EKC East Kent Colleges Group

Search and Governance Committee Minutes

Meeting	Search and Governance Committee	Date	13 November 2025
Location	Broadstairs Executive Boardroom	Time	9:30 am
Membership	Miranda Chapman (Chair) (MC), Gail Clarke (GC), Peter Cheney (PC) and Lucy McLeod (CEO) (LM)		
In Attendance	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 members to the meeting. Gail Clarke and Peter Cheney joined the meeting online via Teams.	
2	Declarations of Interests	There were no additional declarations to the meeting other than those declared as standing	
3	Minutes of the meetings held on 15 May, 16 September and 16 October 2025	The minutes of the Search and Governance Committee meetings held on the 15 May, 16 September and 16 October 2025 were reviewed and approved as an accurate record and will be duly signed by the Chair following this meeting.	
4	Matters arising not covered by this agenda	None.	
5	Terms of Reference for the Search and Governance Committee	The Group Director of Corporate Services and Governance (JC) presented the Terms of Reference 2025-26 for the Search and Governance Committee: JC noted there are no changes to the Terms of Reference for Search and Governance Committee for 2025/26.	

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		Governors confirmed approval AGREED: 2025-26 Terms of Reference for Search & Governance Committee	
6	Governor Skills Audit 2025-26	JC presented the Governor Skills Audit for 2025-26 and the following was noted: • 12 of 18 Governor responses received to date. • Some technical issues may have affected Governor completion. • Further follow-up required to obtain a full picture. CSB to confirm whether delays were due to technical problems and issue a manual completion form if necessary. A response rate of 85% is required to obtain a comprehensive skills audit. Governors highlighted that the focus should be on scores of 5 and 6, as these indicate expertise. If there is sufficient coverage of 6s; lower scores are not considered problematic. Governors agreed that the average score is less significant than ensuring at least one score of 5 or 6 in each category. Governors noted that the current six-point scale is an internal measure and could be reviewed by the new Chair of Full Governing Body (FGB). Governors proposed mapping Governors' key skills against categories to identify gaps for succession planning. ACTION: • CSB to resend the audit link and manual form to outstanding Governors. • New Director of Governance (DoG) to present a breakdown of 6s by category and Committee at the next Search and Governance Committee meeting on 10 March 2026. • Requirement for at least one score of 6 in each category and relevant Committee to be included in the action plan as a review for the new Director of Governance and new Chair of Full Governing Body.	 CSB DoG DoG

		• Previous Audit Gaps:
		  o Legal services skills gap addressed through July 2025 training with Tom Morrison, Stone King LLP.
		  o Managing Public Money training scheduled for 24 March 2026 FGB with the External Auditor, Catherine Biscoe, Buzzacott.
		• Future Training Considerations:
		  o Discussion on whether July FGB should include training based on identified gaps or External Board Review (EBR) preparation.
		  o CB advised that EBR does not require a formal training session but offered to provide a presentation and explanation to Governors in the July FGB meeting.
		
		NOTED: Governor Skills Audit 2025-26
			DoG / CB

7	Recruitment and succession update: FGB, Committee, LCB Membership and Terms of Office update Chair of Governors succession planning and shadowing (process for recruitment) – to propose to FGB.	The Director of Corporate Services and Governance (JC) presented a recruitment and succession update and the following was noted: <u>Education Committee Vacancies</u> JC reported that there was a successful outcome following the interview held with Jane Kendal (JK) on 4 November 2025. CSB has contacted JK to confirm agreement to proceed with appointment as Chair of Ashford Local College Board (LCB), Member of Education Committee and Full Governing Body. MC agreed to act as JK's mentor for the next year, as requested at interview by JK. Governors agreed to recommend JKs appointment as member of Education Committee and Full Governing Body as agreed at FGB (3 October 2025). <u>Audit Committee Chair Vacancy (from December 2025)</u> • JC reported that the role of Audit Committee Chair will be vacant from January 2026. The Chair queried if the current Chair of Audit Committee (PC) had any suggestions or specific	

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		questions the panel should ask the candidates at interview.
		
		PC noted candidates should have an awareness of the Charities Act, the Companies Act, and have an understanding of audit and risk. It would also be interesting to know if they have spent any employment time in audit or finance.
		
		• JC confirmed that the application to the DfE-funded recruitment service for recruitment of a Chair of Audit Committee was successful.
		    o The service provides a vetted shortlist of candidates for interview.
		    o The funded service only applies to appointments to the role of Chair of Audit Committee.
		    o If additional candidates are selected from the shortlist for appointment, there would be an additional cost of approximately £2,000–£2,500 per candidate.
		
		Governors agreed the focus should remain on filling the Audit Committee Chair vacancy rather than considering any additional roles.
		
		Governors agreed to proceed with the service while monitoring its effectiveness and ensuring FE-appropriate processes. It was noted that the service is new to the FE sector.
		
		Governors queried whether the Chair of Audit Committee role had been separately advertised by the Group.
		
		JC confirmed the role had been advertised on the Group website which links vacancies to the LinkedIn website automatically, however, will confirm to ensure appropriate promotion of the role.
		
		Governors confirmed approval that the Audit Committee Chair recruitment can proceed via the DfE funded service.
		
		ACTION:
		• JC to confirm Governor vacancies are advertised on the LinkedIn platform.
			JC

		• JC to proceed with the DfE funded FE recruitment service for the role of Chair of Audit Committee. <u>Climate Change and Sustainability Lead Governor Role</u> • JC asked Governors to consider a replacement for the Climate Change and Sustainability Lead Governor role following ES stepping down in September. Governors considered whether the Climate Change Lead Governor role is still required and what impact it has. It was noted that there is significant sustainability activity within the Group, but Governors do not necessarily receive updates. Governors suggested leaving the role in abeyance for the next few months to assess all lead governor roles and whether the Group requires a review of these to align with its strategic plan. Governors agreed to review this at the next Search and Governance meeting alongside all lead Governor roles. ACTION: • MC will check with ES for any useful feedback following her role as Lead Governor for Climate Change and Sustainability. • DoG to speak to all lead Governors and confirm the continued value of their roles to the main board. <u>Staff Governor Term of Office</u> • JC noted the current Staff Governor is due to reach the end of her term of office on 31 March 2026. A new Staff Governor will need to be elected and in post by April 2026. An election campaign will begin at the end of January.	DoG MC DoG DoG

		<u>Current FGB and Committee membership</u> A Governor queried the end of Governor term of office dates on Table 1 of the paper. JC confirmed it would have been better to display the number of years served by governors and apologised that the incorrect column from the spreadsheet was included for review. Governors queried progress on meeting with Georgina Randsley De Moura (GRDM) to discuss possible FGB membership. GRDM had previously resigned from EKC Training Board, however expressed an interest in joining Full Governing Body. LM noted an existing meeting scheduled with GRDM on 17 December and suggested MC joins for 30 minutes prior to this meeting to discuss FGB progression. ACTION: LM/MC to meet with Georgina Randsley De Moura on 17 December. <u>LCB Update</u> A Governor noted that interviews are taking place for new LCB members, however there are currently no planned interviews for EKC Training Local Board (LB) vacancies. It was also noted that Sheppey LCB require additional members. Governors suggested that Alex Syrotiuk, Principal of Sheppey College has good connections and may be able to make recommendations for new members. Governors emphasised that the role of Search and Governance Committee is to validate LCB members brought forward by Principals for appointment. Governors agreed that it would be useful to arrange a meeting between DoG and the Principal of EKC Training to discuss and encourage identification of potential candidates.	LM/MC DoG

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		Governors further suggested that the new Director of Governance should meet annually with LCB Principals to discuss succession planning. JC will add this review to the handover action plan. ACTION: • MC to check with ES that she is happy to continue with both roles of Chair of EKC Training LB and Folkestone LCB. • DoG to arrange meeting with Principal of EKC Training LB to discuss recruitment • JC to add annual review of LCB membership / recruitment with Principals to the Director of Governance handover action plan. <u>Chair of Governors succession planning and shadowing process</u> JC reported that an expression of interest for the role of Chair of the Full Governing Body (FGB) has been received from Tim Kent (TK). Governors have formally proposed and seconded TK for the position, and the appointment will be taken to a vote at the FGB meeting on 9 December 2025. Governors recommended that: • A formal vote on the appointment of TK as Chair of Governors is conducted at the meeting on 9 December 2025. • TK will leave the room during the vote. • Subject to approval, TK should act as Chair Designate from 9 December 2025 to 31 August 2026, allowing time to shadow the current Chair and ensure a smooth transition. • The appointment as Chair of Governors will be recommended to commence on 1 September 2026 for a four-year term. <u>New Applications for role of Volunteer Governor / LCB Member</u> Governors reviewed three new applications for Volunteer Governor and Local College Board (LCB) member roles. It was noted that anonymisation of applications made discussion challenging, and a clearer labelling system would be helpful. JC provided clarification for the	DoG MC DoG DoG

		purposes of the meeting. • Candidate ID 16281 (AT): Experience appears primarily operational and does not align with the requirements of the role. Governors agreed not to progress this application further. CSB to ensure the candidate is informed appropriately. • Candidate ID 21572 (GS): Strong academic background, local network, and knowledge of teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) and Higher Education. Governors agreed GS should be invited for an interview for an LCB role. Preferred location was not indicated on the application. CSB to confirm this and arrange an interview with the relevant panel. • Candidate ID 21708 (EO): Application references school rather than FE. However, Governors recommended proceeding to interview. Governors suggested Ashford LCB as a potential location but will confirm EO's preference before scheduling an LCB interview. APPROVE: Jane Kendal is appointed as Chair of Ashford LCB, Member of Education Committee and Full Governing Body (as agreed FGB 3 October 2025) RECOMMEND: A formal vote on the appointment of TK as Chair of the Full Governing Body is conducted at the meeting on 9 December 2025 RECOMMEND: Subject to formal vote, TK should be appointed as Chair Designate from 9 December 2025 to 31 August 2026 RECOMMEND: Subject to formal vote, the appointment of TK as Chair of Governors commencing on 1 September 2026 for a four-year term. NOTED: Recruitment and Succession update	CSB CSB CSB
8	Governor Development Programme 2025/26	JC presented the Governor Development Plan 2025-26 for approval and recommendation to FGB. Governors observed that the Governor Development Programme is very comprehensive and may feel overwhelming for new Governors. JC highlighted that training and development opportunities are also shared in the monthly Governance Newsletter, providing smaller, regular updates to support engagement.	

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		Governors queried whether refresher training (e.g., GDPR) should be encouraged for existing Governors every three years, similar to mandatory training requirements. It was suggested that Governors could be assigned the Director of Governance as their line manager within the Group tracking system to provide a clearer snapshot of training progress. ACTION: • JC to include Governor training tracking in the handover action plan for the new Director of Governance. AGREED : Governor Development Programme 2025/26	DoG
9	External Governance Review planning for Autumn 2026	• JC reported that an External Board Review (EBR) for the Group will commence in Autumn 2026, with publication scheduled for Spring 2027. • As part of the review process, the Group is required to undertake an annual self-assessment between EBRs. • JC confirmed that the 2025 self-assessment has been completed and a development plan produced, which will also serve as a useful handover document for the incoming Director of Governance. • JC invited Governors to suggest any additional points for inclusion in the development plan. Governors agreed that the development plan was comprehensive. The only amber-rated area identified was student voice at FGB, which requires improvement. While student voice is strong at Local College Boards (LCBs), it is less evident at the main Board level. Governors discussed whether the Group is fully recognising student-related activity and noted that, although this occurs, it is not always visible at Board level. In considering Student Governor participation, JC clarified that Student Governors are not appointed to represent the entire student body, but to provide their own perspective. Governors acknowledged that this still constitutes a valuable student voice, albeit not	

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		representative of all students. A Governor confirmed that this distinction is covered in the Student Governor induction process. Governors noted that LCB Members and the Chair of Education Committee are proactive in engaging with student voice activities, but feedback from LCBs on student participation could be strengthened. Suggestions included encouraging Governors to undertake learning walks to engage directly with students. Governors proposed making at least one learning walk per year mandatory, noting that this practice had lapsed in recent years. It was agreed that LCB Chairs and Principals should be re-briefed to ensure student voice is given full consideration at local level. Governors also discussed the need to address attendance issues among Student Representatives, suggesting this be raised at the Education Committee when LCB Chairs provide feedback. Chairs should maintain contact with Student Representatives who do not attend meetings. ACTION: • JC to update the Cycle of Business to note for the next academic year, LCB members will be required to complete one learning walk annually. JC queried if the Self-assessment Development Plan, should proceed to the Full Governing Body (FGB). Governors confirmed approval. A Governor suggested that proposals from third parties for the forthcoming EBR should include EKC Group-specific references. Proposals should be reviewed at the next Search and Governance meeting. RECOMMEND: Annual Self-assessment Development Plan to be presented at FGB. NOTED: External Governance Review planning for Autumn 2026	JC JC/DoG

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10	Risk Register	The Director of Corporate Services and Governance presented the Risk Register and the following was noted: • JC reported that the review of the Risk Register is a new agenda item. Paul Sayers, Assistant CEO, Information and Strategy, and JC, in conjunction with the Group Leadership Board (GLB), have re-structured the Risk Register to align with the new Group Strategic Plan 2025–2029. Mitigations have been re-drafted and proposed risk scores updated. JC suggested that it would be useful for the Risk Register to be taken to the relevant committees for scoring of risks and mitigations. • JC clarified that the Search and Governance Committee is required to review Risk 8 on the Risk Register and invited comments from Governors. Governors confirmed that the relevant Committee should own the risk and agreed that Committee-level review would provide additional assurance to the audit process. Governors agreed to recommend the revised Risk Register to the Audit Committee for approval. Governors noted that this item may not require detailed discussion at this stage, however highlighted that one of the key areas within the Risk Register is Cybersecurity. Governors discussed the importance of Cybersecurity and referenced the Cybersecurity Playbook, which provides guidance for managing incidents. It was queried whether all Local College Boards (LCBs) have access to and understand the playbook. JC confirmed the playbook is designed for Senior Leadership Teams at each college site and outlines procedures for incident response. JC also reported that the Group is currently undertaking a review of the Business Continuity Plan and the playbook to link the two documents together. Once this work has been completed, a standardised procedure will be implemented across the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to manage incidents effectively. Governors queried whether there should be a level of Governor involvement, particularly at Chair and Vice-Chair level, given the significant communication responsibilities in the event of a cyber incident.	

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		LM reported that an external company has already delivered a training scenario session for the Group Leadership Board (GLB), JC, key Digital and IT staff. This exercise produced a RACI (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted and Informed) document, and a follow-up session has been held. A further session with GLB is scheduled in the coming weeks. Following these sessions, Governors will receive an update on cybersecurity preparedness. NOTED: Risk Register (Risk 8)	
11	Governor Attendance Report 2024-25 (CPI A20 Governor Attendance)	JC presented the Governor Attendance Report 2024-25 for information. No questions or observations were raised by Governors. NOTED: Governor Attendance Report 2025-25	
12	Gifts and Hospitality Annual Report 2024-25	JC presented the Gifts and Hospitality Annual Report 2024-25 and invited Governors to consider if the delegated responsibility for this report should be Audit Committee rather than Search and Governance Committee. Governors agreed the delegated responsibility should be transferred to Audit Committee. ACTION: • JC to update the Scheme of Delegation to note the delegated responsibility for approval of the Gifts and Hospitality Annual Report should move to Audit Committee AGREED: Gifts and Hospitality Annual Report 2025-25 AGREED: The delegated authority for the Gifts and Hospitality Annual Report to be transferred to Audit Committee.	JC/DoG
13	Any Other Business	JC noted there is a current e-Resolution for the appointment of the new Director of Governance should Governors wish to engage with this process. Governors in attendance confirmed they will register their responses after the meeting.	

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14	Matters Considered Confidential	No matters are considered confidential.	
15	Date and time of next meeting	Date and time of next meeting: Tuesday 10 March 2026 at 09:30, Folkestone Executive Boardroom.	

There being no further business the meeting closed at 11.03am .

Signed: M Chapman Print: Miranda Chapman Date: