



Minutes of the Search & Governance Committee Meeting held on Monday 23 March 2026 at 4pm via Teams

Present: Janet Gater (*Principal*)
Mick Martin (*Foundation Governor*)
Rob Peacock (*Foundation Governor*)
Helen Stevenson (*Foundation Governor*) – Chair

In attendance: Ruth Potter (*Clerk*)

The Chair opened the meeting in prayer.

1. ROUTINE AND STANDING ITEMS

1.1 Declarations of interest

Attendees were invited to declare whether they had any direct or indirect personal, prejudicial or pecuniary interest or conflict of interest in any matter which formed part of the agenda for this meeting or was likely to be discussed at this meeting. No interests other than those already declared and recorded on the Register of Interests were noted.

1.2 Apologies for absence

All members were present. The meeting was declared quorate.

1.3 Items to be included under urgent business

None

1.4 Minutes of the Search & Governance Committee meeting held on 20 October 2025 (*previously circulated*)

The minutes were approved as a correct record and would be signed by the Chair in accordance with Article 12 (3) of the Articles of Government. The publication of the minutes was authorised in accordance with Article 13.

1.5 Matters arising from the minutes (*previously circulated*)

Committee members noted the action log prepared by the Clerk.

1.6 Committee risk register

The Clerk reported that there were currently no risks on the updated Risk Register that were attributed to the Search & Governance Committee for oversight.

2. GOVERNING BODY REVIEW

2.1 Membership and Succession Planning Update (*previously circulated*)

The Chair referred members to the Clerk's report from which the following points were highlighted:

Foundation Governors with terms of office due to expire in 2025-26

The Clerk confirmed that Mick Martin's reappointment with effect from 1 March 2026 had been authorised by the Archdiocese of Liverpool following the last board

meeting. There were two other governors with terms of office due to expire in July 2026. The Clerk reported back on the current intentions of these two governors. In principle, both had indicated their willingness to serve a second term of office, however one of them was awaiting confirmation of potential changes in work commitments before they were able to proceed. Discussion ensued on the individuals' attendance record and consideration given to the wider skills and diversity profile of the board. It was agreed that the re-appointment of Sarah Carroll be recommended to the full Governing Body. Further contact would be made with Graeme Slater before his term of office expired to confirm his intentions.

Governors with terms of office due to expire in 2026-27

An overview was provided of those members with terms of office due to expire in the next academic year. All four individuals had already served two terms of office and the Clerk highlighted the expectations of the College's governing body recruitment policy and governance code. The potential benefits of drawing in fresh skills and experience from new members was balanced against the risk of losing significant corporate knowledge within a short space of time. Discussion ensued and members agreed that the Chair would discuss succession planning with the individuals in question during her annual 1-2-1 meetings. Termly updates would be reported back to this Committee for further consideration in order that recruitment activity could commence early in the Autumn Term to mitigate the risk of board vacancies.

Register of Interests

The Clerk reported on a recent update to the register of interests. Discussion ensued on the change in employment of one individual and the potential conflict of interest this may present for their governance role. It was agreed that the Clerk would contact the individual in question to explore the nature of the conflict and the extent to which this could be appropriately managed.

Resolved:

- **To recommend the re-appointment of Sarah Carroll to the Governing Body, subject to the ultimate authorisation of the archdiocese**

ACTION – (a) FGB agenda item – reappointment

(b) Chair to discuss succession plans during annual 1-2-1s

(c) Clerk to explore conflict of interest and report back to Committee

3. GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Beyond the Agenda Report *(previously circulated)*

The Clerk presented the report arising from the College's involvement in the 'Beyond the Agenda' post-16 pilot research study undertaken by the ImpactEd Group. The results were based on the survey completed by governors and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members with benchmark data from a total of 20 colleges involved in the pilot exercise. Areas of strength were highlighted and it was noted that the College scored above benchmark in all engagement domains. Lower scoring drivers were highlighted; these largely reflected known areas that were included in the Governance Quality Improvement Plan. Discussion ensued on opportunities to improve student input into College governance and recent developments on the Quality and Standards Committee were reported.

Resolved:

- **That the Beyond the Agenda report be received and noted.**

ACTION – Share report with all governing body members

3.2 Governance Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) – progress report *(previously circulated)*

The Clerk presented this report and referred members to the QIP progress update and RAG rated action log. The first priority area was RAG rated red due to the delayed launch of the archdiocese's academisation strategy. It was reported that the strategy would be launched to headteachers and chairs of governors on 28 April. Following this, a board strategy day was planned for 5 June which would provide the Governing Body with an opportunity to consider the strategic implications.

Progress was reported on the remaining governance priorities and linked actions. Discussion ensued on the priority to address diversity imbalances on the board and the importance of targeting appropriate networks in order to successfully address these in future recruitments. In terms of governor engagement in meetings and activities, the Clerk reported that attendance data so far this year showed an improvement on the previous year. Reference was made to the two themed governor visits to College that had taken place in the Autumn Term and plans for the Summer Term visit were discussed.

