CORPORATION BOARD
Finance & General Purposes Committee

Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 12th March 2026 at 6pm

Present	In attendance
Alan Bark (Chair)	Mark Lay, Finance Director
Jacqui Canton, Principal	Olivier Cognard, Vice Principal
David Walker	Kirsten Get, Director of People Services
Edward Collett	Ben Rose, Head of Health and Safety
Jessie Weavers-Medina	Michael Chiyasa, Estates and Capital Development Director
	Jude Brown, Clerk and Governance Advisor

Governor questions are represented with bullet points in bold italics and Management responses follow.

1. Opening Comments
1.1 Apologies and matters to be raised under AOB.

The Chair of the Committee opened the meeting and welcomed the new Director of People Services to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Alan Muza. The meeting was quorate.

There were no items raised under AOB.

1.2 Declarations of interest

There were no new declarations of interest.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 24th November 2025
2.1 Public Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 24th November 2025 were reviewed and approved as an accurate reflection of that meeting.

3 Matters Arising, Written Resolutions & Action Points
3.1 Matters arising, written resolutions and action points

There were no matters arising or written resolutions raised since the last meeting. The actions had been completed and the one in progress action was to be updated under item 4.2 of the agenda. The Committee noted the report.

4 Term 2 Update Reports
4.1 Health and Safety

The Head of Health and Safety gave an overview of the report highlighting that a new incident reporting system had been launched which included improvements made based on student feedback. Overall, Health and Safety indicators were in line with previous terms and there were no real concerns. Two new procedures in COSHH and Working at Height had been released, and training would be available to staff to support these procedures.

The Head of Health and Safety clarified that thirty-three near misses should have been included in the number of events in the report which should therefore have totalled two hundred and fifty. The number of expired risks assessments versus the number of incomplete risk assessments was clarified in that the former usually refer to trip-based risk assessments which were one-offs and hence expired and different from incomplete. In discussion the Head of Health and Safety explained that some risk assessments that are renewed on an annual basis are overdue for review, and this was something he intended to follow up.

The number of risk assessments relating to students were discussed where more students needed risks assessments, but these were all up to date.

- ***Which courses had trips overseas?*** It was explained that these were part of the Turing Scheme which replaced the Erasmus Scheme and the trips related to construction in St Lucia, America, and Spain.

The Committee noted the report. The Head of Health and Safety left the meeting at 18:12.

4.2 Estates and Capital Development

The Estates and Capital Development Director gave an overview of the report highlighting the RAAC work in Witney where there had been some scope changes with time and cost implications, however the DfE had been signing off the scope requests. The estimated delay did not affect the plan for Witney. The Common Leys planning application was covered, and the College has an ecologist on board to assist with the risk assessment. The list of current bids was highlighted as well as the ongoing discussion with Thames Water about the fire hydrant.

The Estates and Capital Development Director also covered the queries from governors about the spikes in energy usage explaining that the weather had been particularly cold at that time and the decarbonisation of the campuses had also led to higher electricity bills when heating was required.

- ***Does anything concern you regarding the RAAC project?*** The Estates and Capital Development Director explained that it was a process of negotiation regarding the claims from the subcontractor. The contractor was being encouraged to raise issues earlier so they can be discussed. Overall, however it was felt that the estates team were being thorough and robust in their management of the programme of work.
- ***Does the delay cause us any operational issues?*** No as the plan was to be back in the building by September, and the current delay is only to May.
- ***How is the budget side of the project?*** There have been fifteen scope change requests which have all been honoured. It was felt that there was a positive working relationship with the DfE and their case worker had been to site so some of the issues could be explained.
- ***Will we need to extend the temporary buildings?*** The Finance Director explained that the College will end up having to pay for the last month (May) but may not be able to move the students until end of FY so as not to disrupt them. The Finance Director felt comfortable with the arrangement.
- ***Have you gone to tender for the Common Leys work yet?*** No, the Estates team are in discussion with some contractors but are waiting on any conditions from the planners before proceeding.

The Committee noted the report. The Estates and Capital Development Director departed the meeting.

4.3 People Services

The Director of People Services highlighted that attrition has reduced to about 8%, with a target of under 5%. Improvements in probation, induction, and onboarding are expected to further boost retention. With upcoming changes to employment rights shortening the time to become permanent, line managers and staff are encouraged to raise issues earlier so there is timely management action. The focus is not only on metrics but also on overall staff experience. The change relating to the National Minimum Wage was explained and the plan to review pay bands in August. Progress had been made on the appointment of the second HR Business Partner which would complete the planned reshaping of the People services team.

The numbers for attrition rate and probation period were discussed where it seemed as if a high percentage of people disappeared during probation. The Senior Management Team review dismissals during the probation period and the number is not very high. The Director of People Services took an action to review the numbers as it was felt that short term agency hires might be complicating the numbers. It was agreed that there were still improvements to be made to decision making and induction to further improve hiring.

Short term sickness was discussed, and it was felt that comparable periods for previous years could be helpful to compare more precisely. The number presented was a six-month snapshot which indicated a decrease in the amount of sickness days per employee.

