HERTFORD REGIONAL COLLEGE
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION
WEDNESDAY 25 MARCH 2026

1664 PRELIMINARY ROCEDURAL MATTERS

1664.1Attendance, Apologies, Welcome & Agenda Changes

Present:	Nick Buckland (Chair)	
	Gareth Dace	
	Paula Davies	
	Nick Day	
	Kathryn Hardwidge	
	Leah Markee	
	Tony Medhurst (Principal)	
	Chiz Onuora	
	Anatoliy Strembitskyy	
	Joshua Temile	*(From Item 1665)*
	Mia Young	
In Attendance:	Andrew Clare	
Apologies:	Patience Egbo	
	Sophia Howard	
	Cecilia Mutuma	
	Mary Pooley	
	Jayne Chaplin	(Clerk to the Corporation)
	Angela McLean	

In the absence of the Clerk to the Corporation (the Clerk), the meeting was recorded, and minutes produced by the Clerk from the recording.

Chiz Onuora was welcomed to his first meeting. Introductions were undertaken.

With apologies for the late notification, members were advised that the Board Briefing had been deferred, confirming that it would be held at a future meeting.

1664.2 Declaration of Interests & Confidential Items

A Declaration of Interest was received from Tony Medhurst in his capacity as a Director of CK Assessment & Training Ltd (Part 2 Agenda)

1664.3 Minutes of the Last Meeting & Matters Arising

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 17 December 2025 were approved as a correct record and the application of the Chair signature was authorised**.** Observing topics to be covered on the agenda and now concluded (Minute 1662.2.3a refers) it was confirmed that there were no further Matters Arising on which to report.

1664.4 Chair’s Update

Nothing reported.

1665 STRATEGY & POLICY

Joshue Temile joined the meeting

1665.1 Principal's Report & College Accountability Statement

After observing those matters considered elsewhere on the Agenda, the report was summarised, particular highlighting:

a. The various recent announcements regarding Post 16 Education and curriculum reform. After reassuring members that the College was well placed and connected to respond:

   i. The latest information from the DfE regarding curriculum reform was noted, confirming detail would be contained in the Curriculum Implementation Plan. The implications were highlighted for colleges and corporations regarding the formal approval and sign off of plans, particularly in the context of Accountability Agreements. As discussed at the Corporation Conference, with the Implementation Plan still awaited, members recognised the pressures and challenges on short to medium term structured, strategic planning within the stated timescales

   ii. The introduction was noted of V Levels in finance, early years and digital from 27/28 and that T Levels would be the only "long" qualifications funded once the reform process was complete. Then:

      - Explaining the distinction between V Levels and T Levels, intended to sit alongside and to be equivalent to one A Level and allow learners to mix and match academic and vocational subjects
      - Reporting that the defunding a range of Level 3 qualifications now would not happen until 27/28 except for Health and Social Care in 28/29.
      - Highlighting the implications and the challenges in changes to provision in the context of neighbouring providers
      - Advising members of the introduction of a new requirement for every provider currently delivering or planning to deliver technical and vocational qualifications to have a clear and credible strategic provider transition plan in place. Due by mid-June 2026, it was noted that it would confirm the institution's high-level intentions for delivery from academic year 27-28

   iii. English and maths reform noting proposed stepping stone qualifications had been welcomed and that consultation was underway

   iv. Schools White Paper/SEND Reform, noting the proposed layers of support and observing the ambitious timeline

b. College activities and developments, notably:

   i. Whilst the measures were to be changed, in the context of c.155 FE Colleges nationally, data confirming the College was currently positioned in or around the top twenty overall in English and Maths Progress Measures with performance in Maths in particular shown to be outstanding

ii. The latest student focus groups exploring a range of topics, but mainly "next steps" as students prepared to move on from the College citing examples of student discussions of their options, next steps and the support received and skills developed in addition to their core programme of study

Reflecting further on the curriculum reforms and the need to remain responsive and meet leaner needs pending publication of the Curriculum Implementation Plan, there was questioning of:

c. The approach of:

i. Sector colleges in aligning with the curriculum reforms to inform the best way to navigate the way forward noting how reformed T Levels potentially presented the greater opportunity for the College
ii. The reforms and any changes to provision for adult learners, noting information currently stated arrangements remained unchanged

Following discussion, the Principal was thanked for an interesting and informative report.

