

# FIRCROFT COLLEGE OF ADULT EDUCATION

## Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting held on Monday 7 July 2025

**PRESENT:** Geoff Layer (Chair), Carole Parkes (Vice-Chair), Eluned Jones, Ben Shore (via Teams), Robert Masunga, Chris Kenny (via Teams), John Holford (via Teams), Julie Hughes, and Mel Lenehan (Principal).

Page | 1

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Stephen Hayden (Head of Finance and Regulatory Compliance), Andy Gazey (Assistant Principal), and Clerk.

REF	ACTION
<p><b>1</b> <u><b>OPENING REMARKS BY CHAIR</b></u></p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. After Item 4, the Chair mentioned the key reports for decision or discussion i.e. Principal’s Report and Update, Budgets and Plans, and Report of Lead Governor – Education.</p>	
<p><b>2</b> <u><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b></u></p> <p>There were no declarations of interest.</p>	
<p><b>3</b> <u><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b></u></p> <p>Apologies were submitted on behalf of Katharine Clough, Lorna Phillip, Harpreet Samra and Parminder Singh Garcha.</p>	
<p><b>4</b> <u><b>GOVERNOR RECRUITMENT</b></u></p> <p>This item was dealt with in Confidential Session with Julie Hughes not being present.</p> <p>The Chair outlined the process followed in the recruitment exercise and the recommendations of the Governance Committee. Governors were agreed that the recommended applicants had targeted skills that would strengthen the Governing Body. The Clerk confirmed that the applicants had been consulted about membership of committees and Julie Hughes also about the Lead Governor - Safeguarding role.</p> <p>A governor mentioned that the College had been in discussions with</p>	

### Minutes of Directors Meeting 7.7.2025

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>Coventry University as part of its Strategic Futures work and therefore whether there would be a potential conflict of interest for Kieran Armitage who was an employee there. The Chair responded that if a potential conflict arose it would be managed in accordance with the Conflict of Interests Policy and Declarations of Interests process. He considered that at this stage Kieran Armitage did not have potential conflicts greater than other governors. The Clerk confirmed her agreement with the Chair.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Appoint Julie Hughes to the membership of the Governing Body with immediate effect</b></li> <li>• <b>Appoint Julie Hughes to the membership of the Education Committee and as Lead Governor – Safeguarding</b></li> <li>• <b>Appoint Kieran Armitage to the membership of the Governing Body with effect from 8.7.2025</b></li> <li>• <b>Appoint Kieran Armitage to the membership of the Operations Committee.</b></li> </ul> <p>Julie Hughes was invited into the room and to join the Governing Body meeting after the conclusion of this item. The Chair welcomed her.</p>	
5	<p><b><u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 MARCH 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 19 March 2025 as a correct record.</b></p> <p>A governor asked whether the Governing Body’s decisions regarding auditors should still stand given recent discussions at the Audit Committee. The Clerk and Principal explained that the performances of both set of auditors were satisfactory and the discussions at Audit Committee did not detract from that.</p> <p>There were no other matters arising.</p>	
6	<p><b><u>CHAIR’S UPDATE</u></b></p> <p>The Chair informed governors that he would be meeting with the Mayor on 17.7.2025. He had also had meetings involving the FEC and WMCA. He and the Principal had Strategic Conversations with DfE officials.</p>	

**Minutes of Directors Meeting 7.7.2025**

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 Chair thanked Ben Shore for his service to Fircroft and for chairing and leading the Audit Committee.</p> <p>The Vice-Chair informed governors that she had received an award for working with United Nations organisations on climate action. The Chair congratulated the Vice-Chair on behalf of the Governing Body.</p>	Page   3
7	<p><b><u>PRINCIPAL'S REPORT AND UPDATE</u></b></p> <p>The Principal was recommending that the Strategic Futures Group continue to meet regularly. She proposed financial modelling for the funding reducing and for it remaining at current levels. She was going to set up an operational team in College to develop income generation ideas and plans. The Principal reminded governors that the DfE provided 2% of the College's funding. The rest of the funding came from the WMCA.</p> <p>The Principal was requesting the governors to approve a deep dive into students who were economically inactive rather than a broader piece of work on Return on Investment. The government and the WMCA were prioritising the economically inactive. The Principal reminded governors that 85% of the College's students were unemployed and 53% were economically inactive.</p> <p>The Chair commented that whilst funding from the DfE was restricted it might be possible to get funding from other government departments such as Health.</p> <p>The Principal distributed copies of the Fircrofter magazine which contained the work of students, stories, poems etc. The English teacher had initiated this project.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED:</b>  <b>Governing Body note the Principal's Report and Update.</b>  <b>Governing Body approve:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Strategic Plan objectives for 2025-2026</b></li> <li><b>2. Focus of the Strategic Futures Group for 2025-2026</b></li> <li><b>3. Climate Action Plan 2025-2027</b></li> <li><b>4. Return on Investment framework development with Mark Ravenhall (recommendation 3 for 2025-2026, deep dive research option).</b></li> </ol>	

