

**Minutes of the meeting of the Northampton College Corporation
held at 17.00 hours on 27th February 2025**

Present: Anne-Marie Kilday (AMK) (Chair), Rod Wood (RW), Paul Beers (PB), Laura Crandley (LC), Jason Lancaster (JL) (Principal and CEO), Paul Nutter (PN), Steve Bunker (SB) (staff governor), Mark Robbins (MR), David Bailey (DB), Kay Sellick (KS), Lynn Drinkald (LD), Alexandra Owen (AO), Julie Teckman (JuT), Keira White (KW) (student governor), and Neus Garriock (NG)

In attendance: Joanne Philpott (JP) (Deputy Principal Curriculum Success and Quality), Rav Garcha (RG) (Interim Deputy Principal, Finance and Corporate Affairs), Mark Owen (MO) (Assistant Principal for Student Services, Safeguarding), John Kirk (JK) (Clerk),

C.25.9	<p>Welcome and Apologies for absence</p> <p>AMK welcomed everyone and introductions were made and newcomers welcomed.</p> <p>Apologies were received from Alric Pagon and David Smith (invited to attend as a guest). The meeting was declared quorate.</p>
C.25.10	<p>Declarations of interest in any items on the agenda</p> <p>None</p>
C.25.11	<p>Minutes of meeting held on 30th January 2025</p> <p>The Minutes were approved as a true and accurate record</p>
C.25.12	<p>Outstanding actions</p> <p>Item 1: RAG rating on the Principals report – Complete</p> <p>Item 2: Staff Turnover – To be addressed in the HR report at the next meeting. – In Progress.</p> <p>Item 3: National Insurance increases. Now addressed - Complete</p>
	<p>C.25.21 Safeguarding item was taken at this point to allow staff to depart.</p>
C.25.13	<p>Student Voice</p> <p>KW reported on Culture Day and a potential clash with A level exams. JP is addressing this. Suggestion boxes are now in place in all three campuses.</p>

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	<p>NG asked how often the boxes are emptied. KW this would be before parliament meetings. NG suggested that students need to be informed of the time scales for emptying. KW noted some staffing shortages in A-level subjects. JP is working hard to resolve this promptly</p>
<p>C.25.14</p>	<p>Staff Voice</p> <p>SB noted concerns from staff on the amount of cover staff are currently being required to do and that more academic coaches would of benefit to support cover. JP noted that this is a priority, but finding staff is very difficult.</p> <p>SB noted requests from staff and students for healthy options in the canteen, particularly at breakfast. JL said that he would raise this with the catering manager for further exploration.</p> <p>The Report was received</p>
<p>C.25.15</p>	<p>Health & Safety Report (exceptional updates)</p> <p>RG: no exceptional incidents were reported.</p>
<p>C.25.16</p>	<p>Principal's Report</p> <p>JL noted the new colour coding to assist focus.</p> <p>Re item 1.3, investment continues in infrastructure, smartboards, student devices and digital support for the higher leaner numbers.</p> <p>KS asked about the employment of cover staff and the viability of using cover supervisors, often used in schools. JL agreed that the growth over the past two years has meant staffing challenges. A greater range of skills is required compared to school cover staff, and recruitment is a major area of focus. The pay review is now on the final stage and this will help increase our competitiveness and focus on recruitment staff.</p> <p>KW asked about recent recruitment events. JP noted 75 attended last night with candidates for a range of posts, which was encouraging.</p> <p>NG asked about sickness absence data. JL noted that this data will come in the report from HR at the next meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KPIs

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	<p>JL noted that the financial position remains strong, Teaching & Learning is good, with retention so far on track. Achievement will come through later in the year.</p> <p>GCSE English results from the November resit are disappointing, and this was addressed more fully in the Quality & Standards Committee meeting this week.</p> <p>Apprentice achievement is also on target to date. Attendance has seen a welcome improvement following significant intervention from staff and managers.</p> <p>AO noted that annualised data is confused with static data in the report. JL accepted this and confirmed it will be clarified in future reports. The presentation of KPIs remains a new initiative and will continue to be developed.</p> <p>RW advocated using an external company for staff and student surveys as this would provide valuable benchmarking and also considerably reduce the internal administration workload. This would be considered for future years.</p> <p>NG asked about the relative high staff turnover percentage. JL noted that increased turnover is being seen across the entire sector, but more detail will be in the HR report at the next meeting.</p>
<p>C.25.17</p>	<p>Quality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QIP Update <p>Noting that the QIP had been scrutinised by the Quality & Standards Committee, JP reported that student progress and attendance continue to be closely monitored and reviewed to ensure they are supported to achieve their qualifications and progress to their next steps through the five key assessment points.</p> <p>Key risks identified include staffing challenges, attendance issues, and students' mental health and well-being.</p> <p>The College is implementing a new staff CPD digital platform How2 which is widely used across the sector to support ongoing improvement to teaching and learning through individualised support.</p> <p>Retention rates remain strong, with current positions at 97.9% for 16-18-year-olds and 98.5% for 19+ students. The College aims to achieve a year-end retention rate close to 95%, despite challenges related to students' mental health and well-being. This will continue to be closely monitored.</p> <p>Applications from potential new students remain strong, particularly among school leavers. Senior leaders are monitoring this to ensure appropriate staffing and resources. Some programmes may need to be capped, and entry requirements for internal progressing students may become more stringent where appropriate.</p>

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The College has further strengthened its approach to curriculum planning for 2025/26, using trend data and business intelligence. Curriculum managers have undertaken a comprehensive review of their current position and presented their plans to an EMT panel.

The College provides strong support for Looked After Children (LAC), High Needs students, and those with Education Health Care Plans (EHCPs). Strategies are in place to monitor and improve the progress of these students, ensuring they make good progress compared with the wider student cohort.

RW welcomed the excellent report, and asked re Objective 6 is there a single online record of learning walks, observations, and interventions, etc. JL noted that learning walks, observations and other evaluation activities are recorded and analysed in a single location, with the information used to shape CPD planning. However, the appraisal system will need to be overhauled following planned changes to the College's approach to observing teaching & learning for the 25/26 academic year. JP noted that a more comprehensive integration is planned for the future for when the upgraded system permits.

JuT asked for an overview of appraisals, JP said this will be available for the next Quality Committee meeting.

PN asks for a single page paper at the end of the year showing appraisals

- **Student Learning and Performance**

JP Retention is good but is expected the fall a little by year end, as is usually the case. Applications from feeder schools are strong.

MR asked regarding ethnicity, are first language issues a significant barrier to achievement? JP noted that culture and parent expectations add to a variety of issues, and lessons need to be more accessible, especially regarding technical language. However, support for these students is effective.

MR asked about the need of capping entries or raising entry standards. JP It would be great to fully meet the local demand, as was mostly the case for 2024/25, but limits of accommodation and staffing mean it is likely to be necessary to limit applications in some areas this year.

NG asked about communicating expectations for new students arriving at college. JP noted there were various events and interviews where expectations are communicated. JL also noted that expectations form a high profile part of activities including open days, induction activities and ongoing into the academic year.

NG also noted that ASD, used in the analysis presented, is now the default term for a range of spectrum conditions. JP noted that the individual learner record (ILR) specified by the Department for Education still lists terms which are no longer used elsewhere, hence the need to report such terminology.

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	The Report was received
C.25.18	<p>Management Accounts</p> <p>RG reported that EBITDA has further increased, and the in-year funding allocation will raise this further. The amount of in-year funding has yet to be confirmed. Income is above forecast. Catering is doing well with higher sales.</p> <p>Pay Costs – before the implementation of the pay review, pay costs are showing savings of £327k, largely due to vacant posts.</p> <p>Treasury deposits are expect to generate 900k which is above budget, giving an overall projected surplus of around £3m. This may further increase.</p> <p>Financial health is currently ‘outstanding’ by the DfE measures, at 290 points out of 300</p> <p>JL spoke on a number of investment initiatives which will provide significant positive impact on learners, including developing curriculum and improving the estate, both in shorter and longer term.</p> <p>DB asked about the extent to which the College is taking full advantage of various capital grants. RG noted that such grants have deadlines for being spent, such as T Level grants. All are on track to be utilised in time.</p> <p>There was broad discussion about the financial position, and how this will always change. It was agreed that managers be invited to suggest projects and initiatives that benefit learners for in-year investment.</p> <p>AO The income received should always be used to the benefit of the students for whom it is allocated. It is prudent to have a list of projects ‘on the shelf’ which can be delivered within a limited timeframe, should the need arise. RG and JL agreed with this and are taking this approach.</p> <p>AO Suggested a prudent approach to not locking in recurring spend for future years. JL agreed, and noted that income next will increase substantially and so we are working within that window</p> <p>PB noted that our end product is qualified students, and the bank balance should not be seen solely on a financial framework, but a more holistic viewpoint with providing staff with the resources they require.</p> <p>The Report was received.</p>
C.25.19	Student Enrolment

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	<p>RG provided an overview of the presented paper. Student numbers remain high, with recruitment for study programmes particularly strong. Applications are also higher than this time last year.</p> <p>RG explained that procurement for adult subcontracted provision is underway to ensure our provision map is appropriate to meet the local and national priorities set out in our Accountability Agreement.</p>
<p>C.25.20</p>	<p>Treasury Management</p> <p>RG noted that current interest was 4.2% from Lloyds which is delivering higher than budgeted income but is not the most competitive available.</p> <p>The College is purchasing a platform well regarded in education sectors which allows greater flexibility in effectively managing investments to maximise returns.</p>
<p>C.25.21</p>	<p>Safeguarding - Termly Update</p> <p>This item was taken before C.25.13 Student Voice</p> <p>Mark Owen reported on safeguarding issues this year, with 381 young people referred as being at risk, increased from 220 at this point last year. There have been a total of 768 incidents recorded to date.</p> <p>Reports of sexualised behaviour is emerging as a growing issue across the sector.</p> <p>Staff upskilling continues with the CPOMS online safeguarding record system being rolled next week to improve monitoring.</p> <p>Tracking of access to inappropriate websites and other resources needs further strengthening. The College is currently finalising the decision to invest in more sophisticated monitoring software to support this more effectively and efficiently.</p> <p>The Local Authority has funded two posts for Looked After Children (LAC), which has had a very positive impact so far, improving the support these vulnerable students receive.</p> <p>Organised crime and youth violence is increasing locally, and there is work ongoing with police to help support and influence students to make better decisions in this area.</p> <p>Schools provide information on students' safeguarding history, though there are some gaps in the timely provision of information which are being actively addressed.</p> <p>The Local Authority are involved in training our staff on early help and intervention.</p>

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	<p>NG asked about mental health support by phone. Can students text and are there other languages supported? MO Confirmed the system is an external platform which is comprehensive, multi-lingual, multi-format, and with an emergency out of hours service. So far this has worked well in supporting our students.</p> <p>It was noted that safeguarding information is shared with us by schools where appropriate to enable us to manage risk.</p> <p>The Report was received</p> <p>MO left the meeting at 5.15pm.</p>
C.25.22	<p>Quality Committee meeting 25th February 2025</p> <p>The minutes were not available at this meeting. AMK provided a summary of the areas covered and the substantive issues were summarised in item C.25.17 earlier.</p>
C.25.23	<p>Date and Time of Next Meeting 1st May 2025, 17.00, Boardroom</p>
C.25.24	<p>Any other business None.</p> <p>All staff and student governors left the meeting</p>
PART 2 CONFIDENTIAL	
C.25.25	<p>Principal's update – recording of student transfers</p> <p>JL outlined the process of recording of transfers in the Individual Learner Record (ILR), which records the student journey with dates and courses. It has been discovered that where students start on one course but are transferred to another, this was not always correctly recorded. Up to 5% of our students who achieved results are affected, but this has not previously been clear since the process for recording these transfers was not correct.</p> <p>The overall impact appears to be that our overall achievement rates for 2023/24 would have been around 1.5 pp. lower than currently recorded. This would mean that our current performance of being 5th highest in the National Achievement Rate Tables would no longer be the case.</p> <p>LD spoke about Late Notification, and that this would reasonably have been expected to be picked up by internal auditors.</p> <p>JL noted this was not a deliberate act, but staff who are no longer here made genuine errors. The new MIS director started in December, and all transfers are now recorded properly. The R14 return in October will have all these issues ironed out for the current academic year.</p>

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	<p>It was agreed prudent to commission a specific independent audit report to ensure an externally validated and fully comprehensive report with recommendations to ensure our recording of transfers and achievement is completed accurately. At this stage, consideration about next steps would be given and discussed with Governors.</p> <p>There was wide discussion on internal audit practice to ensure such issues are examined, and the need to ensure evidence and recording for other provision types are accurate. The Principal reported that there have been no concerns raised to date regarding other provision types but work is ongoing to verify this, including an ongoing internal audit of adult provision under the already-planned internal audit schedule.</p> <p>It was agreed that the Principal was taking all the right steps in clarifying the extent of the data and to ensure the best practice in the future. The Board will be kept up to date on progress with this.</p>
<p>C.25.26</p>	<p>Principal's update – considerations around EMT and School structure</p> <p>JL shared his vision for a revised structure, which was welcomed by members.</p> <p>It was noted that the management structure of employed staff was entirely a matter for the Principal, and members appreciated having sight of proposals.</p> <p>There was broad agreement on the proposal to upgrade some senior managers to senior postholders</p>

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