

Full Governing Body Minutes

Meeting	Full Governing Body	Date	Friday 3 October 2025
Location	The Yarrow Hotel, Broadstairs	Time	3.30pm
Membership	Charles Buchanan (Chair), Lucy McLeod (Chief Executive Officer), Ella Sandall, Gail Clarke, Miranda Chapman, <i>Jason Howard</i> , John Korzeniewski, <i>Peter Cheney</i> , Joanna Worby, Francesca Lashmar (Staff Governor), Carmel Togher, Sam Lawrence-Rose, <i>Tammy Mitchell</i> , John Oliphant, Siobhan Phillips, Rebecca Smith, Tim Kent, Brendan Maher (Student Governor) <i>Absent</i>		
In Attendance	Dan Shelley (DS) (Assistant CEO, Infrastructure & Transformation) Matt Cooper (MC) (Chief Financial Officer) Nick Holbrook-Sutcliffe (NH-S) (Assistant CEO, Education) Victoria Copp-Crawley (VC-C) (Deputy CEO) Kerry Hickmott (KH) (Chief People Officer) Paul Sayers (PS) (Assistant CEO, Information and Strategy) Jamie Weir, (JW) Chief Communications Officer Jack Collison (JC) (Group Director of Corporate Services and Governance) Claire Banks (CSB) (Governance Officer)		

Italics denotes absence

	ITEM	COMMENTS	ACTION
1	Welcome and Apologies for Absence	The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting. Apologies were received from Tammy Mitchell, Peter Cheney and Jason Howard.	
2	Declarations of Interest	There were no further declarations other than those previously declared.	
3	Minutes of the meeting held 9 July 2024, including any	The minutes and confidential minutes of the Full Governing Body meeting held on 8 July 2025 were reviewed and the following amendments were requested. The minutes will be duly approved and signed by the Chair once completed.	

	confidential minutes	<p>Page 4 – should read a ‘lower proportion of adult learners’ rather than a higher number as stated in the minutes. Page 7 – should read ‘FE transformation’ and not EPI. Page 9 – remove ‘and apprenticeships role’.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">APPROVED subject to the amendments noted above : Minutes and confidential Minutes of the meeting held on the 8 July 2025</p>	CSB
4	Matters Arising not covered by this agenda:	There were no matters arising not covered by this agenda.	
5	Chair’s Report	<p>The Chair thanked Governors for their contributions at the earlier Strategy Event and welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the academic year.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed new Governors: Tim Kent, Rebecca Smith, Siobhan Phillips, and Brendan Maher (Student Governor). Introductions were made.</p> <p>The Board noted Natalie Garner’s resignation from Ashford Local College Board (LCB), Education Committee, and Full Governing Body (FGB).</p> <p>The Chair confirmed his intention to step down as Chair of the Full Governing Body at the end of the 2025/26 academic year. The Search & Governance Committee will lead recruitment for a successor.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTED: The Chairs report.</p>	
6	CEO’s Report	<p>The CEO’s Report was taken as read and the following was noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The University and College Union(UCU) have reported that 77 colleges are currently listed as being at risk of strike action if they do not implement a 10% pay award.. Governors were reminded that this year’s 4% pay award has already been agreed, however proposals for further pay-related measures will be brought to FGB in December. The Group remains 	

