exeter college

EXETER COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

CORPORATION BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held at 9.30am on Friday 04 July 2025 at the Future Skills Centre, Exeter Airport, Exeter

Present	Bindu Arjoon	Corporation Chair
	John Laramy CBE	Principal/CEO
	Patrick Tigwell	Vice Chair
	Sue Clarke OBE	
	Antony Hart	
	Neil Hitchings	
	Wilf Hudson	
	Rob Hutchins	
	Carol McCormack OBE	
	Neil Hitchings	
	Stewart Noakes	
	Tim Quine	
	Cynthia Sedgman	
	Sally Wolkowski	
	Adam Watt	
	Victoria Roberts	
	Ayomide Okesola	
Observers	Jo Boardman	
Apologies	Stephen Wiltshire	
	Jess Adams	
	Pamela Degregorio	
	Lindsay Skinner	
	Damion Norcombe	
	Graham Atkins	
In Attendance	Jade Otty	Deputy CEO
	Richard Church	Chief Operating Officer
	Sam Hillman	Deputy Vice Principal
	Gemma Noble	Executive Director of People and Organisational Development
	John Dowell	Executive Director of Finance
	Alison Layton-Hill	Head of Governance
	Abbie Sawyer	Minutes

1. **Welcome and Apologies** **Action**

The Chair welcomed colleagues to the meeting, apologies were noted from Jess Adams, Stephen Wiltshire, Damion Norcombe, Lindsay Skinner, Pam Degregorio and Graham Atkins.

The Board noted that this would be the Chair and the Head of Governance's last Board Meeting and expressed its sincerest thanks to them both.
The Chair advised governors that the meeting was Lindsay Skinner's last Board meeting and the Board recognised Lindsay's contribution as Headteacher Governor. Harrison Littler will replace Lindsay as Headteacher Governor in the next academic year.

The Board noted that this was the last Board meeting for Jess Adams, in her absence the Board acknowledged her valuable contribution.

A warm welcome was extended to Jo Boardman, Director of Governance at Petroc, who will be observing the Board Meeting. The Board will consider Jo's appointment as Head of Governance and DPO, in item 3.2, where Jo will be asked to temporarily leave the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

Bindu Arjoon, CEO, Exeter City Council declared an interest in any items relating to Exeter City Council, and as a director in items related to Exeter College Services Ltd.

John Laramy CBE, declared an interest as a director, in items related to Exeter College Services Ltd.

Jo Boardman declared an interest in item 3.2, and anything related to the potential merger.

Tim Quine and Adam Watt declared an interest in anything related to the University of Exeter

2. **Minutes of Meetings**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2025, as circulated, were agreed.

2.2 The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2025, as circulated, were agreed.

The Chair thanked Patrick Tigwell for chairing the previous Board Meeting.

3. **Matters Arising**

3.1 Amendment to the Instrument and Articles of Government
The Board noted that the DfE had recommended that colleges amend their instrument and articles by 1 September 2025 to:

1. strengthen the role of Student Governors.
2. remove the responsibility of the Secretary of State to appoint governors needed a quorum.

Due to timings, this was being proposed directly to the Board rather than via the Search and Governance Committee.

The Board approved the amendments to the Instrument and Articles and Standing Orders

Appointment of Head of Governance and DPO

3.2 This item was dealt with as a confidential item and recorded in the confidential minutes.

4. **Corporation Chair's Report**

The Chair thanked governors and SLT for their support during her 12 years as a Governor, and 4 years as Chair.

A few highlights were noted, such as Ofsted Outstanding in 2022, sustained college growth and increased focus on SEND learners. The Chair noted many positive changes to the estate, she has been grateful to be a part of the significant improvements.

Special thanks were noted to Alison Layton-Hill, who is also leaving.

The Chair acknowledged a hugely successful academic year and thanked all students, staff and governors for their continued commitment. She wished everyone a happy and restful summer break.

The Board noted the report

5 **Strategic Matters for Discussion**

5.1 Principal's Strategic Report
This item was dealt with as a confidential item and recorded in the confidential minutes.

5.2 **Budget 2025/2026**
This item was dealt with as a confidential item and recorded in the confidential minutes.

5.3 **Gender Pay Gap**
Gemma Noble, Executive Director of People and Organisational Development, entered the meeting.

The Board received the Gender Pay Gap report and the Executive Director of People and Organisational Development gave an overview of the highlights, it was noted that the report was similar to the previous year. Encouraging female employees to pursue leadership roles was particularly noted and governors offered their support in this area.

The Board thanked Gemma for her hard work, and in particular relating to the Times ranking.

The Board robustly discussed the merits of the College purchasing a health and wellbeing plan for all staff. This would be fully funded by the College and the Board satisfied itself that appropriate due diligence/benchmarking had taken place.

The Board approved the provision of the BHSF Ltd health and wellbeing plan for all staff

Gemma Noble and John Dowell left the Meeting

5.4 Skills and Accountability
The Quality and Standards Committee recommended the Accountability Agreement to the Board for approval.

The local and regional skills needs were discussed, alongside more specific local issues. Governors discussed the role of IoT's within this context and intentions for foundation learners.

The Accountability Agreement is scrutinised annually by the Quality and Standards committee and brought to Board. The Board asked that points of enquiry during scrutiny are made clear when presented to Board.

The Board approved the Annual Accountability Agreement

6 **Learner Voice Update**
6.1 College News

The report was received and taken as read.

The Board noted the report.

6.2 **Learner Voice**
The Board was pleased to note that this had been a positive year, with improved attendance at the Learner Voice conferences

A new FE Governor had been selected, Chelsy Ingram, who will be welcomed by the Board in the new academic year.

The Board thanked Ayo for her valuable work and highlighted the importance of learner feedback.

The Board noted the report

6.3 **Student Governor Report**
The Board thanked Jess for her report in her absence, and was pleased to hear that she had had a positive experience and highlighted the importance of her role.

It was noted that Ayo mentoring Jess had been helpful, for future student governors the Head of Governance would consider a more enhanced induction. **ALH**

The Board noted the report

Part 2 COMMITTEE REPORTS FOR NOTING/APPROVAL

7. **Recommendations from Joint Steering Group**

7.1 Executive Summary from Joint Steering Group meeting on 3 June 2025

The first meeting was held on 3 June 2025 and various workstreams had been put in place, each with a specific focus.
Legal due diligence had commenced for both colleges. A financial due diligence provider had subsequently been appointed.

The risk register for the merger will be discussed at the next Joint Steering Group Meeting on 7 July 2025.

The Board noted the report

8. **Recommendations from Audit & Risk Assurance Committee**

8.1 Executive Summary from Audit & Risk Assurance Committee Meeting on 9 June 2025

Thanks were noted to Adele Westcott, as a valued member of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee for four years.

8.2 Risk Register
The Board noted that the main changes to the risk register related to IT and cyber risks. The Board recommended that a separate risk is added to mitigate if the merger does not proceed.

The Board approved the Risk Register

8.3 External Audit Strategy 2024/2025

The Board approved the External Audit Strategy 2024/2025.

8.4 Internal Audit Service Re-appointment

The Board approve the re-appointment of Tiaa as the internal audit service for 2025/2026.

8.5 Internal Audit Service Programme 2025/2026

The Board approved the internal audit programme for 2025/2026, subject to the Governance audit being referred to the Spring or Summer term.

9. **Recommendations from Business Services Committee**

9.1 Executive Summary from the Business Services Committee Meeting on 16 June 2025

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The report summarising the key issues considered by the Business Services Committee meeting held on 16 June 2025 was received. The budget had been agreed earlier in the meeting under item, 5.2.

9.2 Masterplan Executive Summary
Governors acknowledged Steve Strang's efforts to complete the Masterplan. The immediate priorities were the learner experience/ estate condition, and these had been highlighted in the summary.

The Board was reassured that should student numbers decreased significantly, mitigations were in place.

The Board approved the Masterplan and delegated final proof reading and terminology to the working group.

9.3 Exeter College Services Budget
This item was dealt with as a confidential item and recorded in the confidential minutes.

10. **Recommendations from Quality and Standards Committee**

10.1 Executive Summary from Quality and Standards Committee Meeting on 23 June 2025

The Committee Vice Chair summarised the key issues raised at the committee meeting. The approval of the Accountability Agreement had been dealt with earlier in the meeting.

The Committee was thanked for its robust support and challenge on behalf of the Board.

The Board noted the Report.

Part 3 REPORTS AND MINUTES FOR INFORMATION

These reports and minutes will be taken as read and noted. If any member would like to raise any specific questions, would they please advise the Head of Governance in advance of this meeting.

11. **For Information**

11.1 Opportunities and Developments Register

11.2 On Course Teaching and Learning Survey

11.3 Sealings Report

11.4 Letter from Further Education Commissioner

11.5 Masterplan and Property Strategy (in full)
11.6 Amended Instrument and Articles (in full)
11.7 Connect and The HILL governor report
11.8 Achievement benchmarking data

12. **Dates of scheduled meetings for 2025/2026**

- Friday 10 October 2025
- Friday 12 December 2025
- 27 March 2026
- 3 July 2026

The Chair thanked all those in attendance.