

## FIRCROFT COLLEGE OF ADULT EDUCATION

### Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting held on Wednesday 15 October 2025

**PRESENT:** Geoff Layer (Chair), Carole Parkes (Vice-Chair), Eluned Jones, Robert Masunga, Harpreet Samra, Chris Kenny, Julie Hughes, Kieran Armitage, Ben Rawal (part), Katharine Clough (remote), Tahirah Gani (part), Skyler Gledhill (part), and Mel Lenehan (Principal).

Page | 1

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Angela Bate (Assistant Principal Education), Andy Gazey (Assistant Principal Business Support and Development), and Clerk.

REF	ACTION
1	<p><b><u>APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR</u></b></p> <p>The Chair and Vice-Chair were unanimously re-elected to their roles. There were no other nominations.</p>
2	<p><b><u>OPENING REMARKS BY CHAIR</u></b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions would follow after Item 4.</p>
3	<p><b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u></b></p> <p>The Principal knew Rob Smith who is one of the supervisors on her doctorate. Katharine Clough knew Steve Marchant. These interests were not considered significant (Item 5).</p> <p>There were no other declarations of interest.</p>
4	<p><b><u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></b></p> <p>Apologies were submitted on behalf of John Holford and Elliot Moody.</p>
5	<p><b><u>APPOINTMENT/REAPPOINTMENT OF GOVERNORS – CONFIDENTIAL ITEM</u></b></p> <p>The governors had been provided with the Clerk's report and applications/nominations. The Clerk outlined the process followed</p>

Minutes of Directors Meeting 15.10.2025

Fircroft College of Adult Education is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. Registered in England and Wales with company number 14776636 and charity number 1204069. Registered Office; 1018 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6 LH.

	<p>including by the Panel and the recommendations of the Governance Committee.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Reappoint Chris Kenny for a second term from 15.12.2025</b></li> <li><b>2. Appoint Ben Rawal as an Independent Governor from 15.10.2025, appoint him to the membership of the Audit Committee and appoint him as Chair of the Audit Committee</b></li> <li><b>3. Appoint Tahirah Gani as a Student Governor and appoint her to the membership of the Education Committee</b></li> <li><b>4. Appoint Skyler Gledhill as a Student Governor and appoint them to the membership of the Education Committee</b></li> <li><b>5. Appoint Rob Smith as an Independent Governor from 3.11.2025 and to the membership of the Education Committee (subject to the eligibility and formalities being satisfactorily completed)</b></li> <li><b>6. Appoint Steve Marchant as Associate Governor - Operations Committee (subject to his consent).</b></li> </ol> <p>After the resolutions above having being passed Ben Rawal, Tahirah Gani and Skyler Gledhill were invited into the meeting room and joined the meeting. The Chair then invited everyone to introduce themselves.</p> <p>The Chair said that it was early in the year to talk about student numbers and financial accounts. He said that there were a lot of procedural documents on the agenda and these had been considered by the Governance Committee. Governors were welcome to raise questions on these and otherwise he would expedite their approvals. The Chair said the reports that were key were the Folk High School Movement, Principal's Report and Update and the Eco Classroom.</p>	
6	<p><b><u>DEVELOPMENT SESSION – FIRCROFT'S LINKS TO FOLK HIGH SCHOOL MOVEMENT</u></b></p> <p>The Principal presented on The Folk High School Movement and its relevance to the College. This included content on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foundation in Denmark in 1879 and developments globally</li> <li>• Strong philosophy to support democracy and democratic participation</li> <li>• Real sense of civic duty</li> <li>• Freedom to design curriculum</li> <li>• No exams or inspections</li> <li>• Students and tutors as equals</li> </ul>	

**Minutes of Directors Meeting 15.10.2025**

Fircroft College of Adult Education is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. Registered in England and Wales with company number 14776636 and charity number 1204069. Registered Office; 1018 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6 LH.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transformative learning and critical pedagogy etc.</li> </ul> <p>The Principal said that staff had visited Denmark in July 2025 for an international Folk High School teacher conference.</p> <p>Angela Bate (AB) mentioned that the new Access Students had already made positive statements about the Movement and the College's links to it. The Chair indicated that at the Strategy Day in June 2026 there could be further consideration of how Fircroft was embracing some aspects of the Movement and how this might be developed further.</p>	
7	<p><b><u>MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON 13 JUNE 2025</u></b></p> <p><b><u>AND MATTERS ARISING</u></b></p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body approve the Minutes of the Special Meeting Held on 13 June 2025 as a correct record.</b></p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p> <p><b><u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 JULY 2025</u></b></p> <p><b><u>AND ANY MATTERS ARISING</u></b></p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body approve the Minutes of the Meeting Held on 7 July 2025 as a correct record.</b></p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>	
8	<p><b><u>GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS AND ROLES 2025-2026</u></b></p> <p>The Clerk said that recommendations had been made by the Governance Committee. The Clerk would update the papers to include the approvals made earlier in the meeting at Item 5.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Appoint Geoff Layer as Chair of the Governing Body and Carole Parkes as Vice-Chair</b></li> <li><b>2. Approve the Governance Structure</b></li> <li><b>3. Approve Membership of Committees as set out in the report and as updated at the meeting</b></li> <li><b>4. Approve Chairing of Committees as set out in the report and as</b></li> </ol>	

