East Kent Colleges Group

Full Governing Body Minutes

Meeting	Full Governing Body	Date	Monday 13 July 2026
Location	The Yarrow Hotel, Broadstairs	Time	5.30pm
Membership	Charles Buchanan (CB) (Chair), Lucy McLeod (LM) (Chief Executive Officer), Ella Sandall (ES), Gail Clarke (GC), Miranda Chapman (MC), Jason Howard (JH), Ray Bryce (RB) (Staff Governor), Carmel Togher (CT), Sam Lawrence-Rose (SL-R), Tammy Mitchell (TM), John Oliphant (JO), Siobhan Phillips (SP), Rebecca Smith (RS), Tim Kent (TK), Jane Kendal (JKE), Daniel Cope (DC), Brendan Maher (BM) (Student Governor)		
In Attendance	Dan Shelley (DS) (Assistant CEO, Infrastructure & Transformation) Ian Rule (IR) (Interim Chief Financial Officer) Freya Reding (FR) (Interim Director of Finance) 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) Lindsey Biggs, (LB) Chief Innovation and Skills Officer Camilla Etheridge (CE) (Group Director of Governance) Claire Banks (CSB) (Governance Officer) Kate Flounders (KF) (Independent Safeguarding Lead) Item 16 - online		

Italics denotes absence.

	ITEM	COMMENTS	ACTION
1	Welcome and Apologies for Absence	The Chair welcomed members to the final Full Governing Body meeting of the academic year and noted apologies received from Carmel Togher who may join the meeting later.	

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2	Declarations of Interest	Governors were invited to declare any interests not already covered by standing declarations. A declaration relating to Ashford was noted by ES as an existing standing declaration. No additional declarations were received.	
3	Minutes of the meeting held 24 March 2026, including any confidential minutes	The minutes and confidential minutes of the Full Governing Body meeting held on the 24 March 2026 were reviewed and approved as an accurate record and will be duly signed by the Chair.	
4	Matters Arising not covered by this agenda:	There were no matters arising not covered by this agenda.	
5	Chair's Report	The Chair welcomed governors to the final meeting of the academic year and formally welcomed new governors joining the Board. The Chair highlighted the additional expertise and perspectives that new members would bring to Board and Committee discussions. Board Membership Changes The Chair noted a number of membership changes: • Kayleigh Hutchings had resigned following a change in family circumstances which required relocation overseas. • Francesca Lashma had completed her term as Staff Governor. • Student Governor Brendan Maher was attending his final meeting and was thanked for his contribution. • Jo Worby had resigned owing to increased commitments. Governors recognised her significant contribution to the Group Governance. • The Chair confirmed that correspondence had been sent acknowledging resignations and thanking Governors for their service. Governance Developments The Chair reported on:	

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		• Recent individual Governor one-to-one sessions undertaken as part of Board development. The feedback gathered would support the incoming Chair in future Board development activities. • Attendance at a National Leaders event led by the new FE Commissioner. The Chair reported a strong emphasis nationally on governance effectiveness, governor use of data and evidence-based decision-making. Concerns were noted regarding the potential blurring of governance and operational management responsibilities. • Attendance at regional Association of Colleges meetings, which had resumed face-to-face networking activities for the first time since the pandemic. The Chair highlighted the value of in-person sector engagement and knowledge sharing. • Participation in strategic discussions with the Department for Education, providing opportunities to raise sector issues and promote the Group's priorities. Governors discussed the growing national emphasis on data-driven governance and recognised the importance of ensuring that Board reporting and strategic monitoring arrangements continued to provide robust evidence of impact. NOTED: Chairs Report	
6	CEO's Report	The Chief Executive Officer (LM) presented her report and highlighted a number of key developments: Qualifications Reform The Group continued to participate as a sector pioneer in qualification reform activity. Whilst welcoming the opportunity to influence policy development, LM emphasised the importance of providing constructive challenge to proposed reforms where appropriate. LM noted that engagement arrangements had improved through the establishment of sector consultation groups. SEND Reforms Governors received an update on SEND reforms and associated funding opportunities. Discussion focused on the increasing complexity of learner needs and the need to equip	

