

HARLOW COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

CORPORATION MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held at Harlow College – Thursday 28 March 2024 - 9am

Membership:	*Liz Laycock (Chair)	John Godley	*Paul Taylor
	*Sonny Bazzoni	Kate Greer	*Michael Travers
	*Rod Bristow	*Stephen Isherwood	*Dawn Tuner
	*Hannah Cheesman	*Ray Levy	*Ed Whittle
	*Julia Fillary	*Lily Lin	*Heather Wilson
	*Vic Goddard	*Karen Spencer	

* denotes present

In attendance: Pauline Odulinski, External Reviewer
Will Allanson, Deputy Principal
Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal
Becky Jones, Vice-Principal
Deanne Morgan, Executive Director – Finance
Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance

ONS Reclassification Training

The meeting commenced with a training session on ONS Reclassification, presented by Deanne Morgan, Executive Director – Finance

1 Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from John Godley due to annual leave and Kate Greer, due to personal reasons.

2 Declaration of Interests

Michael Travers declared an interest in agenda item 12 – Health and Safety Committee Meeting – 27 February 2024 as he was a main contributor to the meeting.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2023 were approved by the Corporation as a true and accurate record of the meeting and were signed remotely by the Chair.

4 Matters Arising

4.1 Self-Assessment 2022-2023, including performance for 2022-2023 (minute 6.2 refers)

The Corporation was informed that the Chair of Governors and the Chair of Standards and Curriculum Committee approved the additional narrative and rationale in the SAR and ratified the judgements. The SAR was submitted to the Ofsted portal before Christmas.

4.2 Minutes of the Search and Governance Committee Meeting – 21 November (minute 7.1 refers)

Ruth Lucas confirmed that Governor pen portraits have been uploaded to the College's website.

4.3 Operating and Financial Review and Financial Statements 2022-2023 (minute 8.2.3 refers)

Deanne Morgan confirmed that the Financial Statements for 2022-2023 were submitted to the ESFA in advance of the 31 December 2023 deadline.

5 Search and Governance Committee Reports

5.1 Minutes of the Search and Governance Committee Meeting – 13 February 2024

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Search and Governance Committee meeting held on 13 February 2024.

5.1.1 Item 1 – Membership of Harlow College Further Education Corporation

The Corporation received and considered the Search and Governance Committee's recommendations for membership of Harlow College Further Education Corporation,

The Search and Governance Committee recommended the appointment of Vic Goddard of Passmores Co-operative Learning Community, as a Governor of Harlow College Further Education for a period of four years, commencing on 28 March 2024. It is recommended that Vic Goddard be a member of the Standards and Curriculum Committee.

The Search and Governance Committee recommended the appointment of Caroline Betts of Essex County Council, as a Governor of Harlow College Further Education for a period of four years, commencing on 1 April 2024. It is recommended that Caroline Betts be a member of the Standards and Curriculum Committee.

The Search and Governance Committee recommended the reappointment of Liz Laycock as a Governor of Harlow College Further Education for a period of four years, commencing on 19 May 2024.

The Corporation unanimously approved the Search and Governance Committee's recommendations. Vic Goddard and Caroline Betts were appointed as Governors of Harlow College Further Education for a

period of four years and Liz Laycock was reappointed as a Governor of Harlow College Further Education for a period of four years

The Corporation noted that in order to strengthen Committees, Julia Fillary has moved from the Resources Committee to the Audit Committee and John Godley has moved from the Standards and Curriculum Committee to the Resources Committee.

5.1.2 Item 2 – Annual Accountability Statement and the Local Needs Duty

The Corporation received and considered the report on the Annual Accountability Statement and the Local Needs Duty, presented by Karen Spencer, Principal.

Karen Spencer reminded Governors that the College is required to produce an Annual Accountability Statement annually and the process for doing so is linked to the College's Strategic Plan.

The recommendation from the Search and Governance Committee to the Corporation was to approve the approach set out in the report and that the Annual Accountability Statement will be produced and reviewed after the update to the Strategic Plan is completed.

The Search and Governance Committee also recommended to the Corporation the approval of the Greater Essex Commitment Statement which had been produced in collaboration with Principals, Chairs of Governors and Governance Professionals across Greater Essex.

The Corporation agreed the approach set out in the report for the Annual Accountability Statement and agreed the Greater Essex Commitment Statement.

5.1.3 Item 3 – Annual Report of the Further Education Commissioner 2022 – 2023

The Corporation received and noted the Annual Report of the Further Education Commissioner 2022 – 2023, presented by Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance.

Governors were informed that Liz Laycock, Karen Spencer and Ruth Lucas have attended the "Just One Thing More" sessions facilitated by the FE Commissioner's Office on SEND and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

6 Strategic Planning

An interactive session on strategic planning was held, led by the Principalship.

