

Minutes
Strategic Transformation Committee
HRUC Governance

Date	02/02/2026	
Time	17:30 - 19:00	
Location	Microsoft Teams Meeting	
Present	Paul Miller (PM) Niran Mothada (NM) Susan Kingman (SK) Jo Swindells (JS) Mike Sutcliffe (MS) Divya Menon (DM) Keith Smith (KS) Dylan McTaggart (DM) Jo Withers (JW) Timothy Hulme (TH) Alex Denley (AD) Louise Southam (LS) Yaseen Akhtar (YA) (Item 10 only)	Chair Vice-Chair Governor Governor Governor (in attendance) Governor (in attendance) Ex-Officio, CEO Group Executive Principal Executive Director, Business Growth and Partnerships Chief Operating Officer Chief Technology Officer Deputy Principal Uxbridge & HRUC Student Ambition Managing Director – IoT-Business Growth - Skills and Partnerships
Clerk	Clare Mitchell	Director of Governance
Note Taker	Nataliia Tymkiv	

Minutes

1 - Disclaimer at the start of meeting

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

2 - Apologies

Apologies were received from Amanda Priem.

3 - Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were raised.

4 - Minutes of the meeting on 22 September 2025

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the meeting on 22 September 2025.

Resolution: The minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2025 were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

5 - Actions from previous meetings

The Committee received an update on the action log from the previous meeting. Three actions had been completed. The two remaining actions were progressing as planned. The

action relating to strategic and quality matters would be considered at the next CSQE meeting and would subsequently return to this committee for further consideration.

The action relating to the future of the IoT would be the subject of further discussion, including at the forthcoming strategy session.

The Committee noted the update on actions.

6 - Committee effectiveness self-assessment and terms of reference

The Committee noted that the majority of the comments on its effectiveness were being addressed through the revisions to its terms of reference. These had been substantially rewritten and were included at Appendix A.

Comments were invited from governors and the Executive Team. Members welcomed the clearer structure and emphasised the need for the Committee to remain focused on strategic transformation. Business as usual operational delivery sat with the Executive Team. However, the Committee recognised that the boundary between the two was not always clear.

Members also noted the importance of ensuring that any KPIs and measures used by the Committee were aligned with other committees and the corporate goals scorecard, avoided duplication, and added value. The flow of decisions and recommendations between this committee, other committees, and the Corporation should be set out clearly within the terms of reference.

Committee time was limited and should be focused primarily on items for decision, with information items brought forward only where there were significant strategic, financial, or reputational risks.

It was suggested that strategic transformation projects should be clearly identified during the annual business planning process to provide clarity on which matters should be considered by the Committee during the year.

It was agreed that the comments raised would be incorporated into a revised draft of the terms of reference and brought back to the next meeting, with the intention of final sign-off and recommendation to the Board in July 2026.

Action: Committee agendas to focus primarily on items for decision, with information items brought forward only where there were significant strategic, financial, or reputational risks - Director of Governance

Action: Incorporate the Committee's comments into a revised version of the terms of reference to be shared at the next committee meeting and recommended to the Corporation for approval - Director of Governance

7 - Strategy refresh 2030

The Committee received a presentation on the refresh of HRUC's Strategic Plan to 2030. This was a refresh of the existing strategic plan rather than a full rewrite, reflecting changes in the external environment since the strategy was agreed.

The Committee was taken through the proposed structure of the governors' strategy session taking place on 12 February 2026. This would include consideration of HRUC corporate priorities, followed by an overview of external policy developments. An update on the new

Ofsted inspection framework would inform discussion on HRUC's future quality ambition and the discussion of the relevant strategic objectives.

The proposed strategic framing of the objectives was outlined. This was intended to reflect new strategic drivers, simplify the structure of the strategy, and provide greater flexibility and future-proofing. The objectives would initially be introduced at a high level, with detailed consideration taking place through group discussions.

There would be three main areas of focus, curriculum strategy, including areas for growth and sector-leading specialisms; technology, with a strong emphasis on a digital-first approach supported by financial sustainability; and organisational culture and change, including the ambition to be a college of choice and to embed social values. Each session would be interactive and designed to maximise engagement.

The Executive planned to introduce a strategic report card to strengthen delivery and assurance. This would link each strategic objective to clear strategic actions, supported by KPIs, milestones, and ownership.

Members sought clarification on how timescales would be reflected within the objectives, including whether all objectives were intended to run to 2030 or whether some elements would be delivered earlier. Proportionate evidence and data should be provided to support informed discussion at the strategy session. It was clarified that the objectives were framed to 2030, with shorter- and medium-term milestones sitting beneath them, and that supporting information would be provided.