Minutes of Directors Meeting 15.10.2025

Fircroft College of Adult Education is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. Registered in England and Wales with company number 14776636 and charity number 1204069. Registered Office; 1018 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6 LH.

	<p>updated at the meeting</p> <p>5. Approve Carole Parkes as Lead Governor – Social and Climate/Environmental Justice, approve Julie Hughes as Lead Governor – Safeguarding, approve Eluned Jones as Lead Governor – Education, and appoint Chris Kenny as Lead Governor – Technology</p> <p>6. Appoint Eluned Jones as the third Independent Governor to the membership of the Remuneration Committee.</p>	Page   4
9	<p><b><u>CHAIR’S UPDATE</u></b></p> <p>The Chair said that he had nothing to report that was not already in the Principal’s Report.</p>	
10	<p><b><u>PRINCIPAL’S REPORT AND UPDATE</u></b></p> <p>The Principal touched upon a few of the things covered in her Report including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Government Departments most relevant to the College were being revised again</li> <li>• The new Ofsted Inspection Framework was about to be implemented, the next inspection of the College was 3 years away</li> <li>• End year (2024/5) Contract performance was still hitting target</li> <li>• The college had recruited 27 new Access learners.</li> </ul> <p>Andy Gazey (AG) provided a very brief background to the Eco Classroom and informed governors that progress had been slow and the College was waiting for Birmingham City Council to approve the College’s response to the pre-commencement conditions. He added that the risk to the College of having to part fund the project was in the region of £90k-£100k. AG continued to chase the Council. The Chair reminded governors that they had approved the project subject to full planning consent.</p> <p>The Principal explained for the benefit of new governors that the College mainly received its funding under two streams:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adult Skills for courses leading to qualifications, progressing people to work (about £1m)</li> <li>• Tailored Learning (previously called community learning, mainly short course personal and social development).</li> </ul> <p>Free Courses for Jobs had funded Level 3 courses and in 2023/2024 the</p>	

Minutes of Directors Meeting 15.10.2025

Fircroft College of Adult Education is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. Registered in England and Wales with company number 14776636 and charity number 1204069. Registered Office; 1018 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6 LH.

	<p>College moved to claim funding under that. This funded the Access courses provision. Previously the College had used Advanced Learner Loans and bursaries directly from the DfE to cover residential costs. When the College moved to the new funding it was on the basis that the residential costs would be covered. In 2023/2024 the residential costs were paid through reconciliation (about £190k). In 2025/2026 the Free Courses for Jobs funding has been integrated into the Adult Skills Budget. On receipt of the funding contract for 25/26, the Principal asked the WMCA to add in these additional costs to our contract. The response received from the WMCA was that no additional costs would be covered. Currently, External Audit would show the College's financial grading as Outstanding. If WMCA refused to pay the residential costs the grading would be impacted and there could be further consequences. This was a high risk issue for the College.</p> <p>The Principal was liasing with the WMCA and also taking external advice.</p> <p>At the same time the College was negotiating a future funding model with the WMCA. The Principal said that a report to update on the position would be presented to the Operations Committee. The Principal and AG confirmed to the Governing Body that there had been full transparency in the regular ILR and funding submissions to the WMCA on how the residential costs were being claimed in addition to the funding. The Principal sought the Governing Body's support in making further representations to the WMCA. Governors supported the Principal in this and the Chair asked that he and the Governing Body be kept informed.</p> <p>In response to a query by the Chair of Audit Committee the Principal confirmed that generally the College had a positive relationship with the WMCA.</p> <p>The Principal reported that the College was a finalist in two categories for the Green Gown awards: Creating Impact, and Innovating Use of Technology (digital resource for teachers). The winners were to be announced on 5 November 2025.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b> <b>Governing Body note the Principal's Report and Update.</b></p>	
11	<b><u>STRATEGIC FUTURES</u></b>	

## Minutes of Directors Meeting 15.10.2025

Fircroft College of Adult Education is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. Registered in England and Wales with company number 14776636 and charity number 1204069. Registered Office; 1018 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6 LH.