1666 PERFORMANCE, PLANNING & COMPLIANCE

1666.1 From Committees

Following review by the respective committees, reports and recommendations were presented from:

1666.1.1 Search & Governance Committee, 25/03/26

The Committee Chair provided an overview of the business considered, particularly highlighting its discussions regarding the Board's composition of expertise and experience, forthcoming vacancies, preparations for the forthcoming year and progress with governance objectives for the year, confirmed to be on schedule.

The report was noted.

1666.1.2 Resources Committee, 18/03/26

The Committee Chair provided overview of the business considered and the Committee's recommendations, comprising:

(a) 2025/26 Financial Year to Date

i. Financial Report (February 2026)

In the context of the Financial Plan agreed by the Board in July 2025 of a target year-end operating surplus for the College of £423K, the position to February 2026 was confirmed to be £706k ahead of budgeted expectation with the revised Q3 Forecast indicating an increase of £1,137k in operating surplus against the FY 2025/26 Plan.

Reviewing the increased operating surplus, the key variances were explained, particularly highlighting:

i The positive impact of additional funding income and DfE support for NI contributions for the period April 25 – March 26
ii. In the context of increased learner numbers, the Committee's discussion of College capacity to continue to respond to increasing demand, noting:

- Staffing challenges existed in some areas but the position was managed, closely monitored and controlled
- Options being considered within capital projects included the development of Millbrook to increase SEND capacity

i. All covenants had been met and the cash position was strong and the Committee's observations that the College would be better placed to withstand the challenges anticipated in future years of a tightening funding position and ongoing economic volatility. Particularly reflecting on current events and the impact on fuel and energy costs, there was questioning of the extent or likelihood of any financial support from government, noting previous experience of an inconsistent approach in such instances with nothing currently in contrast with support provided for schools.

After review and discussion, the year-to-date position was noted.

(ii) Sub-Contracting Update

After confirming the College Apprenticeship, AEB, Programmes of Study sub-contracted provision to be on profile subject to one contract variation proposed, members were advised of the Committee's recommendation regarding to adjust the contract value by +£20,032 for Learning & Skills Solutions following over delivery on its GLA ASF contract.

After highlighting functional skills was a key LSIP and Mayoral priority, confirming that sufficient funds remained within the allocation and on the recommendation of the Resources Committee, it was **RESOLVED** to:

i. **APPROVE** the proposed adjustment to the GLA ASF contract value for Learning & Skills Solutions by +£20,032

(b) 2026/27 Planning - Financial Plan & Budget Assumptions

In the context of the Financial Plan approved in July 2025 and those Funding Allocations known for 26/27, the updated Plan and the Budget assumptions for the forthcoming year were summarised.

After advising members how the Plan highlighted how sustainability would be achieved through growth delivered over the next 3 years and the financial health of "outstanding" would be maintained, the Budget Assumptions were summarised, particularly noting:

i. The rationale for a change in approach:

   - From the setting of a specific operating surplus to a surplus based on percentage of turnover and investment Income in addition to the operating profit, noted to be in response both to the uncertainties around and the expectation of a tightening funding position and ongoing economic volatility squeezing financial margins
   - In the context of discussions in Part 2 of the meeting, to the financial return from the College Company, CKAT Ltd

ii. How the change of government and priorities were impacting on planning with delays in key capital and revenue funding announcements, recognising before confirming the final Plan and the 26/27 Budget, the potential for the assumptions to be flexed during the detailed budget process with any changes then to be reflected in the final Plan

Following review, the draft 225/26 – 27/28 Financial Plan and 26/27 Budget Assumptions were noted.

