 6% for teaching staff, and the implementation of a new salary scale for teachers at the top of the scale. The pay award would be backdated to 1st August 2025, to be paid in the December pay roll, subject to a successful outcome of the Union Ballot and subject to the Resources Committee being satisfied with the affordability following review in their meeting on 19th November 2025.

7 - Strategic Plan Update

Members noted the full review of the Strategic Plan and targets during the earlier Strategy Event. The Principal confirmed that the Corporation was being asked to approve the annual targets and action plan, facilitating the achievement of the overarching strategic plan, assuring members that any comments or questions raised during the meeting would be incorporated into the final document.

The Corporation approved the strategic plan update, recognising its importance in guiding the future direction of the organisation.

Item 7- Approved: The Corporation resolved to approve the annual targets within the Strategic Plan.

9 - Date of next meeting and close

The meeting was formally closed by the Chair, who summarised the discussions, thanking staff for the comprehensive safeguarding training, highlighting the progress made with closing the pay gap for teaching staff and reflecting on the engaging discussions around the Bridge from the Strategy Event. The Chair reflected on the Strategic Event a few years earlier, where risk tolerance had been reviewed, which had concluded that the Board's risk appetite for innovation in curriculum and business ventures was high, confirming the progress made was in line with their attitude to risk.

Members and attendees were thanked for their time and contributions, and the next meeting date was confirmed as 16th December 2025.