

Full Board meeting
FRIDAY 27 June 2025 AT 10.00
Oaklands Museum, Chelmsford

MINUTES

Members: Amanda Montague (Chair), Trevor Bolton (Vice Chair), Sarah Atkinson, Jan Church, Rachael Cornwall, Richard Davidson, Matt Dearsley, Daniel Holland, David Holmes, Christian Norman, Jaya Patten, David Peace, Rak Rehal, Paddy Reilly, Anabella Russell, Helen Russell, Sheila Salmon, Nadia Themis, David Warnes (CEO).

College Officers: Debbie Garroway, Debs Hurst,

Director of Governance: Ra Hamilton-Burns

Governance support officer: Amy Simmonds

An item marked in **GREEN** on the left-hand column has been pre-scrutinised and is being recommended by a sub-committee. This delegation is designed to allow the Board to focus on key strategic issues on the agenda whilst still ensuring that they have sight of information and ultimate decision-making power.

	Item	Action
1.	<p>Apologies for absence Christian Norman, Rachael Cornwall and Jan Church had sent apologies.</p> <p>Amanda Montague welcomed the Board to the last meeting of the term.</p> <p>The Chair noted that this was the first Board meeting since Amy Simmonds, Board support officer, had returned from maternity leave and welcomed her back. The Board also asked that their thanks be conveyed to Ellie Lammiman who had provided such excellent support during her absence and was now working with Debbie Garroway.</p> <p>Members noted that both student governors had reached the end of their terms of office and, whilst they acknowledged that both would stand for election again, they thanked them for their excellent contributions and wished them every good fortune.</p>	
2.	<p>Declarations of interest and to notify any confidential items David Warnes, Debbie Garroway, Debs Hurst and Ra Hamilton-Burns declared an interest in Item 15.</p>	
3.	<p>Minutes of the previous meetings</p> <p>AGREED. THE BOARD AGREED THAT THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 MARCH 2025 WERE A TRUE AND ACCURATE RECORD.</p> <p>The Board noted the electronic resolution electing Sheila Salmon as Chair 14 May 2025 and members congratulated and welcomed her in her official capacity.</p>	
4.	<p>Matters arising / actions All actions had been completed as follows:</p>	

Item	Action or matter arising	Follow up and status
5.	<p>CEO's Report -aspirational Essex</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DW to share the key messages of Devolution with the Board at the June Board. • RHB to circulate to Board <p>Summary of FEC recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The SLT will consider if any possible savings may be made between the two sites and report to a future Board meeting. 	<p>On agenda 27/06/25</p> <p>Part of ongoing review of Estates Strategy</p>
6.	<p>Meeting Skills needs report</p> <p>Report on employer engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CEO to share the DfE source data for the provision of local needs document 	<p>Completed</p>
7.	<p>Risk Management Report</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> DPFCS will draft a paper on management on cyber security for the PSR Committee. RHB to recirculate the link to the risk appetite survey 	<p>i. Completed</p> <p>ii. Completed</p>
8.	<p>Finance Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SLT to work with PR to develop the messaging around student bursary availability and processes. • PSR Committee will have a standing item on updates for the Dovedale Sports Centre • SLT to draft a timetable for spending grants when received. • Forecast on spend to end of year • DPCFS to report on possible savings on estates • DPCFS to provide a report on Cashflow to include of 'must', 'should' and 'need not' expenditure • DPCQ to produce a report on curriculum areas and the relative profitability and contribution. <p>David Warnes reported that the College will bring in additional resource on a course-by-course basis to analyse contribution</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p> <p>Completed</p>

