

Minutes
Full Corporation
HRUC Governance

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| Date | 17/03/2026 | |
| Time | 17:30 - 19:30 | |
| Location | Harrow College, Lowlands Rd, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 3AQ | |
| Governors | Susan Kingman Vincent Neate Mike Sutcliffe Paul Miller Jenny McLaughlin Mario Michaelides Niran Mothada Divya Menon Theresa Pope Sandeep Kutty (not item 3.1) Grant Cooper Keith Smith | Acting Chair of Governors Vice-Chair CEO, Ex Officio |
| Staff governors | Cherry Horton-Edwards Tieran Morton Gary May Natasha Coutinho | |
| Student governors | Mohammad Barakat Sidrah Esaf | |
| Officers | Dylan McTaggart Tim Hulme Alex Denley Gavin Hughes Clive Hodge Yomi Okunola Julie Amory Jo Withers Mark Burey (Item 10 only) | Group Executive Principal Chief Operating Officer Chief Technology Officer Richmond College Principal Uxbridge College Principal Chief Financial Officer Chief People Officer Executive Director - Business Growth and Partnerships Group Director - PR, Marketing and Communications |
| Clerk | Clare Mitchell | Interim Director of Governance |
| Absent | Sujit Reddy Sofia Barbosa-Boucas Mel Nebhrajani Amanda Priem | |
| Note taker | Nataliia Tymkiv | |

1 - General disclaimer at the start of the meeting

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

2 - Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Sujit Reddy, Amanda Priem, and Mel Nebhrajani. Sofia Barbosa Boucas was absent from the meeting.

3 - Governor appointments

3.1 - Appointment of Sandeep Kutty as a full Governor

The Corporation noted that Sandeep had been appointed as a co-opted Governor in July 2025 and was the only remaining co-opted Governor. The Acting Chair proposed that Sandeep Kutty should be appointed as a full Governor at this meeting in line with the amendments to the Governing documents approved at the December 2025 Corporation meeting.

Resolution: The Corporation appointed Sandeep Kutty as a full Governor from the date of this meeting.

Action: Appointment letter to be sent to Sandeep Kutty

3.2 - Appointment recommendation - Chair Designate

The Acting Chair reported on the outcome of the interview process. Three strong external candidates had been interviewed, with John Cope emerging as the preferred candidate. John was strongly aligned with HRUC's strategic vision and ambition and had extensive knowledge of educational policy, particularly around skills.

The Search, Governance and Remuneration Committee had discussed the outcome of the Chair interviews at its meeting on 9 March and was recommending John Cope for appointment as an external governor and Chair Designate. Appointment as Chair Designate at this meeting would allow for a handover period before John was formally appointed as Chair at the Corporation meeting on 7 July 2026.

The Acting Chair provided an update on the current Chair, who was hoping to attend the July Corporation meeting.

The Corporation noted that several governors' terms of office were due to end during 2026. This would result in vacancies for the Corporation Vice-Chair role. External governors interested in this position were encouraged to contact the Acting Chair.

Resolution: The Corporation appointed John Cope as an external governor and Chair Designate

Action: Appointment letter to be sent to John Cope

Action: Corporation to be asked to formally appoint John Cope as Chair at its meeting in July 2026

Action: External governors interested in the position of Corporation Vice-Chair should contact the Acting Chair

3.3 - Appointment of Theresa Pope (external governor) and Natasha Coutinho (interim staff governor - Harrow)

The Chair welcomed Theresa Pope and Natasha Coutinho. Theresa and Natasha briefly introduced themselves. The Corporation noted that the appointment of both governors had been approved by written resolution between meetings.

4 - Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 - Minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2025

Resolution: The minutes of the meeting held on 16 December 2025 were unanimously approved.

6 - Actions from previous meetings

The Corporation received an update on the actions arising from previous meetings. The majority of actions had been completed, with a small number remaining ongoing.

The Corporation discussed Action 7 relating to feedback from student governors to their College Principals and asked for a summary of the feedback and any resulting actions to be shared with the Corporation.

Action: College Principals to provide a summary of feedback from student governors, including any actions taken and share with the Corporation

7 - Chief Executive's update

The Corporation received the Chief Executive's update, outlining key developments across the College.

