

Board

Agreed

26 June 2025

Members Ian Comfort (Chair); Suzanne Lyne; Shawez Mir; Maddalaine Ansell; Phillip Kerle; Kunal Parkash; Carole Kitching; Sarah Benjamin; Alfie Heaps; Laura Gladstone

Attendees Maxine Deslandes (Deputy Chief Operating Officer); James Taylor (Deputy Principal (Curriculum & Quality)); Richard Ward (Director of Governance)

Owen Rees (Director of Governance designate)

1 Attendance

The Chair welcomed Owen Rees to the meeting as an observer.

Apologies had been received from Rachael Fisher, Karen Redhead, Chris Taylor, Adrien Ong and Matt Fawcett.

2 Declarations of interest

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

3 Minutes

Resolved, That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2025 be approved as a correct record.

The Director of Governance reported that the Digital Innovation Strategy had been included in the papers for this meeting and that the Finance & General Purposes Committee had scrutinised the College's financial position and the impact of funding pressures at its meeting on 19 June 2025.

4 Written resolutions

The Board noted that the following written resolutions relating to the appointment of the Director of Governance and Chair of the Corporation had been passed on 6 and 21 May respectively.

5 CEO update

The Board received a written update from the CEO and Principal.

6 Operational plan

The Deputy Principal (Curriculum & Quality) presented an update on progress against the College's Operational plan. Four actions were assessed as Amber/Red or Red, all of which related to the financial section of the plan and were linked to a delay or failure to meet specific recruitment and progression targets. In the discussion that followed, the Board considered the following issues:

- **Current activity to recruit learners** – the Deputy Principal noted that the College was recruiting ESOL learners at the moment but this was not going to have an impact on the current year. Open events had been held at all three sites recently and had been very successful.
- **The impact of not meeting enrolment targets in the current year** – the Deputy Principal acknowledged that this had been reflected in the allocations for the next year but the College had lodged an appeal with the Department for Education.
- **How far the College was meeting local demand** – the Deputy Principal drew attention to the fact that the College's offer was well-aligned to local skills needs but the lack of sixth form provision put it at a disadvantage in Ealing. He commented that learner flows in West London seemed to be to travel further West rather than East.

A governor commented that the College's 16-18 position in the current year was not uncommon in London, even allowing for the current population bulge. He added that the College's recovery journey and inability to invest in facilities had an impact on the attractiveness of the College to potential learners, and that the impact of the Ofsted judgement may not be seen until the following year's recruitment.

7 Funding report

The Deputy Principal (Curriculum & Quality) presented an update on performance against the College's funding streams.

8 Management accounts

The Deputy Chief Operating Officer presented the College's management accounts for the period ending March 2025, which had been scrutinised by the Finance & General Purposes the previous week. The current end year forecast was for a surplus of £198k after the FRS102 pension adjustment, and an operating surplus of £45k. This was a £207k negative variance against the budget, caused by shortfalls in income in apprenticeships, 16-18 funding, commercial

income, advanced learner loans and high needs funding. The College had introduced a freeze on pay and non-pay expenditure, with vacant posts being held until the end of the year unless deemed critical. The College was forecasting 'Good' financial health at the end of the year.

A governor asked what the impact of pay and non-pay freezes would be on continuing to improve the quality of education. The Deputy Chief Operating Officer commented that the College had put the measures in place at a point in the year when very considerable financial pressures were on the horizon. The College was endeavouring to avoid reductions in business support areas having impacts on teaching and learning.

9 Draft financial plan

The Deputy Chief Operating Officer presented the College's draft financial plan which had been produced alongside the College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR) and discussed by the Finance & General Purposes Committee on 19 June.

The Board discussed the College's plans to offer skills bootcamps, which were being funded both nationally and by the GLA. The College was considering bidding for GLA bootcamps relating to digital, construction and social care. The national bootcamps had not yet been announced. Phillip Kerle reported that the Finance & General Purposes Committee had discussed the level of contracts that the College would need to win in order to hit its income target. The Board was informed that a 'win rate' of 60% had been assumed for the purpose of the financial plan. The Deputy Principal (Curriculum & Quality) explained how the College worked with local employers seeking to fill staff shortages and modelled achievement rates. The Board proceeded to consider the methodology for receiving the funding based on learner enrolment and achievements.

