RUNSHAW COLLEGE

Runshaw College Corporation Board Meeting Minutes [Part 1]

Thursday 4 December 2025, 5.30 – 7.30 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	✓	A			
Portia Bailey Barrow	Independent Governor	✓	✓			
Diane Bourne	Independent Governor	✓	✓			
Sophie Brocken	Student Governor	✓	✓			
Simon Drew	Independent Governor	✓	A			
Richard Evans	Independent Governor	✓	✓			
Jenn Fisher Cooper	Support Staff Governor	✓	✓			
Gary Hall	Independent Governor	✓	✓			
Stuart Hide	Academic Staff Governor	A	✓			
Harriet Longworth	Student Governor		✓			
Michael Lowe	Independent Governor	✓	A			
Martyn Lylyk	Independent Governor	✓	✓			
Dominic Martinez	Independent Governor	✓	✓			
Ade Oladapo	Independent Governor	✓	A			
Clare Russell	Principal	✓	✓			
Total attendance		**93%**	**73%**			
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 Alison Watson-Bird, Simon Drew, Michael Lowe and Ade Oladapo. In the absence of the Chair, the meeting was chaired by the Vice Chair of the Corporation, Richard Evans. The Chair welcomed Harriet Longworth, Student Governor, to her first Corporation Board meeting.

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.

The staff members present declared an interest in item 11 relating to the staff pay award.
No further interests were declared in the Part 1 agenda items.

3.	**Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 October 2025 (Part 1)**
3.1	**Approval of the Minutes (Part 1)**

The Part 1 minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 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 A119 regarding the identification of the Wow factor in respect of the new Science building which remains under discussion.

CB A111, A117, A121, A124 and A126 which are not yet due for completion.

In relation to CB A118 regarding the setting of targets in relation to work placements/T Level placement opportunities for students as part of the plans for the new science building, a governor commented that it would have been beneficial for governors to have an input on this at an earlier stage in order to maximise such opportunities and this was agreed.

Action: CB A127: Governors to have the opportunity to input in relation to social value/work placement opportunities for similar projects moving forwards [Owner: Vice Principal]

4.	**Presentation of Audit Findings Report**

Sue Hutchinson from Beever and Struthers presented the contents of the Draft Management Letter for the year ending 31 July 2025, confirming that their work had been concluded satisfactorily and that the External Auditors concurred that the College remains a going concern.

A summary was provided of the current year recommendations, all of which were designated as low risk and that External Auditor thanked the College team for their work in supporting the Audit.

The Corporation Board received the draft management letter and noted its contents.

5.	**Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2025**
5.1	**Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2025**
5.2	**Financial Statements 2024-25**
5.3	**Audit Letter of Representation**
5.4	**Regularity Letter of Representation**
5.5	**Regularity Self Assessment Questionnaire 2024-25**

The Vice Principal provided an overview of the Executive Summary, confirming that the Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2025, the Audit Letter of Representation, the Regularity Letter of Representation and the Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire 2024/25 were being submitted to the Corporation and recommended for approval by the Audit Committee and Finance and People Committee.

The Vice Principal advised that the financial statements for 2024/25 reflect a year of strong performance and sound governance and that the College had succeeded in maintaining a 'Good' Financial Health rating from the Department for Education. The Vice Principal added that risk management and internal controls were robust and that no significant weaknesses had been identified.

In support of the summary provided by the Vice Principal, a member of the Audit Committee provided an overview of the work carried out by the committee which, he said, provides assurance to the board in relation to the statement of internal control and governance.

Decision: CB D102: The Board approved the following:

- **Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2025**
- **Audit letter of recommendation**
- **Regularity letter of representation**
- **Regularity self-assessment questionnaire 2024/25**

The Board thanked the External Auditor and the College's Finance Team for the work undertaken.

6.	Corporation Annual Reports
6.1	Audit Committee Annual Report to the Corporation 2024-25

In the absence of the Chair of the Audit Committee, the Annual Report of the Audit Committee for the Year ended 31 July 2025 was presented to the Board by a member of the Audit Committee who confirmed that, based on the audit work, it was the opinion of the internal audit service that the framework of governance, risk management and control is 'reasonable' in its overall adequacy and effectiveness which is the highest rating possible.

Action: CB A128: Audit Committee Annual Report to be published on the College website [Owner: Head of Governance]

The Board received the Audit Committee Annual Report to the Corporation for 2024/25 and noted its contents.

6.2	Remuneration Committee Annual Report to the Corporation 2024-25

In the absence of the Chair of the Remuneration Committee, the Remuneration Committee Annual Report for 2024/25 was presented to the Board by the Vice Chair of the Corporation.

Action: CB A129: Remuneration Committee Annual Report to be published on the College website [Owner: Head of Governance]

The Board received the Remuneration Committee Annual Report to the Corporation for 2024/25 and noted its contents.

7.	**Governance Matters**
7.1	**New Governor Appointments**

The Head of Governance confirmed that, following recent governor recruitment activity, three individuals had been interviewed by a panel comprising the Chair of the Board, a member of the Search and Governance Committee and/or the Principal and Head of Governance. The Head of Governance confirmed that the Search & Governance Committee had recommended the appointment of all three individuals but that, whilst it was recommended that the Board proceed with the appointment of two individuals, one appointment should be deferred to a future date for personal reasons.

Following a discussion, the Board agreed the appointment of the following to the College Board:

- Babs Murphy – Chief Executive, North and Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce
- Gary Crowe – Police Superintendent, Chorley, South Ribble and West Lancashire Police

Decision: CB 103: The Board agreed the appointment of Babs Murphy and Gary Crowe to the Corporation.

Action: CB A130: Letter of appointment to be sent to Babs Murphy and Gary Crowe and induction schedule to be progressed [Owner: Head of Governance]

The Head of Governance confirmed that, following the student governor election process, Harriet Longworth had been elected as a new student governor. Board members were signposted to Harriet's election statement for information.

Following a query from a governor, the Head of Governance confirmed that work was in progress in relation to the appointment of a further two co-opted members to the Board, one with skills, knowledge and experience in Cyber Security/IT and another with a financial background. In addition to this, enquiries continue in relation to securing a further Board member with a relevant FE background to join the Standards & Curriculum Committee.

It was further noted that the DfE offer a governor recruitment service should this be helpful in the future.

7.2	**Governance Self-Assessment Report 2024-25 and Quality Improvement Plan 2025-26**

The Head of Governance confirmed that minor changes had been made to the Governance Self-Assessment Report 2024/25 and Quality Improvement Plan 2025/26 following feedback from the Board and that the final draft was now being presented for approval.

Decision: CB 104: The Board approved the Governance Self-Assessment Report for 2024/25 and Quality Improvement Plan 2025/26

7.3	**Plans for Governor Strategy Development meeting**

The Head of Governance outlined the proposed agenda for the Governor Strategy Development Meeting taking place on 27 January 2026 which was subsequently agreed.

Action: CB A131: Governors to be contacted to ascertain availability to attend other meetings planned on the same day and the strategy development meeting to be extended by one hour to accommodate the agreed agenda [Owner: Head of Governance]

7.4 Governor Training, Development and Engagement

The Head of Governance summarised the opportunities for governors to engage with the College community including the inclusion of presentations from colleagues as part of Board/committee meetings, the extension of the link governor scheme, governor meetings being held to coincide with college events and a governor open day.

Board members supported the proposals and a governor commented on the importance of ensuring that the governor open day provided an opportunity for two-way communication between governors and staff/students.

Action: CB A132: Proposals in relation to governor engagement opportunities to be implemented [Owner: Head of Governance]

7.5 Changes to the Instrument and Articles of Government

The Head of Governance summarised the contents of a letter received from the DfE which required minor changes to be made to the Instrument and Articles of Government.