HRUC students had achieved three gold and two silver awards in the first year of participation in the London Skills Competition, placing HRUC as the second highest performing college in London. This was recognised as a significant achievement and a clear indicator of high teaching standards and progress towards the College's longer-term ambition to compete in national and international level skills competitions.

The DfE had announced that there would only be a marginal increase of 0.55% in base 16-18 funding in 2026/27. This was very disappointing given the funding commitments in the White Paper and was being discussed at a national level. Ongoing uncertainty around in-year growth funding was also noted as a financial risk.

The Corporation discussed the implications of inflationary pressures and rising pay costs. There was a widening pay gap between teachers in further education and those in schools. This was recognised as a key risk to recruitment and retention, reinforcing the importance of strengthening the College's People Strategy and overall employee value proposition. These financial pressures would be explored further through the 2026/27 budget discussions.

Developments in curriculum reform were noted, including a temporary pause in defunding BTEC qualifications, which provided short-term stability. However, continued reform of T Levels and broader qualification changes were highlighted as contributing to an uncertain policy landscape, requiring continued focus on curriculum planning and adaptability.

The Corporation was informed of an upcoming Ofsted inspection of the College's initial teacher training provision. This was a routine inspection of a small area of provision and had not been triggered by concerns, although any inspection by Ofsted was acknowledged as significant and requiring appropriate preparation.

Apprenticeship performance was reported as improving, with approximately 40-43% growth in starts compared to the previous year. This was recognised as a strong indicator of progress against a key strategic priority, with continued focus required to sustain momentum and maximise opportunities arising from changes to the skills levy.

The designation of the College as the West London construction lead as part of the construction TEC was noted as a positive development, supporting HRUC's ambitions to build recognised specialisms and strengthen regional leadership.

8 - Strategic objectives refresh 2030

The CEO presented the refreshed strategic objectives for 2030, which had been revised following the governor strategy session on 12 February 2026. The refresh ensured continued alignment with external changes in government policy and strategy.

Key changes to the objectives were outlined, including a broader focus on all students, ambitions for College performance against the new Ofsted framework, and a revised approach to the Smart Campus initiative, prioritising internal capacity building.

A new reporting structure would be introduced, which would provide greater clarity on strategic actions, success measures and accountability. This would strengthen discipline and consistency in reporting impact against the objectives.

The Corporation discussed the inclusion of targets within the objectives, with governors requesting clarity on current baseline positions to support effective monitoring. It was confirmed that the first report against the refreshed objectives would be presented in May.

Action: Corporation to receive the first report against the refreshed objectives at its meeting in May 2026 - to include clarity on baseline positions to support effective monitoring against targets

9 - Breaking fast

The Chair announced a 10-minute break.

10 - Branding and naming strategy update

The Corporation received a progress update on the branding and naming strategy. This work was intended to ensure the Group's identity reflected its strategic ambition and future direction.

While the individual colleges retained strong local identities, the current HRUC group identity was less clearly defined and did not fully support the organisation's longer-term ambitions, including diversification and commercial growth. The Corporation received an update on consultation undertaken to date with students, staff, employers and other stakeholders, alongside further work with the Executive Team to refine emerging themes and potential naming options.

A number of indicative naming options were shared, reflecting themes of community, innovation, clarity, and connection between education, industry and opportunity. This piece

of work remained at a consultative stage, with further testing and evidence to be brought back to the Corporation.

The Corporation discussed the importance of maintaining strong local college identities alongside the development of a clear and effective parent brand that was future proof. Consideration needed to be given to how the branding could be adapted to operate differently across audiences. The new name would also need to comply with legal/compliance requirements.

Governors questioned whether the inclusion of “London” within a future name would remain appropriate in the context of longer-term ambitions, particularly as delivery models evolved and became less place based. In response, it was acknowledged that while digital delivery might increase, London as a place would continue to carry a strong reputational value and remain an important part of the College’s identity.

The Corporation also discussed the timing and cost of changes to branding, noting the need to be mindful of the wider organisational context, including ongoing workforce considerations.

A further dedicated session would be scheduled to consider options in detail before the Corporation was asked to take a decision.