1666.1.3 Audit Committee, 11/03/26
After observing matters elsewhere on the agenda (Minute 1664.1 refers) an overview was provided of the business considered, drawing members' attention to:

a. The interesting and informative briefing provided by the IAS, then after concerns reported on previously, confirming that performance had improved
b. The Committee's discussion of the five review reports presented in line with the annual Audit Plan. Particularly highlighting:

   i. With external penetration testing underway, the decision for the report on Cybersecurity to be revisited at the next meeting once the test findings had been shared and the IAS report updated to reflect subsequent action
   ii. The action being taken by the College was recognised but in the context of the current operating environment and the increased risk and incidents, the need was emphasised to remain vigilant in this regard

c. The Committee's confidence in management's approach to and the implementation of audit recommendations.

The report was noted.

1666.1.4 Quality Standards & Business Planning (QSBP) Committee, 06/03/26
The business considered was summarised, particularly highlighting:

a. Its briefing focused on WorldSkills and Competitions and the Committee's discussion of year to date quality and performance measures showing steady progress and members' request for quantitative data in future reports to support and facilitate scrutiny and discussion of progress and impact
b. Review of progress with strategic objectives and enrolments for the year, including:

   i. Attendance rates, especially those rates for and the challenges with attendance at English and Maths, acknowledged to be an issue nationally
   ii. Entry routes in the context of the College responding to stakeholder and local community need advising members as a lesser known area of activity, of its 14-16 provision providing successful pathways into further education then advising how there was to be a Committee briefing in this regard

iii. 2024/25 Destinations data, improved on previous years and showing the dominant destination remained further education (FE). Sharing the Committee's observation that such information would be useful for all Board members in the context of such focus in the College Accountability Agreement and by Ofsted during inspections, it was confirmed that this would be briefing and the July 26 Board meeting
iv. Discussion of the nature of the interaction of the Chamber with colleges regarding the skills agenda more widely and Local Skills Improvement Plan in particular

c. The Committee's review and after proposing some additional inclusions, approval of the College's updated SEND Policy

The report was noted.

1664.2 Statutory & Regulatory Reports Spring Term Updates
1664.1 Risk Management
Presented after review by the Audit Committee.

After observing discussions elsewhere on the agenda, the assessment around inflation was highlighted advising members that whilst accurate when updated, the operating environment remained dynamic, confirming that this would be revised accordingly.

The report was noted.

1664.2 Health, Safety & Welfare (Safeguarding, Prevent & SEND)
In the context of the Board's overall responsibility for ensuring the sufficiency of the measures in place for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults and accompanied by a progress report on the College Mental Health Action Plan, the spring term report was reviewed.

Whilst recognised to reflect Sector experience, particularly reflecting on referral numbers and trends, questioning and discussion included:

a. The adequacy of resourcing, noting confirmation of appropriate and timely action, advising members that that the workload remained the subject of monitoring and review and expressing confidence that staffing and skills remained at the appropriate level to provide the support required
b. Exploring more specifically, Mental Health training for staff. Members were advised that after discussion with the Head of Student Services, with emphasis on transferable skills, mental health first aid training was provided, confirming any further skills would be considered where required and of value
c. Observing how mental health referral numbers echoed wider workforce trends, exploring the extent of any shift towards resilience training as part of a wider skills set to equip learners with the tools to try and prevent issues before arising:

i. Explaining the varying and differing experiences of learners upon joining the College, noting that whilst not always wholly successful the different support arrangements in place were intended to identify and focus on the most significant challenges and the right balance between support and learning
ii. Reflecting on the aftereffects of the Covid pandemic and data available from which to inform future approaches, noting that whilst information was reviewed, additional funding for additional support was not so readily available

Following discussion, the report was noted.

1664.3 Health & Safety

Presented for information purposes only, the Minutes of the most recent meeting of the Health & Safety Committee were noted.

1665 OTHER BUSINESS & DATE OF NEXT MEETING

1665.1 Any Other Business

None advised

1665.2 Dates of Next Meetings

Wednesday 3 July 2026

With the business forming Part 1 concluded, the meeting moved to the Part 2 confidential agenda at this point.

Signed: Date: 1 July 2026

Nick Buckland OBE, Chair of the Corporation