The Board discussed options for monitoring performance in this area and the impact on the overall financial plan. The Deputy Chief Operating Officer explained that a range of scenarios were set out in the CFFR. A governor expressed concern at the potential impact of not achieving the assumed 'win rate' for boot camps on the College's overall financial position in 2025/26. The Deputy Chief Operating Officer commented that the Deputy Principal (Planning, Partnerships & Projects) was confident that the College would achieve a good level of income from the bootcamps.

The Chair asked what proportion of the payment depended on learner outcomes. The Chair of the Curriculum & Quality Committee drew the Board's attention to a [technical document published by the DfE](#) which set out how payments would be made up. A governor asked whether the College would be exposed to risks arising from over-delivery. The Deputy Chief Operating Officer said that in those circumstances, the College would seek to maximise class sizes. The Chair noted that there was a significant degree of uncertainty in this aspect of the financial plan.

Action: That a risk assessment and sensitivity analysis for skills bootcamps to be produced and circulated to the Board at the start of the autumn term.

Resolved, That the financial plan be approved.

10 Curriculum & Quality Committee

Robin Ghurbhurun reported that the Curriculum & Quality Committee had met on 17 June and discussed the College's Ofsted outcome and the impact on the College's quality improvement plan. The curriculum planning paper had shown a greater rate of change in the courses which would be offered by the College in 2025/26. The Committee had received positive reports on attendance and learner experience, and scrutinised the accountability statement and higher level skills strategy, both of which were recommended for approval.

On safeguarding, Carole Kitching reported that the Committee had discussed trends in safeguarding in the second term of the academic year. The Committee had discussed Ofsted's findings on behaviour and attitudes and the actions being taken by College leadership to tackle the issues raised in respect of the feelings of young female learners. These would include targeted work with both male and female learners.

The Chair noted that Carole Kitching's appointment as Chair of the Corporation and the end of Robin Ghurbhurun's term as Chair of the Curriculum & Quality Committee created two vacancies.

The Deputy Principal (Curriculum & Quality) spoke to the outcome of the College's Ofsted inspection, which had been published the previous week. He noted that the good result placed the College alongside many of its competitors, and that the 'Strong' contribution to meeting skills needs was a good outcome and in line with other colleges in West London. He noted that the areas for improvement would be a focus for the College in the new academic year.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair congratulated the College for the very significant achievement of reaching a 'Good' outcome in the inspection.

Resolved, That the Accountability Statement be approved.

Resolved, That the higher level skills strategy be approved.

11 Audit Committee

Shawez Mir reported that the Audit Committee had met on 12 June and received an update on the management of health and safety at the College. The overall number of accidents had decreased compared to the same period in the previous

year and the one reportable accident had not led to further action by the Health & Safety Executive.

The Committee had scrutinised the Strategic Risk Register, an overview of which had been circulated in the papers for the Board. Two risks had been downgraded, one on the quality of education in light of the positive Ofsted outcome and another on estates. The Committee continued to press on the number of outstanding internal audit recommendations and had agreed that a number of lower-level older recommendations should be deprioritised.

The Committee recommended the reappointment of Buzzacott as the College's external auditors for a further year.

Ordered, That the letter of engagement for external audit services be signed by the Chair.

12 Finance & General Purposes Committee

Phillip Kerle reported that the Finance & General Purposes Committee had met on 19 June and in addition to the financial plan and management accounts, reviewed revised financial regulations and the College's subcontracting plans for 2025/26, which were very significantly reduced compared to previous years. A modern slavery statement had been prepared in light of the fact that the College's turnover now triggered Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

Resolved, That the financial regulations be approved.

Resolved, That the College's proposed subcontracting arrangements for 2025/26 be approved.

Resolved, That the modern slavery statement be approved.

13 Search & Governance Committee

Phillip Kerle reported that the Search & Governance Committee had met on 22 May and considered the results of the annual governance self-assessment. The Director of Governance explained the requirement to conduct an annual self-assessment (other than in the year of an external review) and suggested how future assessments might be improved.

Phillip Kerle reported that Shawez Mir was willing to be reappointed as a governor for a further term of two years, which the Board was pleased to endorse.

Resolved, That Shawez Mir be reappointed for a further term of two years, ending on 16/10/2027.

14 Remuneration Committee (Confidential)

College staff left the meeting.

15 Any other business

College staff returned to the meeting.

The Deputy Principal (Curriculum & Quality) and Deputy Chief Operating Officer presented Ian Comfort and Robin Ghurbhurun with gifts to mark the end of their time as governors. Ian Comfort noted the journey of financial and quality improvement that the College had been on over the last six years, and wished Carole Kitching well as she took the chair.

16 Next meeting

6.00 pm on Thursday 9 October 2025.