BOARD MEETING

Date: 7 May 2026
Time: 10:00 - 12:00
Location: Board room, Colchester Campus

Present:	Lisa Blake	Governor, Chair of Corporation Board
	Sally Messenger	Governor
	Caroline Williams	Governor
	Chris Donovan	Governor
	Tony Farrar	Governor
	James Day	Governor
	Marco Iciek	Governor
	Richard Block	Governor
	Simon Attwood	Governor
	Stephanie Bettinson	Governor
	Adam Fair	Staff Governor
	Nicola Jay	Staff Governor
	Kay Adelani	Student Governor
	Alison Andreas	Principal and Chief Executive
In attendance:	Mark Emerson	Vice Principal
	Gary Horne MBE	Deputy Chief Executive
	Heather Clarke	Interim Head of Governance

1.	Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for absence	Decision Item	Speaker: Chair of Corporation Board

1) To welcome new Governors to the meeting.
   The Chair welcomed new Governors, James Day and Tony Farrar to their first Board meeting.

2) To **RECEIVE** apologies for absence, including reasons given, and to agree whether those apologies are accepted.
   Apologies were received and **APPROVED** from Ali Davies, Deputy Principal, Marie-Ann Capps, Governor and Bryan Cunningham, Governor.

2.	Declaration of any conflicts of interest	Information item	Speaker: Chair of Corporation Board

Members and staff are invited to declare the nature and extent of any financial or other interests they may have in the business to be discussed, including any conflicts of loyalty.

There were no declarations made.

3.	Minutes of the Previous Meeting	Decision item	Speaker: Chair of Corporation Board

To **RECEIVE** and **APPROVE** the minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2026.
The following amends were requested to be made to the minutes from the last meeting:

- The Chair requested for future minutes, in the attendance, it would be useful to include roles/job titles and whether they are present or in attendance.
- Under 10.1 the Chair asked to add in the length of term of the approved appointments as it was discussed within the meeting.

Action_10: Interim Head of Governance will update the minutes from the 19 March 2026 to include attendees role/job titles and include in the format of minutes for future meetings.

Action_11: Interim Head of Governance to update the minutes from the 19 March 2026 to include the length of term of the approved appointments.

The minutes of the last meeting were **APPROVED** and accepted as a true record subject to the minor amendments mentioned above.

The Chair raised under Item 6: Annual Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Report, the penultimate paragraph a question was asked about factors limiting faster implementation and wondered if more ambitious targets could be set.

Action_12: The College Executive to relook at the implementation dates for the action plan in the Annual Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Report and to bring back a proposal for the Board's consideration.

4.	Actions Tracker and Matters Arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda	Information Item	Speaker: Chair of Corporation Board

1) To **REVIEW** the progress of actions arising from previous meetings.
   The Board received and noted the Action Tracker.

   The Governors welcomed the new format of the Action Tracker with a couple of minor amends proposed.

   Action_13: Interim Head of Governance to update the format of the action tracker to ensure there is a deadline column and to number the actions.

   Staff Governor reassured Governors under the outstanding action around mental health concerns, that concerns would not be neglected and learners are signposted to other places for support.

   Action_14: Interim Head of Governance to add an update against Action regarding mental health concerns, that learners are signposted to other support.

   The Chair requested for future meetings, for any outstanding or not due actions, action owners still need to provide an update on the tracker.

   Action_15: Interim Head of Governance to ensure there are updates provided on the tracker for all actions ahead of the next meeting, including outstanding and not yet due actions.

2) To **DISCUSS** any matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda.
   There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere one the agenda.

4.1	Governor's Climate Action Project Proposal	Decision Item	Speaker: Deputy Chief Executive

To **REVIEW** and **APPROVE** the revised Governors Climate Action Project Proposal.

The Governors discussed the revised proposal and there was concern that attending a briefing may not be impactful enough but also ensuring with what is decided to ensure it is realistic to achieve.

The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the Lecture Theatre is available the last week of May and beginning of June to host additional briefings as part of a Summer Series following the success of the event on 28th April 2026. These events won't just be for staff and governors but a wider audience. As part of the briefing, attendees are asked to pledge to make changes based on what they've heard.

The Governors discussed a revised proposal of combining attending a briefing and inviting up to five guests and trying to commit to up to five pledges to improve climate action.

The Deputy Chief Executive informed that the video shown at the briefings cannot be shared outside of the events.

The governors voted:

- There were no votes for the revised proposal.
- All Governors were in agreement to combine the attending a briefing and/or committing to up to five pledges to help climate action.

For the purposes of the Market Place stand, it can show the pledges made by the Governors.

Action_16: Interim Head of Governance will share details of the upcoming National Briefing events for Governors to sign up to attend and invite up to five guests.

Action_17: Interim Head of Governance will reach out to Governors to ask them to confirm what option they will be choosing to complete as part of the Climate Action Plan.

5.	Balanced Scorecard	Information Item	Speaker: Vice Principal

To **RECEIVE** the balanced scorecard for March 2026.

The Board received and noted the Balanced Scorecard for March 2026.

The Board were advised that this is the fourth iteration of the College Scorecard presented to the Board. It will continue to evolve over the year and may incorporate additional performance measures as it matures. The data represents the most current validated information available at the time of writing. There has been no adverse material change to any measures since the last version came to board. The number of unqualified teachers has risen slightly since last board, of the 71 unqualified, 29 are currently undertaking qualifications.

The Board can be assured that 16-18 funded learners are strong - 167 above our funded allocation at the R04 ILR return this has resulted in an increase of c£2.7m to our 2026/27 16-19 revenue allocation statement received in April. Whilst adult forecast income has now caught up with our budgeted target and now is forecast to exceed the target. The apprenticeship recruitment metric has turned amber, this is 1 start below target for end of March, forecasts remain that we will exceed apprenticeship financial targets. The number of staff with performance objectives recorded on the system remains at 84% as at the end of March. Work continues to raise this further, this will be helped by the introduction of the new HR system towards the end of the academic year.

The Vice Principal confirmed there was nothing that had changed or was different to be brought to the attention of the Board.

A Governor highlighted the low attendance in Maths and English, the Vice Principal confirmed this is a long standing issue but has improved from previous years.

A Governor raised that retention dropped slightly in March and asked what had happened and is it continuing to reduce. The Vice Principal confirmed the retention figures are all those who stay on pass 42 days. The Executive will reflect how the retention figure targets are set.

A Governor flagged the rate for staff with objectives is significantly lower, is there a plan to improve as aware some places having objectives set is linked to pay/performance initiatives. The Executive confirmed objectives are not linked to pay/performance initiatives.

The Vice Principal outlined a lot of the staff without objectives are fractional staff and currently in the process of changing HR systems so the aspiration for the new system will make people more accountable.

Action_18: The Deputy Chief Executive to ask the Director of People and Culture to provide an update to FRC on what is being done regarding recording of staff objectives.

6.	Annual Strategic Conversion	Information Item	Speaker: The Principal

To **RECEIVE** the Letter from Department of Education following Annual Strategic Conversation on 16 March 2026.

The Board received and noted the Letter from the Department of Education (DfE) following the Annual Strategic Conversation on 16 March 2026 between College Leaders and the DfE.

The Board are advised that the conversation was structured around a formal (nationally set) agenda, and a record was made in the attached letter, received on 24 April 2026. The conversation resulted in an invitation from DfE for the College to place an exceptional request for capital funding, which was submitted by the Deputy CEO later that week, comprising a proposal to replace end-of-life accommodation at the Colchester campus with a new principal building – the East Wing – as per the College's Accommodation and Estates Strategy.

The Board were assured that it was an extremely positive exchange, in which the Department for Education praised the College's ambition, and recent achievements both financially and educationally. DfE particularly recognised our strong focus on an outstanding learner experience; the College's strong financial position; our work to provide a fantastic workplace for staff; and our productive external partnerships. Governance arrangements were also noted as strong.

