# BOARD MEETING

19 March 2026
16:30 - 18:30
Conference Centre, Braintree Campus CM7 5SN

## ATTENDANCE

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Present:** | Lisa Blake | Governor, Chair of Corporation Board |
| | Bryan Cunningham | Governor |
| | Caroline Williams | Governor |
| | Chris Donovan | Governor |
| | Marie-Ann Capps | Governor |
| | Richard Block | Governor |
| | Sally Messenger | Governor |
| | Simon Attwood | Governor |
| | Adam Fair | Staff Governor |
| | Nicola Jay | Staff Governor |
| | Alison Andreas | Principal and Chief Executive |
| **In attendance:** | Mark Emerson | Vice Principal |
| | Gary Horne MBE | Deputy Chief Executive |
| | Ali Davies | Deputy Principal |
| | Alison Bennett | Head of Governance |

# 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To **RECEIVE** apologies for absence, including reasons given, and to agree whether those apologies are accepted.

- Stephanie Bettinson
- Sanjeev Arya
- Marco Iciek

Apologies were received and **APPROVED** from Stephanie Bettinson, Sanjeev Arya and Marco Iciek.

Kay Adelani was not present and no apologies were received.

# 2. DECLARATIONS OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Members and Staff are asked to declare the nature and extent of any financial, or other interests, in the business to be discussed.

No declarations of any conflicts of interest were received.

# 3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING - CIC/26/1/1

To **RECEIVE** and **APPROVE** the minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2025.

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2025 were **APPROVED** as a true and accurate record.

## 4. ACTIONS TRACKER AND MATTERS ARISING NOT COVERED ELSEWHERE ON THE AGENDA - CIC/26/1/2

1) To **REVIEW** the progress of actions arising from previous meetings and receive an update for any outstanding. Updates are set out in the action tracker.

The following updates were received on outstanding actions:

*Action CIC/25/5/02, Item 6 - Staff Absence Data*: Vice Principal to explore whether future staff absence reporting can be disaggregated to show teaching staff absence separately from support staff absence. It was noted this would be covered under item 5, Balanced Scorecard.

*Action Item 10 - GRSC to consider whether a college response to the review should be published on the College website:* The Head of Governance recommended that the action be closed, noting that the next external governance review is scheduled for the 2026–27 academic year. The Board agreed.

2) To **DISCUSS** any matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

CIC/26/1/2 - Action tracker was received and discussed.

## 5. BALANCED SCORECARD - CIC/26/1/3

To **RECEIVE** the Balanced Scorecard for March 2026.

CIC/26/1/3, Balanced Scorecard was received for information.

The Vice Principal reported:

- The average number of days lost to staff absence has continued to decline.
- Future iterations of the report will differentiate between teaching and support staff,
- Current data shows support staff sickness levels to be 0.49 days higher than those of teaching staff, possibly reflecting the larger support staff cohort.

Governors **QUERIED** whether the College Executive considers the staff with objectives input to the College system target to be achievable. The Principal confirmed they did.

Governors noted the improvement in adult recruitment since the previous meeting.

The Board commented that the number of unqualified teachers remains high. The Deputy Principal advised that all staff in the category are either in training or due to begin training. Of the cohort, 28 staff are currently in training, 37 are scheduled to commence training in September 2026 and are receiving in-college support in the interim, and 4 are scheduled to begin training in 2027.

Governors **ASKED** whether ‘unqualified teacher’ is standard terminology. The Deputy Principal confirmed that it is, explaining that while the College ensures all teaching staff undergo teacher training, it is not a statutory requirement. It was agreed that the College’s definition of ‘unqualified’ should be included in future reports. The Deputy Principal assured Governors that all staff appointed are suitably qualified in the subject areas that they teach.

**ACTION:** Deputy Principal to provide the College’s definition of unqualified teachers in future reports.

# 6. EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT 2024-25 - CIC/26/1/4

To **RECEIVE** for **APPROVAL** the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2024-25

CIC/26/1/4, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) Annual Report, was received for approval.

