



**Search and Governance Committee**

**15 January 2025**

**AGENDA  
REFERENCE**

**A**

<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 September 2025</b>		
<b>PURPOSE</b>	<b>To receive, agree and approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 September 2025</b>		
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	<b>Governors are recommended to note the minutes and agree their accuracy</b>		
<i>No. of pages in main paper</i>	9	<i>Appendices</i>	-
<i>Student Experience Implications</i>	None		
<i>Financial Implications</i>	None		
<i>EDI Implications</i>	None		
<i>Sustainability Implications</i>	None		
<i>Other Risk Implications</i>	Failure to follow agreed and proper practices		
<i>Risk Register Ref.</i>	n/a	<i>Operating Statement Ref.</i>	n/a
<i>Paper previously considered by</i>	-	<i>Author</i>	Matt Widdowson

**Executive Summary**

N/A

# MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE BOARD OF LEICESTER COLLEGE CORPORATION:



## SEARCH AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE HELD ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2025

Present: Danielle Gillett (Chair)  
Jackie Rossa\*  
Shabir Ismail  
Sophie Strevens-Robinson

In Attendance: Louise Hazel Director of Governance and Policy  
Matt Widdowson Governance and Policy Officer (Minutes)

*\*via MS Teams*

### 1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 1.1. Danielle Gillett and Jackie Rossa declared an interest in item 6.
- 1.2. Danielle Gillett declared an interest in item 11.

### 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 2.1. Apologies were received from Chan Kataria.

### 3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 22 MAY 2025

#### 3.1. MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1.1. Zubair Limbada had agreed to serve one more exceptional year as an independent governor.
- 3.1.2. Neil McDougall had now joined the CSQI Committee.
- 3.1.3. Mukund Narsi was still interested in the associate role. Governors needed to be identified who would be able to act as mentors for associates and new governors.
- 3.1.4. Roger Merchant had fed back that he was not interested in chairing the Audit Committee.

- 3.2. The minutes of the meeting of 22 May 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and approved.

### 4. REVIEW OF PROPOSALS FOR EXTERNAL GOVERNANCE REVIEW

- 4.1. Proposals had been received from the AoC, CoSteer, Rockborn and Pro Excellence Partnership. The Director of Governance and Policy introduced the proposals. The following points were highlighted.

- 4.1.1. A tender exercise had taken place, and four companies had been asked to submit their proposals. These were all fairly well-known organisations with the exception of Pro Excellence Partnership who were a local company.
- 4.1.2. Governors would now need to comment on their preferred option.
- 4.2. **Governors had been asked to score the proposals in advance of the meeting following the criteria of price, clarity of proposal and approach, track record, and extent of knowledge.**
- 4.3. **Governors made the following comments.**
  - 4.3.1. **Pro Excellence was an outlier in terms of price, and it was difficult to see what extra value could be gained for the extra cost. Rockborn also did not add any additional value.**
  - 4.3.2. **If something a bit different was sought, then CoSteer could offer this as they could provide a more data-driven review. However, if a standard review was required, then the AoC would be the preferred choice.**
  - 4.3.3. **The AoC had been recognised as a sector leader although its bid was weakened by the lack of face-to-face availability with reviewers.**
  - 4.3.4. **Rockborn were weak with regards to their proposed methodology.**
  - 4.3.5. **Pro Excellence was the premium option with a rigorous methodology. Their weakness, however, was price. advantage.**
  - 4.3.6. **There were concerns around the AoC having previously awarded Weston College an award good governance. If the AoC were the preferred option, it would be a good idea to question them about Ofsted's changes to the evaluation of governance. It was noted that the problems at Weston College had not been identified by the external auditors either.**
  - 4.3.7. **Who had conducted the previous external review?** The ETF and IoD in partnership.
  - 4.3.8. **The AoC would be better positioned with regards to the new Ofsted Inspection framework and there would be the opportunity for the College to steer the review. Ofsted's scrutiny of governance now felt more 'intense'.**
  - 4.3.9. **Co Steer's data analysis was something that the College could probably carry out itself.**
  - 4.3.10. **What might be the issue with the AoC reviewers' face-to-face availability?** The AoC had actually offered a choice of reviewers: Sandra Prail, Shirley Collier, Marina Gaze, Rob Lawson and Steven King. **Would governors be able to select the reviewer?** The Director of Governance and Policy would find out who was still available. **Rob Lawson's biography sounded good although they all had good credentials.** Rob Lawson could be requested as first preference.
  - 4.3.11. **What would be the timeline?** A scoping meeting would be arranged with the reviewer, Principal, Chair and Director of Governance and Policy.
- 4.4. **Governors agreed to appoint the AoC to conduct the external governance review.**

## **5. GOVERNOR DASHBOARD**

- 5.1. The Director of Governance and Policy provided governors with a demonstration of the new Governor Dashboard. The following points were highlighted.
- 5.1.1. This was a completely new dashboard and the committee were invited to offer their initial thoughts. The dashboard used test data.
  - 5.1.2. The data team had developed a top-level dashboard that pulled together some of the key metrics from the strategic plan. Using the summary page, it was also possible to drill down by student type, curriculum area or both.
  - 5.1.3. The data were pulled existing sources used by managers, although it would not be possible to drill down below curriculum area due to data security requirements.
  - 5.1.4. While the existing Quality Dashboard would be useful for the CSQI Committee, the new governors' dashboard included a specific tab for detailing the quality measures. Further work was underway to provide a College-level narrative view for the CSQI Committee.
  - 5.1.5. The Governor Dashboard included an EDIMs tab. Consideration needed to be given to where the KPIs sit within this tab. There would need to be work on comparisons for outcomes.
  - 5.1.6. The trends tab still needed some work, not least because the colours used for the graphs might be difficult for some governors to use. This tab would show the trend for the current year. The aim was to populate the graphs with both this year's and the previous year's data.
  - 5.1.7. A lot of work was done on getting the data right and the benefits of this work was now being seen.
  - 5.1.8. This version of the dashboard would be shared with governors for their comments and suggestions.

5.2. **Governors made the following comments.**

- 5.2.1. **Could years be compared against each other in the trends tab?** Not yet, but work was underway to see if this was possible.
- 5.2.2. **Comparing points in time might be useful.** This was already a function on another College dashboard and showing it in the governor's dashboard might help governors to understand whether everything was on track.
- 5.2.3. **It would be good to view this year's cohort of students with the previous years'.**
- 5.2.4. This would be the same data that were used in Performance Reviews and SLT meetings. It had been made clear to SLT that they were responsible for their own data and correcting any errors.
- 5.2.5. **Where were high needs?** These students could be viewed in the EDIMs tab and viewed at either whole College or curriculum area level.
- 5.2.6. **Would it be possible to tell how many students had an EHCP?** Yes.
- 5.2.7. **This dashboard would be used more than the previous version. It was simple and clear and included all the relevant metrics.**
- 5.2.8. **How could governors access the dashboard?** There would be a training module to help governors, and the link would be shared. A link could also be included on agendas.
- 5.2.9. **Thank you to the team that put this together.**

5.3. **Governors noted the new Governor Dashboard.**

## 6. SUCCESSION PLANNING

6.1. The Director of Governance and Policy presented a paper on succession planning. The following points were highlighted.

6.1.1. Two new student governors had been elected. Both of these students were currently studying T Levels.

6.1.2. Alex Stacey-Midgley would no longer be a member of the Student Liaison Committee due to work commitments.

6.1.3. The following governors' terms of office would be expiring over the coming year:

- Danielle Gillett – 13 June 2026
- Lesley Giles – 30 July 2026
- Neil McDougall – 15 March 2026
- Robert Radford – 13 June 2026
- Jackie Rossa – 20 July 2026

6.1.4. With the exception of Danielle Gillett who was already serving an exceptional additional term, it was proposed that these governors be asked if they would serve another three-year term. This would provide governors with certainty about their roles.

6.1.5. Sue Hopewell's one-year term as a co-opted governor would expire on 2 April 2026. It was proposed that Sue Hopewell be asked to become a full independent governor. This would ensure that the Corporation retained her curriculum expertise and would help address the current gender imbalance on the board.

6.1.6. With regards to board diversity, the apparent rise in ethnic minority membership was due to the change in student governors and the percentage of governors with a declared disability was only two people. The board was also skewed towards male members. Most governors were drawn from the county rather than the city.

6.1.7. Vipal Bechar had been interviewed by governors who had been impressed. His current employment could be helpful to the board and the panel had been reassured by his personal skills.

6.1.8. Steve Munro had been interviewed just prior to this meeting. He had FE and finance experience and had previously been chair of the Audit Committee at SMB Group. The panel were keen to recommend him.

6.2. **Governors made the following comments.**

6.2.1. **The Principal had previously met with Vipal Bechar and had been impressed by him. He currently worked with Phoebe Dawson and would be good on stakeholder engagement**

6.2.2. **The proposal to renew the terms of office for governors was sensible. Sue Hopewell's previous employment at the College had not appeared to be an issue. She had made a good contribution to the CSQI Committee and the Away Day. She was a board member at another College and it was clear that she wanted to make a positive contribution to FE. It would be good to see her at further meetings before coming to a decision about the extension of her term of office.**

6.2.3. **What were the gaps in the skills matrix?** There was scope for another governor with an education background to join the CSQI Committee. There

was also the potential for a future gap in accountants. There would be a loss of experience and knowledge of the local environment when Danielle Gillett, Tom Wilson and Chan Kataria left the board.

- 6.2.4. **Governor skills would need to be cross referenced against the new strategic plan.** With regards to sustainability and the green economy, there might be other routes to filling these gaps. There was also a gap around SEND and there was no current link governor.
- 6.2.5. **The external reviewers might offer a view on the equality indicators.**
- 6.2.6. **Another former employee of the College with a strong EDI background had indicated they might be interested in joining the Board.**
- 6.3. **Governors noted the current Board and committee membership and Skills Matrix.**
- 6.4. **Governors approved the appointment of Vipul Bechar as an independent governor for a term of three years.**
- 6.5. **Governors approved the appointment of Steve Munro as an independent governor for a term of three years.**
- 6.6. **Governors agreed to invite Lesley Giles, Neil McDougall, Robert Radford and Jackie Rossa to serve additional terms of office following the expiration of their current terms.**
- 6.7. **Governors agreed to defer the decision on appointing Sue Hopewell as an independent governor until the next meeting of the Search and Governance Committee.**

## **7. COMMITTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT TO CORPORATION**

- 7.1. The Director of Governance and Policy presented the draft Committee annual report to Corporation. The following points were highlighted.
  - 7.1.1. The report followed a similar format to previous years and described its work over the past year.
  - 7.1.2. The Committee was asked to add anything that was missing from the report.
- 7.2. In response to a **question** about whether the report covered everything it needed to, it was explained that there was no set format but the report was intended to give assurance that the Committee had been reviewing membership and succession planning, along with good governance practice.
- 7.3. **Governors approved the draft report for submission to the Corporation.**

## **8. COMMITTEE AND CORPORATION SELF-ASSESSMENT 2024/25**

- 8.1. The Director of Governance and Policy presented the self-assessments for the Search and Governance Committee and Corporation. The following points were highlighted.

- 8.1.1. There had been only two responses for the Search and Governance Committee although areas for improvement had been identified and included:
  - Recruiting new governors with a focus on addressing skills gaps and increasing diversity
  - Reviewing link roles and committee membership.
- 8.1.2. There was an opportunity to look at the roles of the Chair and Vice Chair and to look at a more detailed succession plan including committee membership and training and development.
- 8.1.3. The responses for the Corporation had been generally very positive. The questions with the least positive results had been around board diversity and training and development. On the latter, this had been less about being informed of opportunities and more around governors having the time to engage in development activities. There might need to be some work around producing individual development plans.
- 8.1.4. There was also a less positive response around stakeholder engagement, but there might be more opportunities to improve this during the strategic planning process.
- 8.1.5. The new governor dashboard would help with reducing the length of papers.

## 8.2. **Governors made the following comments.**

- 8.2.1. **Was there a recommended amount of training and development for governors?** No, it would depend on the requirements of each member. It was important to make use of the ETF Governor Development Programme modules, especially for new members.
- 8.2.2. **Was mandatory training tracked?** The Safeguarding and Prevent module was mandatory and completion was tracked.
- 8.2.3. **The external reviewers should be asked if they could provide some best practice examples around training and development.**

## 8.3. **Governors noted the outcomes of the self-assessment process and recommended actions to be included in the Governance Improvement Action Plan.**

## 9. **DRAFT GOVERNANCE SAR AND GOVERNANCE IMPROVEMENT ACTION PLAN**

- 9.1. The Director of Governance and Policy presented the draft Governance SAR and Governance Improvement Action Plan. The following points were highlighted.
  - 9.1.1. The SAR followed a similar format but with more of a focus on actions from the previous SAR. The areas for improvement might change as the College SAR was developed.
- 9.2. **Governors made the following comments.**
  - 9.2.1. **This was a comprehensive action plan, and the strengths and weakness were clearly defined.** There would be further additions following the External Review.

9.2.2. **The College was going through significant change with changes to ELT and the governing body.**

9.3. **Governors agreed to recommend the draft Governance SAR and Governance Improvement Action Plan to the Corporation, subject to any further changes needed.**

## **10. REVIEW OF CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS FILED IN 2024/25 AND LEGACY ITEMS**

10.1. The Director of Governance and Policy presented a paper detailing the confidential items filed in 2024/25 and legacy items. The following points were highlighted.

10.1.1. There were more confidential items than in previous years due to the interim arrangements and recruitment. Many of these documents included personal information.

10.1.2. Fourteen documents had been identified for release while the rest were recommended to be retained as confidential.

10.2. **Governors made the following comments.**

10.2.1. **What happened to retained documents?** These were periodically reviewed.

10.2.2. **Was there a Retention Policy?** There was. Board papers had to be retained for a very long period of time, including the confidential papers. Minutes were the only documents published on the website although other, non-confidential, documents could be requested by the public.

10.2.3. **What happened to the one's we retain?** They were periodically reviewed to see whether there were any changes to what could be released.

10.2.4. **Could College papers be searched for online?** The permissions on the College's files meant that they could not be searched for.

10.2.5. **As recruitment was underway for senior postholders, should the questions from the previous round of recruitment be released?** Although they would no longer be confidential, they would not be published. If they were requested, then a decision would be made as to whether they could be released.

10.3. **Governors approved the recommendations to retain or release papers.**

## **11. GOVERNOR ENGAGEMENT**

### **11.1. GOVERNORS ATTENDANCE AND ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

11.1.1. **Governors noted the Governors Attendance and Engagement Report.**

### **11.2. WORK UNDERTAKEN BY THE CHAIR**

11.2.1. **Governors noted the Report on the Work Undertaken by the Chair.**

## **12. ACTION RECORD 2024/25**

12.1. **Governors noted the Action Record for 2024/25**

### **13. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION REVIEW 2024/25**

13.1. **Governors noted the Freedom of Information and Data Protection Review for 2024/25.**

### **14. USE OF THE COLLEGE SEAL**

14.1. **Governors asked the following questions.**

14.1.1. **What was the College Seal used for?** The College Seal was used to indicate the Corporation's approval to legal documents. It was a physical seal and was effectively the Corporation's signature.

14.2. **Governors noted the use of the College Seal during 2024/25.**

### **15. RESPONSE TO WESTON COLLEGE FEC REPORT**

15.1. The Director of Governance and Policy presented the College's Response to the Weston College FEC Report. The following points were highlighted.

15.1.1. It was felt prudent to document the commentary around the issues found at Weston College. This document set out the College's position on the FEC's recommendations.

15.2. Governors commented that Weston College was still being discussed, and it had created a lot of nervousness in the sector. This, and other case, showed that figures could be hidden. This was where the Audit Committee and Internal Auditors came in. RSM had a good reputation as funding auditors, and it was a positive that they were the College's internal auditors.

15.3. **Governors noted the Response to the Weston College FEC Report.**

### **16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

16.1. **The Chair had attended the AoC's Chair's Council meeting and there had been a couple of actions coming out of the group. One action was around SPH Remuneration Policies, and the other was a workplan for the committee. The themes for the workplan included working to have the best chairs in the sector, governor attendance, working with the AoC executive to represent the voice of FE, and to promote the role of governor.**

16.2. **Governors noted Any Other Business.**

### **17. DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

- 25 February 2026
- 13 May 2026