

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
HARROGATE COLLEGE BOARD
HELD ON TUESDAY 24 JUNE 2025**

Present

Colin Booth	Group CEO & Governor
Robin Burch	Staff Member
James Haddleton	Co-optee
Lisa Hart	Co-optee
Jane Pither (Chair)	Governor
Olivia Scothern (to item 5c)	Student Member
Annabel Steward	Co-optee
Isabel Sutcliffe (Vice Chair)	Co-optee
Louise Tearle	Co-optee

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

In Attendance

Darcy Amamou (to item 7)	Deputy Head of Communications
Eleanor Harris	Governance Manager
Stuart Jolley	Chief Financial Officer
Nicola Nash	Deputy Director of Curriculum
Ann Marie Spry	Group Vice Principal, Adults
David Warren	Group Vice Principal, Development
Danny Wild	Principal, Harrogate College

The meeting took place at Harrogate College and started at 4.30pm

PART 1 - MEETING ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

1. Transforming Lives Case Study

The board viewed a video demonstrating the impact of Harrogate College's partnership with Harrogate Hospitality and Tourism Association, which used the college's cooking facilities to host a competition, providing students with an opportunity to be involved and learn from some of the best chefs in the region. This and other case study videos are shared through social media, local media and with various stakeholders focusing on themes relevant to North Yorkshire priority sectors.

2. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Paul Hollins. The board heard that this would be Olivia Scothern's last meeting and members extended their thanks to Olivia for her contribution on the board and her impact on the Harrogate College Students' Union.

2. Determination of Observers/Attendees at the Meeting

The board 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 18 March 2025 and consideration of any Actions or other Matters Arising

Members considered the draft minutes of the board meeting held on 18 March 2025 and a rolling list of actions and matters arising from previous meetings, noting that all actions had either been completed or were due for completion at a later date. It was agreed to close the action related to the disaggregation of data from Smoothwall as no technical fix could be found, and a work around had instead been identified. The Link Governor for Safeguarding would continue to monitor safeguarding data reporting as part of future link governor visits and would report back should any further issues arise.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting of the board held on 18 March 2025 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

The Vice Chair updated the board on the discussions and key decisions from the Group Board meeting in May, which included approval of the Group Strategic Priorities 2025/26, annual accountability statement 2025/26 and the reappointment of the Group's External Auditors as well as updates to the Group Risk Register, the Group SODP and EDI annual assurance report.

The Chair informed the board that at an extraordinary board meeting held on 2 June, the board resolved to appoint Bill Jones, current Deputy CEO & Executive Principal, as CEO of the Group following Colin Booth's retirement in January.

b) Principal's Update

The Principal thanked board members for the time they had invested in attending events and visiting the college since the last meeting. He explained that the first meeting of the college's Employer Board had been held with the Link Governor for Skills in attendance. It was planned to expand the membership of the board further to capture additional sectors.

The board heard that an event was planned in Ripon at the end of July to showcase apprenticeships taking place in Ripon with the college. Local radio station, Your Harrogate Radio, would be broadcasting from the event and speaking to employers involved. It was agreed that details of the event would be shared with board members after the meeting and board members were invited to sign up to attend.

c) Student Member Update

The student board member informed the board that activities in the SU were coming to a close at the end of the term, with two student events remaining including an art and design and creative media exhibition, which board members were invited to attend. Board members heard that there would be some changes to the organisation of roles within the SU next year, meaning the Harrogate College Officer role would be undertaken on a voluntary basis. The name of the appointee to the role would be shared with board members as soon as this was known.

d) Feedback from Link Governors

The Chair informed the board that Link Governor visits had been held related to Green Skills, Safeguarding, EDI and TLA since the last meeting with reports available in the resources area of Board Effect. Board members had also attended the annual Bistro event, featuring food prepared and served by the college's Hospitality students and had attended a production of Six the Musical, organised by the SU and performed by Harrogate College students.

6. Harrogate College Board Terms of Reference 2025/26

As the Terms of Reference were thoroughly reviewed in November, no changes were proposed for the 2025/26 academic year. Board members were informed that recruitment to vacant board posts was ongoing, and it was agreed that recruitment materials used to advertise governance roles in the group would be sent to board members to share among their networks.

RESOLVED: The board approved the Harrogate College Board Terms of Reference for 2025/26.