Action: Strategy day scheduled for 22 April 2026 to be cancelled and replaced with an online evening session on the same day for governors to discuss the naming and branding strategy further

Action: Naming and branding strategy to be brought back to the May Corporation meeting for a decision

11 - Committee chairs' updates

11.1 - Audit and Risk Committee

The Committee Chair reported that the Committee had reviewed and approved amendments to the internal audit plan. The plan included key areas such as business continuity and disaster recovery, apprenticeships, health and safety and payroll. The IT and cyber security audit would be scheduled in early 2026/27 following implementation of the Security Operations Centre.

Discussions had taken place regarding the timing and scope of the apprenticeships audit, with a request for the revised scope to be brought back to the Committee to ensure timely oversight of progress.

The Committee also considered the upcoming procurement process for the appointment of external auditors, with a timeline agreed to enable recommendation to the Corporation at the May meeting.

11.2 - Finance and Resources Committee

The Acting Chair presented the update from the Finance and Resources Committee. The management accounts for the six months to 31 January 2026 showed a surplus of £4.8m, £0.2m ahead of budget. The College’s current financial health score was outstanding. Key risks were noted, including high needs income, agency staffing costs, estates expenditure and delivery of capital funding within required timeframes.

Further analysis was planned in relation to apprenticeship income and agency staffing costs to inform the revised full year forecast to be produced as part of the February 2026 management accounts.

The Committee had also approved procurement strategies for the IT managed service provider and the cyber security operations centre. The staff survey functionality on the staff intranet was not currently operational and a review of the software licensing required.

11.3 - Curriculum Strategy and Quality Enhancement Committee (CSQE)

The Committee Chair presented the update from CSQE. The Committee had reviewed its effectiveness and identified the need for more concise and focused reporting, alongside a rebalancing of focus between strategy and quality, and stronger alignment to corporate risks. Student governors would become members of the Committee, as had been the case in the past, from the next academic year to strengthen student voice.

A new dashboard had been introduced to improve the clarity and accessibility of reporting, providing a more concise, “at a glance” summary of key performance information. This had been positively received, with further refinements proposed. The Committee had emphasised the need for clearer benchmark data to support performance monitoring and enable more effective tracking against targets.

The Corporation noted improvements in retention and achievement, including for vulnerable groups, while student experience remained an area of focus. Work experience was reported as improving, although further assurance was required due to a lag in the reporting of data.

Strategic curriculum priorities were outlined, including a focus on health, construction, aviation and digital, alongside ambitions to develop Institute of Technology models and progress towards university centre status.

11.4 - Search, Governance and Remuneration Committee

The Committee Chair presented the update from the Search, Governance and Remuneration Committee. The Committee had considered the recruitment process for the Chair Designate and broader governor succession planning, including upcoming vacancies and future leadership roles within the Corporation.

The Committee had discussed current skills gaps and the need to ensure that future governor recruitment aligned with both current and anticipated strategic needs.

11.5 - Strategic Transformation Committee

The Committee Chair presented the update from the Strategic Transformation Committee. The Committee had reviewed its effectiveness and was revising its terms of reference to clarify its strategic role, ensuring alignment with other committees and avoid duplication. The agenda would prioritise decision-making items, with information papers limited to those with significant strategic, financial, or reputational risk.

The Committee had discussed the 2030 strategy refresh prior to the discussion at the governor strategy session on 12 February 2026. The Committee had suggested refining the objectives to avoid mixing strategy with delivery.

The Committee received an update on the status of Project Ambition, noting that £8.7 million of a £14.7 million capital programme had been spent, with a further £4 million allocated over two years for phase two at Uxbridge. This phase would focus on smaller targeted projects. £2 million would be ringfenced to support the implementation of the curriculum strategy.

The Committee also received updates on the apprenticeship programme, with expectations to exceed sector benchmarks despite higher-than-budgeted costs. The Committee approved a 12-month renewal of the MIT partnership at a cost of \$125,000 and endorsed continued sector leadership on AI through collaborative workshops.

The Corporation discussed the potential duplication of oversight on apprenticeships across multiple committees and the need for improved coordination. The Corporation emphasised the need for clearer accountability, which could be provided through a refresh of the link governor scheme.

