MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF LEICESTER COLLEGE CORPORATION HELD ON 16 APRIL 2026

Present:	Danielle Gillett (Chair) Kyle Cameron Shawn George Lesley Giles Shabir Ismail Neil McDougall	Nicky Randall Robert Radford* Jackie Rossa Lee Soden Tom Wilson
In Attendance:	Louise Hazel	Director of Governance and Policy
	Amanda Scott	Director of HR
	Zubair Limbada	Deputy Principal Finance and Corporate Services
	Randeep Sami	Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality
	Zoé Butler	Director of Student Services and Marketing (items 4-5)

*Joined meeting online via Teams

1 WELCOMES AND DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

1.1 Zubair Limbada and Randeep Sami were welcomed to their first meeting.

1.2 Senior Postholders declared an interest in item 9, Neil McDougall declared an interest in item 13.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Vipul Bechar, Chan Kataria, Vipal Karavadra, Jude Mellor, Steve Munro and Sophie Strevens-Robinson.

3 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

3.1 **Members of the Corporation received and approved the minutes of the meeting on 11 December 2025.**

3.2 **Members of the Corporation received and approved the minutes of the Special meeting on 29 January 2026.**

3.3 As a matter arising, the Principal provided an update on the incident in December. Both students had been taken through the disciplinary process and one had been excluded from College. The other was back in College under close supervision and with parental engagement. The College and emergency services had responded quickly to the incident. However, the College could have managed communications better, particularly the speed with which it responded on social media; more time could have been taken before a response was made.

4 INTERIM SAFEGUARDING REPORT

4.1 The Director of Student Services and Marketing presented the Interim Safeguarding Report. The following points were highlighted.

4.1.1 There were 782 safeguarding referrals concerning 562 students from August 2025 to February 2026, a decrease from 969 the previous year, with a reduction in Smoothwall notifications.

4.1.2 Cases were increasingly complex. The College was working with 98 students under statutory Child In Need or Child Protection plans.

4.1.3 Among referrals, 53% involved male students and 47% female, with 79% of referrals concerning students aged 16-18, consistent with prior years.

4.1.4 The expansion of Operation Encompass in Leicestershire had led to better information sharing and involvement with Social Care. However, its transfer to the Police and changes to how information would be shared in the future presented serious concerns about the impact on the College's ability to safeguard students. The College and other providers' concerns would continue to be raised. The Safeguarding Committee would be kept up to date with developments.

4.1.5 Mental health remained the leading referral reason at 43%, primarily involving self-harm and suicide ideation. Referrals to Wellbeing Mentors increased to 2,257 compared to 1,600 last year. There was increased resource through two Wellbeing Mentor team leaders and an additional Wellbeing Mentor who had been recruited to provide support to adult students due to the growing demand. There were now two wellbeing dogs which had been very well received by students and staff.

4.1.6 Sexual harassment, assault, and abuse referrals remained stable with 64 cases.

4.1.7 There had been no Prevent referrals compared to three last year.

4.1.8 Training and awareness raising continue and included Prevent Young Leaders events and live scenario exercises. Staff safeguarding training completion was 93%, with bi-annual refreshers and multiple network sessions delivered.

4.1.9 The College was supporting 242 care experienced young people, a small decrease on the previous year. Some of the reduction was in the number of children seeking safety.

4.1.10 An internal audit had made no recommendations around safeguarding risks.

4.2 Governors made the following **comments** and asked a number of **questions** including:

4.2.1 **The Southport inquiry had found that repeated referrals from the school had been ignored. Could reassurance be provided that the College did not experience this when making referrals?** The College had a culture of challenging where it felt it was not getting an adequate response and would escalate concerns where needed; the local Prevent team was very helpful and responsive.

4.2.2 **Given the volume of referrals, did the team have enough resource?** This was kept under constant review. There was a team of counsellors, mentors and mental health workers who could provide different types of support to students. It was felt that there was the right balance at the moment. Additional resource had been provided and the ELT was very supportive of requests for resource.

4.2.3 **What was the College's position on mobile phones and social media?** Guidance for schools around banning phones had been issued and Ofsted would be looking at pupils' use of phones but there was nothing comparable for colleges. The College might want to consider its stance but it would be worth waiting for the outcome of the consultation on the use of social media for under 16s. It was possible that, should a ban come in for under-16s, post-16 settings would feel the impact more than schools.

4.2.4 **What was the student governors' views on restriction of phones and social media.** It was likely that students might try and find ways around any ban but it might also affect learning in a positive way.

4.2.5 **Whatever the outcome of the consultation, the College would want to consult students on its approach.**

4.3 **Members of the Corporation <u>thanked</u> the Director of Student Services and <u>received</u> the Safeguarding Interim Report.**

5 STUDENT VOICE REPORT

5.1 The Director of Student Services and Marketing presented the Student Voice Annual Report. The following points were highlighted.

5.1.1 A structured approach operated through over 300 course representatives, a Student Council, a Student Liaison Committee and an active Student Union (SU). Students were very engaged and it was a pleasure to work with the SU.

5.1.2 The Term 1 Student Survey had a 76% response rate with very positive responses about induction, teaching, learning and assessment and support provided by tutors.

5.1.3 Areas for improvement included the helpfulness of feedback and wellbeing/safety understanding although this would be covered more in personal development sessions in terms 2 and 3.

5.1.4 There were no significant gaps by ethnicity or disadvantage, although high-needs and male students showed slightly lower satisfaction; male students were the focus of the latest Hear My Voice project.

5.1.5 Impact and key improvements and actions included improving access to social space, using student feedback to inform the attendance campaign for 2026/27, recruiting new EDI ambassadors, addressing disabled students' concerns about lift access through restricted-access at APC, creation of all-gender toilets at APC and work to improve reflection rooms and prayer provision.

5.1.6 Campus safety and accountability had been strengthened through the introduction of body-worn cameras for Campus Wardens and work was underway to introduce safer, more accessible digital reporting tools for safeguarding.

5.1.7 The College still needed to do more to explain to students where changes had been made as a result of student feedback.

5.2 Governors asked the following **questions** and made the following **comments**:

5.2.1 **How was student feedback aligned with other quality processes? That might help in understanding some of the issues.** The quality processes were being reviewed and would be more aligned to student feedback at course level. The College also needed to be more dynamic in terms of collecting and responding to feedback in year to that changes could be made in a timely way.

5.2.2 **How was the recruitment of the EDI ambassadors going and was that likely to attract the most engaged students?** It would start with the most engaged students but the aim was to get students from a range of demographics who could engage the 'seldom heard' students who might be happier talking to their peers rather than staff.

5.2.3 **Nothing as detailed or learner focussed had been seen in other colleges. It was very special.** Agreed; it was very energising to have such engaged students. 'Meet the Principal' drop in sessions had also been introduced which had been well attended.

5.3 **Members of the Corporation noted the Student Voice Report.**

6 PARTNERSHIPS AND PROJECTS

6.1 The Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality presented the Partnerships and Projects report. The following points were highlighted.

6.1.1 The College continued its subcontract with the National Space Centre for Level 3 Immersive Media and Game Design. The course had received positive feedback from Ofsted and Pearson and was high quality and low risk. It was proposed to continue this into 2026/27 with the potential for expanding the work.

6.1.2 Sector Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs) were delivered in security, health, neighbourhood improvement, and rail engineering. There was strong progression into employment.

6.1.3 Approval was requested to engage a new rail delivery partner SCUK, to run a pilot programme June to September 2026.

6.1.4 The Level 2 Door Supervisor Course was delivered to unemployed adults. There would be a proposal to add a CCTV programme to the security portfolio for 2026/27, under the same freelance tutor arrangement.

6.1.5 There was no further funding for the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF) but there was close work locally over the LSIP and funding might become available.

6.1.6 A strategic partnership with the University of Leicester was in development and provided a range of opportunities for delivery and collaboration. Discussions were ongoing about possible use of the aeronautical building and College use of the University's facilities. Approval for the development of the partnership was sought.

6.2 **Governors** asked the following **questions** and made the following **comments**:

6.2.1 **What was the value of the proposed rail engineering pilot with SC**

UK? This would be confirmed although was a pilot and so was likely to be small.

6.2.2 **It seemed like a sensible approach to start with a pilot.**

6.2.3 **In the context of development of the new strategic plan, was there an opportunity to redefine what constituted a partnership?** There was; the College was proactive in looking at opportunities to engage in wider partnerships beyond subcontracting but it needed to keep an open mind about where partnerships or collaboration might have mutual benefits.

6.2.4 **It was good to see that the College was making the most of its assets and the estates review should also address this. What opportunity was there for working with DMU on shared space?** There had been positive conversations with the University of Leicester about the strategic partnership although it was a bit too soon to talk about shared facilities. The appointment of a new Director of Marketing at DMU might be a good route in to pick up discussions with DMU.

6.2.5 **What was the progress of the CSCF bid?** This was due on 17 April; the bid would be for a £5m project to refurbish gas and plumbing with a 10% match over three years. The Derby led CTEC had provided support as had a number of employers.

6.2.6 **The bid team was to be commended on getting the bid done within a very short timescale.**

6.2.7 **How close was the level of Subcontracting to the £100k limit? It would be helpful to have that set out in the paper.** Noted. The Current level was well below the threshold.

6.2.8 **The paper needed reworking to set out the strategic alignment of the partnerships and the values.** Noted.

6.2.9 **Would there be a stakeholder engagement strategy and would the partnership work sit alongside that?** It would.

6.3 **Members of the Corporation <u>noted</u> the report and <u>approved:</u>**

6.3.1 **The new partnership arrangement for the delivery of Rail Engineering with SC UK subject to confirmation of the value of the project.**

6.3.2 **The development of the partnership with the University of Leicester.**

7 <u>OPERATING STATEMENT PROGRESS REPORT</u>

7.1 The Principal presented the Operating Statement Progress report. The following points were highlighted.

7.1.1 16-19 student numbers were close to allocation although T level recruitment was below target. Adult recruitment was on track; apprenticeships were slightly below plan but improving.

7.1.2 Intensive support was being provided to curriculum areas identified as quality risks. Long-term thematic reviews were underway for underperforming areas.

7.1.3 As reported earlier, student satisfaction remained high.

7.1.4 Capital funding had been secured for HE room upgrades including equipment, IT and some estates work.

7.1.5 A very successful Apprenticeships, Skills and Jobs Fair had attracted over 1,000 attendees.

7.1.6 The College financial position was stable. Financial health rating was 'good'.

7.1.7 The new ELT structure had been implemented and further consultation was ongoing for the curriculum and quality structure below ELT level.

7.1.8 Areas of concern included student attendance, which was below the target of 88%. There had been lots of challenge and discussion at CSQI and the focus was now on students with 50-80% attendance at risk of not achieving with new tools available to support managers. It was noted that this was now the third term and while it might not be possible to make significant improvements for this year, the focus would be on making strong start in the new year.

7.1.9 Preparation for inspection was underway and led by the Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality.

7.1.10 Sustainability work had stalled because of resources but would be picked up again in the new academic year.

7.2 **The Chair of CSQI reported there was real confidence in the actions planned but it was important to manage expectations. If the College were inspected in the next year, current year data would be used and it did not currently look as if there would be significant improvements in achievement this year. This would likely result in a 'needs attention' grading for EPYP; adult and apprenticeships were above NARs. The issue was with Level 1.** Agreed. The data was being reviewed and it was evident that there were some courses which had historic poor performance. Honest conversations about these were taking place with the area managers to assess what the issues were and whether the courses should be continued.

7.3 In response to a **question** about the RAG rating, it was explained that this considered various aspects of each objective. A key could be provided in future reports.

7.4 **Members of the Corporation <u>noted</u> the Operating Statement Progress Report.**

8 <u>FINANCE REPORT (PERIOD 6) AND SPRING REFORECAST</u>

8.1 The Director of Finance presented the finance report (period 6) and spring reforecast. The following points were highlighted.

8.1.1 The year-to-date result was an EBITDA surplus after restructuring costs of £2,079k compared to the budgeted surplus of £2,172k.

8.1.2 16-18 learner responsive learner numbers were slightly above allocation, overall, however, an under-recruitment to T level courses would result in an in-year clawback of funding. The estimated clawback included in the budget had been reviewed as part of the spring reforecast.

8.1.3 The College was on track to achieve its ASF target.

8.1.4 Apprenticeship income was in line with the autumn reforecast target.

8.1.5 HE fee income continued to be challenging and had fallen below the autumn forecast target. The forecast income had been reduced in the spring reforecast by £201k.

8.1.6 A spring reforecast had been undertaken. Overall, the expected EBITDA surplus after restructuring costs had increased by £66k, from a surplus of £2,566k to a surplus of £2,632k.

8.1.7 The College would meet its bank covenants and achieve a ‘good’ financial health rating, based on the spring reforecast.

8.1.8 The College continued to be a going concern.

8.2 The Principal provided an update on funding for 2026/27. There would be a 0.55% increase to 16-18 funding which was very disappointing, particularly as the Government had said there would be real terms increases. There was no increase for apprenticeships or adult funding. This meant that the budget setting for 2026/27 would be difficult. Union pay demands were unrealistic and there was a strong possibility of industrial action. The College would be writing to MPs to highlight the issue. The College would receive £2.2m in capital funding which was less than had been hoped for. **Timing of expenditure of the capital funding was critical so that students benefited as soon as possible.**

8.3 **The Chair of F&GP commented that F&GP had looked at the reforecast and although there were peaks and troughs in movements, overall the position was similar to the autumn reforecast. It was recognised that pay would be an issue. The College remained close to the requires improvement category with only £450k headroom.** This was being monitored on a monthly basis.

8.4 **Members of the Corporation <u>noted</u> the period 6 finance report and <u>approved</u> the spring reforecast.**

Members agreed that senior postholders, staff and students could remain in the meeting for the next item.

9 <u>SENIOR POSTHOLDER APPRAISAL SCHEME</u>

9.1 The Director of HR presented the Senior Postholder Appraisal Scheme. The following points were highlighted.

9.1.1 This was a new policy to provider a more transparent and consistent approach across senior post holder appraisals. The process would be in addition to the usual line manager appraisal of the two Deputy Principals and the Director of Governance and Policy.

9.1.2 It was an evidence-led approach that followed the principles of DfE guidance on senior post holder appraisals.

9.1.3 Feedback from the appraisal would be presented to the F&GP in its role as Remuneration Committee and then to Corporation.

9.1.4 It was intended not to be an onerous process and support would be provided for governors if needed.

9.2 **The Chair noted that this had been considered and recommended by F&GP at its meeting in December 2025. It was felt to be helpful in**

formalising and providing a more transparent process.

9.3 **Members of the Corporation <u>approved</u> the Senior Postholder Appraisal Scheme.**

10 <u>EXTERNAL BOARD REVIEW ACTION PLAN</u>

10.1 The Director of Governance and Policy presented the External Board Review Action Plan. The following points were highlighted.

10.1.1 The paper set out an action plan arising from the College's External Board Review, commissioned from the Association of Colleges and undertaken in September 2025.
10.1.2 The review, carried out by Rob Lawson OBE, was considered by the Corporation in January 2026. It had been shared with the Department for Education and a summary was now on the College website.
10.1.3 Most recommendations had been accepted and incorporated into an action plan aligned with the Governance Improvement Action Plan. It would be monitored by the Search and Governance Committee with reports provided to Corporation.

10.2 In response to a **question** it was confirmed that all actions were underway and some would be discussed at the next meeting of the Search and Governance Committee to determine the next steps.

10.3 **Members of the Corporation <u>approved</u> the External Board Review Action Plan.**

11 <u>NEW FE COMMISSIONER LETTER</u>

11.1 The Chair presented a letter from the new FE Commissioner. The following points were highlighted.

11.1.1 The new FE Commissioner (FEC), Ellen Thinnesen had written her first letter to the sector which highlighted the support and interventions provided by the FEC team.
11.1.2 The letter also highlighted a number of issues related to the importance of strong leadership and governance including: the triumvirate, avoidance of over-reliance on any single individual and ensuring clear designation and accountability for Senior Postholders, management of risk and the use of board assurance frameworks, continuous learning and additional learning and development for technical responsibilities such as the accountable officer.

11.2 **Members of the Corporation <u>noted</u> the FE Commissioner's letter.**

12 <u>WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY</u>

12.1 The Director of Governance and Policy presented the revised Whistleblowing Policy for approval. The following points were highlighted.

12.1.1 The Policy, which was a model Whistleblowing Policy based on legal advice, had been slightly amended to reflect changes arising from the Employment Rights Act in relation to the prevention of sexual harassment and to include suggestions from a recent internal audit report on fraud risk to ensure the College reflected best practice.

12.1.2 Following discussions about a whistleblowing case at the Audit Committee, a number of changes were also made to clarify when this Policy or the Grievance Policy should be used.

12.1.3 The Policy also now included a statement that it would be reviewed sooner than the three-year cycle where necessary.

12.2 **Members of the Corporation approved the Whistleblowing Policy.**

Neil McDougall left the meeting.

13 ELECTION OF CHAIR

13.1 The Director of Governance and Policy presented a paper outlining the process for electing a new Chair of Governors. The following points were highlighted.

13.1.1 The current Chair of Corporation's term of office would end on 13 June 2026. Since Danielle Gillett could not serve another term of office, there would be a vacancy for Chair of Governors.

13.1.2 One Governor, Neil McDougall, has expressed an interest in the role of Chair.

13.1.3 Since there was only one candidate, there was not a requirement for Governors to vote for candidates. However, Governors were asked to consider the suitability of the candidate for the role prior to making a final decision.

13.2 **Members of the Corporation discussed the application from Neil McDougall, agreed he would be a suitable candidate and unanimously agreed to appoint him as Chair of Corporation from 14 June 2026.**

Neil McDougall rejoined the meeting.

14 GOVERNOR VISIT REPORTS

14.1 **Members of the Corporation received and noted the governor visit reports.**

15 GOVERNOR APPOINTMENTS

15.1 **Members of the Corporation received and noted the governor appointments report.**

16 ITEM FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE: RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

16.1 **Members of the Corporation received and noted the risk management update.**

17 COMPLAINTS REPORT

17.1 **Members of the Corporation received and noted the complaints report.**

18 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- **5-6 June 2026**
- **2 July 2026**