Having reviewed the proposed changes, the Board approved the revised document.

Decision: CB 105: The Board agreed the amendments to the Instrument and Articles of Government

Action: CB A133: Instrument and Articles of Government to be updated [Owner: Head of Governance]

8. Reports from Corporation Committees

8.1 Audit Committee

In the absence of the Chair of the Audit Committee, a member of the committee provided a summary of the work recently undertaken, confirming that the key message is that the internal control environment is strong, resulting in a judgement of reasonable assurance. The governor confirmed that significant work had been undertaken to ensure that the recommendations emerging from the internal audits completed during the previous academic year had been addressed and congratulated the team on their progress in this respect.

The governor advised that future work was being undertaken in relation to GDPR compliance, as well as in relation to cyber security, and that a dashboard had now been developed focusing on progress against cyber security KPIs and objectives which was being scrutinised by the committee.

The Board received the report and noted its contents.

8.2 Finance & People Committee

In the absence of the Chair of the Finance & People Committee, the Vice Chair of the Corporation provided a summary of the work undertaken by the committee, confirming that members of the committee had recently joined the final 30 minutes of the Audit Committee to review the financial statements and to hear and ask questions to the Auditors. This was the first time that this had happened, and members of the committee had benefited from the time spent with the Auditors and the Audit Committee. The Chair of the Finance & People Committee had expressed his thanks to the Chair of the Audit Committee for accommodating this and had recommended that this should now be part of the November meetings going forward for the two committees.

The Vice Chair confirmed that the committee had discussed the proposed pay award at length, noting the impact associated with the additional cost vs the original budget. Following the discussion, the Vice Principal was asked to resubmit the future years' forecasts that had been used to approve the Windermere project, considering the most current information. Following a review of the revised forecasts, the committee noted that cash days had improved to an acceptable level and that, whilst staff pay awards of this magnitude were not sustainable moving forwards, the committee agreed that it was important that the College maintained pay in line with that offered by 6th form colleges and, on this basis, were recommending the pay award for approval by the Board.

Finally, the committee reviewed and approved the Health & Safety report and approved the Treasury Policy and reviewed the HR Dashboard and the Great Place to Work survey, including a discussion on the Workload Action Plan.

A governor raised a query regarding the work being undertaken to ascertain the presence of badgers in and around the site of the new build and the Vice Principal advised that the outcome of the survey had just been received which confirmed that badgers are not sufficiently close to build or in sufficient numbers to necessitate applying for a badger disturbance notice but that the College would be following any good practice in this respect. The Vice Principal advised that the College was aiming for a start date of 19 January 2026 with a build duration of 15 months and that the new building would therefore be open to students in September 2027.

The Board received the report and noted its contents.

8.3 Search & Governance Committee

The Chair of the Search & Governance Committee confirmed that the committee had discussed progress against the College's strategic plan which was progressing well and signposted governors to the information provided by the Head of Governance as part of the Governance agenda item.

The Board received the report and noted its contents.

8.4 Standards & Curriculum Committee

The Chair of the Standards & Curriculum Committee provided a summary of the work undertaken by the committee, confirming that the Head of English, Language and Classics delivered a presentation as part of the most recent committee meeting which had been really helpful in enabling governors to gain a more detailed understanding of the area.

The Chair advised that some changes had been made to the quality dashboard which had now been aligned with the curriculum impact measures, and this provided a clearer picture in terms of current performance vs KPIs. The Chair also commended the input provided by the student governors, for example in relation to recommended changes to the Scholars' programme.

The Board received the report and noted its contents.

9 Principal's Report

9.1 Progress against Strategic Plan Objectives

The Principal provided a summary of her report, confirming that strategic milestones remain on track with some minor delays which will not impact on year-end success criteria. Full details were provided to the Board within the Strategic Plan Milestone Tracker.

9.2 Learner Voice update

The Principal summarised the outcome of a learner survey carried out in October 2025, the results of which are benchmarked against several Colleges nationally.

