

Minutes
Full Corporation
HRUC Governance

Date 12/05/2026
Time 5.30pm
Location Richmond upon Thames
College

Governors Susan Kingman Acting Chair
Vincent Neate Vice Chair
Sujit Reddy (online)
Mario Michaelides
(online)
Paul Miller
Mike Sutcliffe
Jenny McLaughlin
Mel Nebhrajani
Amanda Priem
Niran Mothada
Divya Menon
Grant Cooper
Sandeep Kutty
Theresa Pope
Keith Smith CEO, Ex-Officio

Staff Gary May
governors Natasha Coutinho
(online)
Tieran Morton

Student Mohammad Barakat
governors Sidrah Esaf

Staff Dylan McTaggart Group Executive Principal
Tim Hulme Chief Operating Officer
Alex Denley Chief Technology Officer
Gavin Hughes Richmond College Principal
Clive Hodge Uxbridge College Principal
Yomi Okunola Chief Financial Officer
Julie Amory Chief People Officer
Jo Withers Executive Director – Business Growth and
Partnerships
Jane Anderson Director of Governance

Note taker Nataliaia Tymkiv Governance and Data Protection Administrator

Minutes

1 - Disclaimer

The meeting was recorded for the purpose of minuting. No objections were raised.

2 - Apologies for absence

The Chair accepted apologies from John Cope, Nick Davies and Cherry Horton-Edwards. Sofia Barbosa-Boucas was absent.

3 - Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were raised.

4 - Minutes

Resolution: The Corporation approved the minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2026 as an accurate record.

5 - Action log

The action log was taken as read. It was reported that action three had been completed, following the attendance of National Innovation Challenge winner, Valentina Vicario ahead of the meeting, which provided governors with an opportunity to engage with her.

The Corporation noted the update on the action log.

6 - CEO's update and strategic objectives

The CEO provided an update on the external policy and funding environment, strategic priorities, operational risks and the development of the College's strategic objectives.

The Corporation was advised that the national funding position remained challenging, with limited growth in core funding creating pressure on HRUC's operating model. This had been reflected in budget planning and would require continued discipline in relation to staffing, pay, investment and efficiency. The wider sector response to the funding settlement was also referenced, particularly in the context of the Government's previous commitment to a real-terms funding increase for further education.

An update was provided on qualification reform. A new transition planning requirement was expected from the Department for Education, with further guidance awaited. The timeline was expected to be tight, and it was possible that the plan would require Corporation approval. The Corporation would receive a further update once the requirements were confirmed.

The CEO also reported on a number of strategic and operational matters, including systems implementation, SEND capacity, estates development, brand development and construction-related curriculum opportunities. These matters were presented as areas requiring continued oversight due to their strategic, financial, reputational or delivery implications.

The Corporation received an update on the corporate goals scorecard. Retention and attendance were reported as positive areas of performance, while workforce vacancies and staff turnover remained areas for continued monitoring. A revised internal approach to workforce oversight had been introduced to strengthen scrutiny and value for money.

The Corporation discussed the development of the narrative and actions to support the new strategic objectives (which the Corporation had agreed at its previous meeting) and the proposed performance dashboard. The dashboard was intended to provide a clearer single view of the agreed strategic objectives, KPIs, targets, data sources, reporting frequency and direction of travel. It was expected to replace the current corporate goals scorecard and provide a more consistent basis for scrutiny across the Corporation and its committees.

Governors welcomed the clearer approach to performance reporting and challenged how the dashboard would align with Ofsted expectations and wider measures of institutional success. It was confirmed that this alignment would be addressed as the dashboard developed, while ensuring that the final version remained proportionate and accessible.

The discussion also considered how often performance data would be updated. It was explained that reporting frequency would vary by indicator, depending on the relevant data source and the nature of the measure.

The Corporation supported the direction of travel and agreed that the strategic objectives' supporting narrative and KPI framework should be further developed through the Strategic Transformation Committee before returning to the Corporation.

Action: Further develop the strategic objectives' supporting narrative, KPI definitions and dashboard, (ensuring the dashboard aligns with Ofsted expectations) through the Strategic Transformation Committee and bring these back to the Corporation in July - Keith Smith

7 - Strategic risk register

The strategic risk register was presented with a revised dashboard format, providing a clearer overview of the key strategic risks and their relative levels of criticality. The risk profile had been consolidated and grouped around broader corporate themes, with the revised presentation intended to support more focused Board-level scrutiny.

