

**HERTFORD REGIONAL COLLEGE CORPORATION
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SEARCH COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY 26 MARCH 2025**



1. PRELIMINARY PROCEDURAL MATTERS

1.1 Attendance & Apologies for Absence

Membership: Nick Buckland (Chair) *(Except item 2.1.1 ci)*
Jo Dyne
Tony Medhurst
John Sills

Attendance: Jayne Chaplin (Clerk)

1.2 Declarations of Interest

Nick Buckland declared an interest in Item 2.1.1ci

1.3 Minutes of Previous Meetings & Matters Arising

1.3.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2024 were agreed as a correct record and the application of the Chair's signature was authorised.

1.3.2 Observing all topics to be covered on the agenda, it was confirmed that there were no matters arising on which to report.

2. ITEMS FOR FORMAL REVIEW OR APPROVAL

2.1 2024/25 Performance – Progress Reports

2.1.1 Board Membership & Succession Planning

After summarising membership and succession planning developments and the refreshed Board Profile:

- a. Members noted:
 - i. The one student member vacancy and plans to commence recruitment and secure candidates ahead of 2025/26, proposing to provide the opportunity to join as observers, meetings of the QSBP Committee and the Board to maintain interest and engagement
 - ii. Of the four Business members vacancies occurring during 2025, Jo Dyne, John Sills and Charlotte Simmonds were due to depart after completing the maximum number of terms permissible in July and October respectively, and with his first term ending in July 2025, Nick Buckland was eligible for re-appointment
 - iii. In respect of the academic year 2025/26, the terms of office for Patience Egbo and Sophia Howells were scheduled to end 31 July 2026 and, as their first term of office, both were eligible to be considered for reappointment
- b. There was focus on the Board's overall composition and the impact of forthcoming member departures, continuing to recognise the more immediate imperative for prioritising financial/audit expertise to ensure it was maintained at Board level, on the Resources Committee and in line with the more specific Audit Committee membership requirements in the Post-16 Audit Code of Practice. However, the need for search activity to include wider business expertise was observed to ensure an appropriate mix of expertise and experience in all relevant financial and non-financial areas to ensure the effective discharge of duties and strategic responsibilities, through well-informed discussion, and decision-making

- c. The impact of the forthcoming changes then was observed on committees and in key governance positions, recognising the imperative to identify successors in the positions of Vice Chair of the Corporation and the Chair of the Resources, Audit and Remuneration Committees. Reflecting on recruitment activity and succession planning developments:

Nick Buckland left the meeting at this point

- i The positive interest from Nick Buckland in being considered for reappointment as Business Member and Chair of the Corporation was welcomed. The benefits of his expertise and considerable experience, including as Chair, was recognised, then observing how stability and continuity would be maintained and the retention of valuable institutional memory, especially with the departure of the three longest serving members

Nick Buckland rejoined the meeting

- ii Members considered the candidate presented for co-opted committee membership, John McNamara, noting his strategic professional expertise and experience in education and employment through his work with the British Council, observing how this would further strengthen and provide significantly enhanced scrutiny and challenge to the Quality, Standards & Business Planning Committee. Particularly exploring the practicalities of not being geographically local, being based on County Mayo, members were advised of John's confidence that such challenges were not insurmountable, facilitated by online arrangements for meetings and in the event an onsite presence was required, the flexibility to co-ordinate attendance at work related meetings in London with College meeting dates.
- iii How more recently, two prospective candidates with expertise and experience in Accountancy had been identified, agreeing to expedite meetings and further action to ensure, if successful, transition plans could be put in place without delay
- iv Whilst recognising the value of the professional expertise and experience provided by the Co-opted members, it was agreed for focus to remain on addressing the current priorities in the first instance

Following consideration and discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to **RECOMMEND** the:

- d. **APPOINTMENT** of John McNamara as Co-opted member of the Quality Standards & Business Planning Committee for a term of office of four years
- e. **REAPPOINTMENT** of Nick Buckland as Business member and Chair of the Corporation for a second term of office of four years from 1 August 2025

2.1.2 Maintaining Strong Governance: 2024/25 Priorities & Action Plan – Progress Report

An update in the implementation of the governance improvement priorities for 2024/25 was reviewed.

Progress was recognised largely to be on target, particularly noting those actions now completed with proposals forthcoming following review of a number of the external governance review recommendations during the spring term committee meetings.

Following review and discussion, the update was noted.

2.2 2025/26 Arrangements - Planning

After observing discussions elsewhere on the Agenda (Minute 2.1.1 refers), progress was reviewed with arrangements for the forthcoming year:

- a. Noting confirmation that the Chair of the Corporation had commenced discussions with continuing members to identify successors and allow timely preparations for hand-over and any support/ development required to facilitate transition. Particularly reflecting on the impact of impending member departures on:
 - i The specific governance roles with the positions of Vice of the Corporation and Chairs of the Resources, Remuneration and Audit Committees becoming vacant, after consideration of potential contingency options, it was proposed that at the Forthcoming Board meeting, members would be invited to discuss the positions with the Chair of the Corporation.
 - ii Committee memberships with vacancies arising on the Resources, Remuneration, Audit and Search Committees
 - iii Nominated member positions, noting the role for Safeguarding, Prevent and SEND to be a requirement and currently fulfilled by Board Member Cecilia Mutuma, and the position created in January 2021 and fulfilled by Charlotte Simmonds to have been created in response to a need at that time. Then, in the context of and responding to the recommendation in the External Review of Governance, regarding the extension of the use of such roles, the value in and merits of so doing were considered. Observing the need for such roles to add a specific benefit, it was requested for the Senior Leadership team to consider and put forward proposals regarding any current or forthcoming areas of activity or concern where it was considered such focused attention would add value.
 - iv Members' support generally and more specifically in participation in College activities during the year, highlighting the importance of and value members would gain in contributing to the annual College Self-Assessment process agreeing the need to emphasise and encourage participation in the Validation Panel sessions in the autumn term
- b. Reporting that the meeting calendar was under review to ensure the scheduling of business continued to align with key, formal reporting requirements and submission dates, noting that it would be circulated in due course.

3. ANY OTHER BUSINESS & NEXT MEETING

3.1 Any other business

No other business was raised.

3.2 Dates of Next Meetings

Wednesday 2 July 2025, 4.45pm

Signed:



Date: 2 July 2025

Nick Bukland OBE, Chair, Search Committee