



PLUMPTON

COLLEGE

CORPORATION MEETING MINUTES

Land Management room, Plumpton College, Ditchling Road, Plumpton, BN7 3AE
5.00pm Tuesday 30th September 2025

Present: Julie Dougill (Chair), Jeremy Kerswell (Principal), Paul Layzell (Vice Chair)*, Helen Atkinson, Scott O'Brien*, Steve Harper*, Steve Webb, Gillian Payne (Support Staff Governor), Jade Simmons, Mark Smith, Tamara Roberts, Imogen Black (Student Governor), Sage Copper (Student Governor)

In attendance: James Hibbert (Deputy Principal), Phaedra Tanghe (Vice Principal), Sarah Jeffers (HR Director), Paul Cook (FD)*, Coral Ward (Vice Principal) Laura Holt (Governance Professional)

Apologies: Hilary Knight, Shawn Town and Peter Boxer

* via Teams

Minute no.		Action by whom	Action by when
GOV/25 56/01	<u>Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest</u> The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were received from Hilary Knight, Shawn Town and Peter Boxer. There were no declarations of interest.		
GOV/25 26/02	<u>Minutes from the Corporation meeting held on the 8th July 2025 and matters arising</u> Members considered the minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 8 th July 2025 as an accurate record of the meeting. Members noted the Matters Arising report, all items were on the agenda, scheduled or complete.		
GOV/25 26/03	<u>Committee meetings</u> <u>Search and Governance Committee</u> Members noted: - The Minutes of the Search and Governance Committee meeting held on 14th January 2025 - The Annual Report of the Search and Governance Committee - The Register of Interests		

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	- All governors to complete the iHasco on-line Sexual Harassment training for Managers Corporation APPROVED the recommendation from Search and Governance Committee to approve the following: - Committee membership for 25/26 - Instruments and Articles - Rules and Regulations - Terms of Reference for Audit and Risk Committee - Terms of Reference for Finance and Resources Committee - Terms of Reference for Curriculum, Quality and Student Support - Policy approval schedule - Link Governor scheme for 25/26 <u>Audit and Risk Committee</u> Members noted the Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 23rd September 2025. Members noted that the college was in the process of tendering for external audit and noted the discussion at the committee regarding Cyber security and AI risks. Governors questioned whether cyber security insurance was in place, the college confirmed that it is. Action – New Link Governor scheme to be circulated to relevant college managers and governors. Prompts to be added for questions for governors to ask academic managers. College managers to contact governors to arrange the first meeting.	JK/LH	Oct 25
GOV/25 26/03	<u>Chairs report</u> The Chair highlighted the following from the above report: - The Chair meets with the Principal every other week and the Chair/Principal/Governance Professional meet monthly. - The Chair has witnessed first-hand the positive ethos across the site, and both students and new staff who she has spoken with have expressed that they are feeling well-supported and are settling into college life well. - The college is in the Ofsted inspection window for residential provision, the scope includes catering, health and safety, estates and safeguarding - There is a renewed Ofsted inspection framework for FE and Skills with an enhanced focus on inclusion. The Vice Principal (Student Support) is undertaking a piece of work to look at enhanced tracking of disadvantaged groups (attendance/welfare/behaviour). The college is inclusive and achieved a rating of outstanding for High Needs Students in the last inspection. 'Leadership and Management' has changed to 'Leadership and Governance' The college was last inspected for FE and Skills in May 2024. The next inspection is likely to be Spring 29. - A white paper for SEND is due to be released. - The Chair attended a Sussex Skills meeting earlier in the day. Discussion took place regarding devolution and the impact on the skills budget.		

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	The Chair reminded governors of the need to read Keeping Children Safe in Education.		
GOV/25 26/04	<u>Principals Strategic Priorities report</u> The Principal highlighted the following from the above report: • Student outcomes – 16-18 expected to be 83-84% (80% previous year) • Year end position expected to be a surplus with EBTDA of 7.1% and financial health score of 'Good' using DfE metrics • Farm – marginal surplus at year end (£200k loss previous year) • Student recruitment ○ approx. 15% increase in 16-18 student numbers ○ HE numbers held ○ Early apprenticeship recruitment on target ○ Full time adult learners are on track but part time is slightly below target which is in part due to marketing capacity which is being addressed • In year additional funding will be used for staffing for the increased student numbers • 60 new staff recruited since June • 11% staff turnover last year, compared to a regional sector average closer to 25% • Recruitment risk in agriculture <i>Q: is the infra structure keeping pace with the increased student numbers? Classroom sizes, bus routes etc?</i> A: Although the student numbers have increased, they are in line with targets and the college is resourced within the budget to meet the targets. There will be some adjustments made to address pinch points, e.g. curriculum areas with recruitment over target and buses. Discussion took place regarding buses. The bus network has been optimised and there is a slight underspend on buses at the moment. The buses are running at high capacity. Adjustments were made due to a large number of tickets being purchased at a late stage. There are enough classrooms but there is not a lot of flexibility. Planning is taking place now for 25/26. Staff resource was increased in the business plan to reduce class sizes, on the whole this has happened however there are some small pockets where there are vacancies and therefore higher-class sizes. There are more learners in English and Maths than planned due to learners not achieving a grade 4 at GCSE. Early curriculum reforecasting is taking place to see if staff can be released for English and Maths teaching. <i>Q: Is there sufficient resource in the Student Support teams?</i> The growth was predicted, staff resource is appropriate, capacity has increased in staff teams over the last year.		

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	Action – HR Director to provide a list of roles recruited to, to increase capacity <i>Q: Where will the pinch points be if there is continued growth in future years? What will the next pinch point?</i> SMT have a planning day next week in advance of the Governor/SMT strategic planning meeting in November. SMT will look at profiling capacity across the site. It was anticipated that the current student numbers would not be achieved for another 4 years. Governors asked SMT to reflect on whether this should be added to the Risk Register. A student governor raised that they had experienced difficulties parking on campus. The Deputy Principal advised that a new overflow car park for staff (90-100 spaces) went live this week which will reduce parking pressures. Additional spaces will also be released in the front car park and from the building works now that the work is complete. Governors asked what the attendance was in the first few weeks of term. Currently attendance is 90%, there are variances by programme/area. There are no trends in the data. Students are notifying the college if they are ill and the Vice Principal is reassured that the teams are following up students who are not attending and are following policy. The cohort leaders are getting to know the students and barriers to attendance. English and Maths attendance is 85%, which is 15% higher than this time last year. Members noted the Complaints and Compliments report. The curriculum area with the highest number of complaints also has the largest cohort of students. SMT have reflected and learned from complaints throughout the year and have made changes to college wide practices and policies as a result. Managers have received training on investigations and the quality of investigations has improved. The total number of complaints has remained constant despite an increase in student numbers.	SJ	Nov 25
GOV/25 26/05	<u>Risk Register</u> The FD highlighted the following: • New amber risks: attendance and local government changes i.e. devolution • New green risks: Student retention and change in educational policy due to government reform • Highest rated risks: ○ Managing dirty water on the farm (The farm board report sets out the actions and mitigations and the farm continues to maintain full compliance with solutions to dirty water management being set out in future capital expenditure plans and planning permission in progress to install roof coverings) ○ Fire safety risk (rating unchanged due to a low likelihood but a very high impact) ○ organisational capacity (reduced following the appointment of Coral Ward (Vice Principal))		

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	The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee advised that there was a detailed discussion regarding managing dirty water at the Committee meeting.		
GOV/25 26/06	<u>Sustainability Strategy progress update and Environmental Sustainability Annual Report</u> The Deputy Principal advised that sustainability is a golden thread across the College and a priority in our strategic plan. There are five core objectives of the strategy. The Deputy Principal outlined performance, key strengths and areas for improvement for each objective. Further work is needed to increase performance against objective one – to ensure that all areas of our educational provision prepare students for green career pathways and are aligned to the adaptations taking place within existing land based sector industries in response to climate change. Good progress has been made against all other objectives. Excellent progress is being made towards our net zero target for carbon emissions. Emissions have reduced despite the growth at the college. Governors questioned whether the college had decided that Anaerobic digestion is the preferred option, have other options been considered? Return on investment is being considered for different technologies, a full appraisal of all options will be completed. Governors asked whether the college was splitting food waste as there will be legislation introduced regarding this. The Deputy Principal advised that the college is already splitting food waste, although there is more to do and the college are aware of the changes to legislation. Governors asked whether the college was still on track for additional level 3 courses for environment science and the new BSc in Sustainable Agriculture. Managers confirmed this is the case. Discussion will take place at the planning day / strategic planning day regarding additional level 3 environmental science curriculum. Governors asked whether additional staff would be required or if the existing team could deliver this. The Principal advised that additional staff would be bought in and there is a plan. Given the college's vision to be the leader of land and environment and training in the South East, renowned for cutting-edge practice, this is an important area for the college. The college is a finalist in the National Green Gown awards. SMT met with the SU earlier in the day and the students asked whether the college could do more on sustainability. The Vice Principal asked the SU how the college embedded sustainability within the curriculum. The students gave naturally occurring examples of where it has been embedded.		