8	<p><b><u>MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS</u></b></p> <p>Stephen Hayden (SH) stated that the College was looking to return to Good financial health grade and there were factors that could enable this. For example, the College recruited students throughout the year. The Chair commented that College would be trying to make a surplus and to achieve a Good grade.</p> <p>The balance sheet was solid. There was a lot of cash in the high yield account generating income of about £3k per month.</p> <p>A governor asked about the Ryan Reynolds Bursary Fund. SH said that the Fund (about £60k) could be used to grant bursaries on certain conditions. Making the grants would take the College closer to a deficit position. The governor said that the Fund should be used as intended. The Principal said that AEB funds were used for bursaries. The Ryan Reynolds Bursary Fund was a restricted fund. SH was requested to circulate the documentation in relation to the Fund.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body note the Management Accounts.</b></p>	SH
9	<p><b><u>FINANCIAL BUDGETS AND PLANS</u></b></p> <p>SH listed the contents of his report. He said that the budget included contingencies and reconciliations.</p> <p>SH said that the assumptions for the budget year were designed to hit certain measures. He was trying to keep pay costs to/below 65% of all costs. He was budgeting for a 2.5% pay increase. He was assuming a £20k savings on pay costs from vacancies. He had assumed that the income generation target would be met. He had assumed that audit fees would not rise further in the budget year. The balancing was designed to deliver a Good financial grade.</p> <p>The Chair asked how confident SH was on income generation. SH said that there was an element of risk but had assumed that Innovate funding would roll over. The Chair pointed out to governors that the 2.5% pay increase would need to be funded by the College, the government was not funding pay rises for adult colleges.</p> <p>The Vice-Chair noted that it was difficult in the circumstances to set a budget. SH said that he had to stretch certain areas.</p>	

	<p>SH explained how the current Depreciation Policy worked. Sage would now calculate depreciation per month from the date of acquisition of an asset. SH said that the new method was probably more accurate and also more efficient to calculate.</p> <p>SH said that the capital sums indicated would be spent if funding was secured.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body approve:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>The Budget for 2025-2026 and the Financial Plans</b></li> <li>• <b>The amendment to the Accounting Policy – Depreciation.</b></li> </ul>	
<b>10</b>	<p><b><u>RISK UPDATE AND RISK REGISTER</u></b></p> <p>SH said that the Risk Register had been updated and was not significantly different from the previous version.</p> <p>A governor commented that hopefully the risk relating to the Eco Classroom would be removed by the next time governors looked at the Risk Register.</p> <p>A governor considered that there should be another Development Session on cyber risks and ransomware. Another governor said that further actions were still needed to bring risks within target levels. The Chair requested that this risk be revisited in the Autumn Term.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body note the Risk Register.</b></p>	<b>AG/SH</b>
<b>11</b>	<p><b><u>REVIEW AND REAPPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AUDIT</u></b></p> <p>The Chair of the Audit Committee reminded governors that Buzzacott had recently been reappointed following a retendering exercise and Audit Committee was content from them to audit this year's accounts and continue as External Auditors to the College.</p> <p>Audit Committee also recommended that RSM continue as Internal Auditors and considered their performance to be satisfactory. The Chair of Audit Committee (on behalf of the Audit Committee) had provided some feedback to RSM which the lead partner for the College had received constructively. The lead partner's expertise and involvement were valued by the College. The Chair of the Audit Committee said that Internal Audit</p>	