10	Quality & Learners' Matters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RHB to put the KPI papers in a KPI folder in the GVO for all committees. 	Completed		
14.	Board calendar 2025/6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RHB to circulate amended Board dates 	Completed		
5.	<p>i. CEO's Report and Annual Strategic Conversation Letter</p> <p>David Warnes reminded the Board that the appendices included the finalised accountability statement, which received approval in March and is required to be published by June 30; this will also serve as the basis for the action plan.</p> <p>Governors inquired about the public availability of the SLT organisation chart. The current version, intended for the Board, covers only tiers 1-3 and remains in draft form. It was suggested that finance and risk functions be listed under the DPFCS; this has already been addressed and will be reflected in the full chart upon publication. There was further discussion regarding whether the Director for Innovation and Partnerships should report to both Deputy Principals. However, due to the compact and communicative nature of the SLT, dual reporting was deemed unnecessary.</p> <p>Notes from the DfE strategic conversation were provided. At that time, there were numerous uncertainties, several of which have since been resolved, though not all.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The budget is scheduled for March, with the spending review set for June and new initiatives emerging on a weekly basis. Our guiding philosophy is being highlighted this week, with the College focusing on a specific example of smaller provision at each meeting. Devolution efforts are advancing rapidly. The CEO represents FEDEC on the Essex Devolution Group, which is preparing a manifesto outlining skills requirements for the incoming Mayor. FEDEC has also developed a manifesto for Essex Colleges, where the primary request centres on securing an allocation. Governors queried whether a list of college offerings would be provided alongside these requests. FEDEC is addressing this, although the scope varies given differences among member institutions. Changemakers' impact: Students will refer to appendix 4 in their presentation on this topic. Social Value: The Board requested evidence of the College's social value within its community. To this end, a comprehensive social value report has been commissioned and will be presented to the Board in the autumn term of 2025. Governors also noted the potential utility of this report in supporting devolution discussions and associated 			

requests. The previous social value assessment took place during the FC report.

The Student Governor raised a question regarding the potential impact of the forthcoming Ofsted framework on the College in the Autumn Term. Currently, Ofsted has postponed the implementation of the new framework until at least September 2025, with unions advocating for a further delay. Under normal circumstances, Chelmsford College would not be due for inspection until 2028.

ii. Prosperity Report

The Chief Executive Officer presented the following updates:

- The recent Introduction of new FEC financial benchmarks, highlighting:
 - a significant change to cash days.
 - Staff costs remain at a 65% ratio.
- Benchmarking data has been published, positioning Chelmsford College among 20 institutions of comparable turnover and student composition, particularly in ratios of 16-19-year-old learners to adults.
 - Staff pay levels are above average.
 - Teacher pay is below average.
 - EBITDA is above average.
 - Surpluses exceed those of comparator colleges.
- The College's anticipated pay increase of 4% aligns with the School Teachers' Review Board recommendation. At the time of reporting, the allocation had not been confirmed; it is now established at £790k. Guidance from the Department for Education states this funding should be prioritised for staff recruitment and retention. The Association of Colleges' pay negotiations are ongoing.
 - Additional funding is available for construction and technical excellence colleges; Chelmsford College is submitting a joint bid with Harlow, though this process is competitive.
- Issues relating to retention, incentive payments, and pilot programmes remain under consideration.

Currently, Chelmsford College has received 600 more applications than at the same time last year. It is anticipated that not all applicants will enrol, some individuals may enrol without prior application, and an attrition rate of approximately 100 learners before the 40-day census is to be expected. A graph illustrating the cost implications of increased student numbers was provided.

Additional student above 2,641	No of additional teachers	Additional teaching Cost £
50	1	£70k
100	2	£140k
150	3	£210k
200	4	£280k

These calculations do not include potential additional support staff costs (for safeguarding, bursaries, wellbeing, etc.) nor do they account for increased pressure on student services such as the refectory, Learning Resource Centre, and social spaces. It is important for the Board to recognise that the

current demographic growth trend will conclude in 2028–29, after which the population of 16–18-year-olds will begin to decline. The College must ensure it does not become committed to a higher ongoing cost base.