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GOV/25 26/07	<u>One Garden Brighton</u> Members noted the Minutes of the OGB Board meeting held on 17th September 2025. The FD highlighted the following: • Period 1 Management Accounts show a profit. Trade was good for the core trading outlets (Kitchen & Market). There were adverse variances on plant sales, events and dog grooming which are being analysed further. • A new college till system has been installed • New eat in / take out prices (to identify products that do not require VAT to be charged). • Aircall has been installed to improve response times to calls • Half term trail – expect 10k visitors • Kitchen is being updated to cater for Plumpton School of bakery students • Winter solstice event planned • Key risks and implications OGB is on a positive trajectory. Governors were assured by the laser focus on profit rather than revenue and commended management on the turnaround. There has been strong student recruitment at OGB as reported at the OGB Board. The campus at Stammer is essential as there is not the capacity to deliver the courses at Plumpton. Discussion took place regarding the repayment of the OGB loan to the college. It was agreed that a repayment schedule will be drawn up based on future profitability and consideration will be given to the benefit that OGB has provided to students and how this can be accounted for in the loan repayment. Action – Loan repayment schedule to be drawn up taking into consideration the non-financial benefit to the college (PC)	PL	Dec 25
GOV/25 26/08	<u>Monitoring</u> <u>Annual Insurance Report</u> The FD gave an overview of the above report, highlighting that the increase in insurance premium was due to organic growth. The FD drew members attention to the insurance claims report. SMT review the actions that have led to the insurance claim to see what can be learned. Members noted the report. <u>Health and Safety Annual Report</u> The Deputy Principal highlighted the following from the report: • Overall accident reporting is high (triangulated by external organisations) • During 24/25 COSHH accidents reduced by 70% • There were no RIDDOR accidents involving students The Deputy Principal outlined areas for improvement for 25/26 including reducing the number of avoidable accidents and increasing near miss reporting. There will be some changes to the H&S Management Cycle to increase the frequency of reporting. <i>Q: Are you confident that all accidents and near misses are being recorded?</i>		

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	A: The Deputy Principal is as confident as he can be that all accidents are being reported, triangulated by external observers – who feel that there is over reporting in this area. Staff need to be better at reporting near misses, changes to reporting systems are being implemented to support this. <i>Q: How do you tackle staff who are not following policies/procedures, is this through the appraisal process? Are there targets in place for managers of areas with higher accident rates?</i> A: In the areas with higher accident rates, staff are following policies/procedures however there is not enough learning from the near misses to reduce the number of accidents. The Deputy Principal's report to SMT identifies any staff that are not following policies/procedures. SMT also receive information from the H&S team, through the compliance tracker, identifying noncompliance with the Fire Safety policy. Action is taken straight away rather than waiting for the appraisal process. <i>Q: Do you feel you have enough budget to do what you need to do to keep people safe?</i> A: Consideration is being given to increasing staff resource in H&S, which is appraised against other staffing requirements in the college. The biggest impact at the moment will be made by individual college safety managers. Investment has been made in monitoring tools and a dashboard, which helps safety managers to keep abreast of what is happening in their team. <i>Q: Do you ask students how safe they feel in the student survey?</i> A: Yes The Chair and Principal had completed a learning walk prior to the meeting (3 or 4 were practical lessons), good strong health and safety practice was observed. Students were able to articulate Risk Assessments.		
GOV/25 26/09	<u>Policies</u> Managers highlighted the proposed changes to the following policies: • Child Protection and Safeguarding policy ◦ This policy is mapped against the East Sussex County Council policy and the s175 audit document • SEND policy ◦ Minor amendments have been made • Handling the Media ◦ Minor amendments have been made to cross reference other policies • Student Behaviour Intervention Policy ◦ Significant changes were made in response to the Behaviour Management Annual Report to ensure better consistency of intervention. CPD has been rolled out to staff. There has been a really positive start to the year. The college is keen to work with other schools and colleges on student behaviour. • Health and Safety Policy ◦ Minor changes have been made to update staffing		

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	Q: How many SEND students do you have? A: Last year 1350 16-18 students, approximately 500 with SEND, 200 EHCP's, 100 High Needs students. Action – One Page summary of student data for 25/26 to be shared with governors after the 42-day window. APPROVED: Corporation approved the following policies: • Child Protection and Safeguarding policy • SEND policy • Handling the Media policy • Student Behaviour Intervention Policy • Health and Safety Policy	CW	Nov 25
GOV/25 26/10	<u>AOB</u> The Rural Land Management Degree Course was developed in response to a skills gap identified by rural land agents. A steering group of rural land agents worked with the college to write an accelerated two year degree. The first cohort of learners started in September. RICS accreditation has been awarded to the programme to give it Chartered Surveyor status this week. A £1m bid to the Office for Students (OfS) for capital funding has been successful. The money will be used for digital infrastructure to enable future growth. It was Gill Payne's (Staff Governor) last meeting as she had completed her 4 year term of office. The Chair thanked her for all of her work as a governor, in particular all of her work outside of meetings at engagement events and stakeholder meetings.		

Signed Chloe K. Doreau Date 09.12.25