The survey confirmed a number of strengths as well as areas for improvement and the Principal confirmed that the results are being analysed at every level and will be used in conjunction with other sources of information to support existing quality improvement plan actions or identify new actions if required.

A governor queried the survey responses in relation to the quality of teaching and learning and asked how this is being picked up by the College. The Deputy Principal responded that this is a focus of quality improvement plans which target improvements to the whole student experience. It was further confirmed that there is a strong correlation between the quantitative results and qualitative information.

A governor asked how frequently the survey would be undertaken by learners and the Principal confirmed that the survey would be distributed three times per year, with other opportunities for learners to provide feedback in between these times via focus groups for example. A governor asked how distance travelled would be measured and the Principal confirmed that this would be reported moving forwards to confirm progress.

A governor queried the area for improvement related to enhanced IT skills and the Deputy Principal responded that this covers a range of topics from the use of simple Microsoft Office applications to the use of Artificial Intelligence, since students' knowledge and skills in these areas vary considerably. A student governor commented that additional guidance in relation to the use of AI would be beneficial as this can be confusing.

9.3	**Windermere Project update**

The Principal confirmed that the 'start on site' date of 17 November 2025 had been delayed due to the discovery of a badger sett near the construction zone. The Principal confirmed that this pause remains within the contingency allowance and will not impact overall project viability.

	Impact of October Budget

In response to an action from the Finance & People Committee, the Principal provided a summary of the impact of the recent budget, confirming that the budget reinforces the government's focus on tackling youth inactivity and driving skills acquisition in key industrial sectors. The Principal advised that there are no immediate concerns regarding the College's budget for 2025/26 or 2026/27 and that the announcements made as part of the budget would inform the strategic planning process.

A governor asked if the number of NEET young people was an issue in the area and the Principal responded that it is a significant issue and that the college had been working with Lancashire County Council to provide support where possible.

The impact of the announcements in relation to apprenticeship provision were also discussed, including the increase in the national minimum wage and the introduction of apprenticeship units.

The Board received the paper and noted its contents.

10.	**College Self-Assessment 2024-25 and Quality Improvement Plan 2025-26**
10.1	**Final progress against the Quality Improvement Plan 2024-25**

The Deputy Principal provided a summary of the Self-Assessment Report for 2024/25 and the Quality Improvement Plan for 2025/26, both of which were being recommended for approval by the Standards & Curriculum Committee.

In relation to final progress against the Quality Improvement Plan for 2024/25, the Deputy Principal confirmed that, whilst a number of KPIs had not been achieved, the majority of metrics demonstrated positive performance against national benchmarks and that the areas where this was not the case will be the focus of the QIP for the year ahead.

10.2	**College SAR 2024-25 and Quality Improvement Plan 2025-26**

The Deputy Principal summarised the College Self-Assessment Report for 2024/25, confirming that this had been aligned to the language used in the new Ofsted Toolkit, with judgements relating to areas of strength and areas for improvement remaining focused on the agreed Curriculum Impact Measures. The Deputy Principal also confirmed that the report incorporates feedback following an external validation exercise.

Having considered the report, a governor queried the issue of staff workload and suggested that this be a focus of a Board discussion in the future. A governor confirmed that this is one of the areas of focus for the Finance & People Committee however, given the importance of this matter, it was agreed that a presentation to the Board summarising the actions being taken in this respect be part of a future Board meeting

Action: CB A134: Presentation focusing on interventions regarding Staff Workload to be included in future Board meeting [Owner: Head of Governance]

The new Ofsted judgement in relation to Inclusion was discussed and the Deputy Principal confirmed that she is working with the data team to ensure that additional information is captured moving forwards which will then inform the quality improvement plan where appropriate.

Decision: CB D106: The Board approved the College Self-Assessment Report for 2024/25 and the Quality Improvement Plan for 2025/26.

