

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF GOVERNORS HELD ON THURSDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2025

MEETING COMMENCED: 5.00 pm

MEETING ENDED: 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Denys Rayner (Chair), Andy Berry (AB), Helen Stapleton (HS) (on Teams) (until 6.15 pm), Nick Skyrme (NS), Alan Hunt (AH), Mike Westlake (MW) Beverley Hawkins (BH) (from 6.15 pm), Leanne Mills (LM), Tim Rideout (TR), Craig Middleton (CM), Jane Viner (JV), and Ros Wyke (RW) (until 6.15 pm), Mel Squires (MS), Andrew Fowler (AF), Emma Hawkes (EH),

IN ATTENDANCE: Marcus Holder (MH), Louise Rowley (LR), Matt Tudor (MT), and Katy King (note taker)

G.01.01.26 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

DR welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Lyndon Brett, Mark Cox and Claire Pearce.

G.01.02.26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest relevant to the meeting.

Register of Interests – It was noted that all Governors have completed a register of interests for the academic year 2025/26.

G.01.03.26 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 JUNE 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2025 were reviewed and agreed to be an accurate record of the meeting.

G.01.04.26 MATTERS ARISING

Local Skills Need Paper – Governors noted a paper from MT, requested at the last Board meeting, highlighting how the College is addressing the local skills need.

G.01.05.26 CHAIR'S ACTIONS

MH highlighted items which DR had approved since the last meeting. Two merger grant claims were signed off. Insurance renewal approved, pension variation, approved. Break of the BTC loan signed off, iPad order signed off, all of these were signed off according to financial regulation. Governors noted the items signed off by DR as Chair.

G.01.06.26 GOVERNANCE UPDATE

New Board Members – JV, CM, TR and MS were welcomed to the meeting. MS appointment via email was ratified.

Chairs for Local College Boards – Chairs for local boards were elected.

Bridgwater – MW has agreed to stand as Chair for one year. His appointment was approved.

Cannington – MC will be Chair at Cannington, and MS to be Vice Chair. Appointment was approved by the Board.

Taunton – NS will be Chair for one year. Appointment was approved by the Board.

Strode – TR will be Chair for one year. Appointment was approved by the Board.

Staff Governor Elections – It was noted that AF and EH had been elected as Staff Governors for the Group Board. They were welcomed to their first meeting.

Student Governors 2025/26 – It was noted that SW and MC have been appointed as Presidents of the Student Union. SW is the HE Student Union President and HE Student Governor for the Board; MC is the FE Student Union President and FE Student Governor for the Board. SW and MC were welcomed to their first meeting.

College Boards will also have local community stakeholder representatives, and these will be approached by the Chairs and Principals at each College shortly. The Search Committee will approve these appointments prior to the first Local College Boards.

TR proposed that the four Chairs and DR meet together to ensure a consistent approach across the Group. AB noted the terms of reference for the College Board and the Scheme of Delegation which would support this consistency across the Group. A standard agenda will be used by all the College Boards to ensure consistency.

ACTION: DR to meet with Chairs to ensure consistency across the College Boards.

G.01.07.26 MERGER UPDATE

AB gave an oral update on the position since merger on 1 August 2025. AB reported on a Group SLT residential session which had taken place in July in order to prepare for merger and ensure a successful launch of UCS College Group. The Board noted the update.

G.01.08.26 PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE

AB had provided a written summary of the current position which was circulated prior to the meeting. He highlighted key points, and provided further information.

Degree Awarding Powers – Outcome has been delayed as OfS has not met its deadline. Likely to have outcome in November. HS asked about the DAP process and when degree programmes will come on stream. LR confirmed that first degrees will run from 2026/27 and Motor Sport and Sports are already earmarked to be ready for commencement next academic year.

Interim Taunton Principal – JM has been appointed as Interim Principal. Permanent appointment will be made with a view to start date for September 2026. This will be reviewed and approved by the Search Committee at its next meeting.

AB highlighted that he attended a business breakfast event which was hosted by the College in the McMillan Theatre this week, including the CEO of Somerset Council and other key local stakeholders.

AB invited questions. There were none. The Board noted the update.

G.01.09.26 2024/25 UPDATE

Results – A paper had been circulated prior to the meeting and LR gave an overview of the results for both BTC and Strode College at levels 2 and 3 for 2024.

CM noted the decline in results at Level 3 at Strode College. He asked what analyses are being undertaken to address this position. LR confirmed analysis is being undertaken by staff, by subject, by age, by department and other parameters in order to understand the reason for the decline and to put appropriate actions in place to start strong this academic year. SR is working with staff at Strode to take swift action on this.

JV noted the position and was pleased to learn that action is being taken. Further analysis will be presented to the Board at the Quality and Standards Committee meeting on 30 September. At this meeting further information on the reasons behind this decline, and what appropriate actions can be implemented soon, will be covered in more detail.

DR asked about performance levels and how challenging it will be to remain on track for a comparable Ofsted outcome. LR confirmed that Group targets will differ from College KPIs in the first instance, in order to ensure that the targets are realistic and achievable and that these can be aligned to achieve a comparable Ofsted outcome for the new College Group.

TR highlighted the importance of each College understanding how it contributes to the Group as a whole. Noted the urgency for taking action to make appropriate changes for the current cohort of students.

LR commented on highlights of performance, T Levels performed particularly well and Strode in particular in relation to T Level Health where one student achieved a Distinction*, the only result this high for this course in the country.

LR noted the English and maths results which had previously been sent out to the Board when results were published in August.

The Board requested that LR provide a presentation to the Board on the new Ofsted Framework to support with understanding of the requirements for the next Inspection.

In relation to GCSE results, it was agreed that LM and LR would discuss GCSE strategy. LM was asked which AO schools use for GCSE exams, and whether this is the same as the Colleges.

KPIs 2024/25 – The current position on the KPIs for 2024/25 was noted. It was further noted that final outcomes would be available once final analysis of the results data, and the outcome of the audit of accounts had been completed. The final outcome of KPIs for 2024/25 would be provided to the Board as soon as these were available. The Board noted the position.

Finance Update 2024/25 – MH had circulated a summary document on the financial position at the end of 2024/25. He provided an updated on the finances separately for BTC and Strode. It was noted that further and final information would be provided

at the next meeting, once the audit is completed.

NS commented that it was a positive outcome that the contingency figure had been released rather than spent at the end of the year. He commented that some of the grant income may be able to be deferred in line when the expenditure will take place. The FP&GP Committee will review the outturns in more detail at its meeting later in the term.

The Board noted the finance update for 2024/25.

G.01.10.26 2025/26 UPDATE

Curriculum Update – LR had provided a written summary of the position to date. The new Ofsted framework was published this week, and so there will be considerations required in relation to this.

LR noted the new College Advantage which has been developed from the BTC Advantage and the Strode Super 8, and this new programme will be embedded across the provision and within tutorials.

JV noted the College Group has been asked to be a T Level Insight Hub, which is very positive. Only one of 6 colleges in the country asked to take up this role.

NS commented on the differences in volumes of E&M students at BTC and at Strode. AB explained that this is likely due to the range of courses offered at BTC compared to Strode, and the demographic of the feeder schools and their achievements. Colleges do not have control over the number of students who are enrolled who have not achieved a GCSE English and/or maths at grade 4 or above, and many of the courses offered at BTC will require a minimum level 3 in these subjects. A review of this volume is currently being undertaken and an action plan drawn up.

LR highlighted that the results do not reflect the functional skill results. Students going forward will not be studying FS.

LM highlighted that the students who have come through in the past couple of years will be those likely most affected by Covid and this could also have an impact on GCSE results in school.

Governors noted the curriculum update.

Student Recruitment – LR provided an oral update on the position to date. Noting it is still early into the term, and a more accurate and up to date report will be provided at the next meeting. A summary of the position to date included.

EPYP

- *Strong position*
- *FY projection of 4860; against allocation of 4655 and prior year 4682*
- *Potential in year growth*

Apprentices

- *Slightly up against last year to date*

Adult

- *Current year allocation is up on last year so far.*

HE

- *B, T & C Colleges: 69 down from last year to date. 50 to enrol. Courses start next week,*
- *Strode - It is expected that the current shortfall will be achieved through our partnership with LCKA.*

The Board noted the position.

Operating Plan 2025/26 – MT highlighted the key points of the operating plan for the current year. The operating plan has been cut by the strategic aims, cross cutting themes and then by College individually.

A new strategy cycle will be developed for 2026-2030 during the current year in order to reflect the new College Group.

DR asked about the individual College operating plans, and noted that Strode College has more specific targets and it would be useful to have similar detail on the other College plans. MT to action this in liaison with College Principals.

ACTION: SMART targets within all operating plans to be clearer and more detailed.

DR asked when the Board will have the opportunity to review marketing and finance. MH confirmed that per the Scheme of Delegation, these will come under Group functions for finance and marketing and will be reviewed by the Group Board. It was agreed to identify which Group or Committee will review each area.

JV requested that all targets be measurable, either by a target percentage, and ensure that all targets are specific, in order for the outcomes to be measured easily by the Board.

It was agreed to bring back the success criteria to the Board to ensure that the success criteria are specific and measurable. This will be brought back to the next meeting for confirmation, as well as well confirmation of the Committee responsible for monitoring.

MW asked whether there could be an overview for consistency of style. MT to review.

MW asked about how digital programmes will be taken forward, and would like to see consolidation of systems between BTC and Strode. More focused and strong outcomes would be more appropriate. MT highlighted that the new Group Director for IT and Digital have yet to be appointed, and this will need to be driven and owned by them. MW offered to provide some input.

TR commented that the ambition is clear and positive within the plan. He enquired how this plan will be monitored and owned locally within the Colleges, and who will be delivering them. He suggested having the planning in place prior to the start of the academic year.

MT commented that he is developing a timeline to address this differentiation. He will bring this for consideration at the next meeting.

AB confirmed that in other years the operating plans have been finalised earlier, but with merger on 1 August, it was less realistic to have appropriate plans in place by the beginning of the year, as there was insufficient time for planning to take place.

KPIs 2025/26 – These will be developed in advance of the Self Assessment meeting

for consideration.

Group Budget 2025/26 – MH provided a brief overview of the Group budget verbally. A draft budget was approved at the June 2025 meeting. MH provided an update on the position, and the FP&GP Committee would review this in more detail at its next meeting in November.

G.01.11.26 ACCOUNTABILITY AGREEMENT

It was noted that the Accountability Agreement had been submitted prior to the deadline, following authorization in principle at the June 2025 meeting. The new Accountability Agreement will be uploaded to the Group website before December, in line with DfE requirements.

G.01.12.26 SAFEGUARDING

Safeguarding Policy 2025/26 – The Board was asked to review the updated Safeguarding Policy, which had been updated in relation to the new Keeping Children Safe in Education which had been published in the summer.

The Board approved the updated Safeguarding Policy 2025/26.

Safeguarding Update – The DSL had provided a safeguarding update, including a summary of the changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Governors will be asked to undertake a declaration relating to Keeping Children Safe in Education. As well as a safeguarding update training session online.

JV commented on all staff being trained and questioned the language, LR confirmed that all staff will have received the training and been requested to complete it. CM asked about what actions or consequences there will be for non-completion. LR confirmed that staff who do not complete the training will have disciplinary action and be prevented from accessing digital systems.

TR asked about the safeguarding function within each College, and how this fits within the College Boards. It was confirmed that College Boards will receive a safeguarding update from the Principal at each of its meetings.

TR asked whether the College Board responsibility should be included within the Safeguarding Policy. LR will check and ensure appropriate wording is included.

LM commented that MyConcern can push out all policies requiring reading and acknowledging by staff. LR to raise with DSL.

ACTION: Safeguarding Policy to reflect role of the College Boards. MyConcern policy rollout functionality to be explored further.

G.01.13.26 SUBCONTRACTING PARTNERSHIP POLICY

The Board was requested to review and approve the Subcontracting Partnership Policy, which had been subject to minor change.

LR highlighted the changes made, which were noted in a written summary.

The Board reviewed the Subcontracting Partnership Policy and approved the policy as presented, subject to minor changes outlined below.

AH highlighted that there are some points within the policy where BTC has not been updated to UCS College Group.

AH highlighted the need to request background checks and obtain CVs of staff involved in subcontracting partnerships. LR to feed this back and requested more explicit wording within the policy.

ACTION: minor editing of the policy to ensure UCS College Group is named throughout; ensure there is clear wording on obtaining background checks.

G.01.14.26 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

G.01.15.26 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 2 October 2025 – Self Assessment meeting, Taunton College

ACTION LOG

Ref	Item	Owner	Update	Status
1	Meet with College Board Chairs to ensure consistency	DR		
2	SMART targets within operating plan to be clear and detailed	MT	Making good progress but still some work to do and will have this complete by Next Board meeting.	ONGOING
3	Safeguarding Policy to reflect role of College Boards	LR		COMPLETE
4	Subcontracting Policy to ensure name updated throughout and that there is clear information about background checks	LR		COMPLETE
5	Training session for Governors on new Ofsted Framework	LR		COMPLETE