



Corporation Board

Approved by the Chair

1 April 2025

Members Maddalaine Ansell; Sarah Benjamin; Ian Comfort (Chair); Rachael Fisher; Robin Ghurbhurun; Laura Gladstone; Alfie Heaps; Phillip Kerle; Carole Kitching; Adrien Ong; Kunal Parkash; Karen Redhead; Jon Roe; Chris Taylor

Attendees Maxine Deslandes (Director of Finance); Matt Fawcett (Deputy Principal, Planning, Partnerships & Projects); James Taylor (Deputy Principal, Curriculum & Quality); Sabeena Shah (Assistant Principal, Quality and Learner Experience); Richard Ward (Director of Governance)

1 Attendance

The Chair welcomed governors to the meeting and congratulated Alfie Heaps on his election as the College's support staff governor for a term of two years.

Apologies had been received from Mirza Baig, Shawez Mir and Suzanne Lyne.

2 Declarations of interest

Robin Ghurbhurun declared that he was a member of the Board of NCFE and a Managing Director at Jisc.

Phillip Kerle declared that he was a governor of Orbital South Colleges.

3 Minutes

Resolved, That the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2024 be approved as a correct record.

4 Matters arising

The Director of Governance reported that the two matters arising from the previous meeting had been completed.

5 Written resolution

The Director of Governance reported that the following electronic resolution relating to the process for appointing a new Chair of the Corporation had been passed on 13 February.

Resolved, That—

- (1) The role description in the attached paper be adopted;**
- (2) That FE Associates be appointed to run the campaign; and**
- (3) That the FE Commissioner’s office be asked to provide an independent adviser (as part of its standard offer to colleges recruiting a Chair).**

6 Governance matters

The Director of Governance informed the Board that a questionnaire would be circulated the following day as part of an annual governance self-assessment. Governors had been invited to attend a Fundraising Quiz Night dinner in Taste on 29 April, and volunteers were sought to take part in the shortlisting and interview processes for the roles of Director of Governance and Chair of the Corporation which would take place in April and May respectively. The Director of Governance presented draft dates for meetings of the Board and its committees for the next academic year.

Resolved, That the meeting dates for 2025/26 be approved.

7 CEO report

The CEO and Principal presented an update on two matters of importance to the College. The College’s Annual Strategic Conversation had taken place with representatives of the Department for Education and Greater London Authority on 4 March. This was the second such conversation in the current academic year, as the previous meeting had been postponed to the autumn due to the General Election. It had been a constructive discussion covering a wide range of topics and a summary letter would be circulated to all members of the Board once received from the DfE.

The second matter related to emerging funding pressures. Colleges had been informed of a number of cuts which would take effect in the next academic year. Some of these were direct cuts to allocations while others were indirect and taking place as a result of reductions made by local

authorities. The extent of these reductions was not yet certain but at a worst case could amount to £1.9m.

The second funding pressure arose from the impact of the College's under-recruitment of 16-18 year-olds in the current academic year.¹ The lag-funded methodology meant that the relevant allocation for 2025/26 could be £1m less than would otherwise have been the case. The CEO and Principal informed that she was engaging with the College's staff, who were understandably concerned at the impact of such significant pressures on the College's finances.

The CEO and Principal added that the GLA had informed the College that it was not alone, and that in the College's case one of the factors was learners on two-year Level 3 courses not returning for the second year of their course but opting to enter the workforce.

The Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee expressed concern at the emergent risks to the College's finances and asked what the root cause of the under-recruitment of 16-18 learners was understood to be. The Chair of the Curriculum & Quality Committee noted the impact on recruitment of having a 'Requires Improvement' Ofsted grade while other colleges in the sub-region were already at 'Good' or 'Outstanding'.

In the discussion that followed, the Board discussed:

- **Intelligence about current learners and sentiment/intent.** The Deputy Principal (Curriculum & Quality) reported that early indications were that it was a strong cohort than in some previous years.
- **The impact of qualification reform at Level 3.** The CEO and Principal reminded the Board that decisions about courses had been made under the assumption that many BTECs would be defunded in 2024/25, which had led the College to recruit fewer learners onto T Level programmes than would have been the case with BTECs.
- **Demographic growth of 16-18 year-olds, and the potential for in-year growth funding.** The CEO and Principal noted that there were 35,000 more 16-18 year-olds across FE colleges in the current year.

The CEO and Principal noted that while the process of developing the budget for 2025/26 was underway, the College did not yet have all of the information on its funding for the next academic year. The Chair of the

¹ See Item 9 (Funding report), Board minutes [10 December 2024](#)

Corporation proposed that an additional meeting be arranged before the next meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee on 10 June. The CEO and Principal suggested that this would best take place once additional information relating to funding had been received.

Action: Director of Governance to arrange an additional meeting for governors to discuss the impact and mitigation of funding pressures.

The Board discussed the likely impact of under-recruitment and reductions to allocations. The CEO and Principal reported that the College was managing pressures on staffing very carefully. On the potential for increasing commercial rent at Hammersmith & Fulham College, the CEO and Principal noted that prospects were limited by the poor accessibility. The College was exploring a reduction in the occupancy 'footprint' to achieve savings on utilities. The Board discussed the College's SEND provision which the CEO and Principal noted was a strength across the three campuses albeit with challenges in receiving funding from local authorities.

8 Staff survey

The CEO and Principal presented a report on the 2025 staff survey, noting that the results showed the highest levels of staff satisfaction since at least 2017. Of the 34 questions asked, 29 showed an improved score (with a range of +1 to +13 percentage points), one was static (but at 97%) and four showed a reduced score (with a range of -1 to -4 percentage points). The Board welcomed the positive responses to the survey. A governor suggested that the high level of engagement could be harnessed to tackle the funding pressures discussed under the previous item.