		<p>committed to being a Real Living Wage employer, though the widening gap between the national and real living wage presents financial pressures, particularly for the nurseries and the Yarrow.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a growing strategic focus around employer Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs). A request from the previous meeting for a full list of MOUs has been actioned. It was noted that Lindsay Biggs is leading this work, with recent discussions at GLB clarifying the distinction between Group-level and College-level MOUs. • All MOUs will be tracked through the CRM system, which is receiving enhanced attention to ensure impact is monitored. Governors were assured that MOUs are meaningful and outcome-focused, not merely administrative. <p>Governors queried whether the promotion of MOUs and their benefits to EKC Group could be improved. It was noted that while employers are bound by regulatory requirements, the value of these types of agreements are now seen as essential alongside programme, budget, quality and safety considerations.</p> <p>Governors agreed that showcasing these agreements, such as the partnership with Dover Port, would help demonstrate the mutual benefits of MOUs.</p> <p>The Chair suggested the Chief Communications Officer (JW) could support the promotion of MOUs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LM informed Governors of the appointment of Ellen Thinnesen OBE as the new FE Commissioner. <p>The Chair noted that he had previously met Ellen in her capacity as a National Leader of Further Education and anticipated she would outline her approach to the new role at the upcoming National Leaders of Further Education meeting which he will be attending.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LM reported that enrolment for 2025/26 had significantly improved, supported by a more centralised approach to the process. 	<p>JW</p>
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		<p>A Governor noted that this new approach had been particularly effective at Canterbury College, helping to minimise queues and improve the overall experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LM acknowledged that the handling of late enrolments had not gone as well as hoped. Improving this process is a priority for the next academic year. • LM reported strong enrolment figures, with current projections indicating 315–400 students above allocation. This exceeds the planned over-allocation by approximately 115 students. Additional staffing has been put in place to support the increased numbers. • This positive trend reflects national demographic growth expected to continue until 2030. The focus now shifts to student retention, particularly within the first six weeks. While some early withdrawals are expected, efforts will be made to improve transition support from feeder schools to reduce avoidable losses. <p>Governors noted it was pleasing to see an increase in enrolments at Sheppey College.</p> <p>-LM confirmed this was the first year Sheppey had seen growth, reflecting broader improvements and a more positive atmosphere.</p> <p>Governors queried whether the demographic profile in Sheppey was similar to the rest of Kent and LM confirmed this was the case.</p> <p>Governors raised a concern about students not achieving the grades required to access T Levels.</p> <p>LM acknowledged the challenge and outlined that the Group is exploring support options, including offering tailored advice, emphasising English and Maths, and helping EKC students identify suitable pathways and backup plans. The introduction of Vocational (V) Levels was also noted.</p> <p>Governors queried whether low grades, rather than lack of interest, were the main barrier to T Level uptake. LM confirmed that T Levels are academically demanding and this remains a key issue.</p>	
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7	Group Director of Corporate Services and Governance Report	<p>The Group Director of Corporate Services and Governance (JC) presented the report and the following was noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are currently vacancies for the Chair of Ashford LCB, a member of Education Committee and the Chair of Audit Committee (from December). The Full Governing Body currently comprises 18 members, with a maximum of 20. Search & Governance Committee has agreed in principle to five new appointments to strengthen Local College Boards, subject to successful meetings with Principals. The Full Governing Body was also asked to consider the appointment of Jane Kendall as Chair of Ashford LCB and member of Education Committee. <p>FGB approved the appointment of Jane Kendall, subject to a successful meeting with the Chair of Governors, Vice Chair of Governors and the CEO.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Search & Governance Committee agreed to trial Governor Designate roles, allowing prospective Governors to observe Committee meetings as non-voting members. This aims to build familiarity and a future pool of candidates while maintaining governance integrity. <p>The Chair further clarified the purpose of Governor Designate roles, noting that with regular</p>	

