

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HARROGATE COLLEGE BOARD
HELD ON TUESDAY 18 MARCH**

Present

Robin Burch	Staff Member
Lisa Hart	Co-optee
Paul Hollins	Co-optee
Jane Pither (Chair)	Governor
Olivia Scothern	Student Member
Annabel Steward	Co-optee
Isabel Sutcliffe	Co-optee
Louise Tearle	Co-optee

The quorum for the meeting was three members (including at least one governor)

In Attendance

James Broadhurst (item 8)	Project Coordinator to ELT
Andrea Cowans	Group Director of Student Life
Eleanor Harris	Governance Manager
Stuart Jolley	Chief Financial Officer
Carol Layall (Item 11)	Group Director, Quality of Education
Nicola Nash	Deputy Director of Curriculum
David Warren	Group Vice Principal, Development
Danny Wild	Principal, Harrogate College

The meeting took place at Harrogate College and started at 4.15pm

PART 1 - MEETING ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Colin Booth, James Haddleton and Ann Marie Spry. The Chair welcomed Lisa Hart and Annabel Steward to their first meeting as members of the board. The board was informed that David Thorpe had stepped down from his role as co-optee at the end of December. Recruitment of a new member was being undertaken by the Governance Team, with a particular focus on finding someone with financial expertise.

2. Determination of Observers/Attendees at the Meeting

The board agreed and welcomed all attendees/observers at the meeting as per the above attendance list.

3. Declaration of Interests in any Agenda Items

The Chair reminded board members of the requirement to declare their interest in any agenda item. There were none, other than the standing declarations as per the register of board members' interests, which were noted.

4. Minutes of the Meeting of the Board held on 26 November 2024 and consideration of any Actions or other Matters Arising

Members considered the draft minutes of the board meeting held on 26 November 2024 and a rolling list of actions and matters arising from previous meetings. It was noted that the Positive

Regard report had been circulated to board members before Christmas. This would be sent to new members and resent to any members who requested it.

With regard to the action log, the board heard that Annabel Steward would act as EDI Link Governor and Lisa Hart would act as Safeguarding Link Governor for the board. A meeting would be arranged in the summer for Paul Hollins to meet with the Vice Principal Adults regarding AI.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the board held on 26 November 2024 be approved as a true and accurate record and that these be signed by the Chair.

5. Communications

a) Update from Chair including feedback from Group Board, World Café and Group Board Strategic Development Day

The Chair updated the board on the discussions and key decisions from the Group Board meeting in December which included the approval of the 2023/24 financial statements, several HR policies, Livingstone House acquisition and a preferred bidder for the University Centre Disposal.

At the World Café event in January, discussions commenced regarding the refreshed Group Strategy. Following this, at the Strategic Seminar event in March, the Group Board reaffirmed Luminate's values, its educational character and commitment to inclusive education.

b) Ofsted & Principal's Update

The Principal updated the board on the outcome of the recent full Ofsted inspection of the Group, which had been very positive with an overall grading of Good. The Chair had represented Harrogate in the Leadership and Management meeting with Governors during the inspection. The board agreed that the result had been a significant achievement and would be positive for stakeholder engagement at the college. Board members thanked all staff at Harrogate College and the Group for their work during the inspection.

The Principal also informed board members that he had been coopted onto the local Authority's Business Board, which would benefit stakeholder engagement and provide further networking opportunities, especially extending into Ripon.

c) Student Member Update

The student member provided the board with an overview of activities being held by the student union at the college, which included a musical being performed in Knaresborough in June, events arranged to celebrate Christmas and Valentine's day and continued work on mental health, as well as work by student reps to address local issues related to the lifts and the gym.

Board members commended the amount of work being undertaken by the Students' Union and commented that the level of student activity and engagement in extracurricular activities was evident when walking around the college.

d) Feedback from Link Governors

The Link Governor for TLA explained that she had visited the college in March to observe some beauty, business and electrical classes and had spoken with students, student reps, clients and teachers. It was noted that all students spoken to were focused on their course and future. Discussions had also been held with teaching staff regarding the new building where some concerns regarding the size of the classrooms had been raised.

The Principal informed the board that the Link Governor for Reach and Influence with Key Stakeholders was leading on a piece of work with the college regarding the entrepreneurial

curriculum. A meeting was due to take place on Thursday 20 March to explore piloting delivery this year, focused on core skills needed for students to run their own businesses.

6. Appointment of Vice Chair

The board heard that, following a call for nominations sent out to all board members in December 2024, one nomination for the position of Vice Chair had been received from Isabel Sutcliffe. Vice Chairs would receive a standing invite to observe Group Board meetings.

RESOLVED: The board approved the appointment of Isabel Sutcliffe as Vice Chair of the Board for the duration of her existing term on the board.