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		teaching staff with the skills required to support those learners effectively. LM emphasised that funding would be used to strengthen staff capability and support arrangements. Governors discussed the proposed Individual Support Plans (ISPs), highlighting concerns regarding: • Additional administrative burden. • Workforce capacity. • Ownership and responsibility for implementation. • Potential funding implications. • The scale of implementation across the learner population. LM acknowledged these concerns and confirmed that significant planning would be required to implement the reforms effectively. Funding and Policy Developments LM noted: • A national increase in FE funding rates. • Anticipated additional funding estimated at £1.2 million, subject to confirmation. • Continued lobbying activity through local MPs regarding FE funding and VAT issues. Employer and Community Engagement LM reported successful community and stakeholder engagement activities including: • Kent Apprenticeships Celebration Awards. • Official opening events for the Sheppey development and the Margate Digital facilities. • Positive engagement from local MPs and sector stakeholders. Construction Premium Funding Governors received an update on high-value construction course funding. The Group had successfully challenged aspects of national funding eligibility criteria after identifying that certain qualifications delivered by the Group were excluded despite remaining current and educationally appropriate. Following representations made by the Group and	

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		awarding organisation partners, the Department accepted the case and agreed to include the qualifications within eligible provision. The Board welcomed this outcome as an example of effective sector influence and evidence-based advocacy. Strategic Transition Planning LM noted the submission of the Group's transition planning return in relation to qualification reform and future curriculum planning. A further update would be required in October once additional national guidance became available. NOTED: CEOs Report	
7	Group Director of Governance Report	The Group Director of Governance (CE) presented the report and the following was noted: Governor Appointment Governors were asked to consider the appointment of Georgina Randsley de Moura. Having reviewed the supporting information and met the candidate, Governors agreed to ratify the appointment. Reappointment of Governors The Board approved the reappointment of Tim Kent, Rebecca Smith, and Siobhan Phillips for a further three-year term of office. Governance IT and Training CE thanked Governors for the completion of recent e-resolutions, noting these are now conducted on the Board Intelligence portal. CE reported ongoing work to resolve individual IT issues and improve governor engagement with e-resolutions and digital governance systems. CE confirmed that Board Intelligence and EKC Group email accounts can be accessed through any web browser. An instruction sheet has been distributed to Governors to facilitate this process.	

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		The importance of completing mandatory governor safeguarding training was reiterated, with a suggestion that this could be included at a Strategy event or add-on to a future meeting. RATIFIED: Appointment of Georgina Randsley de Moura as a Full Governing Body Member APPROVED: Tim Kent, Siobhan Phillips, and Rebecca Smith reappointment for a further three-year term of office.	
8	Strategic Plan Updates & Priorities 2026-27 (Following afternoon strategy event)	The Assistant CEO, Information and Strategy (PS) presented the Strategic Plan Updates and priorities 2026/27 and the following key points were noted: Governors confirmed their support for the proposed strategic priorities for 2026–27, discussed earlier at the Strategy Event, subject to minor amendments reflecting issues raised during discussions, including consideration of fees policy matters. RATIFIED: Strategic Plan Updates and Priorities 2026/27	
15	Group Management Accounts and Update to the Financial Handbook 2026	Chair advised that consideration of the management accounts prior to the budget Strategy (Item 9) would provide a more appropriate context for the subsequent budget discussion. The Interim Chief Financial Officer (IR) introduced the Group management accounts for May 2026 and welcomed the opportunity to meet newly appointed governors. He explained that he was providing interim support to the Interim Finance Director (FR), who had undertaken the majority of the work in preparing the accounts and was thanked for her significant contribution. • IR noted that the overall financial direction of travel remained positive and performance was currently ahead of the Quarter 3 forecast. • IR reported that income and pay costs remained broadly in line with forecast. The principal variance related to non-pay expenditure, where there was an underspend of approximately £1.9 million year-to-date. Whilst this represented a favourable financial variance, the position had been RAG-rated amber because the Group was not spending resources in line with planned budgets.	