		<p>turnover of Governors, it takes time for new members to become familiar and effective within the Group. The Governor Designate model allows prospective Governors to observe committee meetings, learn the language and culture of the Group, and build relationships before formal appointment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governors were reminded to confirm they have read 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025', and to complete overdue Safeguarding and Prevent training. • A link to the 2025 Governor Skills Audit has been circulated on the Governance newsletter, and should be completed by 31 October for review at the 13 November Search & Governance meeting. • The mandatory DfE Governor Data Collection 2024-25 will be submitted in line with requirements. • JC reminded Governors to attend two Governor / Chief Executive Engagement sessions per year, as outlined in the recent Governance Newsletter. <p>AGREED: The appointment of Jane Kendall to Chair of Ashford Local College Board, Member of Education Committee and Full Governing Body, subject to a satisfactory interview outcome .</p> <p>AGREED: The addition of Governor Designate roles.</p> <p>NOTED: The Group Director of Corporate Services and Governance Report</p>	
8	Management Accounts – July-25 (provisional year-end position)	<p>The Chief Financial Officer (MC) presented the July 25 year-end accounts and the following was noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EBITDA is in line with the Q3 forecast at £7.5 million, resulting in a performance ratio of 9.3%, benchmarked as 'Outstanding' by the Department for Education Financial Health Score. • Cash flow remains safely above the 40-day target. • Overall, the financial position is strong, with additional investment planned to support students and curriculum delivery. • The FE Commissioner benchmarks are all being met, except staff costs as a percentage of 	

		<p>income, which is higher due to many traditionally external services (refectories, cleaning, security etc.) being provided in-house..</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banking Financial Covenants are all being met. <p>Governors queried the budget variance for English and Maths teaching provision and whether this linked to students who are unable to achieve the required grades to progress onto T Level programmes.</p> <p>LM clarified contingency funding had been put in place for additional English and Maths teachers due to changes to the National plan, however once curriculum planning had been carried out, fewer additional teachers were required than anticipated.</p> <p>Governors queried how the Group plans to use its surplus funding to benefit students.</p> <p>MC noted that work is underway to minimise current uncertainties, which will enable more strategic use of surplus funds.</p> <p>The Assistant CEO, Transformation and Infrastructure (DS) confirmed that both the Property and Digital Strategies include detailed proposals for surplus funding, with plans expected to be presented in December.</p> <p>Governors suggested exploring whether surplus funds could support student-focused activities, such as additional English and Maths teaching or enhanced engagement and communication initiatives.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTED: The Management Accounts – July-25 (provisional year-end position)</p>	
9	Safeguarding Update to include the Safeguarding (including Child Protection) and	<p>Part of this item is considered confidential and will be included in the Confidential Minutes Part A.</p> <p>The Deputy Chief Executive Officer (VC-C) presented the safeguarding update and the following was noted:</p>	

	<p>Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation Policy and Procedure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong enrolment has positively impacted safeguarding across colleges. Tutorials have focused on current safeguarding topics, driving awareness through some of the most recent and political risks our learners face. Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) are working collaboratively across sites to share best practice. • Safeguarding chronologies are functioning well, aligned with the Ofsted framework's emphasis on knowing students. A development action plan is in place, including contextualised safeguarding and professional development. • An evacuation drill is scheduled in two weeks with all staff with the new approach. • Mental health support is being reviewed to ensure consistency across colleges. • Safeguarding arrangements are being established for new provision, including Margate Digital. • Reporting categories have been clarified in the safeguarding paper. • All staff have had a refresher update on safeguarding through the annual video and this can be seen by Local Board members in their upcoming LCB meeting. • Approval is required for the updated Safeguarding Policy and Procedure for 2025. <p style="text-align: center;">APPROVED: Safeguarding (including Child Protection) and Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation Policy and Procedure.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTED: Safeguarding Update to include the Safeguarding (including Child Protection) and Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation Policy and Procedure</p>	
10	<p>Annual Reports: a. Staff Survey results 2024/25</p>	<p><u>Staff Survey results 2024/25</u> The Chief People Officer (KH) summarised the results of the staff survey 2024/25.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KH reported on the annual staff survey, conducted via York College using consistent questions for year-on-year comparison. • Engagement levels were lower this year and require improvement. It was noted that some staff are not able to regularly engage with IT equipment to easily complete the survey, whilst other staff members had concerns about anonymity of results. • While progress has been made across all areas, EKC Group has not improved as much when compared to other colleges taking part in the survey. KH emphasised the importance of 	

	<p>b. Complaints 2024/25</p>	<p>ongoing communication with staff about actions taken in response to feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business units have developed individual action plans, and campaigns are underway to reinforce that staff voice is being heard. <p>Governors highlighted inadequate resources for staff, students, and workplaces as a key area of feedback.</p> <p>Governors noted lower scores in communication and engagement and asked whether surplus funds could support improvements in these areas.</p> <p>LM responded that, despite concerns, the Group scored higher than other FE Colleges in communication. There are ongoing efforts to improve communication, including forums and Q&A sessions. LM also reviewed IT-related comments, noting most concerns centred around issues with Apple Macs at Canterbury College.</p> <p>Governors discussed the timing of the survey, which is usually launched in June, suggesting low response rates may be linked to seasonal variances.</p> <p>KH confirmed the launch of the staff survey is tied to York College’s schedule.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTED: The Staff Survey results for 2024/25</p> <p><u>Complaints 2024/25</u> The Assistant CEO, Information and Strategy (PS) presented the Annual Complaints Report with a comparison against 2024/25 and the following was noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall figures were broadly in line with the previous year. • A new category for safeguarding-related complaints has been introduced. • Decrease in complaints at Broadstairs College, with no clear rationale. This is under review. • Increase in complaints at Canterbury College, likely due to improved reporting and recording practices. 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer service complaints remain the highest, reflecting high expectations around communication and professional behaviour. • Vexatious complaints have increased and are now addressed within the updated complaints policy. • Policy-related complaints have risen, particularly around late enrolment procedures, highlighting a need to improve service delivery and manage expectations. This is in the context of a significant increase in applications and student numbers, resulting in the need to effectively manage waiting lists and late enrolments. <p>Governors queried the timescale for processing complaints under Group policies, particularly when complaints are submitted at the end of the academic year.</p> <p>PS confirmed that complaints are not rejected due to timing in the academic year, but may be reviewed differently if raised long after the original incident when it is difficult to collect evidence.</p> <p>Governors asked how long after leaving college a complaint can be submitted.</p> <p>JC confirmed the standard window is two months, though this may vary depending on whether the issue has been previously addressed and the specific context of the complaint.</p> <p>Governors queried whether national benchmarking data is available to compare complaints performance.</p> <p>PS confirmed that such data is not currently accessed, and benchmarking complaints is complex due to differing institutional cultures and reporting practices.</p> <p>Governors discussed the importance of encouraging complaint reporting as a tool for improvement, noting that the number of complaints alone is not always a reliable indicator. More meaningful metrics include the proportion of complaints upheld or partially upheld.</p> <p>Governors queried when the Parents' Charter is sent to students and parents.</p>	
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	c. Use of the College Seal 2024/25	<p>It was clarified that the Parents' Charter is introduced at enrolment and sets expectations for behaviour.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NOTED: The annual report of Complaints for 2024/25</p> <p><u>Use of the EKC Group Seal 2024/25</u></p> <p>The Group Director of Corporate Services and Governance informed the Full Governing Body that the Group Seal has been used three times in the 2024/25 period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swale Borough Council and Southern Gas Networks PLC - Gas Pipeline Easements at Sheppey College. • Jenner (Contractors) Limited – Margate Digital JCT Design and Build 2024 • Thanet District Council – Lease relating to 52-57 Margate, Kent CT9 1DY <p style="text-align: center;">NOTED: The use of the College Seal for 2024/25</p>	
11	Any Other Business	ES informed Governors of a planned 150-mile charity walk over 10 days to celebrate 150 years of Jenner, passing two EKC Group projects along the route. ES will share the route and dates with CSB so that Governors may join if they wish.	CSB
12	Matters Considered Confidential	Part of Item 9 - Safeguarding	
13	Date and time of next meeting	The next meeting is due to take place on Tuesday 9 th December 2025, 5:30pm, Yarrow Hotel.	

There being no further business the meeting closed at 5.01pm

Signed: 

Print: Charles Buchanan

Date: 10 December 2025