7. Outcomes of Board Effectiveness Reviews

The Governance Manager summarised the outcomes of the effectiveness review meetings held throughout February and March. It was reported that overall, members agreed that the board operated effectively and had a strong mix of skills. Several actions were recommended to further improve effectiveness, including encouraging more informal engagement with the college and networking between meetings where time allows, creating an executive summary for board packs and introducing a 'buddy' system for new members at induction.

Board members supported the proposed actions but were assured that any further engagement outside of board meetings and existing Link Governor roles would remain optional, mindful of board members other commitments. The board also noted that the proposed executive summary had been trialled for the March meeting and feedback was welcomed.

RESOLVED: That the board approved the actions recommended resulting from the effectiveness reviews.

PART 2 - STRATEGY SESSION

8. LEG Annual Accountability Agreement 2025/26

The ELT Project Coordinator presented the draft accountability statement, outlining its intended purpose and key changes to DfE requirements, including new national skills priorities. The board heard that for 2025/26 the Accountability Agreement Statement would be produced as a single Luminate document containing group level targets to address local, regional and national skills needs, as opposed to the individual college targets set in the previous year. The board heard that the targets set would be sector based rather than provision based and had been linked to sector areas linked to DfE priorities with actions mapped to areas of the group's curriculum. The board questioned whether the group had considered using any qualitative measures to produce targets and heard the criteria for assessment was restricted to quantitative targets.

The Principal explained that the separate targets produced for the college the previous year had been hard to measure, and it was felt that using group targets would make it easier to demonstrate progress. The board supported the proposed approach for the 2025/26 return, as it was agreed that this would enable Harrogate College to demonstrate how it individually contributes to the group targets and that more detailed information regarding activity at the college would be provided in a separate annex. Board members suggested that the final document, once approved, should also be shared with the Harrogate College Employers' Network for information.

9. Principal's Reports

a) Progress Against Strategic Priorities

The Principal gave the board an update regarding progress with the 2022/2025 strategic priorities for the college and drew the board's attention to the vector data related to strategic priority 2,

which demonstrated that almost 400 out of 550 technical and vocational learners in the region enrolled with Harrogate College. The board agreed that this data showed that the college was reaching almost the maximum market share in the region and justified the approach to focus on progressing these learners through to better occupational competency at level 3 and above. It was noted that the vector data also showed a dip in the proportion of adult learners in the region attending the college, which provided further justification for the expansion into Ripon to increase the college's market share.

Overall, the board noted the strong progress demonstrated against the strategic priorities and commented particularly on the progress evidenced against strategic priority 3, related to employer engagement, as it was now felt that engaging employers in shaping the curriculum and working directly with students has become business as usual activity.

b) Mid-Year Assurance Reports: 2024/25

The Principal presented mid-year assurance reports related to safeguarding, SEND, People Services and Health & Safety. Regarding the safeguarding report, board members questioned why an increased number of concerns has been reported this year. Assurance was given that this was the result of students feeling more comfortable to disclose because of improved relationships with staff, rather than a shift in the student population itself. The board commended the increase in safeguarding and prevent training compliance, to 99% this year and acknowledged the progress in reaching this level of completion. Clarification was given that external training certificates could be accepted for mandatory training if they were validated by the Head of Organisational Development.

In reviewing the People Services report, the board discussed the new T4 roles that had been developed for staff recruitment. Clarification was given that these roles were designed to address recruitment gaps, specifically in trade areas, where a market supplement may be needed to make roles competitive and that teachers recruited to these roles would have current industrial experience.

Regarding the Health & Safety report, the board noted there had been a significant increase in reported incidents this year. It was explained that this was likely reversing the under reporting near miss incidents, which was a group wide trend, rather than an actual increase in incidents itself. The Group Vice Principal Development assured board members that the central Health & Safety team was reviewing incident reporting across the group. Board members questioned how the group managed cyber security and were assured that the group held Cyber Essentials Plus credentials, with very strong cyber security in place, and that the Group Audit Committee received an annual report on cyber security compliance.

c) Review of College Risk Register 2024/25

The board reviewed the updated college risk register, noting that there were no new risks proposed to be added and no proposed increases to risk scores since the last meeting. It was proposed to remove risk reference 2165, delay to the building of the new college due to a judicial review, risks loss of DfE grant funding to build the college, as confirmation had been received from the DfE that the grant fund deadline would be extended, subject to planning permission being granted. The board agreed that the revised format for the risk register would allow for more proactive risk management.

RESOLVED: That the board approved the updated risk register, included the removal of risk reference 2165.

10. Harrogate College New Building Update

The Group Vice Principal Development gave an update to the board regarding progress with the new college building. As noted in the risk register discussion, the biggest risk to the project identified at the last meeting was the extension of the grant funding deadline, which had now

been resolved. The board heard that, although it had been planned to take the revised planning application to the Planning Committee meeting at the end of March, this had been delayed to 29 April as the group was waiting on some additional statutory responses prior to submission. Board members queried what impact this delay would have on the overall project timeline and were assured that it would still be achievable to open the building by September 2026, though any further delays may jeopardise this completion date. Board members questioned whether, if planning was granted, consideration would be given to commencing building prior to the deadline for judicial review has passed. However, it was explained that this was not allowed under the conditions of funding from the DfE.

The board heard that a new price for the construction had been received, which was slightly over the approved budget due to the delays to the project. It was hoped that some additional funding may be secured from the DfE to meet these costs due to the delays experienced. The board was assured that the group already had a very good working relationship with the preferred contractor due to work undertaken on other projects.

PART 3 – PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND SCRUTINY

11. Quality of Education

a) In Year Student Data and On Entry Survey

The board received a report detailing in-year student quality of education data and the results of the On Entry student survey. The Group Director of Quality of Education explained that overall retention at the college was at 95.7%, which was both above the national rate and above the level last year at the college, reflecting the impact of early interventions and the holistic support being offered to students. The most recent attendance figures for the college showed attendance at 83%, which was on a level with the rest of the group. The board was assured that attendance was monitored weekly and that improvements had been seen at the college including a notable reduction in the number of long-term absences. Attendance for English and maths was still a focus, but this was a common theme across the group.

The On Entry survey had received an extremely high level of engagement at the college and demonstrated high levels of satisfaction. It was explained that the student On Programme survey had just closed and the results of this would be reported at the June board meeting.

b) Progress Against Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

The board reviewed the report outlining progress against the actions within the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP), which demonstrated good progress made against all actions. The Group Director of Quality of Education explained that the third round of Quality Performance Review (QPR) meeting had just concluded, the process is very thorough and helps college staff to progress. The board was assured that any recommended actions were things the management team were already working to rectify.

12. Financial Performance

a) Financial Position and Forecast 2024/25

The Chief Financial Officer presented the year to date financial position which was behind budget with an EBITDA of (18.7%) against a budgeted position of (8.7%). This was due mainly to the timing of some income and reduced income as a result of the closure of ceramics courses, combined with increased agency costs. Regarding the ceramics courses, the Principal explained that there had been a significant decrease in enrolment numbers this year and the reduction in the size of the new building meant there would not be space to house the large kilns needed for these courses, as space for general purpose teaching rooms had to be prioritised.

The CFO explained that the year end position showed the college as forecast to be slightly ahead of budget at (25.8%) EBITDA against a budget position of (26.5%), due primarily to increased student recruitment. However, due to an issue with reporting it was noted that the apprenticeship figure reported was likely to reduce in the Q3 forecast.

b) Operation Budget Assumptions

The board noted the major assumptions and processes that would be used in setting the 2025/26 operating budget. Clarification was given that, although the Adult Education Budget for York and North Yorkshire had been top sliced for 2025/26, while this would reduce the overall allocation for the Adult Skills Fund for Luminate, the planned income for Harrogate College was still within the allocated envelope so would have less of an impact at college level.

13. Careers Guidance and Destinations Annual Report

The Group Director of Student Life presented the Careers Guidance and Destination Annual Report, explaining that the Gatsby Benchmark system had been used to create a full careers guidance programme for each college in the group and a new system called Navigate had been introduced for students to record their activities and skills gained.

It was noted that destinations data showed high numbers of students continuing through the levels of further education and students on apprenticeships courses also progressing into employment. It was reported that progression to HE had decreased both at the college and across the group. While the board noted that interventions were in place to improve this, it was acknowledged that the much smaller numbers at the college also impacted the figures when reported as percentages. It was therefore agreed that student numbers as well as percentages should be reported for destinations in future iterations of the report. The Group Director of Student Life explained that of those students progressing to Higher Education, the largest destination was York St. John's, which indicated that students may be staying at home and commuting. This was supported by the experience of the student board member. A piece of work to investigate the impact of commuting on destinations was therefore planned at group level.

The board was pleased to note the declining number of NEET destinations reported, which was now lower than the National Rate. However, the board questioned why the amount of work experience delivered was so much lower than the amount reported to be planned. It was explained that this may be a result of the introduction of the new reporting system, meaning students had simply not recorded their activity, and assurance was given that actions had been put in place to address this. It was also noted that the level of employer feedback was quite low. Again, it was thought this may in part be due to employers not recording this through Navigate and that alternative ways of capturing more informal feedback may be needed. Overall, the board commended the team on a clear and informative report.

The meeting closed at 17.45

Signed: (Chair) Date: