RUNSHAW COLLEGE

Runshaw College Corporation Board Meeting Minutes [Part 1]

Thursday 2 October 2025, 5.30 – 7.15 pm

Corporation Board Members		Attendance				
		02.10.25	04.12.25	26.03.26	14.05.26	25.06.26
Full Name	**Position**					
Alison Watson-Bird	Chair	✓				
Portia Bailey Barrow	Independent Governor	✓				
Diane Bourne	Independent Governor	✓				
Sophie Brocken	Student Governor	✓				
Simon Drew	Independent Governor	✓				
Richard Evans	Independent Governor	✓				
Jenn Fisher Cooper	Support Staff Governor	✓				
Gary Hall	Independent Governor	✓				
Stuart Hide	Academic Staff Governor	A				
Michael Lowe	Independent Governor	✓				
Martyn Lylyk	Independent Governor	✓				
Dominic Martinez	Independent Governor	✓				
Ade Oladapo	Independent Governor	✓				
Clare Russell	Principal	✓				
Total attendance		**93%**				
Clerk						
Denise Williamson	Head of Governance	✓				
In Attendance						
Vanessa Harwood	Deputy Principal	✓				
Martin Rigby	Deputy Principal	✓				
Janet Ivill	Vice Principal	✓				
Sue Hutchinson	Beever & Struthers					

✓	Present
A	Apologies
X	Absent

Item	Agenda item
1.	**Apologies for Absence/Opening Comments**

Apologies for absence were received from Stuart Hide. The Chair also noted that Ade Oladapo had advised that he would need to leave the meeting at 7 pm and that Richard Evans would be joining the meeting via MS Teams at 6 pm.

2.	**Declarations of interest**

Governors were invited to declare any direct, indirect, pecuniary, personal or prejudicial interest relating to any item on the agenda for the meeting. No interests were declared.

3.	Minutes of the Meeting held on 26 June 2025
3.1	Corporation Board Minutes – 26 June 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2025 were approved as an accurate record and authorised for publication.

3.2	Action Log

All actions remaining on the Action progress log had been completed except for the following:

CB A104 regarding areas identified for development by the student governor being addressed. The Head of Governance advised that work is underway in this respect ensuring wider promotion of the student governor opportunity across the college.

CB A106 regarding the implementation of actions proposed in response to the F E Commissioner's letter. The Head of Governance confirmed that this is not yet due for completion and will be addressed as part of the Remuneration Committee meeting in November.

CB A107 regarding the request for an annual report from the link governor for Safeguarding. The Link Governor for Safeguarding provided a verbal summary of her written report confirming that she had attended a number of events in the previous academic year which had presented opportunities to speak with a range of staff. The Link Governor commented specifically on the Student Experience and Support Conference which she had attended and the excellent work being undertaken by the College in this respect. The Link governor referred also to the recent LCC Safeguarding audit, as part of which she was given a bank of questions to ask in relation to safeguarding which will be helpful. A governor commented on the importance of early intervention and this was agreed. The Principal added that a significant amount of work was taking place in relation to strengthening internal quality assurance processes to ensure that the interventions were having a positive impact on students. A governor queried the arrangements in relation to safeguarding for T level students on work placement and the Principal confirmed that the college meets all obligations in this respect.

Action: CB A113: Additional detail to be provided in relation to the safeguarding arrangements for students undertaking T Level work placements [Owner: Deputy Principal]

The Head of Governance confirmed that the written report will be added to the papers following the meeting.

Action: CB A114: Written report received from the Link Safeguarding Governor to be added to the papers following the meeting [Owner: Head of Governance]

CB A111 regarding a staged internal audit focusing on the new Windermere building which is not yet due.

4.	Reports from Corporation Committees
4.1	Standards & Curriculum Committee

Dominic Martinez provided a summary of the work of the Standards & Curriculum Committee in the absence of the Chair, highlighting particularly the positive distance travelled in relation to student outcomes, with nearly all programmes having secured improved results across all provision types, improved value added and improved high grades. The Governor also confirmed that predictions had been more reliable. In conclusion, the governor confirmed that the committee has a high degree of confidence in the improvement actions being implemented and the effectiveness of quality oversight, noting also that further improvements are still being targeted in a number of areas and that there is an ambition to do so from the senior team.

The Governor also highlighted the helpful feedback received from the student governor and the actions agreed on 'way finding' to improve orientation during the critical first days at college, as well as the recommendation that the risks in relation to student outcomes on the risk register be de-escalated.

The Board received the report and noted its contents.

5	**Principal's Report**
5.1	**Summary of student outcomes for all types of provision**

The Principal provided a summary of student outcomes for the 2024/25 academic year which showed very strong overall performance across A Level, Vocational, Technical, GCSE and Apprenticeship provision, whilst also highlighting a mixed picture in relation to Adult provision. A Level results in particular had improved significantly with value added improving to a position within the top 30% of colleges nationally and with the majority of subjects now exceeding both GFE and Sixth Form College benchmarks for high grades.

Having received the report, a governor asked if the results reflected where the college wanted to be at this point and the Deputy Principal responded that this was the case, notwithstanding that the ambition was to achieve outcomes in the top 10% of colleges moving forwards.

A governor identified that scores for pupils receiving free school meals still required improvement and this was agreed, as was that consistency in terms of outcomes is important given that there are still some areas that are not improving as quickly as they might. The Deputy Principal confirmed that any such courses would be subject to the enhanced monitoring processes with progress being reviewed every four weeks until final outcomes are known.

A member of the Standards & Curriculum Committee commented that it was reassuring that any weaknesses had already been identified ahead of the results being known and that there were no surprises. It was further acknowledged that the committee were recommending a change to the terms of reference to include a focus on teacher performance as a reserved business item given the criticality of this in terms of student results.

The Board congratulated the college on a very positive set of results and asked that their thanks be passed to the staff at the forthcoming College Improvement Day.

Action: CB A115: Congratulations on a very positive set of results to be conveyed to staff at the forthcoming College Improvement Day. [Owner: Principal]

Ade Oladapo joined the meeting at 17.50 pm.

5.2	**Arrangements for College Self-Assessment 2024/25 and Quality Improvement Planning 2025/26**

The Principal outlined the approach to self-assessment and quality improvement planning, confirming that the process had been further streamlined to strengthen consistency, accountability and impact. The Principal confirmed that she was in the process of attending a number of Strategic Review Groups with a focus on the analysis of root causes of any issues and the setting of clear improvement targets, confirming also that an external Ofsted-experienced consultant will be working with the College to add rigour and challenge to the process. Timelines have been set for in-year reviews, with all curriculum, support and functional areas aligned to the refined curriculum impact measures.

A governor queried how the new approach to Ofsted inspection would shape what the College does moving forward in terms of improvement planning and the Principal responded that the College will be using the new Ofsted toolkit to inform the completion of the self-assessment report and subsequently any quality improvement actions.

A governor commented that he had recently attended a webinar on the Ofsted approach to inspection which he found useful.

5.3	Student Recruitment summary

The Principal confirmed that student numbers are still fluctuating as we approach the census date, but that enrolment had been exceptional and has exceeded the target set. The Principal commented that this is an excellent position for the College in terms of financial stability both this year and next.

Finally, the Principal confirmed that the College has, for the first time, closed late enrolment as most classes are now at full capacity and student numbers on site are at a maximum. As such, a number of students are now on a waiting list.

5.4	Finance Report for year ending 31 July 2025

The Principal confirmed that the July 2025 management accounts show that the College ended the year with a £190k surplus against a break-even budget, summarising the movements in income and expenditure as part of the final outcome. The Principal confirmed that cash balances remain strong and that all loan covenants were comfortably achieved. The College's financial health is graded 'Good' with key risks limited to ongoing agency staff expenditure and the financial impact of the Windermere project.

The Board received the Principal's report and noted its contents.

6.	Risk Register

The Vice Principal provided a summary of the College's risk register, drawing the Board's attention to the current high priority risks and mitigating actions in place. Having received the report and considered its contents, governors raised the following queries:

- **Demographic downturn** – a Governor asked about the impact of the future demographic downturn and the Principal responded that this was a gradual decline and would not present a future risk with any small reductions being planned for as part of the annual curriculum planning process.

- **Reputation risk** – a governor asked if there is sufficient internal expertise to provide support in the event of any issues and the Principal confirmed that a member of the Senior Management Team had attended some training and had established a contact who could support in terms of crisis management. In addition, the college is now subscribed to a web monitoring service which immediately flags up any issues. Following a discussion, it was agreed that the College's insurance and legal cover in relation to BCP be checked to reference specifically a lawyer who can provide advice and guidance in the event of a serious incident or fatality.

Action: CB A116: Insurance and legal cover in relation to BCP to be checked to reference specifically a lawyer who can provide advice and guidance in the event of a serious incident or fatality. [Owner: Vice Principal]

Richard Evans joined the meeting via MS Teams

- **College Estate** – a governor asked if the Board would receive a report covering the whole college estate given that this was such an important part of the student experience. The Vice Principal responded that the campus masterplan was refreshed each year and that this would now be refreshed again to include the Windermere building with a paper being provided to the Finance and People Committee in this respect, breaking down each building in terms of their current status, future needs etc. The Vice Principal further confirmed that we are currently awaiting the result of a DfE condition survey which will inform future plans. The Vice Principal was asked if she needed any technical support beyond the current estates team but she was comfortable that the DfE inspection coupled with previous architect support was sufficient.