9 Quality improvement

The Deputy Principal (Curriculum & Quality) presented the College's Quality Improvement Plan, which had been scrutinised by the Curriculum & Quality Committee at its last meeting in January. He noted that the College was inside the window for a full Ofsted inspection, and had been monitoring the timing and outcomes of recent inspections of other colleges in the London area.

The Chair of the Curriculum & Quality Committee confirmed that the QIP had been reviewed in detail. A governor asked when the 50% of actions

under the first section on quality of education would come off 'Amber'. The Deputy Principal responded that in some cases, the measures could only be completed at the end of the academic year.

10 Strategic and operational planning

The Deputy Principal (Planning, Partnerships & Projects) presented the College's Operational Plan with actions due at the end of January. Compared to the 12 actions in the October report considered at the December Board meeting, 59 actions were now due for completion. Of these, 32.2% were rated as Green, 10.2% Amber/Green and 52.5% were Amber. There had been slippage in some areas, and the three actions assessed as Amber/Red or Red related to internal progression, recruitment and analysis of course contributions.

The Chair of the Curriculum & Quality Committee noted the importance of termly contribution analysis in the light the funding pressures discussed earlier in the meeting. A governor asked whether the commercial strategy needed to be revised to make a bigger contribution to the College's finances. The CEO and Principal commented that the market was highly competitive and the rate was lower in order to win business. A governor requested that the digital innovation strategy be considered by the Curriculum & Quality Committee.

Action: Digital innovation strategy to be presented to a meeting of the Curriculum & Quality Committee during the summer term (Deputy Principal (Planning, Partnerships & Projects)).

11 Funding report

The Deputy Principal (Curriculum & Quality) presented a funding report based on the College's Individualised Learner Record data as it stood on 1 February 2025. The College was in a slightly improved position based on the same time last year, and was challenging a reduction in its loan allocation which had been made during the year. Apprenticeship income was also up compared to 2023/24. A governor asked how the College targets set out in the paper related to the overall allocation. The Deputy Principal explained that the figures were adjusted to account for items such as achievement funding and that the College was confident that the full Adult Skills Funding allocation on DfE (formerly ESFA) and GLA lines would be delivered.

12 Management accounts

The Director of Finance presented the College's management accounts for the period ending January 2025, which had been scrutinised by the Finance & General Purposes Committee at its meeting on 18 March 2025. The accounts showed an end of year surplus of £198k after the FRS102 pension adjustment, down £206k from the last accounts. Further risks were set out in the sensitivity analysis and the College had introduced restrictions on pay and non-pay expenditure. The Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee asked what further action had been taken on identifying efficiencies since the meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee. The Director of Finance reported that the College's Executive Team met regularly and progress was being made. A governor asked what had caused the financial health score to decline 10 points to 180 points. The Director of Finance explained that it was due to a change in the College's EBITDA. The Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee confirmed that the College was a going concern.

13 Curriculum & Quality Committee (28 January)

Robin Ghurbhurun reported that the Committee had considered a paper on learner withdrawals following the discussion by the Board in December. The Committee had also reviewed the QIP in detail and requested a 'twilight session' on skills for a deeper dive into the College's work in that area. The Committee had welcomed a refreshed safeguarding report, which included graphical information drawn from the College's reporting system.

14 Remuneration Committee (4 February)

Adrien Ong reported that the Committee had discussed guidance circulated by the Office of the Further Education Commissioner on effective senior post holder objective setting and appraisal. The Committee had agreed that aspects of the guidance should be incorporated within the College's processes.

15 Search & Governance Committee (4 February)

Phillip Kerle reported that the Search & Governance Committee considered the matters which were subsequently put to the Board in the electronic resolution on the Chair of Corporation appointment process which had been noted at the beginning of the meeting. He reiterated the importance of governors taking part in the recruitment processes mentioned earlier in the meeting.

16 Finance & General Purposes Committee (18 March)

Phillip Kerle reported that the Finance & General Purposes Committee had considered the management accounts, the College's programme of efficiency savings and also considered a draft fee and refund policy.

Resolved, That the fee and refund policy be approved.

17 Audit Committee (20 March)

Rachael Fisher reported that the Audit Committee had considered a report on the management of health and safety during the autumn term. On subcontracting, it had been informed that the Rhythm Studio had recruited 62 learners, so a minor variation to the College's subcontracting arrangements was proposed.

Resolved, That the College's subcontracting arrangements with the Rhythm Studio be amended to cover 62 learners in the current academic year.

The Committee had received an updated strategic risk register and noted changes to the scoring of strategic risks relating to student data and staff turnover. The Chair of the Corporation suggested that the scoring of financial risks should be revisited in light of the information presented to the Board.

On internal audit, the Committee had received a report showing that a significant proportion of the outstanding internal audit recommendations had been resolved by bringing forward follow-up work scheduled for later in the year. A competitive process for internal auditors had been concluded and the Committee recommended the appointment of TIAA Ltd for a term of three years commencing on 1 August 2025.

Resolved, That TIAA Ltd be appointed to provide internal audit services to the College for a period of three years commencing on 1 August 2025.

18 Any other business

The Chair of the Corporation informed the Board that Jon Roe had indicated that he would be stepping down from his role as a governor ahead of the end of his term later in the year. He thanked Jon for his

contributions to the work of the Board and to the Finance & General Purposes Committee since his appointment in December 2021, which was supported by the whole Board.

19 Next meeting

6.00 pm on Thursday 26 June 2025.