

MILTON KEYNES COLLEGE GROUP

CORPORATION BOARD MEETING

Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 16th July 2025

Pitching Room, SCIoT, Bletchley

17:00 – 19:00

Board Members	Category of Governor	Attendance Record 2024/25	Present at this meeting
Sally Alexander	CEO	8 of 8	Sally Alexander
Abbas Bandali ²	Student	6 of 7	Abbas Bandali
Richard Bartlett-Rawlings	Independent	5 of 8	<i>Sent apologies</i>
Ian Bickers	Independent	8 of 8	Ian Bickers
Ajira Bouchada ¹	Independent	6 of 8	Ajira Bouchada
Mat Gotkowski	Independent	7 of 8	Mat Gotkowski
Rebecca Myrie	Staff	6 of 8	Rebecca Myrie
Amit Nayyar	Independent	7 of 8	Amit Nayyar (Teams)
Angie Novell	Independent	5 of 8	Angie Novell (Teams)
Ruby Parmar	Independent	7 of 8	<i>Sent apologies</i>
Ian Revell	Independent	8 of 8	Ian Revell
Neil Sainsbury	Independent	8 of 8	Neil Sainsbury (in part) (Teams)
Lindsey Styles	Independent	8 of 8	Lindsey Styles
Jay Timpany	Staff	8 of 8	Jay Timpany
Manish Verma	Independent	5 of 8	<i>Sent apologies</i>
Jeremy Wilsdon	Independent	7 of 8	Jeremy Wilsdon
Tom Wraight	Independent	6 of 8	<i>Sent apologies</i>
Catherine McKenna-Mackmurdo (1/11/24 to 29/4/25)	Student	2 of 4	
Leroi Henry (resigned 4/6/25)	Independent	2 of 6	
¹ from 2/10/24 ² from 1/11/24			
Attendance % this meeting		76%	13 / 17
Attendance % year to date		82%	119 / 145

Attendees at this meeting: Jason Mansell (Chief Operating Officer), Mark Fell (Executive Principal), Karen Brown (Head of Governance), Sam Samuels (Governance Partner)

Attendees in part: Susan Akhtar (Group Director of Finance), Anna Clarke (Group Director Employer Engagement and Partnerships / Apprenticeships), Jen Worby (Head of Safeguarding)

1.0 Procedural

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

Mat Gotkowski chaired the meeting and welcomed everyone including Susan Akhtar. Apologies had been received from Ruby Parmar. Manish Verma, Richard Bartlett-Rawlings and Tom Wraight.

Neil Sainsbury would be late as he had gone to a different campus.

1.2 Declaration of Interests

Ian Revell and Richard Bartlett-Rawlings had an interest in item 3.1 and Ian Revell and Ian Bickers had an interest in item 3.4. These items had been previously approved by written resolution.

2.0 Strategic Priorities 2024/25

2.1 CEO Report and Board Dashboard *(previously circulated as Paper 2.1)*

Sally Alexander highlighted some items from her report.

Staff Celebration Day

Governor Ian Revell was thanked for attending and co-presenting the awards which were given for long service, meeting college values, best teachers and student nominations.

Dashboard

Governors noted that whilst several academic metrics are showing a slight decline since the last meeting, it is still a very positive picture as reported in paper 2.3A below.

Governors asked:

Does the College nominate for awards?

Yes, however, a panel, chaired by the CEO, reviews each opportunity, as we have to be selective (there may be a high cost involved e.g. paying for a table at an awards ceremony). We are exploring a national prison education award and AoC Beacon awards.

Governors congratulated Maria Bowness, Group Director: Curriculum & Pedagogy for receiving the Women Leaders UK award for Skills Education & Training.

The Board received the CEO Report and Board Dashboard

2.2A Financial Health 2024/25 Management Accounts Period 10 (May 2025) *(previously circulated as Paper 2.2A)*

The Finance Group had previously scrutinised the P10 Accounts (See Paper 2.2C).

Susan Akhtar led on this item.

Overall

- The Group position as at P10 (31st of May 2025) is a year-to-date operational surplus of £2,776k (budget £1,170k). This is mainly due to lower costs and non-realised contingencies.
- Financial Health is 'Good'
- The budgeted surplus (£1,400k) is expected to be met or exceeded at year-end.