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		Governors challenged whether the underspend meant that current learners were not receiving the full benefit of resources intended for them. Governors commented that if expenditure was not taking place, then students were potentially not benefiting from investment that had been planned for the current academic year. FR agreed that this was an important consideration and confirmed that further analysis would be undertaken. Discussions with budget holders suggested a cyclical pattern of expenditure, whereby some departments purchased resources in advance for the following academic year, creating periodic underspends within the current year. Notwithstanding this explanation, FR acknowledged that the pattern required further investigation and challenge. Based on current projections, FR expected the Group to achieve an EBITDA position above forecast by year-end. Governors sought clarification on whether the current-year underspend would effectively flow into the next year's budget position. FR confirmed that where expenditure had not been required, this would be reflected in future budget assumptions and factored into the Group's financial planning. IR advised that a review of accounting treatment was being undertaken in some expenditure areas. He emphasised that this represented a change in practice rather than a material change in accounting policy and noted that there were no significant advantages to achieving exceptionally high financial health scores beyond maintaining a strong position. He suggested that maintaining a "good" or "outstanding" financial position should be balanced with ensuring appropriate investment for students where resources could add value. Governors questioned what would happen if the underspend were carried into future budgets and departments continued not to use the allocated funding. FR responded that this would create opportunities to redirect funding to areas where it could have a greater impact.	

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		LM noted that equipment and consumables budgets were allocated on a per-student basis and that further analysis was required to identify departments consistently underspending and understand the reasons behind this. She stressed the importance of ensuring funding allocations remained appropriate and reflected actual student need. Governors observed that cyclical expenditure patterns were common across many organisations and businesses, particularly where departments sought to protect future provision by purchasing resources earlier than planned. IR agreed but stressed the need for constructive discussions with budget holders to avoid either unnecessary expenditure or persistent underspending. He advised that the Group would seek a better understanding of the actual cost of delivering individual programmes so that budgets could be aligned more closely with actual student requirements. FR added that some curriculum areas were spending in line with expectations and that several vocational and construction-based programmes had faced significant inflationary cost pressures that needed to be reflected within future budget planning. Governors asked whether any persistent underspend could support capital investment projects. IR confirmed that this was possible, noting that unspent revenue resources would strengthen reserves and provide greater flexibility for future strategic investment decisions. Governors sought assurance regarding the financial health score and banking covenant performance. Governors noted that the threshold for achieving an Outstanding financial health rating was 240 points and that the Group was currently reporting a score of 280, with a forecast year-end position of 260. IR confirmed that, even taking account of anticipated accounting adjustments, the Group remained on course to achieve an Outstanding financial health rating.	

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		Governors commended the revised management accounts presentation, commenting that the dashboard format and financial reporting provided greater clarity and accessibility for Governors. Appreciation was expressed to FR and the finance team for the improvements made. Governors reflected on recent comments from the FE Commissioner regarding concern for colleges operating at the lower end of financial health measures. Governors noted that EKC Group remained in a significantly stronger position than many colleges across the sector and that its robust financial performance provided a strong platform from which to pursue strategic priorities and future investment opportunities. NOTED: May Management Accounts	
9	Budget Strategy: 1. Revenue Budget	The Interim Chief Financial Officer (IR) presented the proposed budget and advised Governors that it had been prepared on a prudent and deliberately conservative basis. • At the time of preparation, a number of positive funding developments had not yet been confirmed and therefore had not been incorporated into the budget assumptions. This included additional funding announcements and funding associated with pay awards. As a result, the Group anticipated that the eventual outturn position would be stronger than that currently reflected in the budget. • IR advised that further improvements were expected through changes to Teachers' Pension arrangements and associated grant funding. Governors were informed that a number of developments would require revisions to financial forecasts during the year and that a substantial update would be presented through the Quarter 1 forecasting process. Although the revised funding statement would not be received until September, the Group were confident that the key financial assumptions and strategic direction of the budget remained sound. Governors considered key financial indicators and discussed the continuing position regarding pay costs as a percentage of income.	

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		IR noted that, when benchmarked against the wider FE sector, the Group remained above sector norms. However, he explained that this was attributable to the Group's operating model, under which catering, cleaning, security and other support functions were delivered in-house rather than contracted externally. Consequently, costs that would appear as service expenditure in some colleges were reflected within payroll costs at EKC Group. IR further noted that the additional funding recently announced to support pay awards would improve this measure and reduce the percentage moving forward. Governors added that the Group also remained committed to paying the Real Living Wage, which naturally increased payroll costs, however reflected the Group's values and commitment to fair pay. IR commented that, whilst benchmarking was useful, it should be viewed as a reference point rather than a target and that the Group was able to provide a clear rationale for the variance. Governors commended FR and the wider finance team for preparing the budget within challenging timescales and against a backdrop of continuing uncertainty in national funding decisions. Referring Governors to the Risks and Opportunities analysis on page 72 of the papers, IR highlighted the opportunities associated with High Value Course Premium funding for construction provision. Governors noted that the Group had been allocated approximately £1.2 million through the scheme, however only £300,000 had been incorporated into the budget because this was the amount the Group could confidently forecast as achievable at the time. Subsequent developments indicated that at least a further £300,000 was now likely to be realised, creating a direct improvement to the forecast position. IR explained that whilst a total opportunity of approximately £900,000 remained identified within the opportunities register, £300,000 of that opportunity was already becoming realised.	