The Committee then moved on to consideration of the 19 proposed strategic objectives. Members expressed concern about the large number of objectives and commented that several objectives combined strategic intent with delivery detail. It was agreed that there needed to be a clearer distinction between the "what" and the "how" to ensure the objectives remained outcome-focused, measurable, and suitable for effective oversight. Cost would also need to be a consideration if HRUC was to maintain outstanding financial health during the period to 2030.

The Committee agreed that further refinement of the objectives was required ahead of the strategic session.

Action: Proposed strategic objectives to be reviewed, and refined to reduce the overall number, strengthen clarity, distinguish strategic intent from delivery actions, and ensure appropriate outcome focus, quantification, and timescales - KS

Action: Proportionate evidence and data should be provided to support informed discussion at the strategy session - KS

Action: Final refresh of the strategic plan to come to the Corporation meeting in March for approval - KS

8 - Project Ambition

The Committee received an update on Project Ambition, including its background, purpose, and expenditure against the previously tabled budget.

The Committee was reminded that five non-ICT capital projects had been initiated during 2024/25. These comprised works at Barra Hall; new modular facilities at Harrow Weald to support growth in SEND provision; new catering and hair and beauty facilities at Hayes;

works at the White House, Harrow; and campus-wide improvements at Uxbridge delivered under Phase 1 of Project Ambition. The projects addressed curriculum requirements, estate condition, health and safety, and compliance needs.

Project Ambition had originally been tabled with a budget of £12.4m. In addition, as part of Phase 1, further urgent works had been undertaken to address health and safety compliance and wider estate upgrades. This has necessitated an additional £2.3m of capital investment over two years (2024/25 and 2025/26) funded from the FECTF grant of £6.6m, the Condition Funding grant of £4.6m and EBITDA. This had brought the total programme value to £14.7m.

The Committee was advised that expenditure to date totalled £8.7m, leaving approximately £6.0m remaining within the overall programme. It was noted that £2.0m of this balance had been ring-fenced to support the emerging curriculum strategy, leaving £4.0m available for Phase 2 of Project Ambition at Uxbridge.

The original plan for Phase 2 of Project Ambition had been to construct an iconic new reception building (which was previously intended to form Phase 2 and would have utilised the full residual sum of £6.0m). The scope of Phase 2 had now been adjusted to deliver a series of smaller, targeted projects focused on improving the student and staff experience and delivering improved value for money across 2025/26 and 2026/27. £2.2m of the approved capital budget would be spent on Phase 2 projects in 2025/26.

The remaining capital allocation of £1.8m for 2026/27 would be kept under review. Alongside the aforementioned ring fenced sum of £2.0m, this would have the effect of creating a £3.8m capital budget, which would need to be considered and approved by the Corporation as part of the overall budget for 2026/27.

Governors questioned whether Project Ambition was evolving into a rolling programme within a longer-term estates approach. It was confirmed that the emerging estate strategy would include three-, five-, and ten-year planning horizons, aimed at addressing legacy issues and ensuring greater parity across campuses.

Clarification was sought on the remaining balances of external grant funding. It was confirmed that approximately £2.7m remained from the FE Capital Transformation Grant, which must be spent by 1 April 2026, and that approximately £1m remained available from the DfE Condition Improvement Fund for future works.

The Committee noted the update and the capital expenditure statement on Project Ambition. The Committee also noted the Executive Team's intentions with regard to the revised scope of Phase 2 and the intended capital spend of £2.2m in 2025/26. This spend aligned with the budget previously discussed and the allocation and use of DfE grants.

9 - Apprenticeship update on success measures

The Committee received an update on apprenticeship performance, structured around the four success measures previously agreed by the Corporation. The update was presented by LS who had recently taken over responsibility for apprenticeships.

244 starts had been delivered against a profile of 274, equating to 88% of target. This represented a 30% increase on the previous year. The shortfall was attributed primarily to the timing of starts being deferred into later quarters. Activity had been refocused towards higher-volume employers to recover learner numbers and income during Q3 and Q4, and assurance was provided that the full-year profile remained achievable.

£346k of savings had been delivered to date. The originally agreed savings target of £630k was unlikely to be fully achieved, as further reductions risked impacting quality and compliance. The Committee asked whether the initial target had been ambitious and it was agreed that this was probably the case. An external consultant was working with the MIS team and the Chief Financial Officer to review the cost of delivery by apprenticeship standard. This work would inform future staffing decisions, including the potential need for a dedicated funding and compliance manager to support timely onboarding and funding claims.

The Committee noted continued improvement in the employer pipeline and the creation of opportunities for larger cohorts of new starts. A recent tender submission had not been successful; however, the process had strengthened tender-writing capability and positioned the College as a credible partner for future opportunities.

Predicted overall achievement and timely achievement were both forecast to be higher than the previous year and overall achievement was expected to exceed sector benchmarks. The Committee noted that timely achievement continued to be impacted by a cohort of legacy apprentices, largely on longer-duration programmes affected by earlier staffing challenges and post-pandemic disruption. Targeted interventions were in place, and it was anticipated that the majority of these apprentices would complete during the current year.

Governors sought clarification on timely achievement levels and comparative performance. It was noted that national timely achievement benchmarks were limited, particularly for longer programmes. Reducing the gap between overall and timely achievement remained a priority.

The potential implementation of a new learning management system remained under review and would be considered once the full diagnostic and cost-benefit analysis had been completed.

The Committee noted the update and welcomed the progress made, while recognising the ongoing challenges.

10 - MIT partnership renewal

The Committee received a paper on the renewal of the partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). The Committee was reminded of the purpose and benefits of the partnership and was asked to consider the recommendation for renewal.

The Committee noted that the partnership had provided access to sector thought leadership through events, employer discussions, and innovation activity, including engagement opportunities linked to Amazon and the National Innovation Challenge. Work was ongoing to strengthen engagement, increase internal use of the partnership, and enhance staff CPD benefits.

The Committee was advised that the recommendation was to renew the partnership for 24 months at a cost of USD 125,000 per year, providing continuity, security, and sufficient time to strengthen impact and explore the recruitment of additional college partners. An alternative option of a 12-month renewal was also presented, allowing for an earlier review of impact and value for money.

Governors sought clarification on the tangible benefits of the partnership beyond brand association and questioned the practical difference between a 24-month renewal and a 12-month renewal. In response, it was confirmed that further work was required to strengthen

measurable outcomes and that MIT would continue to support HRUC's engagement and development regardless of the renewal period chosen.

The Committee considered the costs and benefits of the partnership, including its strategic value, contribution to reputation and positioning, and potential to unlock future opportunities. The Committee also noted the importance of strengthening internal engagement and ensuring clearer measures of impact over the renewal period.

The Committee agreed to renew the partnership for a further twelve months and then review the return on investment.

Resolution: The Committee approved renewal of the MIT partnership for 12 months at a cost of USD 125,000.

11 - Community for the adoption and advancement of AI in FE

The Committee received a paper outlining a proposal for HRUC to continue its system leadership role in accelerating the adoption and advancement of artificial intelligence across the FE sector.

HRUC had established and was leading a growing national community focused on the practical use of AI to enhance learner experience, operational efficiency, and decision-making. The community now included over 50 FE colleges and had attracted strong external interest and partnerships, positioning HRUC as a recognised sector leader.

£25,000 had been identified from the 2025/26 IT capital budget to commission a series of facilitated workshops for collaboration clusters. These workshops would focus on developing shared requirements specifications and identifying common challenges. This investment aligned with HRUC's wider strategic priorities and that reputational and strategic benefits were already being recognised across the sector.

Governors questioned whether HRUC would be the sole funder of the proposed £25,000. The Committee also emphasised the importance of maximising the reputational value of these workshops for HRUC as well as ensuring that the work led to genuine capability and expertise development. It was clarified that HRUC would fund the initial workshops only, with the expectation that future phases would be co-funded by participating colleges rather than solely by HRUC.

Further clarification was provided that the £25,000 was for facilitation and collaboration rather than the purchase of AI products or systems. The intention was to create a sustainable mechanism for FE leaders to work together on strategic priorities linked to AI adoption. Governors also questioned the appropriateness of using IT capital funding rather than revenue funding. The financial treatment of the £25,000 would be discussed with the CFO.

Action: Financial treatment of the £25K investment in AI workshop facilitation to be discussed with the CFO.

The Committee recognised the proposals as supporting HRUC's strategic transformation agenda and its role in sector leadership.

Resolution: The Committee gave its support to HRUC undertaking further system leadership work to drive the adoption and advancement of AI in FE, subject to a clear statement that participating Colleges must collectively fund future phases of work.

12 - Any other business

There were no items of other business.

13 - Date of next meeting

Monday, 18 May 2026, from 5.30pm to 6.30pm, with the possibility of extension until 7.00pm.