The Staff Survey and the questions that can asked as part of it were discussed. The Principal explained that the main questions cannot be changed to enable year on year comparison and the survey takes around 20 minutes to complete. It was felt that improving last year's 56% completion rate needs focus on motivating staff to open and engage with the survey, not just the survey itself. Manager engagement is key and it was agreed that managers should lead by example and cascade the message to their teams. It was discussed that Hourly Paid Lecturer (HPL) engagement may differ from permanent staff; results may need to be broken down to understand participation patterns. It was emphasised that staff are encouraged to complete the survey during work time, not at home. The suggestion to include a question about whether staff feel able to be themselves at work.

The Chair placed a strong emphasis on the value of exit interviews to understand why staff leave, and it was discussed whether current online questionnaires were effective or fully utilised. Responses may vary depending on who conducts the exit interview.

Action	**By Whom**	**Deadline**
Director of People Services to check the attrition level during probation period.	KG	June 2026
Director of People Services to review adding sickness data for comparable periods to report	KG	June 2026

The Committee noted the report.

5 Finance Matters
5.1 Management Accounts to end January 2026

The Finance Director covered the management accounts and the mid-year budget review together as they told a similar story.

The Committee recommended the Management Accounts to the end of January 2026 to the Board to approve.

5.2 Mid-Year Budget Review

The Finance Director gave an overview of the forecast financial position. The full-year forecast shows a strong financial position, with income projected to come in around £1.5 million above budget. Although pay costs are expected to exceed the plan by £0.8–£1 million and non-pay costs may end up around £100k higher as a precaution, overall performance remains positive. EBITDA is stronger than budgeted, cash levels are ahead of expectations, and the college's financial health score is set to improve from 180 to 190. While the next threshold for achieving an 'outstanding' score is 230, the current trajectory was felt to be reassuring. It was explained that growth in income is driven by several areas: 16–18 funding has increased following additional allocations from the DfE, High Needs (Element 3) funding from OCC is expected to be higher than originally forecast, and apprenticeship income is performing well at £330k above budget, with a £200k uplift anticipated for the full year.

Allowance has been made for potential clawback due to the DfE funding audit that is currently ongoing about which a report would be made to Audit Committee. The risk on clawback was discussed and that Internal Audit have not found systemic issues. The report was expected in April.

Payroll costs were explained in detail by the Finance Director due to the continued use of agency staff and the impact of improved recruitment time to hire. It was agreed that a focus needs to be kept on the use of agency staff as there are often quality issues. The NI grant was yet to be included as it was not yet confirmed by the Government. Major capital works are largely on track with expected capital grants for maintenance and management of the estate on the horizon.

5.3 Confidential Paper

The Committee agreed to recommend the paper to the Board.

5.4 Grant applications

The Finance Director explained that the grants had been covered in the Term 2 Estates Report and there was nothing further to add.

The Committee noted the report.

6. Policies
6.0 Policies Cover Paper

The Clerk gave an overview of the policies for discussion at the meeting.

6.1 Professional Development Policy
This was an expired policy which had previously included a lot of procedural information and therefore went out of date quickly. The policy has been rewritten as a high-level policy document, and a detailed procedure will sit beneath it outlining the College's management approach to specific circumstances.

The Committee agreed to approve the policy.

6.2 Staff Attendance and Performance Management Policy

This was a revised policy with probation-related material split out and put into the new Probation Policy. Some slight improvements were made to put onus on employees on long term sick leave to stay in touch with the College and clarifications about how medical and dental appointment leave will be made.

The Committee agreed to approve the policy.

6.3 Staff Probation Policy

This was a new policy for F&GP to review. The information about probation has been split out from the Performance Management and Attendance Policy to increase useability and clarity. There is no change to the College's policy position.

The Committee discussed whether the policy should include timescales to ensure that reviews were held early enough. It was explained that an accompanying procedural document would cover these and be easier to amend.

The Committee agreed to approve the policy.

6.4 Family Friendly Policy

This policy had been revised to take account of changes from the Employment Rights Act 2025 regarding bereaved parent rights, and day one rights to parental and partner leave, and a table of changes had been provided to explain the changes. The Director of People Services agreed to check some of the wording to make it more inclusive where the language was not stipulated by law.

The Committee recommended the policy to the Board for approval.

6.5 Reserves Policy

This policy had had only a light refresh with only dates amended.

The Committee recommended the policy to the Board for approval.

6.6 Equality Diversity & Inclusion Policy
This policy had been refreshed with clarifications on responsibilities and definitions, and a stronger link to the College's values. It was clarified that a working group to examine the College's new Equality Objectives would still be set up.

The Committee recommended the policy to the Board for approval.

8. General Purposes
8.1 Freedom of Information Requests Update

The Clerk provided an update on Freedom of Information (FOI) requests outlining the general nature of the requests received and that they were now all complete within the required timescales.

The Committee noted the report.

9. Any Other Business

There were no additional items under AOB.

9. Future Business

The Clerk explained that the term of appointment of the Chair of F&GP as Chair was ending later in March. The current Chair was happy to serve another term if appointed but any other nominations would be needed ahead of the June meeting of F&GP. The election of the Chair would be held at the start of the next meeting of the Committee.

It was agreed that the current Chair would cover any questions that might arise for F&GP in the meantime.

The meeting closed at 19.40.

The next meeting will be held in Abingdon on Thursday 18th June 2026 at 6pm.

A Bark

Signature ……………………………………………………………

Chair of F&GP Committee 10/07/2026

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