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	2. Capital Budget	As a result, future reports would show an improved financial position, however a reduced level of remaining opportunity. Governors noted that an additional £600,000 remained potentially available, although achieving the full amount could require changes to curriculum or delivery approaches that may not necessarily be in the best interests of students. LM reiterated that the Group would not pursue funding opportunities where doing so would compromise curriculum quality or learner experience and acknowledged that, in some circumstances, funding may need to be returned if it could not be used appropriately. IR further noted that a separate increase in national funding rates had not been included within the opportunities schedule because it had not been known at the time the budget was prepared. IR confirmed that this represented an additional positive development that would further strengthen the Group's financial position once incorporated into future forecasts. In discussion, LM highlighted an opportunity arising from over-delivery of the Adult Skills Fund, estimated at £400,000. IR cautioned that additional funding would not necessarily follow the extent of over-delivery achieved. Governors nevertheless noted that the Adult Skills Fund had historically been under-delivered and that the current position therefore represented a significant achievement for the Group. IR agreed, commenting that the position demonstrated a more accurate reflection of the Group's delivery capacity and ability to meet local demand. Governors also reviewed the capital budget included within the papers. IR confirmed that most of the planned capital expenditure would be funded through grant allocations, supplemented by a proportion of the Group's own resources. Governors were assured that the proposals	

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		represented measured investment and that no excessive expansion or unnecessary financial risk was being proposed. Governors sought clarification regarding the potential Ashford development opportunity and enquired whether the anticipated £1 million contribution from the Group had been incorporated within the budget. IR confirmed that this expenditure would not fall within the forthcoming financial year and had therefore not been included within the current budget assumptions. RESOLVED: Budget Strategy 2026/27	
10.	1. FGB approved costs over £500K: 2. Business Committee approved costs between £150K and £499k.	The Interim Chief Financial Officer (IR) presented the schedule of expenditure exceeding £500,000 requiring Full Governing Body approval, together with a summary of contracts previously approved by the Business Committee. Governors were advised that a few items had not been considered previously by the Business Committee, however required approval to allow operational delivery and contractual commitments for the forthcoming year. DS noted that the device replacement programme had already been approved by way of an e-resolution and therefore did not require further consideration. DS explained that the contracts presented represented essential operational expenditure and business continuity requirements across the Group, including software licensing, student support provision, insurance, and statutory obligations. During discussion, Governors asked whether the Group continued to lobby for reductions in business rates. DS confirmed that the Group already benefited from an 80% reduction in business rates.	

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		IR noted that he understood the relief arrangements were agreed through local government mechanisms. Governors sought clarification regarding the Microsoft licence costs and questioned whether the proposed expenditure included additional expenditure associated with Microsoft Copilot. DS confirmed that Copilot costs were included within the contract value presented for approval. Governors queried whether there would be any financial advantage in paying the full three-year Microsoft licence contract in advance given the Group's strong cash position. IR advised that such an approach would attract audit challenge because the expenditure related to future accounting periods. In addition, IR confirmed there was no financial discount available for making an upfront payment, and therefore no benefit would be achieved by departing from the normal payment profile. APPROVED: £754,921 – Stage Coach bus passes for Students via the Bursary APPROVED: £840,000 – Microsoft Licences (3-year contract) APPROVED: £305,697.24 - Insurance Policy renewal APPROVED: £345,064.80 – Adobe Licences APPROVED: £167,421.40 – TopDesk 3-year licence APPROVED: £188,194 – Canterbury Business rates 2026/27	
11	Annual Accountability Agreement 2026/27	The Assistant CEO, Information and Strategy (PS), presented the Annual Accountability Agreement for 2026/27 and reminded Governors that the submission formed a mandatory condition of funding for all further education colleges. PS noted that this was the fourth year the Group had completed the Accountability Agreement process. PS advised that the proposed Agreement had been included within the meeting papers together with an update against the previous year's commitments. Governors welcomed the inclusion of progress reporting against the 2025/26 Agreement, noting	

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		that this provided useful context and demonstrated the Group's achievements against its stated priorities. PS reported that the Department for Education had revised the submission timetable, moving the deadline to 31 July. As a result, there was no longer a requirement to convene a sub-group of Governors during the summer period to approve the document. The final approved Agreement would be published on the Group's website in December, in accordance with national requirements. PS confirmed that appropriate consultation had been undertaken with key stakeholders during the development of the Agreement and that the document reflected both local priorities and national expectations. The Board was therefore invited to approve the final submission. In discussion, Governors commented that the document presented a strong reflection of the Group's story and achievements and effectively demonstrated the progress that had been made over recent years. The Group had originally participated in the pilot process for the Accountability Agreement framework and welcomed the maturity of the approach now being taken. Governors agreed that the inclusion of progress against previous commitments strengthened the document and provided a clear narrative of continuous improvement. RESOLVED: Annual Accountability Agreement 2026/27	
12	Property Strategy Update	The Assistant CEO, Infrastructure and Transformation (DS), presented the annual Property Strategy Update. DS advised that the majority of the Property Strategy had already been considered in detail during the Strategy Event held earlier in the day and therefore focused on the remaining matters requiring Full Governing Body consideration. Air Handling Unit Refurbishment – Canterbury College DS sought approval for the refurbishment of the air handling units at Canterbury College at a cost of £510,088.20. Governors were advised that the project formed part of the Group's ongoing programme of estate maintenance and infrastructure renewal to ensure that facilities remained	

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		fit for purpose and capable of supporting a high-quality learning environment. Future Condition Fund Allocation Risk DS reported concerns regarding the methodology being used to assess estate condition across the sector. Governors were reminded that national condition surveys had originally been undertaken in 2019 and had recently been replicated. However, the Group had identified a few anomalies within the updated condition assessments, including instances where estate elements had received improved condition ratings despite no improvement works having been undertaken. DS noted that concerns regarding the reliability and consistency of the revised surveys had been raised by several colleges across the further education sector. The Chief Executive had also taken the opportunity to highlight these concerns directly with the Department for Education during the Group's Annual Strategic Conversation. Governors questioned whether estates investment decisions were based upon the national FE Condition Survey assessments. DS confirmed that they were not. Estate planning and investment decisions continued to be made using the Group's own professional surveys and local knowledge of estate condition. As an example, DS noted that some toilet facilities had recently been graded as Category A within the national assessment despite being more than 30 years old and not having undergone significant refurbishment. Governors were therefore assured that the Group was continuing to rely upon its own evidence base when prioritising investment decisions. Kent community Energy (KCE) Power Purchase Agreement and associated 20-year lease The Chair advised that an additional item should have been referenced under Matters Arising, however would be included under item 12. At the 24 March 2026 FGB meeting Governors had considered proposals relating to solar panel installation at Broadstairs College by KCE. Following that discussion, DS had undertaken further	

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		investigative work, and revised proposals had subsequently been reconsidered by the Business Committee. Governors were advised that the Business Committee had reviewed the updated proposal in detail and was recommending approval to the Board. Governors noted that a robust and thorough discussion had taken place at Committee level, including consideration of financial, operational and sustainability implications. A Governor questioned whether this should be self-funded as the returns appear to be advantageous. Discussion focused on the impact of diverting capital funding on the wider capital programme. RESOLVED: Advanced Control Solutions to complete the refurbishment of the Air Handling Units at Canterbury College (£510,088.20) RESOLVED: Kent community Energy (KCE) Power Purchase Agreement and associated 20-year lease – Broadstairs College	
13	External Board Review	The Chair of the Full Governing Body (CB) provided a verbal update on the forthcoming External Board Review. Governors were advised that Stone King had been appointed to undertake the review during the Autumn Term 2026 as part of the Board's ongoing commitment to continuous improvement in governance. The Chair acknowledged that external governance reviews could sometimes be perceived as a compliance exercise, however, emphasised that the previous review had been valuable and had formed an integral part of the Group's governance improvement process. The Board had benefitted from the recommendations and lessons arising from earlier reviews and it was important that the forthcoming review was approached in the same spirit. The Chair noted that there had been some discussion nationally regarding inconsistencies in approach and reporting between different external governance reviews, and that future amendments to sector guidance may emerge. Notwithstanding this, the Chair stressed that the review should be viewed as an opportunity to reflect, learn and reconsider aspects of governance practice rather than simply as a compliance requirement.	

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		The Board was encouraged to engage openly and honestly throughout the review process, particularly during individual interviews with reviewers. The Chair highlighted that the greatest value would be achieved if Governors felt able to share both positive and negative experiences, identify areas of strength and discuss opportunities for further development. This was considered particularly important as the Board prepared for a change in Chair and continued its wider governance development journey. Governors queried when the Group could expect feedback from the review process. The Chair advised that initial findings would be presented to governors during December 2026, or by the end of the calendar year, depending on the timing of the review and reporting process. NOTED: External Board Review October 2026	
14	Procurement of Internal Audit Service	The Assistant CEO, Information and Strategy (PS), presented the recommendation for the appointment of the Group's Internal Audit Service for a two-year period commencing 1 August 2026. • Governors were advised that the Audit Committee had considered the outcome of the procurement exercise at its meeting on 23 June 2026 and was recommending a preferred provider for FGB approval. • PS explained that the procurement specification had reflected the importance of securing an internal audit provider with sector experience, particularly in relation to Department for Education funding assurance reviews. • Governors were advised that two proposals had been received in response to the tender exercise. Both submissions were of a high quality and were assessed against a set of evaluation criteria. Following detailed evaluation, the proposal submitted by Validera was assessed as fully meeting all requirements and achieving the strongest overall score against the agreed criteria. • PS noted that the Audit Committee had scrutinised the procurement process and was satisfied that the exercise had been conducted fairly and robustly. The Committee's recommendation was therefore brought forward for Full Governing Body approval.	

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		RESOLVED: Appointment of Validera as EKC Group Internal Auditors for two years from 1 August 2026	
16	Safeguarding Update	Kate Flounders joined the meeting online via Teams at 18:52. The Independent Safeguarding Chair (KF) presented the Safeguarding Update, and the following key points were noted: • A significant reduction in the number of students involved in safeguarding incidents. • Evidence that improved safeguarding chronology systems were enabling earlier identification of vulnerabilities and more targeted support for at-risk learners. • Changes in safeguarding trends, with domestic abuse and substance misuse emerging as more prominent concerns, replacing some previous safeguarding themes. The Group are using this intelligence to inform tutorial content and preventative education programmes. Emerging Issues • Governors were updated on an unusual emerging trend involving students using toilet facilities as social spaces. While acknowledging the unusual nature of the issue, the Group reported active work to understand underlying causes and encourage use of alternative communal areas. Safeguarding Reflections Reflecting on her tenure, KF described the Group as the "platinum standard" of safeguarding practice and highlighted: • The successful development of a consistent safeguarding culture across all business units. • Significant improvements in safeguarding systems and recording practices. • Effective use of technology and monitoring systems. • Strong staff support networks. • A culture where student wellbeing remains central to decision-making. Governors welcomed the report and, noting that this was her final report, thanked KF for her substantial contribution to safeguarding across the Group over many years. Tribute was paid to the assurance, expertise, and challenge that she had provided to the Board.	

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		NOTED: Safeguarding Update	
17	Progress against the Quality Improvement Plan	The Deputy CEO, (VC-C), presented progress against the Quality Improvement Plan and the following points were highlighted: • Governors were reminded that the report had previously been considered and scrutinised by the Education Committee at its meeting on 11 June 2026 and that the Committee was satisfied with the progress being made across several key areas. • VC-C highlighted several positive developments arising from the Quality Improvement Plan. Whilst Functional Skills Mathematics continued to present challenges, significant work had been undertaken to strengthen both English and Mathematics provision across the Group. Governors were advised that a range of interventions had been implemented, including greater timetable flexibility and adjustments to delivery models designed to improve learner engagement and outcomes. • Additional expertise had recently been introduced within the Innovation Team to support improvements in curriculum development and pedagogical practice. However, VC-C acknowledged that the impact of this investment had not yet progressed as far as initially anticipated. • Significant improvements achieved within ESOL provision during the year. The Board heard that performance had strengthened considerably and that learners had benefitted from a richer educational experience, with outcomes demonstrating progress. • Attendance remained an area of challenge during the year, with performance having been adversely affected by the meningitis outbreak experienced across parts of the Group. Nevertheless, VC-C noted several positive achievements, including strong learner success in skills competitions and wider enrichment activities. VC-C commented that these successes had contributed to a growing sense of momentum and confidence across curriculum areas. The Chair commented that it was particularly heartening to see the progress being achieved against the Quality Improvement Plan and welcomed the evidence of improvement across a number of key performance measures.	