PART 2 - STRATEGY SESSION

7. Luminate Education Group 2025-27 Strategy

The Deputy Head of Communications presented the draft refreshed group strategy for 2025-2027, which had been updated to include new photos and a new section related to shared services, following the consultation held at the World Café. The board heard that more substantial changes such as embedding EDI throughout the strategy and expanding the sustainability section to cover civic impact as a whole would be considered, when a fuller review of the strategy was undertaken once the new CEO was in post.

Board members were pleased to note the thorough consultation process that had been followed as part of the review. Members suggested that a glossary of terms could be included to make the strategy accessible to the widest possible audience, and that including a greater emphasis on the student voice in the message from the Chair at the start of the document would give greater prominence to the group's core purpose. Regarding the images used, the board noted that a CGI image of the new Harrogate building had been included, and assurance was given that this image would only be used in the published strategy if there was sufficient clarity regarding the status of the project by the time of publication. Overall board members commented that the refreshed strategy provided a clearer focus than previous iterations.

8. Strategic Deep Dive: Harrogate College Strategic Priorities

The Principal presented the proposed list of Strategic Priorities for the college for the next 12 months to the board. The board heard that the consultation process had brought up a number of themes with the biggest focusing on teaching excellence and working in partnership. As a result the following four priorities were proposed:

- **Relational Practice** – To embed a structured approach of relational practice into all aspects of staff and student life to improve student and teacher performance leading to high retention, achievement, progression and attendance. It was explained that this links to both a group wide aim and the adoption of 'Positive Regard' as a measure in schools in the region, aimed at improving engagement with students.
- **Business Partnerships** - To develop business relationships, leading to an outstanding student experience and financial growth of the college, by providing a co-designed curriculum, delivered in industrially leading workspaces by industry trained staff. It was noted that the new building would also be used to showcase employer relationships for example through sponsorships or endorsements through provision of equipment.
- **New Luminate TLA Strategy** – To provide consistently high-quality, inclusive teaching and learning that enables all students and apprentices to make sustained progress and cultivate a dynamic culture of growth and development for our staff that offers unparalleled opportunities for continual improvement, enabling them to thrive and reach new heights of professional excellence. The board heard that the group's TLA strategy was being developed in response to the new Ofsted framework.
- **School Links** – To develop a schools links programme with primary feeder schools that supports an aspirational vocational and technical pathway for Key Stage 4 pupils across Harrogate.

The board discussed the four proposed priorities, noting that these would be supported by action plans, which highlighted how the ideas generated through the consultation had shaped them. The board was informed that these priorities had also been aligned with the Group strategic priorities

and the college risk register. Board members agreed that the student focus of the strategic priorities was clear but questioned how it was planned to ensure progress would be monitored by the board going forward. It was explained that a Link Governor would be assigned to each priority who would monitor progress and feedback to the board along with the standing progress update provided by the Principal at each meeting.

RESOLVED: That the board approve the Harrogate College Strategic Priorities for 2025/26.

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, including the recent successes in recruiting to roles in Electrical and Motor Vehicle using the new T4 roles. The Deputy Director of Curriculum informed the board that number of applications had also been received for vacancies in English and Maths, and positive interviews for vacancies in childcare had taken place. Vacancies remained for marketing and business courses, and it was agreed that adverts would be shared with board members who may have contacts interested in applying. It was hoped that this successful round of recruitment would reduce reliance on agency staff next year and have a positive impact on the college budget and the student experience. The board heard that student recruitment numbers continued to be positive, with applications above target, which would also contribute to an improved financial picture next year.

The board discussed the recent application for Wave 6 Skills Bootcamp funding, which the college had been asked to reapply for despite an unsuccessful first application. The Principal explained that a condition of procurement for reapplication was to deliver 120 learners in one financial year, which would not be possible. The college had therefore submitted an application based on 60 learners, which was an achievable target. Although this had not met the threshold for reapplication the board would be kept informed if this changed nearer the funding deadline.

Board members were pleased to note that apprenticeships were now being delivered in Ripon across a variety of sectors. It was explained that the increase in activity in Ripon had raised awareness of the college, which had been supplemented by targeted marketing to businesses in the area. Whilst the current strategy for the college focused on marketing to north of Harrogate from Ripon to Darlington, it was agreed that marketing in other areas such as Wetherby could also be considered, although this area fell within the West Yorkshire boundary so may get picked up by Leeds City College marketing.

The board was assured that good progress had been made against all other strategic priorities and that activity would continue in these areas as business as usual following the approval of the new priorities.

b) **Review of College Risk Register 2024/25**

The board reviewed the updated college risk register, noting that no changes to risk levels or emerging risks were proposed. A group wide emerging risk related to IT replacement had been identified but was not currently on the risk register. The board heard that the college would be leasing part of the building to Tesco over the summer to use as a recruitment centre and that the income from this would be used to directly improve IT hardware for the college, to help mitigate this emerging risk.

RESOLVED: That the board approve the latest iteration of the risk register.

c) **SODP: Proposed Quality & HR Targets**

The Principal presented the proposed quality and HR targets for the college for 2025/26, explaining that the college would continue to self assess as good and to extend targets from the strong position already achieved. Board members commended the positive progress made so far

but queried whether the targets set for apprenticeships were too cautious, given the current predicted best case achievement. It was explained that while this target was reasonably cautious, it was still above the national rate and accounted for the time it would take for apprentices to complete their courses. The board heard that, although changes were being introduced to assessments nationally, the current national rate appeared low when compared to classroom achievement. Having discussed this target the board acknowledged that this presented a trajectory of progress that was planned to continue, and would therefore expect to see the target increase further in future years.

RESOLVED: That the board approve the Quality & HR targets and recommend to group board that these be included with the Group SODP.

10. Harrogate College New Building Update

The Group Vice Principal Development gave an update to the board regarding progress with the new college building, which had been approved by planning on 27 May but had subsequently received further legal challenge during the challenge window. Board members were assured that the group was working with its legal counsel to address the legal challenge. The group had been in contact with the DfE to seek permission to get an early works order to begin work during the legal challenge period. However, it was explained that the DfE's required the group to wait until all legal challenges had passed before grant funds could be drawn down. Although legal advice was being sought, not obtaining an early works order would mean that completion was likely to extend to October 2026.

The board was also informed that the Group was in discussion with the DfE regarding additional funding to meet the increased cost of the project, which had gone up by just over £1m due largely to inflation.

PART 3 – PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND SCRUTINY

11. Financial Performance

a) Financial Position and Forecast 2024/25

The Chief Financial Officer presented the year to date financial position as at 31 May 2025, explaining that there had not been significant movement since the previous iteration of the report. The largest impact on the budget this year had been the level of agency staffing costs against vacant posts, resulting in a negative EBITDA position. However, it was acknowledged that the impact of this additional spend had been mitigated slightly by in year student growth funding, which would continue next year due to the lagged nature of this funding.

b) Draft Operating Budget

The Chief Financial Officer presented the draft Operating Budget and drew the board's attention in particular to the increased 16-19 income, which was the result of lagged income due to the increased enrolment in 2024/25. This increase in income would be offset by reductions to other lines of income and increased staff costs, though as previously discussed it was anticipated that agency costs would be reduced. The board also noted that service costs in the budget would reduce this year, partly as a result of decreasing utility costs, but also due to a change in the distribution of these costs due to greater growth in other parts of the group. The board acknowledged that the budget continued to set a negative target EBITDA for the college for the year. However, it was agreed that this was an improved position on the previous year and that the new college building would further improve this trajectory.

RESOLVED: That the board recommend the draft Operating Budget for inclusion within the overall operating budget for the group.

12. Quality of Education

a) In Year Student Data

The board received a report detailing in-year student quality of education data including predicted student outcomes and the results of the student on-programmes survey. The Principal explained that the college was on track to achieve all quality targets set last year. Clarification was given that although best case achievement for apprenticeships was predicted to be higher this year than the target for next year, it was likely that actual achievement would reduce to target as some apprentices would not pass their End Point Assessment before the end of the year.

b) Progress Against Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

The board reviewed the report outlining progress against the actions within the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). It was noted that the only targets that had not yet been fully achieved related to applied general value added scores and attendance. The Principal explained that while the number of students passing Applied Generals had increased, the number passing at target grade was lower than expected. The action to increase value added scores in this area would therefore be rolled over to the QIP for 2025/26. It was explained that attendance at the college was improving but this action would also be carried over to next year in order to drive further improvement.

The meeting closed at 6.15pm

Signed: (Chair) Date: