

# HARLOW COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

## CORPORATION MEETING

### Minutes of the meeting held online on MS Teams on Thursday 26 March 2026 – 9.30am

Membership:	*Paul Taylor (Chair)	*Vic Goddard	Lily Lin
	*Caleb Asareaddo	*Neala Goddard-Bird	*Karen Spencer
	*Caroline Betts	*John Godley	*Ian Tompkins
	*Matt Braund	Stephen Isherwood	Ed Whittle
	*Rod Bristow	*Ayub Khan	*Heather Wilson
	*Julia Fillary	*Ray Levy	

\* denotes present

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

#### 1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Stephen Isherwood and Lily Lin due to work commitments and Ed Whittle due to family commitments.

Paul Taylor welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Corporation was informed that Rod Bristow is stepping down as a Governor and thanked him for his dedication and commitment to the College over the last seven years. Rod Bristow said that it had been a great privilege to serve such a well-led College.

Governors were informed that Dan Swords has resigned from the Corporation and that Ian Tompkins is Harlow Council's representative.

#### 2 Declaration of Interests

Paul Taylor reported that he has been elected as the Eastern Region representative on the AoC National Chairs' Council and confirmed that this had been added to his register of interests.

#### 3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2025 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 FE Commissioner Newsletter (minute 9.3 refers)

Ruth Lucas circulated the FE Commissioner's Annual Report 2024 – 2025 to Governors on 18 December 2025.

#### **4.2 Keeping Children Safe in Education Report 2024-2025 (minute 10.2 refers)**

The Chair of the Corporation wrote to Essex County Council to express concerns about the Velizy Avenue pedestrian crossing on 12 Jan 26 however no response has been received. The Corporation agreed that this should be followed up.

### **5 Written Resolution Minute**

The Corporation received and noted the Written Resolution which was passed on the 9 January 2026.

Paul Whitehead reported that the letter of intent has been signed and the College is now waiting for the finalised approval report from the Council.

### **6 Principal's Report**

The Corporation received and considered the Principal's Report, presented by Karen Spencer, Principal.

Karen Spencer reported that at the next Corporation meeting there will be group discussions on key projects and developments.

Governors were informed that great work is being undertaken in relation to the Health Science Academy and key partnerships are being further developed.

Karen Spencer reported that the College is applying for Post-16 Capacity funding for STAC Phase 2 to match fund the funding from Essex County Council and the gift of the land from Manchester Airport Group. Uttlesford has a high area demography for 15 and 16 year olds and each local authority area has been scored out of 10, with Uttlesford scoring 8.

A Governor asked how much funding is being applied for and Karen Spencer reported that applications can be for up to £5m however it is a competitive process.

The Corporation unanimously approved the College's application to the Post-16 Capacity Fund.

Karen Spencer reported that excellent work has been undertaken on carbon reduction and thanked everyone involved.

Governors were informed that a long discussion was held at the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting around the new Ofsted framework and its "expected standard" compared to the College's walkthrough data which states if an internal standard has been met or not. The College's standard is higher than Ofsted expectations therefore there is the potential for assuming that staff are not meeting the Ofsted standard due to the way data is being presented. This is being explored further by the Deputy Principal and the Executive Director – Quality. Becky Jones reported

that work has already started on mapping the Ofsted criteria against the current walkthrough process.

A Governor highlighted that it is fantastic that the College has higher expectations and that this should continue. Karen Spencer reported that the College will keep measuring to the College's internal standards however when the data is cut, ensure that this is recognised as a higher than Ofsted's standard.

A Governor reported that at a recent meeting he attended that the "exceptional standard" in the new Ofsted framework equates to being world class. Ruth Lucas reported that six colleges have been inspected under the new framework and that there are 15 grades per inspection and there has not yet been any "exceptional standard" grades.

Governors' attention was brought to student enrichment activities and events which have taken place, such as a clothes swap.

A Governor asked about V-Levels.

Karen Spencer reported that it looks like V-Levels will be a replacement for applied A-Levels and that there is a bigger opportunity linked to potential flexibilities with T-Levels. There are also one year Level 2 and Level 3 courses being introduced which will assist in some curriculum areas. Governors noted it is still too early to have any more precise information.

The Corporation noted the Principal's Report and approved the College's application to the DfE's Post-16 Capacity Fund.

## **7 Student Governor Update**

The Corporation received and considered the Student Governor Update, presented by Caleb Asareaddo and Neala Goddard-Bird, Student Governors.

Neala Goddard-Bird reported that a full toilet audit has been completed and work is underway in those which scored the lowest, with £100k being invested in toilets this year.

Neala Goddard-Bird reported that students have been happy to see a reduction in the price of food at STAC and an increase in variety. Caleb Asareaddo reported that some students had fed back that the price is the same however portions have increased.

Caleb Asareaddo highlighted the issue of the cost of parking at STAC.

Caleb Asareaddo reported that STAC was a runner up in the AoC Beacon Awards for real world learning and Karen Spencer thanked everyone involved in the assessor visit.

Governors were informed that the Royal Aeronautical Society had visited STAC which was a great event for students.

The Corporation noted the Student Governor Update.

## **8 Search and Governance Committee Report**

### **8.1 Search and Governance Committee Meeting Summary Report**

The Corporation received and noted the summary report of the Search and Governance Committee meeting held on 12 February 2026.

#### **8.1.1 Minutes of the Search and Governance Committee Meeting – 12 February 2026**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Search and Governance Committee meeting held on 12 February 2026.

#### **8.1.2 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 Richard Smith as a Governor of Harlow College Further Education Corporation for a period of four years, commencing on 1 April 2026, and for him to sit on the Audit Committee.

The Corporation agreed that Ian Tompkins would move from the Audit Committee to the Standards and Curriculum Committee with immediate effect.

Ruth Lucas reported that there is currently a vacancy on the Corporation as a result of Dan Swords resigning on 25 March 2026. There will be another vacancy at the end of this academic year when Lily Lin's term of office expires as she will have served two full terms of office, however she will continue to sit on the STAC Advisory Group. Discussions are being held with potential Governors and will be reported to the next meeting of the Search and Governance Committee. The Search and Governance Committee and the Corporation are constantly reviewing its membership in line with strategic priorities.

The Corporation unanimously approved the Search and Governance Committee's recommendations. Richard Smith was appointed as a Governor of Harlow College Further Education for a period of four years, commencing on 1 April 2026 and Ian Tompkins will change Committees with immediate effect.

## **9 Standards and Curriculum Committee Reports**

### **9.1 Standards and Curriculum Committee Meeting Summary Report**

The Corporation received and noted the summary report of the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 12 March 2026.

### **9.1.1 Minutes of the Standards and Curriculum Committee Meeting – 12 March 2026**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 12 March 2026.

### **9.1.2 Key Performance Indicators 2025-2026**

The Corporation received and considered the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2025-2026, presented by Becky Jones, Deputy Principal.

Governors were informed that these were discussed at the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 12 March 2026 however they have been updated since the meeting to reflect the current position at the time of writing the papers for this meeting.

Becky Jones highlighted the revised flagging process for this year and the movement in predicted achievement from the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting to this meeting, as follows:

- College overall achievement moved from 79.4% to 87% (last year final figure 86.7%, national average 82.5% \*)
- 16-18 achievement moved from 73.5% to 83% (last year final figure 84.8%, national average 83.4%)
- Apprenticeship actual achievement to date remains the same 39.6% (last year final figure 62%, national average 62.3%)
- Adult overall achievement remains the same 86.1% (last year final figure 89.3%, national average 81.7%)

Becky Jones reported that the reflagging has been used to rebase the KPI forecasts and offers Governors reassurance that the College is on track to achieve the KPIs.

Karen Spencer reported that the FE Commissioner's Office commended the College on its achievement rates last year and this is testament to all the hard work undertaken.

The Corporation noted the Key Performance Indicators 2025-2026.

### **9.1.3 Quality Improvement Plan 2025/2026**

The Corporation received and considered the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2025-2026, presented by Becky Jones, Deputy Principal.

Governors were informed that the QIP was discussed at the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 12 March 2026 however it has been updated since the meeting to reflect the current

position at the time of writing the papers for this meeting and that updates are shown in purple font.

Becky Jones reported that some RAG ratings have moved from amber to green and confirmed that there has been no backward movement in RAG ratings.

A Governor asked about the target of 85% of sessions demonstrating stretch and challenge being met and currently this is at 75%. Becky Jones reported that this is due to not all walkthroughs having been completed and teaching, learning and assessment is being looked at more closely, ensuring that stretch and challenge is a key focus.

A Governor asked about staff industrial upskilling, which is currently at 58% against a target of 80%. Becky Jones reported that a lot of activity has been planned by staff which will take place next term. It is a work in progress and it is hoped that the target will be achieved. This is a new area this year and has not previously been reported on. Karen Spencer requested that how much is planned but not yet taken place be added into future commentaries.

The Corporation noted the Quality Improvement Plan 2025-2026.

## **10 Audit Committee Reports**

### **10.1 Audit Committee Meeting Summary Report**

The Corporation received and noted the summary report of the Audit Committee meeting held on 3 March 2026.

#### **10.1.1 Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting – 3 March 2026**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes and the confidential minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 3 March 2026.

#### **10.1.2 Confidential Item – Appointment of Internal Auditors**

The Corporation received and considered the report on the appointment of internal auditors, presented by Deanne Morgan, Executive Director – Finance.

Deanne Morgan reported that a procurement process had been completed by a panel comprising of the College's procurement advisor, the Chair of the Audit Committee and College management and reported that the Audit Committee is recommending the appointment of Validera as the College's Internal Auditors.

The Corporation approved the recommendation of the Audit Committee to appoint Validera as the Internal Auditors for three years (2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29), with the option to extend to five years (2029/30 and 2030/31).

## **11 Resources Committee Reports**

### **11.1 Resources Committee Meeting Summary Report**

The Corporation received and noted the summary report of the Resources Committee meeting held on 9 March 2026.

#### **11.1.1 Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting – 9 March 2026**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 9 March 2026.

#### **11.1.2 Management Accounts for the period 1 August 2025 – 31 January 2026**

The Corporation received and considered the management accounts for the period 1 August 2025 – 31 January 2026, presented by Deanne Morgan, Executive Director – Finance.

Governors were informed that the management accounts presented to the Resources Committee at its meeting on 9 March 2026 were up to 31 December 2025 however the Corporation has been provided with the most up-to-date management accounts.

Deanne Morgan reported that there has not been a lot of movement between the December and January management accounts apart from a reduction for clawback relating to 2022 – 2023, a reduction in staffing forecasts and amendments to non-pay costs.

A Governor reported that the amendment on the borrowing line on the cash forecast as requested at the Resources Committee meeting is helpful

The Corporation approved the management accounts for the period 1 August 2025 – 31 January 2026.

#### **11.1.3 Banking Facility**

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

Governors were informed that this report was discussed at the Resources Committee meeting held on 9 March 2026 and that the Committee recommended the approval of the banking facility.

Governors noted that the College's cash position is good, the College is solvent and it continues to meet its obligations for the loans.

The Chair of the Corporation highlighted that the College has strong financial management and thanked the Finance Team for their exceptional work.

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>Limit</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Overdraft	£Nil	-
BACS (salaries)	£1,200,000	per month
BACS (non salaries)	£1,000,000	per week
Business Card (2 x credit cards)	£4,000	per month

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

## **12 DfE Annual Strategic Conversation Outcome Letter**

The Corporation received the DfE Annual Strategic Conversation outcome letter, presented by Karen Spencer, Principal.

Karen Spencer reported that the letter was a standard letter, outlining areas of discussion held.

The Annual Strategic Conversation was attended by DfE representatives, a representative from the FE Commissioner's Office, the Chair of the Corporation, the Chair of the Audit Committee, all members of the Principalship and the Head of Governance.

The format of the College's Self-Assessment Report, aligned to the new Ofsted framework, was praised.

The Corporation noted the DfE Annual Strategic Conversation outcome letter.

## **13 FE Commissioner Letter**

The Corporation received, considered and noted the letter from the new FE Commissioner.

## **14 Stansted Airport College Advisory Group Meeting – 13 February 2026**

The Corporation received and noted the notes of the Stansted Airport College Advisory Group meeting held on 13 February 2026.

Karen Spencer reported that a lot of this had been covered in previous agenda items.

Governors were informed that meetings are taking place in relation to the communications plan and that funding for expansion is the key area of focus.

## **15 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group Meeting Summary Report – 24 February 2026**

The Corporation received and considered the summary report of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group meeting held on 24 February 2026, presented by Karen Spencer, Principal.

Governors were informed that this report and the reports in agenda items 16 and 17 are in a new format, providing Governors with a strategic summary of the meeting rather than the minutes.

Karen Spencer reported that good progress is being made towards the Investors in Diversity Silver Award with the second survey having been completed. The College can apply for a Gold Award after holding the Silver Award for two years however the AoC has increased their work on charters, including an E&D charter and a student charter, therefore there are options that are to be explored.

Governors noted that a number of inclusion events have taken place and are planned for students and staff.

Karen Spencer congratulated the College's AAT Team which has been shortlisted for the Inclusive Provider of the Year award at the 2026 AAT Training Provider Awards.

The Corporation noted the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group Summary Report.

## **16 Safeguarding Committee Meeting Summary Report – 4 March 2026**

The Corporation received and considered the summary report of the Safeguarding Committee meeting held on 4 March 2026, presented by Karen Spencer, Principal.

Governors were informed that the meeting provided an overview on safeguarded and vulnerable students, staff training and the number of safeguarding incidents dealt with. The most serious safeguarding incidents are case reviews and child protection. The volumes are in line with what the College expected and the Team has been asked to be clearer on how incidents are risk assessed.

Governors were assured that all statutory requirements are being met.

A Governor asked about the high number of mental health cases and asked what was behind this. Karen Spencer reported that there are a whole range of issues and they are not significantly different to what the College would normally deal with. There are services available to support these young people and referrals are made to other agencies where required.

The Chair of the Corporation reported that the College has agreed to do a presentation to Essex's Magistrates Association Branch on the topic of how the FE system safeguards and works with young people who may have had, or have ongoing, interactions with the Criminal Justice System or the Family Courts.

The Corporation noted the Safeguarding Committee Meeting Summary Report.

## **17 Health, Safety and Environment Committee Meeting Summary Report – 19 March 2026**

The Corporation received and considered the summary report of the Health, Safety and Environment Committee meeting held on 19 March 2026, presented by Paul Whitehead, Deputy Principal.

Governors were informed that there have been no RIDDOR reportable events, reporting of health and safety incidents has increased, there is a good level of staff training and that good work is being undertaken in preparation for the implementation of Martyn's Law in April 2027.

There have been improvements to estates and infrastructure and a watchful eye is being kept on security and safeguarding.

The Corporation noted the Health, Safety and Environment Committee Meeting Summary Report.

## **18 Any Other Business**

Ian Tompkins reported that under local government reorganisation, Essex will be split into five unitary authorities from April 2028 which will replace all the existing councils in Essex. A West Essex Council will be created which will consist of Uttlesford, Harlow and Epping Forest and will have responsibility for highways, education, social care, housing etc. A statutory change order will abolish the existing authorities and a shadow authority will be established in 2027. Local and County Council elections will still take place in May 2026.

Karen Spencer reported that the West Essex option was the College's preferred option and is the best model for both Harlow and Stansted. A statement from the Leader of Essex County Council has been released saying they are considering challenging the outcome judicially.

Ian Tompkins reported that the new Essex Integrated Care Board comes into being on 1 April 2026.

## **19 Dates of Future Meetings**

Summer Term 2026	Tuesday 19 May 2026	9.30am
	Thursday 09 July 2026	9.30am