Karen Spencer introduced the session and reminded Governors of activities taken place to date.

The College hosted an event for Chairs, Principals and Governance Professionals across Essex in February 2024, aligned to the Local Skills Improvement Plan and the duty to review provision to ensure that it is meeting local skills' needs. In addition to this, an internal strategic planning session was held with Governors and senior managers in February 2024.

The next phase is to start shaping some of the larger infrastructure projects. The quality of student experience, teaching and learning and curriculum intent and purpose is at the heart of what the College does however there is a need for collective resources to deliver the larger projects.

Governors were split into three groups, each led by a member of the Principalship, and each group discussed and scored two options. The feedback from the groups were as follows:

1. Phase 2 of Stansted Airport College which includes the development of a 147 centre to offer licensed engineering qualifications.

This scored very strongly.

The only area which scored low was Human Resources as there would be significant additional staffing requirements.

2. The consolidation of Health Science provision into C building, to brand an NHS Academy, similar to the STAC branding model.

The average score was 2.4 out of 3.

There are well-established partnerships in place and the project is believed to be achievable.

3. The opportunity to site a permanent hub in the Gilston Development of Harlow, initially focused on construction but with a view to becoming a longerterm adult education venue.

The average score was 2 out of 3.

The risk of not doing this is high.

It is worth keeping in the thinking, when moving facilities away from the main Harlow campus, does it detract from what is delivered on that campus and does it reduce opportunities for people in Harlow.

4. The removal of O and M buildings and expansion onto adjacent College owned land with key worker housing, Sports and Hair & Beauty facilities. This would also enable the relocation of the Salon from Harlow Town Centre once development work begins there.

The average score was 2 out of 3.

The facilities would be a welcomed addition on the campus and it would be good to have an exams hall.

The funding and timeframe may however mean that the project is not achievable.

5. The expansion to the front of the Automotive compound to create frontage connecting the College to the Town Centre as part of the Town Plan.

This scored quite highly however the affordability scored lower as there is less chance in securing funding through partnerships.

This is seen as a more longer-term project and the feasibility of delivering this within in the next five years is lower.

6. Campus capacity Harlow - walkway between J and K buildings.

This project scored the lowest of all six options.

There was a question around whether the College needs more classrooms and is the current space being used effectively therefore more classrooms are required.

Will Allanson reported that Harlow is set to grow by 40% by 2033 therefore additional capacity will be required during the period of the next Strategic Plan. The capacity does not need to be address immediately however it will need to be by the end of the next Strategic Plan in 2029. The Estates Strategy, which sits alongside the Strategic Plan, forecasts learner numbers and space needs analysis.

Becky Jones reported that with the new requirement for additional face-to-face teaching hours for English and Maths, along with T-Levels and the introduction of the Advanced British Standard, more hours will need to be delivered onsite.

Karen Spencer reported that the walkway will need to be addressed and scoped in at some point.

Will Allanson reported that the College has a rolling plan for campus improvements in order to ensure the buildings are fit for purpose and sustainability targets are achieved.

Karen Spencer reported that the next Strategic Plan will have the key curriculum themes upfront and will be strengthened throughout the Plan, with quality, technology and sustainability being cross-cutting themes.

A Governor asked when the costs of the projects and return on investment would be known in order for Governors to make a decision on the priority of projects. Karen Spencer reported that the projects are reliant on securing funding from Government sources and that a return on investment and learner numbers assessment are part of the application process. The College needs to be prepared to submit an application for a relevant project when the funding becomes available, therefore it is a reactive process. In order to fully cost up all projects, it could cost up to £250k per project, with no guarantee that funding to deliver the project will be secured.

A Governor asked if the Strategic Plan should include the environment the College is operating in, the College's priorities, then the larger scale projects with costs and numbers included. Karen Spencer reported that in the previous Strategic Plan this information was included and the environment detailed. Once the up-coming priorities are agreed, these will be shaped and looked at against the College's Financial Strategy and Human Resources Strategy. The detail on costs have always been included in the Estates Strategy rather than the Strategic Plan however indicative figures could be included in the Strategic Plan. An assumption could be made on what the College thinks the upcoming opportunities might be and ensure the College is well-placed when the opportunities and funding arise. This approach has worked well previously for the College.

The Chair of the Corporation reported that the discussions held were important and thanked Governors for their strategic input into the process.

7 Standards and Curriculum Committee Reports

7.1 Minutes of the Standards and Curriculum Committee Meeting – 14 March 2024

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 14 March 2024.

7.1.1 Item 1 – Key Performance Indicators 2023/2024

The Corporation received and considered the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2023/2024, presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

The Corporation was informed that they had been scrutinised in detail in the individual reports presented at the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 14 March 2024 and that the final position for 2022-2023 has been added in since the Committee meeting as requested by Governors.

The Corporation noted the Key Performance Indicators 2023/2024.

7.1.2 Item 2 – Quality Improvement Plan 2023/2024

The Corporation received and considered the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2023/2024 presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

The Corporation was informed that the QIP was considered in the individual reports presented at the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 14 March 2024.

Becky Jones reported that English and maths remains a challenge. Attendance however has improved, due to an Attendance Officer having been appointed and new strategies which have been introduced being successful, such as online learning for a bespoke group of students.

Governors were informed that the College's English and maths November GCSE resit results have improved, with Maths results being higher than the national averages however English is lower.

Governors were informed that English achievement is the College's biggest concern at present.

Becky Jones reported that the College-wide retention task force group's main focus is on attendance and the group has identified students at risk of not continuing at College.

Becky Jones reported that the College's apprenticeship provision has improved over the last four years and that the College is on track to reach the 60% achievement target for this academic year. The impact of the positive changes made to this provision are being seen.

Governors were informed that bigger increases in apprenticeship achievement are expected next academic year onwards, as the legacy apprentices, which have had an impact on the College's data, are now completing.

A Governor highlighted that A-Level achievement was a concern and what are the AS results looking like and what impact will this have on A-Level results.

Becky Jones reported that not every A-Level has an AS Level however there are a number of students in their second year of A-Levels who did complete AS exams last year and it is envisaged that there will be improvements in the A-Level results this summer.

ALPS value added is reported and monitored monthly and whilst the current second years are trailing behind slightly, the AS cohort is looking stronger.

A Governor asked what the cause of the improvements in A-Levels standards was. Becky Jones reported that once the AS exam is taken, students receive a grade and then an information, advice and guidance conversation takes place to ensure that A-Levels is still the right course of that student or whether there is a better option available to them. Sometimes students take a sideways move at this point and go on to be more successful.

A Governor asked if there is a seamless connection between AS and A-Levels and asked if this is not disruptive. Becky Jones reported that it is not disruptive and that for students with high levels of exam anxiety, staging exams throughout the two years is better rather than just sitting a final exam at the end of the two years.

The Corporation noted the Quality Improvement Plan 2023/2024.

8 Resources Committee Reports

8.1 Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting – 27 February 2024

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 27 February 2024.

8.1.1 Item 1 – Management Accounts

The Corporation received and considered the management accounts for the period 1 August 2023 – 31 January 2024, presented by Deanne Morgan, Executive Director – Finance.

Deanne Morgan reported that the January management accounts have not gone through the Resources Committee due to the timing of the Committee meeting. Instead, the Resources Committee had received the December management accounts.

Governors were informed that a small year-end deficit is being predicted which is mainly due to agency staff costs which are high. Management are looking at how this expenditure is presented in the management accounts so that management and Governors can monitor agency spend better.

Governors noted that the College's financial health rating is forecast to be good and the bank covenants are forecast to be met. Deanne Morgan highlighted that meeting the bank covenants is tight in April due to not as much adult work being delivered during the economic closure however this is offset by a reduction in running costs across the College during this period. Karen Spencer reported that management looked at the impact economic closure at Easter would have on delivery before making a decision on closure. It was confirmed that last year the only course delivered during the Easter holiday was a one-day course for the unemployed, therefore the economic closure will not have a big impact on adult income being earned.

A Governor asked if the effect of the changes in employee national insurance is included in the accounts. Deanne Morgan confirmed that the change just means that more cash is paid at different times of the year however the net effect is zero. Karen Spencer reported that HR will notify staff of the impact of this change. Governors noted that there is no change in employer national insurance.

Deanne Morgan reported that the cost of the Teachers' Pension Scheme will increase from April however this is fully funded by the Government at present.

The Corporation noted the management accounts for the period 1 August 2023 – 31 January 2024.

8.1.2 Item 2 – Treasury Management Report

The Corporation received and considered the treasury management report, presented by Deanne Morgan, Executive Director – Finance.

Governors were informed that this report was discussed in detail at the Resources Committee meeting held on 27 February 2024 and Deanne Morgan reminded Governors that this is an annual report.

Governors noted that cash is good and interest is being generated however cash levels will decrease as campus work is undertaken.

Governors noted that the College has three loans on two products, with one ending in October 2026 and the other in July 2027.

Deanne Morgan reported that the bank confirmed that both bank covenants were met at the end of last financial year.

The Corporation reviewed and approved the following annual banking facility with Virgin Money / Clydesdale Bank, as recommended by the Resources Committee:

Facility	Previous Limit	New Limit	Frequency
Overdraft	£0	£0	-
BACS (salaries)	£870,000	£950,000 (since October 2023)	per month
BACS (non salaries)	£1,000,000	£1,000,000	per week
Business Card (credit card)	£40,000	£40,000	per month
Open Credit (Cash facility with Natwest)	£10,000	£10,000 (until account closed)	per week

Governors were informed that the credit card facility is being reduced and the College is moving to pre-payment cards.

The Corporation noted the treasury management report and unanimously approved the following:

- Committing up to £2 million in fixed term investments in £500k rolling tranches with a review at the point of £1m invested, subject to the interest rate being above the interest rate on the current account.
- The annual banking facility with Virgin Money / Clydesdale Bank as detailed above.

8.1.3 Item 3 – Future Funding

The Corporation received and considered the management accounts for the report on future funding, presented by Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal.

The Corporation was informed that the report had been discussed in detail at the Resources Committee meeting held on 27 February 2024.

Paul Whitehead reported that since writing the report, the College has received its funding allocation statement for 16 – 18 and adult funding. The 16 – 18 funding is slightly higher than anticipated.

Governors were informed that management will now start financial planning for next year and further information will be presented to the Resources Committee at its meeting on 9 May 2024.

The Corporation noted the report on future funding.

9 Audit Committee Reports

9.1 Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting – 5 March 2024

The Corporation received and noted the minutes and the confidential minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 5 March 2024.

9.1.1 Item 1 – Appointment of Internal Auditors

The Corporation received and approved the Audit Committee's recommendation to appoint Scrutton Bland as the College's internal auditors for 2024-2025.

10 ESFA Annual Strategic Conversation

The Corporation received and considered the letter regarding the ESFA Annual Strategic Conversation, presented by Karen Spencer, Principal.

Karen Spencer reported that the meeting was held with officials from the DfE and the FE Commissioner's Team, along with Liz Laycock, Paul Taylor, Karen Spencer, Will Allanson, Paul Whitehead, Becky Jones and Ruth Lucas.

Karen Spencer reported that it was an open and frank discussion covering topics such as qualification reform, finances and the burden of audit.

The Corporation noted the ESFA Annual Strategic Conversation letter.

11 Stansted Airport Advisory Group Meeting – 28 February 2024

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Stansted Airport Advisory Group meeting held on 28 February 2024.

12 Health and Safety Committee Meeting – 27 February 2024

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Health and Safety Committee meeting held on 27 February 2024.

Will Allanson reported that there has been a change in the membership and focus of the Group.

13 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Operational Steering Group Meeting – 8 March 2024

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Operational Steering Group meeting held on 8 March 2024.

Governors were informed that the College is in the process of obtaining the Investors in Diversity silver award. After Easter, a questionnaire will be sent to all students, staff, governors and some stakeholders, the results of which will be anonymous. From this, an improvement plan will be developed. Governors were encouraged to engage with the survey in a timely manner.

A Governor asked if this is connected with Investors in People and Will Allanson confirmed that it is the same process however a different organisation.

Will Allanson reported that the overriding objective is for the College to be recognised as a fair and inclusive organisation.

A Governor asked whether the accreditation process takes 1-2 years as mentioned in the Committee notes. Will Allanson reported that the assessors work throughout this period and when the College believes it has met all the objectives in the action plan, a reassessment will take place, along with another survey. All of this will take place over a 1-2 year period.

14 Safeguarding Committee Meeting – 13 March 2024

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Safeguarding Committee meeting held on 13 March 2024.

Liz Laycock reported that the College's safeguarding position is strong and comprehensive safeguarding processes are in place. Dawn Turner and Will Allanson confirmed this position.

A Governor asked about mental health and exam anxiety and at what point do these issues become a safeguarding issue. Liz Laycock reported that this has been discussed at both the Safeguarding Committee and the Standards and Curriculum Committee and the College has processes in place to assess whether or not there is a safeguarding issue as well, as there is sometimes a crossover into safeguarding. Karen Spencer reported that Liz Laycock works very hard on the Committee and brings her expertise on safeguarding to the Committee. Karen Spencer confirmed that students referred to safeguarding are definite safeguarding cases and not just ones with exam anxiety.

15 Any Other Business

Karen Spencer reported that Robert Halfon MP has resigned from his post as Skills Minister with immediate effect and will not be standing as an MP in the next General Election. He has been a great supporter of Harlow and the College over the years and it was agreed that the Corporation will write a letter of thanks to him.

16 Dates of Future Meetings

Summer Term 2024	Wednesday 22 May 2024	9am
	Tuesday 16 July 2024	9am