This situation must be balanced against the imperative for growth, especially relative to local competitors, as the College remains the smallest in the area. Furthermore, there is a responsibility to address the needs of local youth and avoid contributing to increases in the NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) rates in Chelmsford and Essex. Accordingly, the Senior Leadership Team sought the Board's advice and guidance on these matters.

Governors noted that applications up by 20% when the target had been for an increase of 10%. They commented that there had been the possibility of in-year funding for additional students. Bridget Phillipson had commented that there is an expectation that this will be paid but it will be subject to affordability. Chelmsford College had recruited around a 100 extra learners but did not quite meet the criteria for in-year funding last year. The Board remarked that the extra funding is allocated to colleges with predominately 16-18 and 75% of Chelmsford College learners are in this category this so will get 4%. There was discussion about using the funding for recruitment and retention, particularly for TLA, to support quality and this had been discussed in detail at Audit and Risk Committee.

The CEO reminded the Board that the allocation for each year is based on the recruitment of the prior year.

One governor suggested that the Board is placing a great deal of focus on construction and engineering courses and there is less emphasis on Moulsham Street courses. The CEO said that the staff would probably hold the opposite view. Some of the planning is practical as the DfE had announced extra funding specifically for construction which has, in turn, underpinned the pragmatic focus on building construction provision. There are ten focus areas, and it is expected that focus will move through each of these in the coming years.

It was suggested that one solution would be to move support staff out of the College campuses to free up space to use as classrooms.

Paddy Reilly observed that, similar to university practices, learners are first recruited, leading to the allocation of funds which are eventually directed to the classroom. He cautioned that it is important to improve support services so that hygiene factors are addressed, contributing to a positive learner experience.

Governors asked if the enrolment numbers in the College, or any other college, track against the demographic or if the quality of its provision means that the College attracts students to its capacity in spite of demographic changes. This is a good question, and the College has invested in BECTA?? last year to give a breakdown of data and it allows forward planning. The College knows nationally there are circa 65k additional students likely to enrol in colleges and this will peak in 2028-9. The College has demonstrated a

growing trend in recent years and Chelmsford has a growing population due to house building.

The Board asked why the College appears to have staff training costs which are 25% below benchmark? This is probably an anomaly of the statistic as the College provides a great deal of training which is cost free which would not appear in the statistic. The College provides each member of staff ten days of CPD which is more than most colleges. The staff governor suggested that staff should have more money invested in their training and asked if more should have attended the current T level conference. The two members of staff attending the T level conference will cascade the learning to colleagues. The DPC&Q said there are many opportunities throughout the year which are communicated and wondered if the information is not cascaded. A symposium is coming into College during CPD week in July and staff are sharing best practice.

Governors asked if the College had researched why are staff going to other colleges as it is currently carrying 46 vacancies. The College will redouble efforts on exit interviews and but previously it hadn't been possible to identify single issues as staff departed for a variety of reasons.

A governor observed that maintaining ambition and a desire for expansion is essential. The primary consideration should not be whether to expand, but rather to determine appropriate limits. It is crucial to ensure adequate facilities, staffing, and support are in place to accommodate growth. The CEO emphasised the importance of prioritising key areas and expressed gratitude to the Board for their guidance on considering expansion strategies. The Senior Leadership Team will proceed with evaluating practical implications and making informed decisions. The Board requested regular updates regarding any substantial increases above target enrolment numbers.

The Board asked if there would be a need for cost cutting. This is not currently necessary. The work with FEC on curriculum efficiency continues to review class size and teacher utilisation and will control costs.

There was a debate about the 65% staff to income ratio and if it is realistic. The College is performing 2% better than its peers and the Board said that target does not reflect reality given the recent changes to minimum pay and national insurance costs. The College has a lower teacher to student ratio but a higher-class size against benchmark.

iii. Subcontracting 2025-6

Two of the subcontractors are new and the contracts are therefore deliberately limited as the College monitors their performance.

Following an open and transparent tender process using 'Find My Tender', there were 27 applications for 2025-26. There applicants were scored and evaluated with the highest scoring providers shown in Table 1.

Table 1:

	Contract Value requested	Evaluation Score	Recommended Contract Value
Learning Curve	£150,000	96/100	£75,000
The Skills Network	£225,000	96/100	£75,000
Best Practice Network	£tbc	95/100	£25,000
CT Skills	£125,000	91/100	£25,000
Total	£500,000		£200,000

Governors asked when the geographical location of learners will become a limiting factor to the College's ability to subcontract. This had been discussed at the PSR Committee, and it was noted that the College also has online learning provision which is without borders. It had been discussed at the DfE strategic conversation and in the future the College is likely to have two separate contracts – one for Essex-based learners with the devolved authority and one with the DfE for national provision.

It is expected that the College will hit its allocation but there was discussion about whether to enrol learners above this number.

Governors asked if there is a reason for the low ratio of students to staff at 20 against a benchmark of 30. The CEO explained there needs to be more analysis of the reasons behind this. There are minimum class sizes and the College checks on curriculum efficiency. More students in the class means that the workload for teachers and more students have an impact on the demands of estates and common spaces.

A governor commented that specific skills with an identified need in Essex, such as construction, might be managed through close relationships with the College's partners. It was suggested that a tactical decision might be to allow over-recruitment to meet these identified needs but not in other curriculum areas. The Board suggested that teaching models might be modelled more flexibly, and different solutions sought. Construction and engineering is one key area as is SEND but there are limited facilities, and flexibility is required particularly when introducing apprenticeship provision. The SLT continually reflects on practice at other colleges, such as timetabling during lunch hours, to make the best utilisation of the space. Quick fixes in the short term are critical to accommodate this additional demand. Learner experience has to be weighed up against teaching and other costs. Some additional teaching capacity will be through agency staff. Currently the College is carrying 46 vacancies.

The Governors recognised that all applicants are not equal in terms of teaching costs and facility requirements. This is very complex to manage, and the Board asked how the SLT identifies bottlenecks and ensures provision is allocated in the right area. The SLT has a report each week which shows the trends in each area and this informs planning. The Board asked if there are ever issues where courses do not make a contribution and it is expected that the report over the summer will inform this.

	<p>AGREED: THE BOARD AGREED THAT THE CONTRACTS OUTLINED SHOULD BE AWARDED TO SUBCONTRACTORS FOR 2025-6</p> <p>Benchmarking</p> <p>Following the release of the latest benchmarking data, The CEO provided an update of how the College compares to its benchmarking group (colleges of similar income, learner numbers and Ofsted grade profile), the main conclusions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas below benchmark: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Teacher pay (£2,524) ◦ Average income per 16–19-year-old (£782) • Areas above benchmark <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Staff costs as % of income (2%) ◦ EBITDA (2.54%) ◦ Surplus (£262,000) <p>Governors asked if the colleges chosen to benchmark against offer the Board sufficient assurance that Chelmsford College is measuring itself against a comparable group. The CEO responded that the group is diverse, and whilst it isn't possible to be exact, he was confident that the colleges selected are appropriate.</p> <p>ACTION: Detailed report of ethical practices – ask DW</p>	
6	<p>Risk Management Report</p> <p>The Risk Register and Dartboard were presented to the Audit and Risk Committee, with the following key points noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cybersecurity is being elevated back to a red risk category. The internal audit of this area has been rescheduled to take place in the Spring. • The internal audit programme for 2026/27 will incorporate an audit focused on complaints. • Two learner complaints have been classified as red risks, and external legal counsel is currently being sought. • The implementation of a new MIS system presents a potential risk; however, a new MIS Director will join the College on Monday, 30 June. • A policy addressing parental harassment of teachers is scheduled to be developed. • Achieving an EBITDA of 7% has also been identified as a significant risk. 	
7	<p>Finance Report</p> <p>a) Management Accounts May 2025</p> <p>b) Update on MIS systems (si) – there was an update on MIS systems, and it was confirmed that the new Director of MIS will join in July 2025.</p> <p>c) Capital spend <i>Correction the items under Dovedale should say 'other capital £90k.'</i> The management accounts outlined a total capital spend of £977k of which £226 relates to College expenditure (not funded by grants) for 2024/5.</p> <p>For 2025/6 the Board was asked to approve the following capital expenditure</p>	

which had been outlined in prior committee and Board meetings:

