

808 PRELIMINARY PROCEDURAL MATTERS

808.1 Attendance, Apologies for Absence & Chairing

Membership: Gareth Dace (Chair)
Paula Davis
Leah Markee
John McNamara
Tony Medhurst
Anatoliy Strembitsky
Mia Young

In Attendance: Sabrina Ahmed-Qureshi, Director of Quality & Learning Innovation
Jayne Chaplin, Clerk to the Corporation
Katrina Dougherty, Vice Principal Enterprise & Innovation
Alison Fisher, Adult Learning & Commercial Manager
Ahsev Merdjan, Head of Apprenticeships
Angela McLean, Vice Principal Curriculum & Quality
Richard Roberts, Director of Apprenticeships & Commercial Development

Apologies: Nick Buckland
Mary Pooley

In the absence of the Committee Chair, it was **RESOLVED** for Gareth Dace to Chair the meeting.
All were welcomed to the meeting

808.2 Declarations of Interest & Confidential Items

There were no Declarations of Interest or confidential items.

808.3 Briefing: Employer Relationships and Commercial Development

In the context of the strategic objective to establish its place as an Anchor institution in the community, an update was provided highlighting the College approach and its response to local need and relationships with key stakeholders and commercial activities. After reminding members of current delivery of commercial courses in Electrical, Construction and to the NHS, there was focus on the introduction of new provision, a sector-based Work Academy Programme aligned and responding to the needs of and in partnership with the DWP, noting:

- a. It to be a new job-focused training programme that commenced in March 2025 with the objective to increase confidence and support learners into employment via a two week pre-employment training course, which provided an employability element and a sector specific qualification
- b. Delivery across three local priority sectors, Construction (CSCS), Customer Service and Hospitality (Food Hygiene) advising member that seven courses had been delivered to date
- c. The positive impact of the programme, highlighting year to date outcomes exceeding 90% and twelve learners securing full-time employment, illustrated through case studies
- d. The ways in which relationships with key employers had been strengthened and transformed, particularly highlighting their involvement in directly supporting delivery

- e. Future developments with plans for further courses in existing sectors planned for 2026 and opportunities for new provision in Security (SIA) and Traffic Marshalls

Questioning and discussion included:

- f. The referral and induction process and the development of the programme:
 - i Highlighting the nature of the skills developed as part of the programme, explaining these to be a blend of reinforcing and refining existing skills and the development new, specific skills, all of which were in direct response to needs considered by the DWP and employers to be essential requirements
 - ii Exploring arrangements in the event that the required standards were not met, noting opportunities to repeat elements to be an integral part of the programme
 - iii Then observing the strategic importance of directly liaising and strengthening the relationship with DWP in developing and allowing the College to respond directly to local need
- g. The nature of the relationships with key employers and the ways in which they had been involved in the design and delivery of the programme:
 - i Acknowledging the value of their direct input into the identification of required skills, noting the enormous benefit of feedback provided directly to learners and the facilitating of access to their professional networks and industry contacts, considered integral to and instrumental in the development and success of programme participants
 - ii Then observing and recognising the development of further and future opportunities

The Adult Learning & Commercial Manager, the Head of Apprenticeships and the Director of Apprenticeships & Commercial Development were thanked for an interesting and informative presentation.

The Adult Learning & Commercial Manager, the Head of Apprenticeships and the Director of Apprenticeships & Commercial Development the left the meeting.

808.4 Minutes of the Last Meeting & Matters Arising

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2025 were agreed as a correct record and the application of the Chair's signature was authorised.

It was confirmed that there were no matters arising or outstanding actions on which to report.

809 2024/25: Year-End Performance

809.1 Quality: FE Provision

(a) College Self-Assessment Report (SAR)

Presented following extensive review through the SAR Validation Panel process, the grade profile for the key judgements and the overall Grade 2, Good, were considered.

Reflecting on the supplementary information supporting the grades and the outcomes for the year, discussion focused on:

- i What had been considered to be the most significant achievements during the year recognising:

- In the context of further significant growth in 16-18 learner numbers, the modest improvement in outcomes
 - The significantly successful outcomes for High Needs learners
 - The nature of the support provided overall for learners
- ii What were considered to be the most significant risks recognising in the context of the growth in numbers, the increase in pastoral support requirements and attendance, highlighting current strategies and further measures being introduced
- iii More specifically the nature of the planned activity around the student voice, observing generally where engagement from learners could be more variable. The range of activities for capturing learner feedback were recognised, explaining a need to better evidence the nature of the support available and the recording of its impact through more centralised records, highlighting examples of the College response to feedback, notably the most recent action taken after comments about the use of Skills Builder, then extending appreciation to the observations and positive feedback from the student governors in this regard

Concluding that the SAR represented an accurate reflection of College performance and the quality of provision and the priorities for attention in the Quality Improvement Plan for 2025/26, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- iv **RECOMMEND** for the Corporation to **APPROVE** the College 2024/25 Self-Assessment Report and 2024/25 Quality Improvement Plan

(b) Corporation SAR

Reflecting members' feedback during its recent review of performance and highlighting the contribution of the Corporation towards the leadership and management element of the College SAR, the Corporation Self-Assessment Report was considered.

In the context of the Grade 2, Good, proposed, the rationale for the grade was acknowledged to be supported by key strengths highlighted. The areas identified to form the focus of attention for 2025/26 were noted, particularly the continued focus on the quality of education (outcomes) and priorities to further improve the effectiveness of governance performance.

Following discussion, and after concluding that the Report represented an accurate assessment of the performance of the Corporation, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- i **RECOMMEND** for the Corporation to **APPROVE** the Corporation 2024/25 Self-Assessment Report and 2025/26 Quality Improvement Plan

809.2 Compliance: Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Annual Report

Outlining how the College met its public sector general and specific equality duties, and supported by qualitative and quantitative data, the College's progress towards its equity objectives and opportunities being considered for 2025/26 were summarised and reviewed.

Following discussion, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- a. **RECOMMEND** for the Corporation to **APPROVE** the Equity & Diversity Annual Report.

810 2025-26 – In Year Performance Monitoring

810.1 Quality Monitoring & Improvement

After observing those items covered elsewhere on the Agenda (809.1 refers) an overview was provided of quality monitoring, improvements and developments.

Focused on the measures and activities for further developing the quality of Teaching, Learning & Assessment the findings of the latest Internal Quality Reviews, the reports for Apprenticeships and Maths and Science were reviewed, highlighting in response to questioning:

- a. The most notable recent changes to the quality of the learner experience, particularly emphasising the greater cross collaboration between the learner support areas to further improve an already positive student experience
- b. Of the areas for improvement identified in line with Ofsted areas of focus, the need for further attention on consistency in employer engagement and their involvement of the co-design of the curriculum and impact of industry engagement. Exploring further the extent of action already taken, any particular challenges encountered and the nature of any response in this regard, the range of measures already in place and underway were highlighted, then recognising the investment in time required to bring to fruition and evidence the impact of the full benefits of such relationships. Observing how a more proactive approach to obtaining feedback could more immediately capture and demonstrate evidence of impact, members were advised that whilst such conversations were already taking place, the need to develop something to more formally record this was acknowledged.

Following discussion, the activity and developments were noted.

810.2 Enrolment Update

After summarising the current position for enrolment numbers, discussion focused on:

- a. As the majority of College provision, 16-18 Study Programmes noting in the context of College targets, whilst there had been further growth in numbers and the funding allocation had been exceeded, any in-year financial impact could not be assumed. Confirming that there had been withdrawals, it was noted that analysis highlighted numbers to be proportionally less than for 24/25 and mainly attributed to 'Non Attendance' 'Gone to another provider', 'Asked To Leave' and 'Change in personal circumstances'
- b. Apprenticeships, which whilst slightly below target, recruitment was noted to be largely aligned to planned profile across all apprenticeship sectors
- c. Higher Education numbers noted currently to be above the Curriculum Plan and when compared to the same period in the previous year, recognising it to be positive after a decline in numbers in the previous three years.

Then responding to questioning of any particular areas of risk or concern, members were advised of the resourcing implications and pressures associated with the growth in numbers but confirmation was noted that all was being managed, explaining how plans for the year had been informed by previous experience

The update was noted.

810.3 Strategic Objectives & Business Planning

The current position for performance to date was summarised, particularly highlighting:

- a. The 99.4% Retention rate for all funded Education and Training learners, noting it to be an improvement on the same period in 2024/25
- b. The 88.1% Attendance rate, noting whilst below College 95% aspirational target the rate was above overall rate in the same period 24/25 (86.5%) attributed to an increase in vocational (+1.2 pp) and English and maths combined attendance (+5.7 pp).

After noting discussions elsewhere on the Agenda (Minute 808.3 refers) and the overview of other curriculum developments and activity, members reflected further and questioned the impact of the resourcing implications and pressures associated with the growth in numbers. Explaining the challenges and how planning had been informed by experience of recent years with further investment in this regard, particularly in support staff, the feedback from the staff members was welcomed, confirming a positive change with such investment being visible and helpful in alleviating particular areas where pressures on services had been evident.

Following review, the current position was noted.

811 Regulatory & Compliance

811.1 Policies: Malpractice & Maladministration

Responding to a requirement of the Joint Council for Qualifications, a new Malpractice & Maladministration Policy was presented

After explaining the rationale and College approach to and arrangements for responding in the event of cases of suspected or actual malpractice/maladministration, the Policy was considered.

After review, and as a new Policy, it was **RESOLVED** to:

- a. **RECOMMEND** for the Corporation to **APPROVE** the Malpractice & Maladministration Policy

812 OTHER BUSINESS & NEXT MEETING

812.1 Any Other business: Newspaper Article

Details of a recent published article about the work of local schools were shared, commending the support of the College marketing department and the reference to College students

812.2 Dates of Next Meetings

Wednesday 4 March 2026, 5.30pm

Wednesday 10 June 2026, 5.30pm