Action: CB A117: Spring term meeting of the Finance & People Committee to include a detailed update in relation to the Campus Masterplan. [Owner: Vice Principal]

The Board received the report and noted its contents.

7.	**Windermere Science Building**

The Chair of the Finance & People Committee provided a summary of the current position in relation to the Windermere Science Building, confirming that two task and finish group meetings had recently taken place, along with a governor briefing and an extraordinary meeting of the Finance and People committee with the objective of scrutinising proposals relating to the Windermere Science Building. Having gone through this process, the Chair confirmed that the Finance & People Committee are now recommending approval of the project to the Board.

The Chair of the Finance & People Committee further confirmed that a significant amount of work had been undertaken by the management team to ensure that the total cost was brought back in line with the original budget. The Chair also commended the scrutiny undertaken by the task and finish group, highlighting particularly that the projected financial position had now improved due to the increase in learner numbers and that the position in relation to cash days had also improved. The Chair confirmed that he felt that the governance processes followed had been very thorough.

Having received the report and considered its contents, governors queried the following:

- **Work placement opportunities for students –** A governor proposed that stretching targets be set in relation to providing work placement/T level industry placement opportunities for students and it was agreed that the Vice Principal would liaise with the governor in this respect.

Action: CB A118: Details regarding targets set in relation to work placements/T level placement opportunities for students to be shared with the Governor. [Owner: Vice Principal]

- **Number of tenders received –** A governor asked the reason for there only being one tender and if there was any learning for the future. The Vice Principal confirmed the position in relation to this, advising that the college had used two different frameworks and summarising the reasons why only one tender had been submitted at the end of this process.

- **'Wow factor' –** A governor asked what would be identified as the 'Wow factor' in relation to the new building. The Vice Principal responded that additional work would be undertaken to ensure that this was clearly articulated in the marketing materials**.**

Action: CB 119: Consideration to be given in terms of identifying the 'Wow factor' relating to the new science building for inclusion in marketing materials [Owner: Vice Principal]

The Board Chair thanked the Principal and SLT for their dedication in supporting the additional meetings with governors ahead of this key decision tonight.

Decision: CB D96: The Board approved the £9.4m budget for the development of the Windermere building, the award of the building contract to John Turner Construction and authorised the Principal and Vice Principal to sign all contracts and apply the Corporation Seal on behalf of the College.

Action: CB 120: Updates on progress and financials on new build to be included at Board sessions going forward.

8.	**Governance Matters**
8.1	**Board Membership**

The Head of Governance confirmed that, due to her work commitments, Louise Myers had resigned from the Board with immediate effect but will continue as a co-opted member of the Finance & People Committee. The Head of Governance also confirmed that the election process was underway in relation to the recruitment of a new student governor and that discussions are in progress with a number of external individuals who have expressed an interest in joining the board.

In response to this a governor suggested that skills in relation to IT/Cyber/AI were an existing gap within the Board and it was agreed that this be prioritised, potentially in relation to seeking an additional co-opted member.

Action: CB 121: Identification of a prospective governor/co-opted member with IT/Cyber/AI skills to be prioritised [Owner: Head of Governance]

A governor also commented that he would be willing to speak with any individuals interested in the role of governor and it was agreed that this would be very helpful.

Action: CB 122: Opportunity to speak with an existing governor to be offered to potential governors moving forwards [Owner: Head of Governance]

The Board received the information regarding Board membership and noted the position.

8.2	Board and Committee Papers

The Head of Governance confirmed that the requirements in relation to Board and Committee papers had been further streamlined to improve clarity for governors with report authors having been asked to reduce the length of reports to a maximum of 2 pages wherever possible.

Board members provided positive feedback on the papers received for the Board meeting which followed the new format.

The Board received the information regarding Board and Committee papers and noted the position.

8.3	Board/Committee approval of College Policies

The Head of Governance confirmed that the college follows the recommendations published by Eversheds in relation to the approval of policies and procedures, advising that the guidance confirms the policies that must be approved by the Board, those that can be delegated for approval by a committee and those that can be delegated for approval by SLT. Wherever possible all policies being submitted for Board approval will have previously been scrutinised and subsequently recommended for approval by the most appropriate committee. To further streamline the process, an executive summary will be provided to the Board highlighting any changes made to a policy with the policy itself being included within the Appendices.

The Board received the information regarding Board and Committee approval of College policies and noted the position.

8.4	Convene Document Library

The Head of Governance reminded Governors that the Document Library within Convene contains a copy of all key college documents including, for example, the Strategic Plan, latest Self-assessment report, Accountability statement and a useful A-Z of further education acronyms/abbreviations. The Head of Governance further advised that additional work was required to delete some old information from the system and that she was currently working to overcome a permissions issue within Convene in order to do so.

The Board received the information regarding the Convene Document Library and Committee papers and noted the position.

8.5	College Events Calendar and Governor Training

The Head of Governance signposted Board members to the College Events calendar for 2025-26 confirming that this would be updated and re-circulated as additional information becomes available. A governor suggested that Outlook invitations be sent to governors in relation to the college events and this was agreed.

Action: CB123: Outlook invitation in relation to College events to be sent to governors [Owner: Head of Governance]

Governors were also reminded to inform the Head of Governance of any relevant training, development and/or external activities undertaken in order that this information can be included on the Governor Training Log.

The Board received the information regarding the College Events Calendar and Governor Training and noted the position.

8.6	**Changes in the way in which Ofsted inspects Further Education and Skills Providers**

The Head of Governance provided a brief summary of the changes being made to the way in which FE and Skills providers would be inspected from 10 November 2025.

Having received the information, Governors suggested that it would be useful for this to be an agenda item for a future Board meeting once some inspection activity has taken place.

Action: CB A124: New Ofsted inspection approach and early outcomes to be included as future Corporation Board discussion item. [Owner: Head of Governance].

8.7	**Amendment to the Terms of Reference for the Standards and Curriculum Committee**

The Head of Governance confirmed that, following a discussion at the September meeting of the Standards & Curriculum Committee, the Committee are seeking approval for the terms of reference to be amended to include oversight of teacher performance and capability with the term 'teacher' including teachers, trainers and mentors. Following a discussion, it was agreed that this matter was a sensitive one and that headline information only would be shared and that the item would be considered as a reserved business matter. It was further agreed that future meetings would be attended by the Director of HR who would present the information.

Decision: CB D97: The Board approved the revised terms of reference for the Standards & Curriculum Committee.

Action: A125: Reserved Business item in relation to Teacher Performance and Capability to be added to next Standards & Curriculum agenda with a request that the Director of HR attend. [Owner: Head of Governance]

9.	**Annual Reports and Policies**
9.1	**Safeguarding Annual Report including KCSE update**

The Deputy Principal provided a summary of the Safeguarding Annual Report which was recommended for approval by the Standards and Curriculum Committee, highlighting particularly the introduction of the safeguarding operating framework and CPOMs during last year. The Deputy Principal confirmed that assurances had been received following both the Ofsted inspection and the LCC audit, notwithstanding which internal audits would be regularly undertaken in order to provide complete oversight of whether the process is working and any emerging concerns.

Decision: CB D98: The Board approved the Safeguarding Annual Report.

A governor suggested that governors receive a presentation in relation to Prevent at a future meeting and this was agreed.

Action: CB A126: Presentation regarding the College's approach to Prevent to be included as part of a future Board meeting [Owner: Head of Governance]

9.2	**Safeguarding and Prevent Policies**

The Deputy Principal summarised the changes being proposed to the Safeguarding Policy and the Prevent Policy and confirmed that these had been recommended to the Board for approval by the Standards & Curriculum Committee.

Following the review of both the Safeguarding Policy and the Prevent Policy, the Board confirmed their approval.

Decision: CB D99: The Board approved the Safeguarding Policy and the Prevent Policy.

9.3	**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and Freedom of Speech Policies**

The Board reviewed the changes proposed to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and the Freedom of Expression policy which had been recommended for approval by the Standards & Curriculum Committee.

Decision: CB D100: **The Board approved the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and the Freedom of Speech Policy.**

9.4	**Health and Safety Policy**

The Vice Principal summarised the amendments being proposed to the Health and Safety Policy following which the policy was reviewed by the Board.

Decision: CB D101: **The Board approved the Health and Safety Policy.**

10.	**Governance Impact Statement**

The Board identified the following in terms of impact:

- The approval of the Windermere Project
- The suggestion regarding establishing a USP/Wow factor for the Windermere build.
- The input received from the Safeguarding Link Governor
- The advice given in relation to preparing for any critical incidents.

- Acknowledgement of the step change in terms of results but the need for continuous improvement.
- Approval of policies.
- Identification of the need to identify a governor/co-opted member with an IT/Cyber/AI skills set.

11.	**Confidentiality**

None

12.	**Date of next meeting**

Corporation Board Meeting – 4 December 2025 – The Wrightington Hotel. The Board meeting will be followed by a festive meal.

The Chair of the Board confirmed that she would be unable to attend this meeting but that the meeting would be chaired by the Vice Chair of the Board.

Ade Oladapo left the meeting prior to Part 2.