

Minutes of: Search and Governance Committee

Date: 3:00pm on 23rd June 2025 **Location:** A5, College Road Campus

Present	In attendance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Peta Darnley (<i>Chair</i>) (<i>Online</i>) ▪ Abigail Appleton (<i>Principal & CE</i>) ▪ Mervyn Jones ▪ Russell Roberts <p>Collectively referred to as the “<i>Committee</i>” and individually as a “<i>Committee Member</i>”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Abigail Boyce (<i>Clerk to the Corporation, “Clerk”</i>)
Quoracy: Meeting was quorate in accordance with paragraph 1 below.	Absent: John Auckland

1. Quorum

The meeting was duly convened, with three members present, satisfying the quorum requirement as set out in the Committee’s Terms of Reference under the Standing Orders (*Section B, Subsection 4, Clause 2.2*).

2. Apologies and Declarations

- a. **Apologies for absence:** Apologies for absence were received from John Auckland.
- b. **Declarations of interest:** The Chair of the Committee declared a professional connection to one of the governor applicants. It was agreed that the Chair would not participate in any decision-making relating to this individual. It was also noted that the current Chair of the Corporation, who is a member of the Committee, was present during the discussion regarding applications for the future Chair role. The Committee acknowledged their presence was appropriate in their capacity as a member but that they did not take part in the discussion or influence the outcome..

3. Minutes of last meeting

- a. **Approval of minutes of meeting held on 31st March 2025:** the minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.
- b. **Matters Arising:** all actions were noted as complete or as in progress.

4. Board and Committee Membership 2024/25: Vacancies and Succession

a. Student Governors

The Committee reviewed the departure dates of the current student governors and noted that two of the three would be leaving the Board. Recruitment strategies were discussed, including advertising and the optimal timing for promotion. The Principal advised that the most effective approach is through tutors encouraging students to apply. It was agreed that recruitment should begin at the start of the new academic year.

b. Independent Governor Applications

The Committee considered two applications, recognising the distinct strengths each candidate offered in terms of professional experience, diversity and digital expertise. The Committee emphasised the importance of lived experience in fostering inclusive governance

and ensuring the Board reflects the community it serves. It was also noted that prioritising expertise alone risked limiting the Board's diversity and perspective, potentially leading to an overly narrow representation. One applicant is also under consideration for a consultancy role; to mitigate any potential conflict of interest, the Committee agreed it would be more appropriate for this individual to contribute in a consultancy capacity at this time. The Committee also recognised the continued need to appoint a governor with accounting expertise. It was agreed that the Committee would meet with the candidate and provide an update at the next meeting.

Action: Clerk to arrange meetings between the Committee and Governor candidate.

c. Update on Committee Membership and Chair Roles

The Committee reviewed the upcoming committee chair appointments, noting that Board approval is required. They discussed the Staff Governor recruitment process, with a vacancy arising in October. The Principal highlighted the staff festival as a key opportunity to promote the role and aimed for applications by September, prior to the next Search and Governance meeting. The Board supports having three Staff Governors representing HE, FE, and professional services, with recruitment adverts targeted accordingly. The Committee also considered the need to replace other governors whose terms are expiring.

5. Chair Recruitment

a. Applications and update

The Committee reviewed two applications, and the Principal provided an update on meeting with the candidates, noting that one was approached directly while the other applied independently. The Committee discussed the strengths and weaknesses of both applicants, emphasising the importance of recruiting someone who can offer effective challenge. Concerns were raised regarding the recruitment timeline, and the Committee agreed to begin considering the use of recruitment agencies. It was decided to meet both candidates and evaluate potential agencies, possibly including a break clause in agency agreements. The Committee agreed to proceed with initial interviews for the applicants while the Clerk contacts recruitment agencies to explore options.

ACTION: Clerk to arrange meetings between the Committee and Chair candidates.

b. Recruitment Agencies

The Committee discussed several recruitment agencies, considering their potential impact and suitability for the role. Emphasis was placed on exploring regional agencies to ensure a good understanding of the local market. The Committee outlined key qualities they expect from a recruitment agency, including responsiveness and a strong candidate network. The Chair of the Corporation confirmed their intention to step down in December, with that meeting being their final attendance. The Committee noted the requirement for formal board approval of the extension and interim Chair appointment. The Committee approved the proposed arrangements and expressed gratitude for the Chair's service.

ACTION: The Clerk will contact recruitment agencies for quotes and information.

6. Fellows Update

The Principal informed the Committee that Edward Bulmer has confirmed his acceptance of a Fellowship.

7. Governor Portal Options: Review and Recommendation

The Clerk presented options for a governor portal, comparing GovernorHub and Teams. The Committee considered the advantages and disadvantages of each platform and acknowledged that GovernorHub appeared to offer greater benefits for Governors. The Principal noted she would consult her Operations Manager on outstanding matters and aim to provide a final recommendation at the September committee meeting.

8. Training, Development, Staff and Student Engagement

a. Staff engagement event

The Principal briefly informed the Committee about the upcoming Tea and Cake meet-and-greet with professional services, scheduled prior to the Board meeting.

b. Curriculum Visit Dates

The Committee reviewed the proposed curriculum visit dates and discussed the value of including a visit to the Forge. They also considered the advantages of providing a range of options to enable greater governor participation.

9. Draft Cycle of Business and Agenda plan 2025/26

The Principal presented the agenda to the committee and explained that the intention is for both the Clerk and the Principal to review and refine the agenda collaboratively over the summer period to ensure it aligns with upcoming priorities and requirements.

10. Annual Committee items

a. Election of Committee Chair 2025/26

In line with the College's process, the Clerk invited Committee members to comment on the Chair election prior to the meeting. The Committee confirmed that Peta Darnley will continue as Chair of the Search and Governance Committee for the coming academic year. This recommendation will be submitted to the Governing Body for approval in accordance with Standing Orders. The Committee thanked Peta Darnley for her ongoing leadership and commitment.

b. Self-Assessment of Committee 2024/25

The Committee acknowledged this as an accurate reflection of its current performance. The Chair noted the Clerk's intention to revise the Terms of Reference, emphasizing the need for clarity and flexibility. It was further recommended to implement a programme of board reviews, including one-to-one meetings between the Chair of the Corporation and individual governors, to support a comprehensive governance review.

11. Close of Business and Date of Next Meeting

With no further business to discuss, the Chair closed the meeting at 16:30. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 29th September 2025, at 3:00 PM.

Minutes approved: Date: 29th September 2025