	<p>services should be retendered shortly although he appreciated that the College did not have the capacity or the budget to do this in 2025-2026 and that it should be done the following year.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body approve the reappointment of Buzzacott as External Auditors and RSM as Internal Auditors for 2025-2026.</b></p>	Page   6
12	<p><b><u>EXTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY 2025-2026</u></b> <b><u>EXTERNAL AUDITORS' ENGAGEMENT LETTER</u></b></p> <p>The Chair of Audit Committee said that Buzzacott had assigned a new partner to the College. Meetings and planning with relevant staff were due to take place shortly and the work should be delivered on time.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body approve:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External Audit Strategy 2025-2026</li> <li>• External Auditors' Engagement Letter.</li> </ul>	
13	<p><b><u>INTERNAL AUDIT STRATEGY 2025-2026</u></b></p> <p>Governors noted that the Internal Audit Plan for next year included a Cyber Risk Deep Dive.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body approve the Internal Audit Strategy 2025-2026.</b></p>	
14	<p><b><u>ECO-CLASSROOM</u></b></p> <p>Andy Gazey (AG) updated governors. He said that the process involving Birmingham City Council (BCC) and their appointed ecologist had been difficult.</p> <p>There were 4 pre-commencement conditions attached to the planning permission which were being worked through. Following submissions on these BCC would have 8 weeks to respond although he hoped to receive clearance sooner. The construction phase would be 11-14 weeks and this included 3 weeks to get a watertight shell of the building. AG hoped that the College would have the classroom by September/October time. AG added that to make the classroom "eco" had added £21k to the project.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body note the update on the Eco-Classroom.</b></p>	

Minutes of Directors Meeting 7.7.2025

15	<p><b><u>EXTERNAL REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE – UPDATED ACTION PLAN</u></b> <b><u>INTERNAL SELF-ASSESSMENT OF GOVERNANCE</u></b></p> <p>The Clerk outlined her report and recommendations from the Governance Committee.</p> <p>The responses to the Skills Audit Survey were positive. A governor said that the moderation exercise at the Strategy Day had been helpful.</p> <p>Governors were encouraged to visit the College outside of Governing Body meetings. The 1-2-1 meetings with the Chair would take place in the next few weeks. The Clerk said that having considered the Strategic Objectives for 2025-2026 it was not necessary to bring the Training and Development Plan back in the Autumn Term. The Curriculum Strategy and Stakeholder Strategy (for example) would be covered at Governing Body meetings which included Development Sessions.</p> <p>Governors were content to follow the recommendations of the Governance Committee.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body approve:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Arrangements for Internal Self-Assessment of Governance</b></li> <li><b>2. Updated Action Plan of External Review of Governance</b></li> <li><b>3. Role Descriptions of Lead Governors</b></li> <li><b>4. Governors’ Training and Development Plan.</b></li> </ol>	
16	<p><b><u>REPORT OF LEAD GOVERNOR – EDUCATION</u></b></p> <p>The Lead Governor-Education outlined her report. She said that the Matrix accreditation process had not been easy and wanted to congratulate staff. The Careers Strategy was a work in progress and there was work to do on this. The Principal said that the role to progress this area was being recruited to. The Lead Governor – Education was pleased that there was now a new Lead Governor – Safeguarding. There had been a Development Session at a previous Governing Body on the SAR and QIP.</p> <p>The Chair said that the involvement of Student Governors at Governing Body meetings was important.</p> <p>The Principal said that following the retirement of the Vice-Principal the two Assistant Principals had taken on new responsibilities and were supporting each other.</p>	

	<p>The Chair requested a Development Session on what governors could add to the dialogue on education and how this could be achieved. Governors agreed that discussions and reflections on education and students' experience needed to be more prominent at governance meetings. The Chair said that the Development Session could also include the new Ofsted framework.</p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body note the report of the Lead Governor – Education.</b></p>	<p><b>Chair/ ML/ Clerk</b></p>
17	<p><b><u>MINUTES OF COMMITTEES</u></b></p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body note the following Committee Minutes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Governance Committee 15.1.2025</b></li> <li>• <b>Operations Committee 5.2.2025</b></li> <li>• <b>Education Committee 26.2. 2025</b></li> <li>• <b>Audit Committee 5.3.2025</b></li> <li>• <b>Special Audit Committee 19.3.2025.</b></li> </ul> <p>The Chair again said that he would like to see discussions on education and students brought into sharper focus at Governing Body meetings.</p>	
18	<p><b><u>SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS</u></b></p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body approve the Schedule of Meetings 2025-2026.</b></p>	
19	<p><b><u>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</u></b></p> <p>There were no other items of business.</p>	
20	<p><b><u>DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING</u></b></p> <p>15 October 2025 5pm</p>	
<b>CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS</b>		
21	<p><b><u>GOVERNOR RECRUITMENT</u></b></p> <p>The minutes relating to this item are set out in 4 above.</p>	

**Minutes of Directors Meeting 7.7.2025**

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>22</b>	<p><b><u>CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 19 MARCH 2025</u></b></p> <p><b><u>AND ANY MATTERS ARISING</u></b></p> <p><b>RESOLVED: Governing Body approve the Confidential Minutes of the Meeting Held on 19 March 2025 as a correct record.</b></p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>	Page   9
-----------	---	----------

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

**Minutes of Directors Meeting 7.7.2025**

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.