The discussion focused on the need to ensure that mitigations remained active, proportionate and subject to regular review. It was recognised that some strategic risks were likely to remain inherently high due to their nature, and that the Corporation's key role was to seek assurance that mitigations were effective rather than relying solely on changes to the risk score.

Governors welcomed the revised dashboard which was considered an important step forward. They suggested that future versions could show movement over time and make clearer where a residual risk position was considered tolerable within the Corporation's risk appetite. This would help distinguish between risks requiring further management action and risks that remained high despite appropriate mitigation.

Governors also discussed how assurance could be strengthened through internal audit, external review or focused deep dives into selected risks. This was considered particularly important for areas where external good practice or independent testing could help evidence the effectiveness of mitigations. It was noted that the Audit and Risk Committee had already planned, and would shortly be beginning, a programme of deep dives into strategic risks.

The potential move to a digital risk management platform was discussed. Governors supported the principle, provided that any system supported HRUC's own risk management process and did not create unnecessary administrative burden. Governors also emphasised that lessons from recent system implementation should inform future procurement assurance, particularly in relation to specification development, route to market and implementation planning.

Governors acknowledged the work to improve risk management which had been done by Rehka Kaul and asked that their thanks be passed on to her.

Action: Consider how the strategic risk dashboard could support clearer Board-level scrutiny of risk movement, risk appetite and residual risk tolerance - Tim Hulme

Action: Pass on the Corporation's thanks to Rekha Haul for her work improving risk management - Jane Anderson

8 - Updates from Committee Chairs

8.1 - Curriculum Strategy and Quality Enhancement Committee

The verbal update from the Chair of the Curriculum Strategy and Quality Enhancement Committee focused on the continued development of dashboard reporting, student experience, policy scrutiny and Ofsted-related learning.

The Committee had continued to strengthen its use of dashboards to support strategic scrutiny and align its work with the wider Corporation reporting framework. This was seen as a positive step in enabling governors to focus on performance, assurance and areas requiring intervention.

Student experience had been considered in detail, with the Committee exploring how student support activity linked to attendance, achievement and wider strategic outcomes. While the direction of travel was positive, governors challenged how impact would be measured and how resource implications would be escalated where they affected delivery against strategic KPIs.

The Committee had also scrutinised the draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy and requested further amendments before it was brought to the Corporation for approval. This was regarded as an example of effective committee scrutiny, ensuring that strategies presented to the Corporation were sufficiently balanced, inclusive and aligned with HRUC's strategic intent.

Ofsted-related learning was discussed at committee level. The focus was on ensuring that lessons from recent activity were embedded strategically and translated into delivery for students from September.

A broader governance point was raised regarding cross-committee escalation. Where a committee identifies a risk, resource issue or dependency that sits within another committee's remit, this should be clearly captured and routed through the appropriate governance channel.

Action: Consider how committee minutes and action logs can more clearly identify matters requiring escalation to another committee or to the Corporation - Jane Anderson

8.2 - Finance and Resources Committee

The Committee Chair reported that the Finance and Resources Committee had considered the proposed 2026/27 business plan and budget and recommended it to the Corporation for approval.

The Committee had also reviewed a strategic estates and curriculum investment proposal linked to priority provision. The proposal was considered to support HRUC's strategic direction, local skills priorities and future curriculum growth. The Committee was satisfied that the proposal had been incorporated into the wider business planning assumptions.

The Committee continued to monitor the financial position, key budget assumptions and areas of risk, including income delivery, pay and non-pay controls, investment priorities and the wider external funding environment.

8.3 Audit and Risk Committee

The Committee Chair reported that the Audit and Risk Committee had not met since the previous Corporation meeting, but work had continued in relation to the internal audit programme and assurance activity.

Governors asked for an update on the internal audit focussed on payroll. It was explained that there had been a delay as a result of issues with the payroll system. Governors expressed concern and highlighted the importance of ensuring that any amendments to the internal audit plan are properly considered through the Audit and Risk Committee, particularly where changing circumstances affect the value or timing of planned audit work. The Corporation asked that the internal audit focussing on payroll be dealt with as a matter of priority.

Work remained ongoing in relation to key assurance areas, including health & safety, business continuity, workforce planning, data governance and apprenticeship-related scoping.

Action: Prioritise internal audit of payroll - Yomi Okunola

8.4 - Search, Governance and Remuneration Committee

The Search, Governance and Remuneration Committee Chair reported that the Committee would be considering a number of governance matters ahead of the July meeting, including appointments, Vice Chair arrangements, the link governor scheme, governor appraisals and mandatory training.

8.5 - Strategic Transformation Committee

The Strategic Transformation Committee Chair explained that the Committee had not met since the previous Corporation meeting, but preparation was underway for its next meeting.

The Committee's forthcoming work would include review of its terms of reference, apprenticeships, performance against targets, Project Ambition, capital allocation and the emerging strategic objectives. The Committee would also consider how the Corporation's agreed strategic objectives might be developed into longer-term strategic strands for governor oversight.

9 - Policies

9(i) Preventing Terrorism and Radicalisation Policy

The Preventing Terrorism and Radicalisation Policy was presented for approval following scrutiny by the Curriculum Strategy and Quality Enhancement Committee.

Governors asked questions focused on whether the policy was supported by sufficient awareness, preparedness and testing across the organisation. Governors emphasised that approval of the policy should be supported by clear evidence that staff and students understood the relevant procedures and that HRUC could demonstrate readiness in practice.

It was explained that a staff briefing would be organised ahead of the autumn term, covering key statutory and safety-related areas, including safeguarding, Prevent, health and safety and lockdown procedures.

Governors asked whether scenario testing was planned, and it was confirmed this was, as well as gold command training. Governors considered this particularly important given the wider external risk environment and the need to ensure that procedures would operate effectively if required.

Emergency communication arrangements and safety-related systems were considered as part of HRUC's wider approach to safety and incident response. Governors sought assurance that these arrangements were effective, understood and appropriately promoted to staff and students. It was also recognised that any outstanding issues affecting emergency preparedness should be addressed through the relevant management and assurance routes. A particular concern about alarms not being audible during lockdown testing was raised by a staff member and it was agreed this would be looked into as a priority.

A governor asked how many students had downloaded the Safe Zone app and a staff member committed to provide the information.

Resolution: The Preventing Terrorism and Radicalisation Policy was approved.

Action: Confirm how many students have downloaded the Safe Zone app - Alex Denley

Action: Confirm why some alarms were inaudible during a test and when the issue will be resolved - Tim Hulme

9(ii) Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure

The Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure was presented for approval following scrutiny by the Curriculum Strategy and Quality Enhancement Committee.

The discussion focused on early intervention, support for vulnerable students and the importance of reducing escalation where appropriate. Governors recognised the need to balance clear behavioural expectations with appropriate support, particularly for students with additional needs or vulnerabilities.

Governors challenged whether learning from lower-level disciplinary cases was being reviewed consistently to identify patterns, strengthen support and prevent escalation to more serious stages. It was agreed that this should be considered as part of HRUC's wider approach to student support, safeguarding and behaviour management.

Resolution: The Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure was approved.

Action: Pass on the Corporation's request that Student Services / Safeguarding colleagues consider how learning from lower-level disciplinary cases can inform earlier intervention, student support and escalation prevention - Gavin Hughes

10 - Business plan and budget for 2026/27

The Business Plan and Budget for 2026/27 were presented for approval, following recommendation by the Finance and Resources Committee.

The presentation set out the key financial assumptions underpinning the plan, including constrained core funding, growth opportunities in priority areas and continued pressure on staffing and non-pay costs. Workforce capacity and contingent labour remained areas of focus, with internal oversight arrangements strengthened to support better insight, value for money and budget control.

It was reported that the budget had been prepared on a prudent basis, with assumptions designed to maintain financial sustainability while supporting investment in strategic priorities. Planned investment would support areas including IT, digital transformation, estates, curriculum development and student-facing improvements.

The Corporation considered the sensitivity analysis underpinning the budget. This included the potential impact of more stretching financial assumptions, pay-related pressures, known cost pressures and exceptional items. Governors recognised that the budget needed to balance financial resilience, strategic investment and deliverability, and that more ambitious assumptions could create additional delivery risk if not supported by clear plans.

The projected income profile was discussed at a strategic level. Growth opportunities were identified in priority areas, including high needs, apprenticeships and commercial provision, while some income streams remained constrained and subject to market pressures. Active monitoring and reforecasting would therefore be required during the year to ensure HRUC remained financially sustainable and able to respond to emerging risks.

Governors challenged how the Corporation should interpret a prudent plan alongside HRUC's wider ambition for growth. It was explained that the budget provided a sustainable baseline, while the delivery strategy would seek to outperform the assumptions through market share growth, improved enrolment, partnership development and strategic investment. The distinction between the financial plan and the wider delivery strategy was therefore considered important.