Resolved:

- **That the QIP progress report be noted**

**ACTION – (a) Plan Summer Term governor visit to College to take place after May half term
(b) Confirm schedule of 2026-27 governor College visits to maximise opportunities for attendance**

3.2 Code of Governance *(previously circulated)*

Further to the significant update to the Charity Governance Code in November 2025, the Clerk confirmed that she had completed an initial mapping exercise to review the College's governance arrangements against the revised Code principles. An assessment against the updated AoC Further Education Code of Good Governance had also been completed for comparison. An overview was provided of the two codes and additional considerations highlighted such as the Catholic Education Service (CES) position and alignment with the Academy Trust Code of Governance.

Reference was made to the legal and regulatory landscape against which the Governing Body must adopt a governance code, specifically the College Financial Handbook which required colleges to adopt the code that 'best reflects their legal structure and operations.' The Governing Body was required to include a statement of corporate governance in the annual report and accounts that reported on compliance with the adopted governance code, explaining any departures. In addition, the triennial external governance review – due in 2027 – would be framed against the College's adopted code.

The report and self-assessment documentation had also been presented to the Audit Committee given its role to provide the corporation with an opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the assurance arrangements, framework of governance, risk management and control processes. Both codes were found to provide an established framework of good governance.

Discussion ensued on the pros and cons of both codes and members noted the sector specificity of the AoC Code compared with the generic good governance principles set out in the Charity Code. Following consideration of the self-assessments, members agreed to recommend adoption of the AoC Code with effect from 1 August.

The Clerk reported that Principle 2 of the AoC Code recommended adoption of the Colleges' Senior Post Holder Remuneration Code (SPH Code) and confirmed that the SPH Code was currently under consultation pending revision. Given this and the advice set out in the Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA) paper on 'Selecting and using a code of governance', members explicitly excluded the SPH Code from their recommendation.

Resolved:

- **To recommend adoption of the AoC Further Education Code of Good Governance (excluding the SPH Code) from 1 August 2026**

ACTION – FGB agenda item for approval

4. GOVERNOR TRAINING

4.1 Governor and Clerk training log – mid-year review *(previously circulated)*

The Chair referred members to the log which captured all training and development activity undertaken so far during this academic year. A broad range of in-house and external online training and development activity was noted. Reference was also made to the Governing Body's 2025-26 training and development plan and the Clerk highlighted the updates following the last meeting:

- Ofsted's new further education and skills inspection framework – training session scheduled prior to the March board meeting
- Catholic inspection framework – training session to be held in the Summer Term prior to the June board meeting
- EDI training – British values and socio-cultural elements to be incorporated into annual Safeguarding and Prevent training in Autumn Term. Online refresher training on core EDI principles and legal requirements to be completed by end of academic year.

Resolved:

- **That the Governing Body mid-year training report be received and noted.**
- **That the updated training and development plan be approved.**

ACTION – Identify online EDI training and circulate for governor completion

5. GOVERNANCE / REGULATORY UPDATE

5.1 Instrument and Articles of Government *(previously circulated)*

The Clerk reminded members of the Department for Education (DfE) letter requiring colleges to remove a clause from the Instrument and Articles of Government (I&A) that prevented student governors under the age of 18 from voting on certain matters. due to its incompatibility with charity law expectations. Amendments to the I&A required the written consent of the Governing Body and the Trustees and Bishop, therefore the Catholic Education Service (CES) had been co-ordinating the amendment process for all Catholic colleges. The amended I&A were presented for review and it was noted that the clause in question had been removed and

subsequent clauses re-numbered. The College was required to sign and return the consent form with a clean copy of the I&A. The CES would then liaise with the Archdiocese to secure the consent of the Bishop and enable the Trustees to make the new I&A.

Resolved:

- **To recommend adoption of the amended I&A in full and signature of the consent form by the Chair on behalf of the Governing Body**

ACTION – FGB agenda item for approval

5.2 Governance and regulatory update *(previously circulated)*

The Clerk referred members to her report which highlighted the following points:

- Triennial external governance review – the next external review was due to take place in 2026-27.
- Letter from new FE Commissioner – setting out areas of focus for strong governance.
- Accountability Agreement and Local Needs Duty – updated guidance for 2026-27
- New SFCA guide on achieving an effective quality and curriculum committee.

Members discussed plans for the next external board review and agreed that this should be scheduled to take place during the Spring and/or Summer Term in 2027. A specification for the review would be drafted with governor input and quotes from three providers secured. This would be reported back to the next Committee meeting.

Resolved:

- **That the governance and regulatory update report be noted**

ACTION – Clerk and Committee member to liaise on planning and preparation for the external governance review and bring report back to next meeting.

6. OTHER MATTERS

6.1 Governor Training

Members were invited to update the Clerk on any training activities they had completed since the last meeting. No activities were reported.

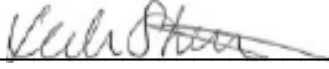
6.2 Any Other Urgent Business

None

6.3 Date of next meeting

Monday 11 May 2026 at 3pm

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution at the meeting. There being no further business to address, the Chair closed the meeting at 4.50pm.

Signed by the Chair _____


On this day _____ 11 May 2026 _____