

**HARLOW COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION**  
**CORPORATION MEETING**

**Minutes of the meeting held at Harlow College –  
Wednesday 26 March 2025 – 9.30am**

Membership:	*Paul Taylor (Chair)	Arthur Hall-Jackson	*Karen Spencer
	*Caroline Betts	*Bronte Humphrey	*Ian Tompkins
	Rod Bristow	Stephen Isherwood	*Michael Travers
	*Julia Fillary	Ayub Khan	*Ed Whittle
	Vic Goddard	*Ray Levy	*Heather Wilson
	*John Godley	*Lily Lin	

\* denotes present

In attendance: Will Allanson, Deputy Principal  
Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal  
Becky Jones, Vice-Principal  
Deanne Morgan, Executive Director – Finance  
Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance

**1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Rod Bristow, Vic Goddard, Arthur Hall-Jackson, Stephen Isherwood and Ayub Khan due to work commitments.

**2 Declaration of Interests**

There were no additional declarations of interest.

**3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 December 2024 were approved by the Corporation as a true and accurate record of the meeting and were signed remotely by the Chair.

**4 Matters Arising**

**4.1 Keeping Children Safe in Education Report 2023-2024 (minute 10.2 refers)**

Governors' attention was brought to the post-meeting note in the minutes in which the Governor who raised some issues in the meeting confirmed that the issues referred to were from approximately ten years or longer ago and that there are no issues being reported by the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead at present.

**4.2 Stansted Airport College Advisory Group – 06 December 2024  
(minute 13 refers)**

Will Allanson confirmed that the sim is working at STAC and is now part of the enrichment offer.

## **5 Search and Governance Committee Reports**

*These agenda items were taken at the start of the meeting.*

### **5.1 Minutes of the Search and Governance Committee Meeting – 13 February 2025**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Search and Governance Committee meeting held on 13 February 2025.

#### **5.1.1 Item 1 – Membership of Harlow College Further Education Corporation**

The Corporation received and considered the Search and Governance Committee's recommendations for membership of Harlow College Further Education Corporation,

The Search and Governance Committee recommended the appointment of Ian Tompkins as a Governor of Harlow College Further Education for a period of four years, commencing on 26 March 2025. It is recommended that Ian Tompkins be a member of the Audit Committee and the Search and Governance Committee.

Ian Tompkins joined the meeting and introduced himself.

The Search and Governance Committee recommended the reappointment of Paul Taylor as a Governor of Harlow College Further Education for a period of four years, commencing on 5 April 2025.

The Search and Governance Committee recommended the extension of Michael Travers' term of office to 31 March 2025. The Corporation was informed that a new Staff Governor has been elected and their term of office will commence on 1 April 2025.

Michael Travers was thanked for serving as a Governor.

The Corporation agreed that appointments should be for four years and up to the end of the academic term in which the term of office expires.

The Corporation unanimously approved the Search and Governance Committee's recommendations. Ian Tompkins was appointed as a Governor of Harlow College Further Education for a period of four years, Paul Taylor was reappointed as a Governor of Harlow College Further Education for a period of four years and Michael Travers' term of office was extended to 31 March 2025.

#### **5.1.2 Item 3 – Annual Report of the Further Education Commissioner 2023 – 2024**

The Corporation received and noted the Annual Report of the Further Education Commissioner 2023 – 2024, presented by Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance.

## **6 Principalship Presentation**

The Corporation received a presentation from the Principalship on devolution, Ofsted and curriculum, presented by Karen Spencer, Principal and Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

Caroline Betts and Ian Tompkins declared an interest in this agenda item.

Karen Spencer highlighted that devolution will mean devolving more powers to local areas however the College has an ongoing issue with the GLA and how it funds learners, along with the political and geographical challenges with Harlow's boundaries. Essex County Council understands that it is more complicated for Harlow and that the political boundary is a challenge in terms of the funding model. The challenge for Harlow is also the relationship with Hertfordshire County Council as they are not currently looking at devolution. There are some opportunities with devolution and there is a potential that the skills budget could be put to better use.

A Governor asked if the College was intending to submit a letter of support for Essex County Councils' devolution. Karen Spencer reported that there are some benefits to devolution if some of the nuances can be worked out in the detail. The key is that funding could be used for training if the employer is based in Essex and not just based on the learner being resident in Essex. This would be a better model and place the College in a better position.

Paul Whitehead reported that the challenge with the GLA started when they went for devolution. The College was originally not awarded a contract therefore the College was classed as a fringe provider and started off on the back foot, with there not being sufficient funding in the contract then and now to meet costs of delivery and demand. As Harlow College is an Essex college, it is likely to be a bigger stakeholder in the Essex devolution than it was in the GLA devolution and therefore the College should be in a better position to be on board with and help shape the Essex devolution going forward. Caroline Betts confirmed that Essex County Council is working with Essex colleges and they will have a voice.

Karen Spencer reported that the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) Board is looking at data across Essex and reaching out to providers, asking them what would work best for Essex residents and Essex businesses.

Karen Spencer confirmed that the College is looking to support Essex County Council's devolution with the caveat that the system recognises Essex-based businesses and economic corridors. A Governor highlighted that this is important as where Harlow sits is isolated and postcodes can be an issue.

Karen Spencer informed that local government reform is completely separate to devolution and that Essex County Council is looking at a five unitary model in Greater Essex with approximately 500,000 residents per area. Harlow could be included in an area with Epping and Uttlesford however this is not yet fully agreed. The final decision on the areas and the number of areas will be made by Government.

Becky Jones reported that the draft proposal for changes to Ofsted inspections is in the consultation phase, with a report card style being proposed. A five-point scale is proposed and all key judgements will be graded against this scale, with the exception of meeting skills' needs which will continue to be a three-point scale and safeguarding which will either be "met" or "not met". There will be no single overall grade for overall effectiveness. The evaluation areas against which judgements will be made were highlighted along with the proposed criteria for evaluation. There will no longer be a Skills Nominee and this will be replaced with a Shadow Nominee who will be able to part in discussions with the inspectors. At the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting, the Student Governor fed back that they liked the report card and that it is more accessible for parents.

Karen Spencer reported that the interim report for the Curriculum and Assessment Review has been published. It is recognised that there is a need to look at Levels 1 and 2 and the maths and English condition of funding remains however there is a review of the qualifications that sit underneath this. Governors were informed that the College has been approached by the DfE to speak to them due to the College's excellent maths and English outcomes.

The Corporation noted the presentation on devolution, Ofsted and curriculum and agreed for a letter of support for devolution, approved by the Chair of Governors, to be sent to Essex County Council.

## **7 Student Governor Update**

The Corporation received and considered the Student Governor Update, presented by Bronte Humphrey, Student Governor.

Bronte Humphrey reported that a group of Green Ambassadors is being established who will focus on working towards the 17 United Nations' Sustainability Goals.

Governors' attention was brought to the list of internal and external events that the Student Ambassadors and Student Governors have supported, along with the future events that are planned.

Bronte Humphrey reported that there has been good student feedback in terms of exam preparation for maths and English and that students are reporting that they feel more confident this year than they did when they took their exams in school.

There is a sense of feeling safe on campus and students report that they appreciate staff greeting them at the gates and this helps them to feel safe. This is also happening at STAC.

Governors were informed that the College chatbot was trialled at the recent open evening and this is now live on the College website and working well.

A Governor asked Bronte what the most interesting thing they have been involved with. Bronte reported that it was the FEDEC learner voice conference as it was interesting to meet students from other colleges and hear what they are doing.

Bronte reported that the food, including price and options, is an ongoing issue. Michael Travers reported that there had been an issue with the air handling unit in the canteen which had an effect on what could be offered however this has now been resolved. Paul Whitehead reported that there is an ongoing review of the College's food offer and it is being addressed.

A Governor highlighted that there is only one water cooler at STAC. Michael Travers reported that providing more could be looked into. Karen Spencer reported that the number is in line with what the College has on the Harlow site and that students are able to ask the canteen to provide them with drinking water.

The Corporation noted the Student Governor Update.

## **8 Standards and Curriculum Committee Reports**

### **8.1 Minutes of the Standards and Curriculum Committee Meeting – 13 March 2025**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 13 March 2025.

#### **8.1.1 Item 1 – Key Performance Indicators 2024/2025**

The Corporation received and considered the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2024/2025, presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

The Corporation was informed that they had been scrutinised in detail in the individual reports presented at the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 13 March 2025 however some adjustments have been made to the current position on some KPIs to accurately reflect the College's current position.

Governors were informed that overall apprenticeship achievement is at 54% and it is predicted to be 60% at year-end. The national rate is 52.1%.

There has been a change to the flagging system for adults on short 12-week courses. They are flagged green at the start of the course and then after two weeks, they will be reflagged.

Overall adult achievement has been added into the KPIs.

Karen Spencer reported that the College's November results for GCSE maths and English were strong however there was only a small number of learners who sat the exams. When compared to the national results, the College is significantly ahead of the national rates. The KPIs are rated amber however due to the summer resits still needing to take place.

The Corporation noted the Key Performance Indicators 2024/2025.

#### **8.1.2 Item 2 – Quality Improvement Plan 2024/2025**

The Corporation received and considered the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2024/2025 presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

The Corporation was informed that the QIP was considered in the individual reports presented at the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 13 March 2025.

The Corporation noted the Quality Improvement Plan 2024/2025.

## **9 Audit Committee Reports**

### **9.1 Minutes and Confidential Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting – 4 March 2025**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes and the confidential minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 4 March 2025.

#### **9.1.1 Item 1 – Cyber Security Internal Audit Report**

The Corporation received and considered the cyber security internal audit report.

Paul Whitehead reported that the audit had provided a reasonable assurance level and Governors' attention was brought to the two recommendations in the report which management had not accepted. These recommendations were discussed in detail at the Audit Committee meeting and the Corporation received further information on the College's rationale for not accepting the recommendations. A detailed discussion was held around this, drawing on Governors' areas of expertise and practice within their own organisations. Governors agreed that whilst the decision on accepting the recommendations were a management decision, it was important that the Corporation was aware of these decisions and any associated risks.

Governors were informed that a regular Cyber Security report will be presented to the Audit Committee.

The Corporation noted the Cyber Security Internal Audit Report and endorsed management's decisions to not accept two of the recommendations raised within the report.

## **10 Resources Committee Reports**

### **10.1 Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting – 6 March 2025**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 6 March 2025.

#### **10.1.1 Item 1 – Management Accounts Up To 31 January 2025**

The Corporation received and considered the management accounts for the period 1 August 2024 – 31 January 2025, presented by Deanne Morgan, Executive Director – Finance.

Deanne Morgan reported that the December management accounts had been presented to the Resources Committee meeting due to the timing of the meeting.

Governors noted that there is a current predicted year-end deficit however the predictions do not include a proportion of the additional £50m for further education which has been announced by Government and pension costs. The figures in the accounts are therefore the worst-case scenario. Some in-year growth is expected, such as growth funding, the share of the £50m, any capital funding and the funding for increased NI contributions.

A Governor asked if the pension costs could swing either way. Deanne Morgan reported that this was possible and that the costs have now been separated out in the management accounts.

The Corporation noted the management accounts for the period 1 August 2024 – 31 January 2025.

#### **10.1.2 Item 2 – Treasury Management Report**

The Corporation received and considered the treasury management report, presented by Deanne Morgan, Executive Director – Finance.

Governors were informed that this report was discussed in detail at the Resources Committee meeting held on 6 March 2025 and that the Committee recommended the approval of the banking facility.

Governors noted that there were no plans to invest or borrow.

The Corporation reviewed and approved the following annual banking facility with Virgin Money / Clydesdale Bank, as recommended by the Resources Committee:

<b>Facility</b>	<b>Previous Limit</b>	<b>New Limit</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Overdraft	£Nil	£Nil	-
BACS (salaries)	£950,000	£1,100,000	per month
BACS (non salaries)	£1,000,000	£1,000,000	per week
Business Card (2 x credit cards)	£40,000	£4,000 (Replaced credit cards with payment cards)	per month
Open Credit (Cash facility with Natwest)	£10,000	N/A Account closed	per week

The Corporation noted the treasury management report and approved the following the annual banking facility with Virgin Money / Clydesdale Bank as detailed above.

## **11 ESFA Annual Strategic Conversation**

The Corporation received and considered the letter regarding the ESFA Annual Strategic Conversation, presented by Karen Spencer, Principal.

Karen Spencer reported that the meeting was held with officials from the DfE and the FE Commissioner's Team, along with Paul Taylor, Ray Levy, Karen Spencer, Will Allanson, Paul Whitehead, Becky Jones and Ruth Lucas.

Karen Spencer reported that they key points discussed included the issue with the GLA and national contract and no flexibility in viring funds between contracts, developments at Harlow and at STAC, the opportunities from Government in investing in infrastructure and funding.

The Corporation noted the ESFA Annual Strategic Conversation letter.

## **12 Stansted Airport Advisory Group Meeting – 14 February 2025**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Stansted Airport Advisory Group meeting held on 14 February 2025.

Paul Taylor declared an interest in this agenda item.

STAC Phase 2 was discussed at length at the STAC Advisory Group meeting and work is being undertaken on an interim basis to manage growth and maximise space on the current site. Off-site, on-airport alternative accommodation is also being explored.

Karen Spencer reported that Essex County Council are keen to invest in the expansion of STAC and MAG are looking at ways it can support the College in securing the funding required for STAC Phase 2. The Corporation was informed that there is potentially the need to set up a sub-set of Governors to ensure that there is Board input in discussions and to ensure there are open channels of communication back to the Corporation. The Corporation agreed that this should be the Chair of the Corporation, Chair of the Audit Committee and Chair of the Resources Committee.

## **13 Health and Safety Committee Meeting – 25 February 2025**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Health and Safety Committee meeting held on 25 February 2025.

The Corporation noted that it is meeting its statutory obligations.

## **14 Safeguarding Committee Meeting – 12 March 2025**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Safeguarding Committee meeting held on 12 March 2025.

The Corporation noted that it is meeting its statutory obligations.

The Safeguarding Link Governor reported that the meeting was very positive and that they were impressed with the quality of the reports.

## **15 Equality and Diversity Policy**

The Corporation received and considered the Equality and Diversity Policy, presented by Will Allanson, Deputy Principal.

Governors were informed that there are no substantive changes to the Policy, with some additions being proposed on pages 5 and 9.

The Corporation approved the Equality and Diversity Policy.

## **16 Any Other Business**

There were no items of any other business.

## **17 Dates of Future Meetings**

Summer Term 2025	Thursday 22 May 2025	9.30am
	Thursday 10 July 2025	9.30am