

HARLOW COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

SEARCH AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on MS Teams at 2pm on Tuesday 07 October 2025

Membership *Ray Levy
 *Lily Lin (Chair)
 *Karen Spencer
 *Ian Tompkins

*denotes present

In attendance Paul Whitehead, Deputy Principal
 Simon Boyce, Vice-Principal
 Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Deanne Morgan.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Search and Governance Committee meeting held on 23 June 2025 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting, subject to two typographical changes.

4 Matters Arising from the Minutes (not mentioned elsewhere on the agenda)

4.1 Register of Membership & Membership of Harlow College Further Education Corporation (minutes 5 and 6 refers)

The Search and Governance Committee was informed that an approach was not made to the Hill Group and the Harlow and Gilston Garden Town due to a positive approach being made to Harlow Council which will be discussed as part of agenda item 6 – Membership of Harlow College Further Education Corporation.

5 Register of Membership

The Search and Governance Committee received and considered the Register of Membership, presented by Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance.

The Committee noted that the vacancy would be discussed in agenda item 6 - Membership of Harlow College Further Education Corporation.

A Governor asked about the Student Governor vacancy and Ruth Lucas confirmed that there have been six nominations and an election is currently being held.

A discussion was held around the mapping of Governors to the 2 Cs and 2Es and Ruth Lucas agreed that this would be updated.

The Search and Governance Committee noted the Register of Membership.

6 Membership of Harlow College Further Education Corporation

The Search and Governance Committee received an update on membership of Harlow College Further Education Corporation, presented by Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance.

Ruth Lucas reported that Harlow Council had been approached to nominate a Councillor to join the Corporation. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Dan Swords, put his name forward. Ruth Lucas met with him to discuss the role further and to highlight the time commitment of the role and that the appointment would be subject to him being an elected Harlow Council Councillor.

A discussion was held on the value that Dan Swords would add to the Corporation and that he is a champion of Harlow, further education and skills.

The Search and Governance Committee noted the update on the membership of Harlow College Further Education Corporation and recommended the following to the Corporation for approval at its meeting on 23 October 2025:

- The appointment of Councillor Dan Swords as a Governor of Harlow College Further Education Corporation for a period of four years (or less if he ceases to be a Harlow Council Councillor) and for him to sit on the Resources Committee.

7 Self-Assessment of Governance 2024 – 2025

The Search and Governance Committee received the Self-Assessment of Governance 2024 – 2025, presented by Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance.

The Committee was reminded that the self-assessment questionnaire was discussed in detail at the Search and Governance Committee meeting held on 23 June 2025, along with the format of the report. This was approved at the Corporation meeting held on 10 July 2025.

Karen Spencer reported that a new Ofsted inspection framework is being launched in November and it is believed that this will move away from functionality of the Corporation, with more of a focus on what difference the Corporation has made. The impact needs to be articulated greater in the Self-Assessment of Governance 2024 – 2025 however this cannot be updated and completed until the College's self-assessment has been undertaken and the data finalised. The leadership and management section in the old Ofsted inspection framework has been replaced with a leadership and governance section in the new framework. Karen Spencer reported that self-assessments events with teams will be held next half term which will feed into the overall College self-assessment which Governors will look at.

A Governor asked how the overall effectiveness score of 4.7 out of 5 compares to the 2023 – 2024 score. Ruth Lucas reported that a full self-assessment was not undertaken in 2023 – 2024 as this was the year of the Corporation's External Governance Review, therefore a self-assessment was not required. The last full self-assessment was

undertaken in 2022 – 2023 and Ruth Lucas reported that the questions were not the same therefore the scores cannot be compared however overall the scores were more positive in 2024 – 2025, compared to 2022 – 2023.

It was suggested that the Chair's appraisal as part of the self-assessment should be included in the main body of the report rather than just the results of the questions being in the appendix. It was agreed that this will be included in the updated version of the Self-Assessment of Governance 2024 – 2025.

A discussion was held around Governors undertaking an evaluation after each Corporation and Committee meeting, as suggested by a Governor in the self-assessment questionnaire. A discussion was held around this and it was agreed that this could be overkill and that at the moment the balance is right.

A Governor highlighted that Governor attendance had dropped. Ruth Lucas reported that two meetings were rearranged therefore that affected attendance and that there are always genuine reasons for Governors sending apologies, with an online option always offered. A discussion was held on the RAG rating of attendance. Attendance has been RAG rated based on the attendance at Corporation and Committee level compared to the previous year. The overall attendance target in the Governance KPIs for 2024 – 2025 is 80% and it was agreed that the RAG rating should be based on attendance in relation to the target rather than in relation to the previous year. Ruth Lucas agreed to update the RAG ratings.

A Governor asked about the impact of diversity on the Corporation. Ruth Lucas reported that the Corporation is more diverse than the regional and national figures. Karen Spencer reported that there is a cross-College focus on equality, diversity and inclusion and place in the community. There are some measurable metrics such as how people feel they belong and how they see their future. There is data which supports improvements being made for students and staff, such as social inclusion, gender pay, ethnicity pay and implementation of the real living wage. The impact in the community has not been measured however anecdotally, the College has a strong reputation in the community and this is supported by the high number of applications to the College.

A Governor highlighted that the wider agenda for Harlow is important and how collectively key organisations can go beyond and ask the community if what is being done is creating a greater sense of ambition. It was agreed that this is not a responsibility of Harlow College Governors and that this could be picked up with the groups that the College is working with.

The Search and Governance Committee noted the report and agreed that the Self-Assessment of Governance 2024 – 2025 would be updated after the College's self-assessment is undertaken.

8 AoC Further Education Code of Good Governance

The Search and Governance Committee received and considered the report on the AoC Further Education Code of Good Governance, presented by Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance.

The Head of Governance reported that the Corporation needs to report that it is compliant with a governance code in the financial statements and that the Corporation adopted the AoC's Further Education Code of Good Governance in October 2023.

The Head of Governance highlighted the mapping exercise against the six principles in the Code, demonstrating how the Corporation has complied with the Code and areas for development.

The Search and Governance Committee agreed that the Corporation has been compliant with the AoC Further Education Code of Good Governance during 2024 – 2025 and agreed to recommend to the Corporation at its meeting to be held on 23 October 2025 that a statement of compliance is included in the financial statements.

9 Governance KPIs and Improvement Plan 2025 – 2026

The Search and Governance Committee received and considered the governance KPIs and improvement plan for 2025 – 2026, presented by Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance.

The Search and Governance Committee agreed that the governance KPIs and improvement plan for 2025 – 2026 would be approved after the Self-Assessment of Governance 2024 – 2025 is completed.

10 Any Other Business

There were no items of any other business.

11 Dates of Next Meeting

Autumn Term 2025	Thursday 27 November 2025	2pm
Spring Term 2026	Thursday 12 February 2026	9.30am
Summer Term 2026	Thursday 07 May 2026	9.30am
	Tuesday 23 June 2026	9.30am

Key Points From The Meeting For Corporation:

1. Item 1 – Membership of Harlow College Further Education Corporation

To receive and approve the recommendation of the Search and Governance Committee.

2. Item 2 – AoC Further Education Code of Good Governance

To review and approve the College's compliance with the AoC Further Education Code of Good Governance and for a statement confirming this to be included in the financial statements.

Action Plan:

Action No.	Agenda Item	Action	By Whom	By When
001	5 – Register of Membership	Update the mapping of the 2 Cs and 2 Es.	Ruth Lucas	October 2025
002	7 – Self-Assessment of Governance 2024 – 2025	Include analysis of the Chair's appraisal in the main body of the report.	Ruth Lucas	December 2025
003	7 – Self-Assessment of Governance 2024 – 2025	Update RAG ratings on attendance figures.	Ruth Lucas	December 2025