The Principal reported that:

- The report contains a comprehensive summary of learner and staff data, EDI activity and staff CPD.
- The action plan, created a year ago, has been updated with progress and achievements to date against the four priority areas.
- Progress has been good and will accelerate with the appointment of the Director of Inclusion and Wellbeing from May 2026.

Governors **QUERIED** how the action plan referenced in section 7.1 is monitored. The Principal confirmed that monitoring is undertaken through the EDI Steering Group, which reports to the Senior Leadership Team.

With reference to section 3.2, Governors sought clarification regarding the statement that male apprentices outperform female apprentices by 12%. The Deputy Principal advised that this variation is predominantly linked to the types of programmes on which a particular gender makes up the majority of learners.

Governors **ASKED** about campus accessibility and whether any areas/ buildings are non-compliant or difficult to access. The Principal explained that access to some areas, such as upper floors of the Higher Education building, can be difficult when the only lift is non-operational. In such circumstances, workarounds are implemented, including re-timetabling lessons into accessible classrooms.

Governors **ASKED** whether Governor EDI data will be included in future reports. It was confirmed that this is intended.

Governors noted that the EDI Charter was approved in March 2025 and observed that the action plan does not indicate that its implementation is being treated as being sufficiently high-priority.
They **ASKED** what factors were limiting faster implementation and whether more ambitious targets could be set. It was agreed that the intended impact and reporting lines for the action plan could be strengthened to support more effective action and oversight**.**

**DECISION:** Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2024-25 was **APPROVED** by the Board for publication on the College website subject to discussed changes.

# 7. STRATEGIC PLAN - ONE YEAR ACTION PLAN - CIC/26/1/5

To **RECEIVE** for information a mid year update on progress towards strategic plan success factors

CIC/26/1/5, Strategic Plan - one year action plan, was received for information. No questions were raised by Corporation Board members.

# 8. SAFEGUARDING REPORT - CIC/26/1/6

To **RECEIVE** the Safeguarding report for March 2026

CIC/26/1/6, Safeguarding Report, was received for information.

The Deputy Principal reported that, since the report was written, there has been one allegation made against a member of staff.

Governors' attention was brought to the section highlighted in blue which reflects discussion at the Curriculum and Quality Committee (CQC) and provides explanation on the target for staff completion of mandatory safeguarding training. Governors reiterated to College Executive that safeguarding is a statutory responsibility of the Corporation Board and therefore assurance is required that all staff consistently complete the required training. The Chair of CQC confirmed that the Committee continue to monitor this closely and challenge any apparent non-compliance.

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the Finance and Resources Committee receives the Day-1 safeguarding training completion figures, which currently stand at 100%. It was agreed that a review of the reporting of safeguarding training figures to the respective Committees would be undertaken by the College Executive (CE).

**ACTION:** The College Executive will review and confirm the most appropriate way to report safeguarding training figures to the respective Committees.

Governors requested further information on student mental health data and delays in referrals, as referenced within the report, asking what additional capacity or partnerships might help meet demand, and whether the College is satisfied with the level of risk these delays present. The Deputy Principal explained that team capacity has been increased and that strong relationships with external agencies are in place. However, referrals can be challenging when partner agencies are at capacity. Assurance was given regarding the competence of the team and the support mechanisms in place, including supervision. Governors **ASKED** whether there had been an increase in reporting. It was confirmed that the national rise in mental health concerns is reflected within the College. The Board requested that the Audit & Risk Committee consider how this issue is reflected on the Corporate Risk Register and report back at the May Board meeting.

**ACTION**: ARC to consider how the rise in mental health concerns and the risk presented by the delays in referrals being seen by agencies is reflected in the Corporate Risk register and report back to the May Board meeting.

Governors **QUERIED** the criteria for stop-and-search procedures. The Deputy Principal clarified that searches are initiated based on reported behaviour, for example the smell of drugs or alcohol, observed behaviours, or reports that an individual may be in possession of drugs, alcohol or a weapon. Governors were assured that a robust protocol is in place.

Governors **QUERIED** the one outstanding DBS check referenced within the report and **ASKED** the Chair of CQC whether the Committee received the assurance they needed on this. The CQC Chair replied that assurance had been provided by the Assistant Principal and the Principal, however any outstanding DBS check can present a risk.