Members of the Corporation asked questions about whether the impact of demographic change and wider economic conditions had been considered. It was reported that HRUC's core funding assumptions had been prepared cautiously, while the Executive continued to focus on strengthening recruitment, modernising enrolment processes and competing effectively for market share.

The Corporation also questioned the potential impact of qualification reform and wider policy change. This was identified as one of the more significant strategic risks, particularly where changes to progression routes could affect HRUC's ability to meet student and employer needs.

Questions were also asked about opportunities to strengthen commercial income and make better use of HRUC's estate and wider assets. Areas such as leisure and wellness, events and conferencing, partnerships and asset management were identified as part of the emerging commercial strategy. Governors supported a realistic but ambitious approach, with further work required to assess opportunities and ensure alignment with HRUC's strategic objectives.

It was noted that the Finance and Resources Committee would continue to monitor financial performance, delivery against assumptions and emerging risks through regular reporting and reforecasting.

Resolution: The Business Plan and Budget for 2026/27 were approved.

Action: Provide update on the emerging commercial strategy, including estate and asset utilisation opportunities, at or before the July meeting - Tim Hulme

11 - Appointment of external auditor

The appointment of the external auditor for 2026/27 was presented for approval, following a tender process and recommendation from the Audit and Risk Committee.

It was reported that the tender process had been narrowed through a scoring mechanism, with shortlisted firms invited to present. Following the evaluation, Bishop Fleming was identified as the preferred provider. The discussion highlighted Bishop Fleming's sector credentials, the quality of its proposed approach and its ability to work effectively with HRUC.

The Corporation was asked to support the appointment of Bishop Fleming and approve the associated fees as quoted. It was noted that a written resolution procedure had been used to secure the Audit and Risk Committee's recommendation in this case due to the urgency of the matter. Governors were asked to respond promptly to written resolutions when issued.

Resolution: Bishop Fleming was appointed as external auditor for 2026/27, and the associated fees were approved as quoted.

12 - Feedback from student governors

The Corporation received updates from student governors, on the feedback which students had provided to each college together with updates on actions taken or planned in response.

The feedback covered a range of student experience themes, including access to study and social spaces, enrichment activities, catering and vending provision, campus facilities, digital access, library resources, the website and the wider physical environment. Specific feedback was also shared regarding access to facilities, the timing of enrichment activities, trips and how the colleges showcase their facilities to prospective and current students.

Positive feedback was reported in relation to teaching and staff support, learning environments, cultural activities, modern campus facilities and improvements already made in response to student views. Feedback from Uxbridge also highlighted positive responses to recent improvements to social and learning spaces, catering provision and campus facilities, alongside a desire for continued focus on greener and more welcoming outdoor spaces.

Governors commented that the "You said... we did" format was helpful and emphasised the importance of maintaining regular dialogue with students and closing the feedback loop. Where matters were still being explored or progressed, students should be given clearer updates on progress and indicative timescales where possible. It was explained that there was ongoing dialogue between the Principals and students and that timescales and tracking was recorded and discussed in practice.

Action: Add student feedback, including timescales and action tracking to agenda planner as a regular Corporation item - Jane Anderson

13 - Any other business

The Chair expressed gratitude to staff and governors for the contributions made before and during the meeting. The Chair noted the upcoming Corporation meeting on 7 July, where John Cope would be appointed as the new Chair, and Nick Davies would be acknowledged for his long-standing service, at the end of his term of office. A celebration and a gift from the governors were proposed.

An event celebrating staff wellbeing and recognition, organised by People and Organisational Development, was mentioned, with invitations to be sent to governors soon.

It was reported that an extraordinary Corporation meeting was being arranged to take place in early June, online.

The Director of Governance stressed the importance of ensuring all governors are up to date with safeguarding training. It was also mentioned that some governors needed to complete declarations related to Keeping Children Safe in Education, and cooperation on this matter was requested.

Finally, it was noted that options relating to branding discussed in a previous session were being refined and would be brought back for formal proposal in July.

Action: Complete outstanding safeguarding training and Keeping Children Safe in Education confirmations as a priority [governors that are not up to date with these requirements have been informed]

14 - Date of next meeting

The next regular meeting was confirmed to be held on 7 July 2026 at Uxbridge College from 17:30 to 19:30.

15 - Confidential item

A confidential session followed the main meeting.

The Chair closed the meeting at 7.24pm.