	<p>The Principal informed governors that a potential strategic project regarding income generation, global and local philanthropy was being given early consideration. Recently, there had also been a £25k donation from Caroline Cadbury, through a Cadbury Trust. Caroline had visited the College a couple of years earlier in her role as Chair of BVT.</p> <p>In the meantime, legal advice was also being sought about future use of the Trust and how it might be used to protect the College’s future and the reserves it held. In response to a query from a governor, the Chair said that if the reserves could be transferred to the Trust it might benefit the College as the College was having to look at income generation and use of funds whilst staff already had busy jobs. The Trust would then be used to benefit and fund the College.</p> <p>Reports would be taken to Governing Body meetings as progress was made. The Chair said that it was better to look at options at this stage when the College was in a position of strength.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body note the update from the Strategic Futures Group.</b></p>	
12	<p><b><u>SCHEME OF DELEGATION – MATTERS RESERVED TO GOVERNING BODY FOR DECISION COMMITTEES’ TERMS OF REFERENCE</u></b></p> <p>The Clerk pointed out the changes and the reasons for them (Financial Handbook 2025, and also the Principal now being the only Senior Post Holder) following the retirement of the Vice Principal in April 2025.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body approve the Scheme of Delegation – Matters Reserved to governing Body for Decision Committees’ Terms of Reference.</b></p>	
13	<p><b><u>STANDING ORDERS</u></b></p> <p>There were no changes being proposed.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body approve the Standing Orders.</b></p>	
14	<p><b><u>CONFLICTS OF INTEREST POLICY AND DECLARATION OF INTERESTS FORM</u></b></p> <p>There were no suggested changes.</p>	

Minutes of Directors Meeting 15.10.2025

Fircroft College of Adult Education is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. Registered in England and Wales with company number 14776636 and charity number 1204069. Registered Office; 1018 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6 LH.

	<b>RESOLVED: Governing Body approve the Conflicts of Interest Policy and the Declarations of Interests Form.</b>	
<b>15</b>	<b><u>GOVERNOR ELIGIBILITY FORM</u></b>  There were no suggested changes.  <b>RESOLVED: Governing Body approve the Governor Eligibility Form.</b>	Page   7
<b>16</b>	<b><u>ATTENDANCE RECORDS 2024-2025 - GOVERNING BODY AND COMMITTEES</u></b>  Governors noted the Clerk’s report. The Clerk said that most governors had very good attendance. The Chair said that the challenge was to improve attendance for next year so that it was better than other college benchmarks and internal expectations.  <b>RESOLVED: Governing Body note the Attendance Records 2024-2025 - Governing Body and Committees.</b>	
<b>17</b>	<b><u>ANNUAL INTERNAL ASSESSMENT OF GOVERNANCE 2024-2025 - UPDATE ON ACTION PLAN</u></b> <b><u>EXTERNAL REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE – UPDATE ON ACTION PLAN</u></b>  Governors noted and approved the Action Plans. Suggested actions from the Chair’s 1-2-1 meetings would be considered by the Governance Committee.  <b>RESOLVED: Governing Body approve the Annual Internal Assessment of Governance 2024-2025 - Updated Action Plan</b> <b>External Review of Governance – Updated Action Plan.</b>	
<b>18</b>	<b><u>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</u></b>  The Clerk encouraged governors to verify their ID with Companies House. Governors had been provided with instructions. Some governors found the process fairly easy whilst others had difficulty. Further help would be available if necessary.	
<b>20</b>	<b><u>DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING</u></b>	

Minutes of Directors Meeting 15.10.2025

Fircroft College of Adult Education is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. Registered in England and Wales with company number 14776636 and charity number 1204069. Registered Office; 1018 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6 LH.

	10 December 2025 5pm	
<b>CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS</b>		
<b>21</b>	<b><u>APPOINTMENT/REAPPOINTMENT OF GOVERNORS</u></b>  Minuted at 5 above.	Page   8

<b>Signed</b> ..... <b>Date</b> .....
---------------------------------------

**Minutes of Directors Meeting 15.10.2025**

Fircroft College of Adult Education is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity.  
Registered in England and Wales with company number 14776636 and charity number 1204069.  
Registered Office; 1018 Bristol Road, Selly Oak, Birmingham B29 6 LH.