## 9. CURRICULUM AND QUALITY COMMITTEE (CQC) CHAIR'S REPORT - CIC/26/1/7

To **RECEIVE** the 29 January 2026 CQC Chair's Report

CIC/26/1/7, Curriculum and Quality Committee Chair's report, was received for information. No questions were raised by Corporation Board members.

## 9.1 EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION POLICY - CIC/26/1/8

Following scrutiny, the Board is asked to **APPROVE** the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy on the recommendation of the CQC.

CIC/26/1/8, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy, was received for approval on the recommendation of the Curriculum and Quality Committee.

The Principal informed the Board that the policy is fully consistent with the Association of Colleges (AoC) ED&I Charter, which the College has adopted.

No questions were raised by Corporation Board members.

**DECISION**: The Board **APPROVED** the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy as recommended by the Curriculum and Quality Committee.

# 10. GOVERNANCE, REMUNERATION & SEARCH COMMITTEE CHAIR'S REPORT - CIC/26/1/9

To **RECEIVE** the 4 February 2026 GRSC Chairs Report

CIC/26/1/9, GRSC Chair's Report was received for information.

On recommendation of the Committee the Board **APPROVED** reappointment of:

- Caroline Williams as an independent Governor for a 2nd term of four years.
- Richard Block as an independent Governor for a 2nd term of four years.
- Stephanie Bettinson as an independent Governor for a 2nd term of four years.
- Angela O'Donoghue as a co-opted Governor to the Curriculum and Quality Committee for a 2nd term of four years.

The Board noted that the committee discussed the Governance Action Plan which will be brought back to the GRSC in June for review, before being brought to the July Board meeting.

## 10.1 MEMBERSHIP UPDATE - CIC/26/1/10

1) To **RECEIVE** an update on membership

2) To consider and **APPROVE** the appointment of:

- Jenny Kaye - Co-opted to FRC
- James Day - Independent Governor and ARC
- Tony Farrar - Independent Governor and CQC

CIC/26/1/10, Membership update, was received.

On recommendation of the Governance, Remuneration and Search Committee the Board **APPROVED** the appointment of:

- Jenny Kaye as a Co-opted Governor to the Finance and Resources Committee for a four year term.
- James Day as an Independent Governor and member of the Audit and Risk Committee for a four year term.
- Tony Farrar as an Independent Governor and member of the Curriculum & Quality Committee for a four year term.

The Board noted the resignation of Varun Verma with effect from 27 February 2026.

The Board noted the ongoing quoracy challenges of the Audit & Risk Committee. Following discussion, it was agreed that co-opted members should be sought to strengthen committee membership and resilience. It was further noted that all committees permit routine remote attendance, meaning geographical location need not be a barrier. Governors emphasised the importance of considering diversity in the recruitment process.

**ACTIONS:**

- Head of Governance to liaise with the Marketing team to write a targeted advertisement for coopted members for the Audit & Risk Committee, setting out the expected commitment. Marketing Team to lead. Remote participation to be highlighted as an option.
- Governors to share the advertisement within their networks.

## 10.2 GOVERNOR LEAVE OF ABSENCE

To be discussed as Part II, confidential item.

Discussed as a confidential item.

## 10.3 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CORPORATION MEMBERS - CIC/26/1/11

To **RECEIVE** and **APPROVE** the Code of Conduct for Corporation Members & Co-opted revised January 2026.

CIC/26/1/11, Code of Conduct for Corporation Board Members and Co-opted Members. No questions were raised by Corporation Board members.

**DECISION:** Code of Conduct for Corporation Board Members and Co-opted Members was **APPROVED** and will be circulated for Governors (including co-opted) to sign and return.

# 11. FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE CHAIRS REPORT - CIC/26/1/12

To **RECEIVE** the 2 March 2026 FRC Chairs Report.

CIC/26/1/12, Finance and Resources Committee Chair's report, was received and reviewed.

The Board noted the outcomes of the annual wellbeing survey, which highlighted some concerns regarding workload, capacity and perceptions of fairness. The Deputy Principal advised that the survey questions are drawn from the Working Well accreditation framework, part of the Essex Wellbeing Service, and are therefore standardised. The Deputy Principal further confirmed that, with the forthcoming appointment of the Director of Inclusion and Wellbeing, this area will continue to be a priority.

**11.6 - RECORDED AS CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE**

## 11.1 MONTHLY MANAGEMENT REPORT P6 (JANUARY 2026) - CIC/26/1/13

To **RECEIVE** for information the Monthly Management Report P6 (January 2026)

CIC/26/1/13, Monthly Management Report P6 (January 2026) was received. No questions were raised by Corporation Board members.

## 11.2 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS & DELEGATED AUTHORITY OF LIMITS - CIC/26/1/14

To **APPROVE** the Financial Regulations, to include changes to the delegated authority of limits (Sect 11.2.1), on recommendation of the FRC

CIC/26/1/14, Financial Regulations and Delegated Authority of Limits, was received for approval.
No questions were raised by Corporation Board members.

**DECISON:** Financial Regulations and Delegated Authority of Limits was **APPROVED** by the Corporation Board.

## 11.3 GENDER PAY GAP REPORT - CIC/26/1/15

To **RECEIVE** for information the Gender Pay Gap report

CIC/26/1/5, Gender Pay Gap Report, was received for information. No questions were raised by Corporation Board members.

## 11.4 CLIMATE ACTION PROJECT - CIC/26/1/16

To **AGREE** the Governor climate action project with outcomes to be shared at the marketplace event on 09 July 2026

CIC/26/1/16, Climate Action Project, was received for information.

The Deputy Chief Executive **QUESTIONED** whether the proposal was impactful enough.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the proposal would be looked at further considering what Governors do that has impact on the environment and trace back what can be done to show impact.  Governors agreed the Adoption of a Planter as an additional.

**ACTIONS:**

- Sustainability Governor to propose Climate Action Project to bring back to May Board for discussion and approval..
- Governors to adopt a planter on the College Site.

## 11.5 APPOINTMENT OF SUSTAINABILITY GOVERNOR

To formally **APPOINT** a nominated Sustainability Governor

Marie-Ann Capps was nominated and formally appointed as the Governor for Sustainability.

# 12. CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

To **NOTE** that due to a revised meeting schedule, the risk register will be reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee on 24 March and subsequently presented to the Board at the May meeting for review.

It was previously agreed that, due to a revised meeting schedule, the Corporate Risk Register will be reviewed by the Audit & Risk Committee on 24 March and subsequently presented to the Board at the May meeting for review.

## 13. BOARD MATTERS

The following items were brought to Governors' attention:

1. Website biographies – There are still some outstanding Governor biographies and photos required for the College website. It was requested that these be submitted to the Head of Governance by Friday 31 March.
2. Mandatory training - Refresher training to be undertaken by Governors as required.
3. Completion of the EDI survey (Microsoft Forms link previously sent).

## 14. KEY DATES

To **NOTE** the following:

Upcoming key dates:

- 7 May - Governor Engagement afternoon (following board meal)
- 12 May - Staff awards Governor panel
- 9 July Market Place

Board meetings:

- 19 March 2026 - Braintree Campus
- 7 May 2026 (09:30) followed by board meal
- 21 July 2026

Key dates for the remainder of the 2025-26 academic year were noted.

## 15. REVIEW OF MEETING - CIC/26/1/17

The Board is asked to:
1) **CONSIDER** if any items or elements of discussions should be marked as confidential.

- Item 8.2

2) **REVIEW** the upcoming schedule of business for the Board and consider its completeness and accuracy

1) It was agreed that Item 11.6 would be recorded as confidential

2) The upcoming schedule of Board business was considered for completeness and accuracy. No amendments were requested.

## 16. PART II

Part II will take place without Staff or Student Governors present

To **APPROVE** the Part II Minutes of the 21 October and 15 December 2025
To **RECEIVE** the 02.03.26 FRC Chairs Report
To **REVIEW** and **APPROVE** Governor Sabbatical

Decision item.

Part II discussions took place without Staff or Student Governors present.