The Governors acknowledged the really positive letter and it was agreed for the letter to be shared with co-opted members.

Action_19: Interim Head of Governance to share the Letter from the DfE following the Annual Strategic Conversation with co-opted members for their information.

7.	Quality Improvement Plan and Implementation update	Information Item	Speaker: The Principal

To **RECEIVE** an update on the implementation of the Quality Improvement Plan.

The Quality Improvement Plan and Implementation Update was received and presented by the Principal.

The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) comprises of 10 overarching areas for improvement with a total of 62 actions.

As of 17 April 2026, there are 9 - in progress, 30 – complete, 1 – Action not full achieved – new action added, 3 – overdue (all are in progress) and 0 – not started.

The Principal outlined this is a summary based document based on a more detailed report that was received by the Curriculum and Quality Committee.

The Chair of CQC expressed very pleased on the progress being driven forward.

The Chair asked what on Learner Voice is challenging to deliver. The Principal outlined we have strong reps in some areas but not everywhere, so the team are trying to ensure there is coordination of themes and feeding it up the organisation, this has been impacted by resource capability.

A Governor asked whether it would be worth including digital literacy on the Balanced Scorecard.

Action_20: The Vice Principal will look at suggestions of what could potentially be included on the Balanced Scorecard regarding digital literacy and will bring back to the Board.

The Board noted the update and acknowledged the positive progress on the QIP.

8.	**Corporate Risk Review**		
8.1	**Risk Appetite**	**Decision Item**	**Speaker: Deputy Chief Executive**

To **DISCUSS** and **AGREE** the Board's appetite for risk.

The Board received, discussed and noted the Board's appetite for risk.

The Board were asked to consider the paper and the content of the proposed questionnaire to be shared to all Governors, co-opted members and Senior Leaders to inform the Risk Appetite Statement.

The contents of the questionnaire was provided from a template from Scrutton Bland.

In November 2025, Scrutton Bland provided a Substantial Assurance Opinion in their review of the College's Risk Management Framework to determine the level to which risk is embedded, understood and reported within management and the Board and Committees.

There was one formal recommendation to ensure assurance sources /dates are regularly updated and RAG rated on the Corporate Risk Register (CRR). This has been completed.

The College's current Risk Appetite Statement and Overview is embedded within the Risk Management Policy that was last approved by the ARC and Corporation in July 2025. The full risk appetite statement is included at Appendix B for ease of reference.

Auditor recommendations specific to Risk Appetite were:

- To keep the statement under review as it should not be a permanent assessment
- To ensure top risks are covered by an agreed risk appetite position

- To consider where the organisation might be operating outside of risk appetite and if so, why?
- To consider where the organisation is operating close to the boundary
- To consider where risk appetite might be increasing faster than mitigation
- To consider where operations might be constrained by risk appetite being too low

The Deputy Chief Executive asked if the Board would want to do more regular reviews at the Board of the Risk Appetite, the Governor's agreed annual is enough.

The Governors agreed it would be beneficial to upload the Corporate Risk Register to Team Engine, each time it is seen by the Board or a Committee, noting it won't be a live document.

Action_21: Interim Head of Governance to create a folder in the document library on Team Engine, to upload the most recent copy of the Corporate Risk Register, and update regularly, after each meeting it is shared for Governors to access.

Governors agreed that the questionnaire is a good starting point to inform the College's Appetite for Risk and proposed a future pre-board briefing session to help assess the risk matrix and put it all together.

Action_22: Interim Head of Governance to discuss with Chair and Principal for the pre-board briefing session for the July meeting, an option would be to discuss the risk matrix.

Action_23: Interim Head of Governance to create a Microsoft Forms of the Risk Appetite Questionnaire and share with Governors, Co-opted members and Senior Leaders ahead of the July ARC and Board meetings.

8.2	Corporate Risk Register	Discussion Item	Speaker: Deputy Chief Executive

To **RECEIVE** an update on the Corporate Risk Register identifying movement and any areas of concern.

The Board received and noted the update on the Corporate Risk Register presented by the Deputy Chief Executive.

The Board were assured that the Corporate Risk Register was reviewed and updated by the Risk Management Committee (RMC) held on 2 March 2026 and has since been updated following DfE funding announcements during w/c 9 March 2026. The Register has been updated in accordance with the recommendation and added value suggestions following the recent Internal Audit

The Board were advised that the most acute risk (National Curriculum Reform) has been downgraded but remains a concern from September 2027 onwards.

New risks that were identified included:

- Loss of Buildings (3 x 5 residual score)
- ALS sufficiency to support learner needs

The following risks were recently moved to 'deferred status'

- Falling HE viability
- Significant Enrolment Shortfall
- High staff sickness rates

The Board were asked to consider the current Corporate Risk Register, particularly in relation to the controls and actions associated with the top six risks.

A Governor raised the large risk around the Middle East crisis, and also around facilities and buildings and wondered if there is anything more strategic the College should be doing.

The Deputy Chief Executive outlined we are not directly impacted with our energy costs by the crisis in the Middle East as 80% of our costs are hedged at 2025 rates. The inflationary effect though will be covered off with work being carried out in budget setting.

With regards to the risk around facilities and buildings, this was raised directly with DfE and also in meetings with Essex County Council and Colchester City Council around asking what DfE are going to do collectively.

The Executive are aware of inflationary impact of goods and services, so are currently exploring further support to students from bursaries and broadening opportunities through CIFT (Colchester Institute Foundation Trust). Further work is being done on marketing materials to push out bursary opportunities to students and parents to raise awareness.

A Governor raised with the increasing tensions in the UK, to ensure the College's vigilance around safety and security around sites.

The Chair raised with the announcement of the Clean Energy Technical Excellence College (CETEC), brings its own risk(s). The Principal assured that the CETEC will have a separate risk register and a succinct version will be included in the Corporate Risk Register.

The Chair raised is there a risk around our overall establishment keeping up with the College's growth in general, or does there needs to be a higher level risk around our establishment.

The Deputy Chief Executive this is recognised and pre-empted in some respect with an increase of posts within Senior Leadership Team. The Executive continue to monitor the structure, to ensure capacity, resource and capabilities.

Action_24: The Deputy Chief Executive and Vice Principal to take away the risk around capacity of establishment, reputational risk, management structure capacity and readiness to act fast to be picked up at ARC and come back to the July Board meeting through the Chair's report.

9.	**Capital Funding Requests**		
9.1	**Request for Capital Sanction 2026-27: Kitchen Upgrade**	**Decision Item**	**Speaker: Deputy Chief Executive**

To **RECEIVE** and **APPROVE** the Capital Expenditure Request for Kitchen upgrade.

The Board received the request for Capital Sanction for the Kitchen Upgrade and were asked to:

- Approve the project cost of £386,389 to upgrade the main Kitchen
- To agree to provide capital match funding of £245,000 to match funding from a trust of £141,389.

The project has been approved by the College Executive as set out in the attachments in the paper.

Funding would be prioritised from within the 2026-27 capital budget, generated from internal cash reserves on the back of another year of high levels of operating surplus.

The reason for the upgrade of the cooking equipment is to ensure it meets the standards required to support Outstanding Teaching and Learning as well as been more energy efficient and sustainable. This project is part of a wider phased upgrade project that is key to our fossil fuel divestment programme that completes in 2032.

Governor asked if there is anything in the terms of conditions that would prohibit access to the funding if the work is started, the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed no.

The Board **APPROVED** the request to approve the application for the kitchen upgrade and agreed for the College to provide capital match funding of £245k.

9.2	Request for Capital Sanction 2026-27: L Block Extension	Decision Item	Speaker: Deputy Chief Executive

To **RECEIVE** and **APPROVE** the Capital Expenditure Request.

The Board received the request for Capital Sanction for L Block Extension and were asked:

1) To approve the application for a £4.5m new build project made up of:
   DfE's Construction Skills Capacity Fund (CSCF): £4,000,000
   CI Match Fund Contribution: £400,000
   Employer cash match funding commitments received: £100,000

2) To agree to provide capital match funding of £400,000 over the course of the project (£227k to August 2026 'at risk', then a further £273k after December 2027).

The College's continued growth is driving increased demand for additional floorspace and new buildings to support rising 16–19 student numbers and expanding market share. The Accommodation and Estates Strategy is scheduled for review by the Finance and Resources Committee on 12 May 2026.

An Exceptional Capital Funding Request has been submitted to the DfE, with a response awaited; submission was considered essential given strong projected population growth in Colchester through to and beyond 2030.

The College also explored opportunities under the Post-16 Capacity Fund and Construction Skills Capacity Fund to maximise chances of securing funding. Although DfE guidance favours refurbishment, the preferred option is a new-build construction facility (extension to L Block) to best meet demand and align with the campus masterplan, delivering good value for money by maximising teaching space through use of existing common areas.

Chair of FRC asked for assurance on how much contingency is built into the project budget and it is sufficient. The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the worst-case scenario has been factored into costings.

The Board **APPROVED** the request to approve the application for the new build project for the L Block Extension and agreed for the College to provide capital match funding of £400k.

10.	Curriculum and Quality Committee (CQC) Chair's report	Information Item	Speaker: Chair of Curriculum and Quality Committee

To **RECEIVE** the 30 April 2026 Curriculum and Quality Committee Chair's Report.

The Board received and noted the Curriculum and Quality Committee Chair's Report.

The Board were advised:

- That the performance of learners against target continues to increase to at least target.
- That attendance at GCSE English and mathematics classes has increased significantly.
- That leaders are effectively planning the future college curriculum against a background of national uncertainty.
- That the College's apprenticeship provision continues to perform very well against other providers nationally (see paper for detail). Governors were particularly proud to learn that Plumbing and Domestic Heating Technician apprenticeship outcomes are the highest in the country (all providers).
- That adult in year enrolment and retention rates remain high. Although, there is some concern over the performance of functional skills within adult provision.
- That progress continues to be made against all areas for improvement within the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). However, improvement within Learner Voice continues to be a challenge.
- That leaders survey students and apprentices levels of satisfaction associated with teaching and learning and analyse the results according to provision type, curriculum area and by question.
- That the response rate on the Higher Education Module Evaluation Summary – semester 1, was low. The response rate dropped to 51%, a decrease of 16 percentage points from 2024/25. HE student satisfaction rates remain positive in most areas except Engineering.
- That the Prevent Policy was received and recommended to the Board for approval.

The Board can be assured:

- That the College continues to improve in terms of actions and performance against targets across FE and apprenticeship provision.
- Leaders continue to drive performance across the college and across provision types to bring about sustained improvement.
- Leaders continue to respond swiftly and effectively to changes within the post 16 education landscape.
- Governors continue to challenge leaders to achieve sustained improvement
- FE students and apprentices remain highly satisfied with the quality of provision.
- Higher Education students remain highly satisfied

Action_25: Governors are encouraged to read the most recent Ofsted report, the interim Head of Governance will upload it into the document area on Team Engine.

10.1	Applications and Curriculum Plan (FE) - 2026-27	Information Item	Speaker: Chair of Curriculum and Quality Committee

To **RECEIVE** an update on the Applications and Curriculum Plan (FE) - 2026-27

The Board received and noted the report on Applications and Curriculum Plan (FE) – 2026-27.

The Board were advised that members of the Curriculum and Quality Committee reviewed the information presented on applications by FE learners for academic year 2026-27 and are confident that when matched with historical conversion rates the risk to curriculum areas and the college is reduced. The overall application activity shows a slight decline year-on-year, with total active applications reducing from 6,249 to 6,052 (-197, -3%). This represents a small reduction in applications at whole-college level.

Areas of growth include:

- Early Years (+106, +42%)
- Digital Media (+67, +15%)
- Art & Design (+35, +12%)
- Music & Performing Arts (+30, +10%)
- Engineering & Construction (+36, +9%)
- Automotive (+27, +7%)
- Foundation Learning/ESOL (+23, +6%)

Areas showing decline include:

- Health, Social Care & Science (-246, -39%)
- Business, Accounting & Computing (-75, -13%)
- Trowel and Wood Occupations (-84, -11%)
- Hospitality & Salon (-55, -8%)
- Mechanical & Electrical (-53, -8%)
- Public Services & Sport (-8, -2%)

The two curriculum areas with the most significant decline in applications are Health, Social Care and Science with 39% reduction, and Business, Accounting and Computing with 13% reduction. Both of these curriculum areas have been impacted by the changes to the level 3 curriculum.

The Board can be assured that leaders are monitoring the fluctuation in applications between qualifications, within curriculum areas, curriculum levels and across the college and they are matching applications to historical conversion rates (numbers of learners who enrol compared with numbers who apply) to predict the impact on funding and resources within curriculum areas.

A Governor asked for reassurance as to what was underpinning the confident assumptions with an overview of 3% decrease in applications. The Chair of CQC outlined that some areas will have year on year growth, with the progression from year 1 to year 2. The Vice Principal also assured these figures are purely application volumes and not projected enrolments.

11.	**Prevent Policy**	**Decision Item**	**Speaker: Chair of Curriculum and Quality Committee**

To **APPROVE** the Prevent Policy following recommendation by the 30 April 2026 meeting of the Curriculum and Quality Committee.

The Board received and approved the Prevent Policy recommended by the Curriculum & Quality Committee.

The Executive and the Safeguarding Governor assured the Board it was compliant with Prevent.

12.	Audit & Risk Committee Chair's Report	Information Item	Speaker: Audit & Risk Committee Vice Chair

To **RECEIVE** the 24 March Audit & Risk Committee Chair's Report.

The Board received and noted the Audit & Risk Committee Chair’s report from the Vice Chair.

The Chair asked for all Governors to re-share the ARC Governor opportunity with their networks.

Action_26: Interim Head of Governance to reshare the details of the ARC opportunity with all Governors to re-share with their networks.

13.	Policy Review		
13.1	Scheme of Delegation - Approval of Policies	Decision Item	Speaker: Interim Head of Governance

To **REVIEW** and **APPROVE** the Scheme of Delegation - Approval of Policies.

The Board reviewed and approved the Scheme of Delegation – Approval of Policies, presented by the Interim Head of Governance.

Action_27: Interim Head of Governance to look at where would be the best location to store policies so that Governors has easy access and bring back an update on a plan of action to the next meeting.

14.	Key Dates	Information Item	Speaker: Chair of Corporation Board

To **NOTE** the following:

Upcoming key dates:

- 12 May - Staff awards Governor panel
- 9 July Market Place

Board meetings:

- 21 July 2026

The Board noted the upcoming dates.

The Principal confirmed that the Staff Awards Panel members will be invited to join for the meal with the Staff Awards winners which will be in the Autumn.

Action_28: The Interim Head of Governance will share the dates for the Staff Awards on the 10 July 2026 and the Market Place with Governors.

Action_29: Governors to let the interim Head of Governance know if they are available to help man the Market Place stand on the 9 July.

15.	Review of Meeting	Discussion Item	Speaker: Chair of Corporation Board

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

There were no items to be marked as confidential.

It was confirmed the project funding requests don’t need to be removed. A request was made to ensure anything referring to pay is neutralised until Governors have looked at budgets.

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

The Interim Head of Governance apologised for not including the current schedule of business for the Board.

Action_30: The Interim Head of Governance will present the Schedule of Business at a meeting with the Chair and Principal and make any amends ahead of the next Board meeting.

The Chair asked the Board if they find the new format of the cover sheet for papers an enhancement. Governors agreed it helps with reading the papers and gives a clear steer of what is being asked which then makes meetings more effective.

The meeting concluded at 12:00.

Staff and Student Governors left the room for Part II of the meeting.