11	Staff Pay Award

The Vice Principal presented the proposal in relation to the Staff Pay Award, confirming the recommendation of the Finance & People Committee for a pay award of 7% from 1st January 2026 and a minimum hourly rate of £13.18. The Vice Principal emphasised that this would ensure that pay remains aligned with 6th Form College pay scales and provided assurance that the award will be funded from operating income rather than from cash reserves or contingencies and has been accounted for in terms of the calculation of cash days.

Governors agreed that it was important to ensure that pay continued to be aligned with sixth form pay scales subject to affordability.

A governor asked if additional staff will be required to support the growth in student numbers and the Principal responded that this will not be the case. A governor queried the impact of larger class sizes on staff workload given that this was a focus and the Deputy Principal responded that class sizes have been capped and that it would be very unusual for classes to be larger than the amount specified, with the average being below the maximum.

Decision: CB 107: Having received the report and discussed the proposal in detail, the Board approved the consolidated pay award of 7% for all staff from 1st January 2026 and the minimum hourly rate of £13.18.

12	Risk Register

The Vice Principal summarised the current risk landscape for the College which was shown in a new format using an application which is part of the Facilities Management System. Board members agreed that this is a useful approach and provides a clear picture of the current position regarding risks.

The Vice Principal confirmed that risks related to Cyber Security remain a key focus and that a risk in relation to inefficient/ineffective college operations due to unsuitable MIS systems had been added following the recent issue arising with the HR system.

The Vice Principal confirmed that the full risk register is presented to the Audit Committee for comment and review.

A governor asked why the Vice Principal was the owner of all of the risks identified and she responded that risks had yet to be delegated as this was a new system.

The Board received the report and noted its contents.

13	**Termly Reports**
13.1	**Safeguarding and Prevent Update**

The Deputy Principal provided a summary of the safeguarding and wellbeing activity to date, confirming that KPIs had been sharpened with a focus on measuring impact.

A governor queried the trend in relation to the number of safeguarding referrals and the Deputy Principal responded that numbers are increasing. Governors agreed that it was important to ensure that appropriate interventions are in place and queried whether the team had sufficient resources to cope with demand. The Deputy Principal responded that resources are sufficient, that the team is fully staffed but that the position would remain under review with the potential to increase the capacity for face-to-face counselling in the future.

A governor queried the number of students accessing the Student Assistance Programme which was low. The Deputy Principal responded that the number had now increased substantially following a promotional campaign and a whole college approach to wellbeing. It was agreed that further information in relation to take-up be provided at the next meeting.

Action: CB A135: Information regarding take-up of Student Assistance Programme to be provided at next meeting [Owner: Deputy Principal]

A governor asked the Student Governors if they were aware of the Student Assistance Programme, known to students as the Wisdom App, and the Student Governors said that they were and that this had been promoted widely across the College.

A governor asked about activity targeted at the most vulnerable students, estimated to represent c. 20% of the student population and the specific interventions in place to support these students was discussed including for example student ‘clubs’ focusing on particular issues such as grief.

The Board received the report and expressed their thanks to all staff involved in the work of Safeguarding learners.

13.2	**Health and Safety Update**

The Vice Principal provided an update on Health and Safety, focusing initially on the area of fire risks assessments. It was noted that one building had been rated as a substantial risk but that, of the 31 actions identified, 25 had been completed with 6 remaining outstanding and completion planned as a priority.

In response to a query from a governor, the Vice Principal confirmed that resources were sufficient to ensure that the remaining actions were resolved.

A governor asked how this issue had occurred and the Vice Principal responded that the team undertaking the assessment had not had the benefit of some contextual information to support their work which would have been beneficial.

The Vice Principal confirmed that this is being monitored closely by SMT as part of the Facilities meeting and that regular updates would be provided to governors.

The board received the report and noted its contents.

14.	**Annual Reports**
14.1	**Annual Risk Management Report 2024-25**

The Vice Principal provided a summary of the Annual Risk Management Report which was recommended for approval by the Audit Committee. The Vice Principal confirmed that the report included information on how areas identified as being significant risks had been approached during the last academic year, the mitigations put in place and subsequent impact.

Decision: CB D108: The Board approved the Annual Risk Management Report for 2024-25.

14.2	**Annual Health & Safety Report 2024-25**

The Vice Principal provided a summary of the Annual Health and Safety Report which was recommended for approval by the Finance & People Committee. The Vice Principal confirmed that the College has low instances of accidents compared with sector norms.

Decision: CB D109: The Board approved the Annual Health & Safety Report for 2024-25.

14.3	**Annual ESG and Sustainable Development Report 2024-25**

The Vice Principal provided a summary of the Annual ESG and Sustainable Development Report which was recommended for approval by the Finance & People Committee. The Vice Principal confirmed that significant progress had been made, including a 49% reduction in carbon emissions.

A Board member asked what had driven the improvements and the Vice Principal responded that these were largely due to the move to a single campus as well as the move to more energy efficient buildings, including the new Buttermere Building.

Decision: CB D109: The Board approved the Annual ESG and Sustainable Development Report for 2024-25.

14.4	**Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report 2024-25**

The Deputy Principal provided a summary of the amendments to the Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report which was recommended for approval by the Standards & Curriculum Committee. It was agreed that additional information regarding the various different student groups as defined by the new inclusivity judgement would be included in future reports.

Action: CB A136: Future reports to include more detailed information in relation to the performance of different student groups in line with the new inclusivity judgement [Owner: Deputy Principal]

A governor asked if there is a gap in terms of high-grade achievement and it was agreed that the information be brought to the next Standards & Curriculum Committee.

Action: CB A137: Information regarding any gaps in high grade achievement by student group to be brought to the next Standards & Curriculum Committee meeting [Owner: Deputy Principal]

Decision: CB D110: The Board approved the Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report for 2024-25.

15.	**Policies for approval**
15.1	**Risk Management Policy**

The Vice Principal provided a summary of the amendments to the Risk Management Policy which was recommended for approval by the Audit Committee, explaining that the document combines both the Risk Management Policy and the Risk Management Plan. The Vice Principal confirmed that there is no change to the overall scope and that the policy continues to confirm that the college has a low appetite for risk.

A governor queried the reference to the ESFA within the document which should now refer to the DfE and it was agreed that this be amended.

Action CB A138: Policy to be amended and references to ESFA to be replaced with DfE. [Owner: Vice Principal]

Decision: CB D111: The Board approved the Risk Management Policy following the amendment identified.

15.2	**Treasury Policy**

The Vice Principal provided a summary of the changes to the Treasury Policy which was recommended for approval by the Finance & People Committee explaining that there were no substantial changes but that clarity on some of the wording had been improved.

Decision: CB D112: The Board approved the Treasury Policy.

15.3	**Complaints Policy**

The Principal provided a summary of the changs to the Complaints Policy which was recommended for approval by the Standards and Curriculum Committee.

Decision: CB D113: The Board approved the Complaints Policy.

16.	Governance Impact Statement

The Board identified the following in terms of impact:

- Scrutiny and approval of the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2025 and supporting documentation.
- Scrutiny and approval of the appointment of two new governors to the Corporation Board.
- Scrutiny and approval of the Governance Self-Assessment Report 2024/25 and Quality Improvement Plan 2025/26.
- Scrutiny and approval of the College Self-Assessment Report 2024/25 and Quality Improvement Plan 2025/26.
- Scrutiny and approval of Staff Pay Award.
- Scrutiny and approval of Annual Reports and Policies.
- Request for additional information regarding different student groups to be added to future EDI reports and for information regarding any gaps between different groups in terms of high-grade attainment.

17.	Confidentiality

None

18.	Date of next meeting

Strategy Development Meeting: 27 January 2026
Corporation Board Meeting: 26 March 2026