Action: Review of link governor scheme to come to the next SGR meeting and then to the Corporation

11.6 - Student Shadow Board

The Corporation received an update from the student governors on the Student Shadow Board meeting on 10 March 2026. Students had engaged with developments in immersive learning technologies and provided feedback on accessibility, availability across courses and the potential to enhance learning experiences, including for students with additional needs.

The student governors highlighted the benefits of immersive learning but raised concerns regarding limited availability across curriculum areas and the need for a broader rollout. The Executive confirmed that there was no policy that restricted immersive learning to particular courses but timetabling, the availability of content and staff capability were all limiting factors.

The Corporation discussed the importance of aligning technological investment with teaching delivery, including staff capability and training, and developing a longer-term vision for the “classroom of the future”.

Action: Provide a response to student feedback on the availability of immersive learning and consider wider rollout and staff capability as part of future planning

The CTO confirmed that a five-year immersive learning strategy was being developed that would take all these considerations into account. Capital investment in this area would need to be reviewed.

12 - Strategic risk register (SRR) update

The SRR update was presented to the Corporation. The risk register now comprised 17 strategic risks. The Executive Team, led by the CEO, met monthly to review risk wording, gross and net risk scores and existing controls and mitigations. The Executive Team was then responsible for driving risk management through the internal governance board which oversaw the operational risk registers. A deep dive would be taking place at the next Audit and Risk Committee into SR1 – failure to recruit, retain and support the workforce.

The strategic risk register included 6 significant risks with net scores of 12 to 18, 3 high risks with net scores of 9 to 11, 3 acceptable risks, and 5 low risks with net scores of less than 6.

Recent focus areas included funding, agency staff, and the impact of the Middle East crisis on fuel prices. The College was working with an energy consultant to monitor and manage energy costs. A governor asked how this might impact achieving net zero by 2030. The CEO clarified that the strategic objective was to be carbon neutral rather than net zero by 2030. Implementation would be included in the estates strategy which was under development.

The Corporation discussed the SRR and the progress in its development and noted the emerging risk surrounding potential increases in energy prices and the action being taken to mitigate this.

13 - Governance items

13.1 - Code of Conduct for members of the Corporation 2025/26

The existing Code of Conduct had been revised to update key references. Once approved, the revised code would be circulated to all current governors and made available on GovernorHub.

Resolution: The Corporation approved the new Code of Conduct for members of the Corporation.

Action: Circulate the revised Code of Conduct to all governors and add to GovernorHub

13.2 - Policy on attendance at Corporation and Committee meetings

This policy had been amended to reflect the revised standing orders, stating that members of the public could request to attend Corporation meetings, while Committee meetings would be held in private. The updated policy was recommended for approval by the Search, Governance, and Remuneration Committee.

Resolution: The Corporation approved the updated policy on attendance at Corporation and Committee meetings.

Action: Policy on attendance at Corporation and Committee meetings to be made available on the HRUC website for members of the public

13.3 - Corporation and Committee meeting dates 2026/27

The meeting dates for 2026/27 were being presented for approval earlier than in 2025/26 with the aim of reducing clashes with other HRUC meetings and events and aligning procurement/business planning with the governance timetable.

Resolution: The Corporation approved the proposed meeting dates for the 2026/27 academic year.

Action: Meeting invites for 2026/27 to be sent to members

14 - Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) annual report 2024/25

The Corporation received the EDI annual report for 2024/25. The report highlighted several strengths, including categories of students performing well and areas for improvement. Specific areas for improvement included performance among certain ethnic groups, care-experienced learners, high needs SEND learners in basic maths and English, gender imbalance in leadership, and low reporting of disabilities by staff. The report outlined the actions being taken to address these areas.

A governor highlighted the importance of recognising and celebrating the hard work of the Student Services team, who played a crucial role in achieving positive outcomes for a number of disadvantaged groups of students. The Corporation noted that the next step would be to publish the report on the College website.

Action: EMT to consider how the contribution of the Student Services team to supporting EDI outcomes could receive greater recognition and whether the team required any additional support

15 - Any other business

There was no other business raised.

16 - Dates of next meetings

- Tuesday 12 May 2026 - 5.30pm to 7.30pm at Richmond Upon Thames College
- Tuesday 7 July 2026 - 5.30pm to 7.30pm at Uxbridge College

17 - Confidential items

See separate confidential minutes