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		NOTED: Progress against Quality Improvement Plan	
18	Sub-contracting rationale 2026-27	The Assistant CEO, Information and Strategy (PS) presented the Sub-contracting Rationale 2026/27, and the following key points were noted: Governors were advised that publication of an annual subcontracting rationale remained a funding and transparency requirement for further education providers, irrespective of whether subcontracting activity took place. • PS confirmed that EKC Group did not currently undertake any subcontracted provision. Whilst the Group collaborated with a range of external providers and partners to support curriculum delivery, employer engagement and learner opportunities, these arrangements did not constitute subcontracting. • The Subcontracting rationale was therefore largely unchanged from previous years and accurately reflected the Group's continuing position of delivering provision directly rather than through subcontracting arrangements. Governors were advised that, in accordance with funding requirements, the approved rationale would be published on the Group website. No changes to the rationale were proposed for the 2026/27 academic year and no questions were raised by governors. RESOLVED: Subcontracting Rational 2026/27	
19	Minutes of Committee Meetings: Education Committee-11/6/26	The Chair invited Committee Chairs to provide updates arising from their most recent meetings and to highlight any matters requiring the Board's attention. <u>Education committee</u> TK, acting as Chair of the Education Committee, reported that many of the matters considered by the Committee had already been discussed elsewhere on the Full Governing Body agenda and during the Strategy Event. He highlighted that the Committee had considered transition arrangements in some detail and noted that this work had subsequently been incorporated into	

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		wider strategic discussions. TK noted that, whilst the closure of the Aylesham provision had not been formally referenced elsewhere, resources had now been redirected into the transition pilot programme. The Board heard that this represented an innovative approach which sought to maximise the impact of available resources whilst supporting learner transition arrangements.	
	Audit Committee – 23/6/26.	<u>Audit Committee,</u> JH, Interim Chair of Audit Committee, reported that he had temporarily chaired the Committee meeting. JH noted that the Committee had been joined by representatives from RSM and had received the outcome of the Department for Education funding audit. The audit had produced a satisfactory outcome, remaining within the required 5% tolerance threshold. JH congratulated staff on the result and thanked colleagues for their work in securing a positive outcome. It was also noted that the Audit Committee minutes would be amended to accurately reflect JH's role as Chair for that meeting.	
	Business Committee – 18/06/26	<u>Business Committee</u> GC, Chair of the Business Committee, advised that the principal matters discussed by the Committee had already been covered extensively within both the Full Governing Body meeting and the earlier Strategy Event. There were therefore no additional substantive matters requiring further discussion. GC confirmed that the Committee had considered the Group's Gender Pay Gap report as part of its recent business. IR additionally informed governors that changes to FE College Financial Handbook had recently been announced nationally. Whilst the changes were not expected to have a significant impact on the Group, a briefing paper would be circulated to governors in due course for information.	
	S & G Committee – 18/5/2	<u>Search and Governance Committee presented by Miranda Chapman, Chair</u> MC, Chair of the Search and Governance Committee, reported on a light committee agenda since the previous Board meeting. CB had chaired the most recent meeting. Governors noted that there remained: • One vacancy on the Full Governing Body; and	

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		• Three vacancies across Board Committees. MC advised that recruitment activity was progressing to address these vacancies and that suitable candidates continued to be identified and assessed. The Committee had also approved a change to the term of office arrangements for Local College Board members, increasing the standard term from two years to four years to provide greater continuity and stability within governance structures. NOTED: Minutes of Committee Meetings	
20	Policy Approval	The Chief Innovation and Skills Officer (LB) presented several policies requiring Full Governing Body approval. The Chair invited questions or comments on the policies before the Board. Governors were reminded that the policies had been scrutinised by the relevant committees and were being presented with recommendations for approval. Members raised no questions or concerns. APPROVED: Health and Safety Policy APPROVED: Modern Slavery Policy APPROVED: Fees Policy APPROVED: Whistleblowing Policy	
21	Any Other Business	None raised	
22	Matters Considered Confidential	No matters considered confidential.	
23	Date and time of next meeting	The next meeting is due to take place on Friday 2 October at 3:30pm, at the Yarrow Hotel.	

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7:27pm

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Signed:  Print: TJ KENT Date: 2/10/26

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