	College funds		Condition Fund Grant
Contribution to Sports Hall	£75,000	Creation of double classroom and gym at PR. Quotes to be received Monday 30 th . Estimated to include removal of all services, dividing wall, new doors to outside space, desks /chairs, lino. This includes some contingency for other works that may be necessary	£150,000
210 PCs	£120,000	Creation of IT helpdesk PR/MS	10,000
IT Enhancements to Teaching spaces	£33,000	T level rooms M327 & M328	20,000
T Level IT rooms M327 & M328	£17,000	Automatic doors Art Block and rear MS	20,000
Laptop trolley	£30,000	Dovedale House Damp	10,000
Equipment for Academic Areas	£25,000		
Total spend	£300,000	Total Spend	£300,000

Governors asked that more detail of possible improvements might be included in the Estates strategy and potential growth be explored and modelled. There have been a number of workshops, and the possible improvements had been shortlisted. There are various funding opportunities which might augment the funding currently available. on Brick workshop and improve student experience facilities at Princes Road to make a larger refectory and common room – a proposal will come to Board in December 2025.

Action: Deputy FCS to bring a paper outlining the ten possible areas for expenditure and the rationale for identifying these to the September Board meeting

AGREED: THE BOARD AGREED A TOTAL £600K EXPENDITURE - £300K FROM COLLEGE FUNDS AND £300K FROM CONDITION FUNDING (£300K) TO BE SPENT BY MARCH 2028.

d) CFFR/Indicative budget to achieve an EBITDA of £1.6m and 7%.
Due to a number of changes the current CFFR has been drawn up using assumptions with several versions showing high-level impact on various scenarios. To achieve an EBITDA (earnings before interest, depreciation and amortization) of 7% the Board was asked to approve the indicative budget at Version 3. A detailed budget will be presented to the Board in September.

Governors asked how confident the College is that the income forecast will be achieved. The majority comes from 16-18 and other certain income sources, the exposure is to the £0.5m that the College generates itself through business and adult revenue.

- The final budget will outline the sensitives.
- Financial health is 'good' and the College is due to make a surplus this year.
- The Boards noted that the proposed 4% pay increase will uplift the staff/income ratio considerably higher than 65%.

Student governors asked if the changes to bursary will be more complex. The new system 'pay my student' is designed to make applications more user friendly. It was confirmed that each student can discuss their individual circumstance with the bursary team.

	<p>AGREED: THE BOARD AGREED THE INDICATIVE BUDGET/CFFR WITH AN EBITDA OF £1.6M and 7%.</p> <p>Finance regulations</p> <p>The DPFCS presented the Finance regulations which had gone to the PSR Committee and then been updated with the support of Ruth Gilbert. These were now being recommended to the Committee with the proviso that the Finance handbook had been launched on 23 June and will make further changes. A final version will be presented to PSR in the autumn term.</p> <p>AGREED: THE BOARD AGREED THE FINANCIAL REGULATIONS NOTING THAT FURTHER UPDATES WILL BE REQUIRED TO REFLECT THE FINANCE HANDBOOK LAUNCHED ON 23 JUNE 2025.</p>	
8	<p>Quality & Learners' Matters</p> <p>The DPQ&L reminded governors that at this time of year exams are over. Therefore, the key focus is on apprenticeships and online adult learners.</p> <p>Predicted outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently the 16-18 achievement predicted to the same as last year 83.6% with risk areas being sport, IT and health and care. • 10% improvement in apprenticeships • Adults predicted to come in as forecast but there will be carry ins for next year. <p>The hard close will be mid-October for the final outcome.</p> <p>Predictions have changed and strategies have been altered to address the outcomes. The DPQ&L is now overseeing this personally to achieve the best possible outcomes.</p>	
9	<p>Estates update</p> <p>This had been covered in item 7</p>	
10	<p>Student Governor end of year summary</p> <p>Daniel Holland and Bella Russell presented a summary of their year as student governors and outlined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities • Impact that had been made • Reflections • <u>Unloc Student governor award</u> achievements <p>Governors praised their eloquent presentation and achievements. They asked student governors what they would have liked to do with more time; both cited increased collaboration with ambassadors and ongoing contact through Changemakers and course reps.</p> <p>Sheila Salmon acknowledged their national recognition and noted broad appreciation of their work among governors.</p>	

	<p>The staff governor thanked them for their positive participation and suggested greater teacher involvement and promotion of upcoming student governor elections.</p> <p>Governors suggested improvements for student governors, requesting more information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skill development courses • Acronyms • Job descriptions <p>Trevor Bolton commended both student governors commenting that their contributions had been the best that the College has seen over the past five years that he had been involved in the College.</p>	
11	<p>Committee minutes to note</p> <p>The Board noted the minutes of the following committees:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Quality and learners' committee - 20 May 2025 ii. Policy, sustainability and resources committee- 2 June 2025 iii. Search, governance and remuneration committee – 16 June 2025 iv. Audit and risk committee - 25 June 2025 <p>As the meeting had taken place less than 36 hours before the Board meeting, minutes were not yet available so David Holmes, Chair of ARC explained that many of the items discussed by the Committee had been mentioned. He did explain that the Committee had also considered and was recommending the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External audit plan 2024-5 • Internal audit plan 2025-6 • Going concern – College remains a going concern • The new audit charter from Scrutton Bland <p>A copy of the minutes and the papers being recommended would come to the September Board meeting.</p>	
12	<p>Recommendations from Committees –</p> <p>The Board agreed to take the following recommendations from Committee 'en bloc':</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Quality and learners' committee - 20 May 2025 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Recommendation of Q&L revised Terms of reference b. Subcontracting policy and schedule 2025/6 ii. Policy, sustainability and resources committee- 2 June 2025 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Finance and People and Organisation KPIs for 2025/6 b. Fees Policy 2025/6 iii. Search, governance and remuneration committee – 16 June 2025 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Second vice Chair - To recommend that there be a role for a second vice chair to the board b) Reappointments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trevor Bolton to be reappointed to serve an additional two years to 24 March 2028 • Richard Davidson to be reappointed for a second term 	

	<p>of four years to 22 September 2029</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paddy Reilly to be reappointed for a second term of four years to 31 July 2029 <p>c) Terms of Reference - the terms of reference for the audit and risk, quality and learners', policy, sustainability and resources and search, governance and remuneration committees are recommended to the Board for 2025-6</p> <p>d) The outline annual cycle of business to the board for 2025-6</p> <p>e) The scheme of delegation to the board.</p> <p>iv. Audit and risk committee - 25 June 2025 Items listed by David Holmes in item 11.</p>	
13	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>The Director of Governance reminded the Committee that there had been recent DfE advice with technical changes to Chelmsford College's Instrument and Articles. These centred on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right of student governors under 18 to vote on financial matters • The quorum and the Secretary of State • Governance Codes <p>The proposed updated Instrument and Articles for Chelmsford College ensured compliance with this guidance.</p> <p>AGREED: THE BOARD AGREED TO THE UPDATES OUTLINED FOR THE COLLEGE'S INSTRUMENT AND ARTICLES TO REFLECT DFE GUIDANCE.</p>	
14	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting would be held on Friday 19 September at 14.00</p> <p><i>The staff and student governors and all staff members with the exception of the CEO left the meeting at 12.30. The Director of Governance also withdrew and a member of the Board acted as Clerk.</i></p>	