Capital Expenditure

- The capital expenditure spend is £730k.

Cash Position

- The cash balance is strong at £15,373k cash balances and 80 cash days.

Governors asked questions to which Susan and Jason Mansell responded:

What happens to the surplus at the end of the year?

It is reinvested back into the business either as revenue or capital.

As a £73m business it is imperative that we have strong reserves and a strong cash position. We will continue to bid for external capital funding and the reserves allow us to match fund if necessary.

Why are the cash days so high at Period 10?

Cash days represents the number of days the College could operate before it runs out of cash. Cash balances have grown over the year and is a culmination of receiving higher in-year growth funding than anticipated, capital grant funding not yet spent, and some unutilised contingencies (e.g. where we were cautious about adult and apprenticeships recruitment). We are also now receiving additional income from credit interest on cash balances.

Why is Facilities spending over budget?

It is internal re-allocation after we received some external funding so not an overall increase.

The Board noted the financial position as at Period 10

2.2B Budget 2025/26 (previously circulated as Paper 2.2B)

The Finance Group had previously scrutinised the P10 Accounts (See Paper 2.2C).

Susan Akhtar led on this item.

- The key budget principle is to deliver a financially sustainable position, to continue with the investment in A-levels (130 new students) and to embed the new PES Contract.
- Total income is projected as £73m and includes modest growth in student numbers (to reflect demographic data). It is a realistic budget which will continue to deliver financial sustainability and 'Good' Financial Health'
- The budgeted Group surplus is £2,268k (campus £1,714k and prisons £554k). The budget includes the trading activity for MKC Commercial Ltd of £3,925k and an allocation of £5k for the Student Union.
- Developing the budget has involved robust planning and collaboration between Finance, Curriculum and Marketing. Schools have been targeted to deliver a contribution of an average of 50% contribution and ensure class sizes of 18 for 16-18 and a campus delivery model '*to drive aspirational, innovative, and student-focussed education experiences that are digitally driven, inclusive and values-led*'. Most schools are forecast to achieve 50% contribution.
- The budget does not assume any in-year growth funding and does not include a vacancy factor (gaps in staffing).
- The three-year plan demonstrates that the College needs to maintain previous improvements to build to a sustainable Campus provision which delivers an exceptional student experience. Staff utilisation along with matching income to delivery costs is critical to achieving these outcomes. The improvement in the budgeted surplus for campus reflects the efficiencies implemented this year (as endorsed through the CEFSS process).

Capital expenditure

- A cap-ex budget of £500k was approved at the last meeting. There will also be investment in the estate through externally funded capital projects (£6.1m Tariff Funding, £0.8m Carbon Offset funding and £1.08m Salix funding).

Setting KPI targets for 2025/26

- The October Board paper will include a proposal on Financial KPIs after submission of the CFFR (College Financial Forecasting Return).

Risks

The key risks are:

1. campus under-recruitment / poor retention meaning income does not match staff costs.
 2. apprenticeship recruitment / income is less than budgeted
 3. adult recruitment / income is less than budgeted
 4. pay award claim is higher than budgeted.
 5. embedding the new PES contract
- Page 11 of the Paper presents various scenarios e.g. the impact of these risks on the budget. We use demographic data, pipeline applications etc to verify targets where possible.

The Board:

- ***Approved the College Budget for 2025/26***
- ***Approved the College rolling three-year financial forecast 2025/26 – 2027/8***
- ***Noted that the Financial KPIs for 2025/26 will be brought to the next meeting for approval***
- ***Noted the letter from the DfE confirming Good Financial Health***

2.2C Finance Group Meeting 1st July 2025 *(previously circulated as Paper 2.2C)*

Mat Gotkowski referred to the report of the scrutiny by Finance Group members.

The Board noted the report from the Finance Group.

Neil Sainsbury joined the meeting at 17:35

Susan was thanked for attending and she left the meeting

Jen Worby was welcomed to the meeting

2.3 Student Experience: Safeguarding *(previously circulated as Paper 2.3)*

Jen Worby highlighted some headlines from the annual report:

- **Compliance:** the College is compliant with all Safeguarding and Prevent statutory duties and works effectively with the local agencies. In March 2025, the Internal Auditors assessment of the controls relating to Safeguarding was 'Substantial Assurance' (highest level) and in February 2024 Ofsted judged Safeguarding to be 'effective'.
- **Safeguarding Incidents:** the number of incidents increased in 2024/25 to 3,835 (2,992 in 23/24) although the number of distinct student disclosures at 1,617 remained the same (1,600 in 23/24); some students have raised a high number of incidents (the maximum being 30) reflecting the complexity of their situations. Referrals due to

behaviour, mental health, home issues or triggered by the College's internet monitoring system (Smoothwall), all increased.

- **Behaviour:** there was an increase in Level 4 Disciplinary Panels (122 compared to 75 in 23/24) and exclusions (18 compared to 4 in 23/24). This is attributed to:
 1. An increased number of students on campus
 2. New roles identifying more issues (e.g. campus managers and an increase in positive behaviour mentors)
 3. Improved CCTV (the College can better identify the parties involved).

The College is sharing information with Thames Valley Police, Safeguarding agencies in MK and local schools. The screening arches continue to be deployed on a random basis.

- **Prevent:** the College meets its obligations under the Government's Prevent Strategy and is represented on the Milton Keynes Prevent Board and at Channel Panel Meetings by the Group Director for Inclusion. Referrals are made as appropriate
- 94% of students have fed back that they feel safe at College. We are working on our data systems so we can better demonstrate the team's impact on young people.
- Ian Revell is the Link Governor for Safeguarding and Prevent and meets termly with the Director of Inclusion.

Safeguarding is ragged as red in the Strategic Risk Register recognising the potential impact of an incident. Following discussions at the Audit & Risk Committee, and to triangulate the safeguarding strategic risk controls, Ian Bickers explained that he had recently met with a group of students, who were honest and transparent about their situations, shared their own challenges and spoke very positively about their experience at College. They knew how to raise safeguarding issues and how the College would support them. All agreed that they felt safe and the College had made a very positive impact on their lives.

The Student Governor asked about Level 3 disciplinarys and whether the Behaviour Policy could be reviewed to make it stricter; Jen confirmed the policy will be reviewed over the summer. The safeguarding team does a lot of work to ensure that Level 3 disciplinarys do not escalate to Level 4 and positive behaviour mentors support students in class. However, behaviour is often a complex issue.

Governors requested more data on behaviour below Level 4 to determine the success of the team in preventing escalations.

Action 2: Amy Langford / Jen Worby by 1 October 2025

Mark Fell added that

- 1) changes to the Personal Development Curriculum in 2025/26 are expected to have a positive impact and will include behaviour which employers are requesting e.g. social skills and good manners.
- 2) From his experience of working in several FE colleges, the Board can be assured that the work of the team in managing safeguarding and behaviour issues is exceptional.

Governors asked questions to which Jen responded:

Can you explain the Rise and Shine Project which is taking place?

It is a two week project and involves potential students who are referred to the College from a range of backgrounds including school refusers, students from special schools and students who may have been bullied at school. It is a two week programme of activities so the College can really get to know them, understand their

needs and identify the special support they may need. In some cases, the College cannot meet their needs and helps them find alternative provision.

What type of incidents are picked up by Smoothwall?

It is a monitoring and filtering system which intercepts certain online activity e.g. if a student searches articles on suicide or drug dealing.

Do you use CPOMS to track non-safeguarding incidents?

Yes, we record behaviour and respond accordingly with support and / or a behaviour plan.

Can you assess if behaviour increases are due to an increasing trend or better detection?

We receive a lot of information from the police and local agencies e.g. the MK Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) so if there emerging trends, we are aware and can respond appropriately.

We may report more incidents than other colleges because we are better at detecting them.

Despite global events, it is good to note that Prevent incidents are low. How many have reached the threshold for Channel?

The Channel panel is a multi-agency programme that identifies and supports individuals who are at risk of being drawn into terrorism. This year, 4 referrals have been made to the Channel Panel; none were adopted.

What impact does the Personal Development curriculum have on keeping the numbers of Prevent and racism incidents low?

It raises awareness but we don't have specific numbers.

Are there course specific interventions as some areas have more incidents than others?

No, we have analysed the data and there is no explanation for the spikes.

The Board:

- ***Approved the Safeguarding & Prevent Annual Report 2024/25 which provides assurance that the College is meeting its responsibilities for Safeguarding and Prevent.***
- ***Noted that the Safeguarding Strategy will come to the Board in October for approval***

Jen was thanked for attending and she left the meeting

2.4A Student Experience: Student Outcomes *(previously circulated as Paper 2.4A)*

Mark Fell highlighted some headlines from the report:

- Early indications show that the quality strategy and new initiatives e.g. CPR (Curriculum Performance Review) and Blueprint for Success, have had a significant, positive impact on achievement rates. The CPR process, supports detailed monitoring every half-term and enables prompt remedial action to be taken.
- Based on current information, retention and attendance are high for the sector (e.g. female retention is 4.3% above) and predicted achievement is very strong. 16-18 adult,

functional skills maths and functional skills English achievement are all predicted to be better than last year and above the KPI. Apprenticeships is predicted to be better than last year and at the KPI. The risk is there are more exam based results to come this year.

- Vocational achievement is expected to be above 90%.
- The overall effectiveness for all schools at CPR6 was 1.6 (1.7 for 23/24). Governors will be invited to attend self-assessment validations in September.

Governors asked whether all colleges have a CPR process. Mark confirmed that it is not a legal requirement, but it is a quality assurance process where we look at 72 measures across the year. Quality of Education and Safeguarding carry a higher weighting. Other colleges will have their own form of quality assurance process.

The Board:

- ***Noted predicted performance against 24/25 KPIs***
- ***Noted the ongoing development of provision***

2.4B Student Experience: Prison Services SAR (Self-Assessment Report) 2024/25 and QIP (Quality Improvement Plan) 2025/26 (previously circulated as Paper 2.4B)

The CQG had previously scrutinised the Prison Services SAR and QIP.

Mark Fell referred governors to the report and the proposed self-assessment grades (Good in all aspects). A modified version of the CPR process is being implemented in prisons from 1st October 2025.

The self-assessment grades relate just to prison education whereas Ofsted will award an overall grade for education, skills and work (skills and work are outside the College's control). There will be a new prison Ofsted inspection framework.

The QIP includes the areas requiring improvement.

The Board approved the Prison Services SAR 2024/25 and the QIP 2025/26

2.4C CQG Meeting 9th June 2025 (previously circulated as Paper 2.4C)

Jez Wilsdon, Chair of the CQG, referred to the report of the meeting when the Group had scrutinised the draft Prison Services SAR, the campus QIP and CPR5 outcomes (reported in Papers 2.4A and 2.4B).

Jez referred to the challenge at the meeting from Sufian Sadiq (Associate Governor) on how teaching and learning, CPD and staff supportive interventions impact on the student experience and achievement. At the next meeting the CQG has requested a deep dive into this area.

The College is hosting a teaching and learning conference on 1st of September to which all governors have been invited.

'Curriculum' will have a higher focus for CQG next year.

The Board approved the report of the meeting

Anna Clarke was welcomed to the meeting

2.5 Stakeholder Strategy (previously circulated as Paper 2.5)

Anna Clarke summarised:

- Engagement with stakeholders is key to supporting learners. The information gathered is used to inform the College's strategic direction, supports Ofsted inspections, underpins curriculum planning to meet local need, identifies emerging development sectors and opportunities.
- The Stakeholder Strategy outlines the process through which the College identifies, manages and seeks feedback from stakeholders. There are four categories of stakeholders (Community, Employers, Civic and Education).
- In 2025, feedback has been sought and received which will inform development of the new Strategic Plan. The feedback confirms strong stakeholder support.
- From 2026, annual stakeholder surveys will inform an annual report to the Board.
- The Stakeholder Strategy will be reviewed next year alongside the new Strategic Plan.

A governor referred to the recent breakfast meeting at which informal feedback was sought from Fellows of the College, which was a very positive event. All governors will be invited to the next meeting.

The Board approved the Stakeholder Strategy

Anna was thanked for attending and she left the meeting

3.0 GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE

3.1 Search & Governance Committee 17 June 2025 (previously circulated as Paper 3.1)

Ian Revell referred to the report of the meeting; the S&G Committee continues to drive the effectiveness of governance and appointment and reappointment of governors.

The Committee reviewed self-assessments against the FE Code of Governance (***with the conclusion that the Board is fully compliant***) and good practice recommendations from the AoC and FE Commissioner (terms of office and CPD) and concluded:

- Governors may continue to serve three terms of three years and a fourth term in exceptional circumstances however the option to serve a fifth term of office will be removed
- Board KPIs (attendance, training, link governor visits) will be monitored by the Committee
- Some actions were identified for the Board Development Plan 2025/26 (which will come to the Board in November).

The Board's self-assessment questionnaire will be issued this summer.

The Board approved:

- ***the report of the meeting***
- ***governors may serve three terms (of three years) and a fourth term in exceptional circumstances. The option of a fifth term will be removed.***
- ***the appointment of Ian Revell and Richard Bartlett-Rawlings as Vice-Chair(s) for 2025/26 (previously approved by written resolution)***
- ***the appointment of Mark Homans as an Independent Governor for three years from 1st August 2025 (previously approved by written resolution)***
- ***the Committee's Terms of Reference for 2025/26***

3.2 Audit & Risk Committee 19 June 2025 (previously circulated as Paper 3.2)

Amit Nayyar referred to the report of the meeting.

The Committee received assurance on internal controls including risk management, health and safety, data security, audit recommendations, sub-contracting and anti-fraud. The external auditor presented the audit strategy/plan for 2024/25. The internal auditor presented reports on Prison Contracts (**substantial** assurance given) and Commercial Activities (**satisfactory** assurance given) and the strategy and plan for 2025/26. There was an in-depth discussion and challenge on cyber security including sub-contractors, and additional assurance was requested.

The Committee was pleased to note the Sport Central contract (which was signed and sealed today), has been finally resolved thanks to the tenacity of the Group Director: Estates.

The Board approved the report of the meeting and the documents listed at item 4.5 below

3.3 Capital Projects Monitoring Group 10 June 2025 and 8 July 2025 (previously circulated as Paper 3.3)

Neil Sainsbury referred to the report of the meetings. The Tariff (to support growth in student numbers at Chaffron Way and Bletchley) and Carbon Offset (replacement of boilers at Bletchley) projects are on time and budget. Both have very tight delivery timescales (September 2025).

The Board had previously approved the SALIX 4 funding grant agreement of £1,080k (written resolution 8th April 2025 and ratified by Board on 30th April 2025) which will enable the main building and Motor Vehicle workshop at Bletchley Campus to be fully decarbonised at a total cost of £3,359k. The balance will be met by carbon offset funding £1,777k with the remaining £502k being met by DFE capital grant funding.

Neil also drew attention to Paper 4.6 which relates to the contract with Spacemaker Developments Ltd for Chaffron Way (Tariff project); the contract will be signed under seal in due course.

Jason Mansell added that the contract with Borrás Construction (approved by written resolution on 29 May 2025 and ratified at the Board meeting on 4 June 2025) was signed and sealed today. The contract value was £6,850 higher than the contract sum previously advised however the increase is within the 10% contingency previously approved by the Board.

The Board:

- ***Approved the report from the CPMG meetings on 10 June and 8 July 2025***
- ***Approved the SALIX 4 Capital Project and delegated authority to the CPMG to approve the schedule listed in Section 13.3 of the Financial Regulations (including the headline project plan, cost plan and timelines)***

3.4 MKC Commercial Ltd and The Code Makers Academy Ltd (previously circulated as Paper 3.4)

Sally Alexander referred to the report of the recent meetings which were held virtually.

MKC Commercial Ltd (MKCCCL)

239 staff were paid through the MKCC payroll on 30th May. Income and expenditure are on budget. The Directors approved the budget for 2025/26. Mat Gotkowski has resigned as a Director from 31st July and Ian Bickers and Ian Revell have volunteered to join the Board.

CMA Ltd (CMAL)

The legal documents to novate contracts from CMAL to MK College Group have been drafted by solicitors and submitted to DfE for their review and approval. When they are approved and executed, CMAL can be struck off. Mat Gotkowski has resigned as a Director from 31st July and Ian Bickers and Ian Revell have volunteered to join the Board. The company is dormant.

MKCCL

As the sole shareholder, the Board:

- **Approved the report of the meeting**
- **Approved the budget for 2025/26 (included in Paper 2.2B)**
- **Approved the appointment of Ian Bickers and Ian Revell as Directors from 1 August 2025 for a three-year term (previously approved by written resolution)**

CMAL

As the sole shareholder, the Board:

- **Approved the report of the meeting**
- **Approved the appointment of Ian Bickers and Ian Revell as Directors from 1 August 2025 for a three-year term (previously approved by written resolution)**

3.5 Items for the next meeting

- SEND & High Needs Annual Report
- Safeguarding update / Safeguarding Strategy
- Student Achievement 2024/25 (headlines)
- Staff Pay update
- Financial Health KPIs
- PES Mobilisation Plan
- Consent Agenda: Curriculum Strategy, Board Business Plan 25/26, Use of the College Seal 24/25
- CPMG 16/9, CQG 22/9

4.0 CONSENT AGENDA

The following items were approved by consent / without discussion:

- 4.1 Climate Action Plan Annual Report (previously circulated as Paper 4.1)**
- 4.2 Delegation of the Fees Policy 2025/26 to the Executive Leadership Team (previously circulated as Paper 4.2)**
- 4.3 Sub-Contracting Strategy and Plan for 2025/26, Policy, Fees and Charges (previously circulated as Paper 4.3)**
- 4.4 Minutes of the last meeting (4th June 2025) (previously circulated as Papers 4.4A, Conf 4.4B and Conf4.4C)**

Matters arising

Date Raised	Actions arising from the last and previous meetings	Action Owner	Current position
4/6/25	1. People Strategy – clarify the basis for the ethnicity target of 20%?	JM / JQ	Complete – included in the CEO report at 2.1
	2. People Strategy – amend to include a specific paragraph acknowledging the differences in prisons	JM / JQ	Complete
	3. Circulate the Grant Thornton MK50 Report and letter from the Secretary of State for Education on Skills England priorities.	SA / KB	Complete – circulated 6/6/25

30/4/25	Provide an example of employer engagement e.g. with the NHS including meeting frequency, employer needs and the College's response.	MF	Complete – included in Paper 2.4A
	Propose EDI targets and realistic positive action	AK	Carry forward – diarised for November 2025

4.5 Audit & Risk Committee 19 June 2025 recommendations (*previously circulated as Papers 4.5*)

Also refer to item 3.2 above.

The Board approved:

- **Strategic Risk Register**
- **Internal Audit Strategy & Plan 2024/25**
- **External Audit Strategy & Plan 2023/24**
- **A&R Committee terms of Reference 2025/26**
- **Health & Safety**
 - **Annual Report**
 - **H&S Policy**
 - **H&S Policy Statement 25/26 (for signing)**
- **Travel and Subsistence (Expenses) Policy**

4.6 Written Resolution – Main Works Contract (Spacemaker Developments Ltd (Chaffron Way Works) – Tariff project) (*previously circulated as Paper 4.6*)

4.7 Contracts Approved (for signing and sealing):

- a) **MK Council S106 Funding Agreement (refurbishment of lifts)** (*previously circulated as Paper 4.7A*)
- b) **Sport Central Underlease** (*previously circulated as Paper 4.7B*)

Next Meeting 1st October 2025

Sally Alexander thanked Abbas Bandali for serving as a Student Governor this year, presented him with a voucher and wished him well at University.

Jason Mansell presented Mat Gotkowski with a college bowl and thanked him for chairing the Finance Group and serving as Vice-Chair, member of the Audit & Risk Committee, member of the Remuneration Committee and Finance Link Governor. Mat has resigned from the Board effective 31st July 2025 having served over six years.



Approved 1st October 2025
 Ruby Parmar
 Chair of Governors