

**SEARCH AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 6 October 2025 in the SLT Meetings Room, The Tower Building, Hele Road, Exeter**

**Present**

Adam Watt	Chair
Patrick Tigwell	Vice Chair
John Laramy	Principal/CEO
Neil Hitchings	
Carol McCormack	

**Apologies**

Sue Clarke

**In Attendance**

Joanna Boardman      Head of Governance

**1. Welcome, apologies and declarations of interest**

The Chair welcomed colleagues to the meeting and apologies were received from Sue Clarke.

**2. Minutes**

2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2025, as circulated, were agreed.

**3. Matters Arising**

3.1 It was noted that any matters arising were on the agenda at this meeting o had moved forward.

- **Policies:** Outstanding policies to come back in January post-merger.
- **Self-Evaluation:** Covered under the committee’s review discussions.

**4. Self-Evaluation**

4.1 Committee SAR

The committee reviewed the SAR and the following items were noted for action.

**Paragraph 3 - Board Representation and Diversity:**

The wording should reflect that the Board *strives* to represent Exeter and Devon through individuals who are willing and able to serve as governors within their availability.

It was agreed that future wording should emphasise:

- Commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)
- Openness to recruiting governors without a university-sector background
- Valuing experience from employers and alternative routes (e.g. Stephen and Damien cited positively)
- The Board *strives to* be representative, recognising that governance data goes beyond purely local measures.

**Paragraph 4 – Committee Structure and Induction:**

As this committee is made up of members who already sit on other committees, a comprehensive committee induction was deemed redundant. Wording to be amended accordingly.

**Deferred Reviews:**

It was noted (3.1) that the review of the Terms of Reference will be deferred until post-merger

**Risk Management (6.1):**

The Committee does not currently have a standing agenda item for risk. It was agreed to expand commentary on:

- Board skills
- Succession planning risk

**Areas for Consideration:**

No commentary to be added on post-merger matters at this stage.

**Impact of the Committee:**

Members agreed the summary of the past 12 months was accurate but the Principal and CEO suggested that the Committee had not taken sufficient credit for:

- The strength and balance of Board skills
  - The effectiveness of recruitment and development
- The Committee acknowledged its strong performance while maintaining a focus on continuous improvement.

**Section 7.2 – Future Focus:**

Continued emphasis on:

- Diversity of the Board
- Representation across the College’s catchment area
- Recruiting individuals with skills to provide appropriate challenge
- Addressing skills gaps with an effective Board size

The SAR was approved with the above being included.

## 4.2 Governor action plan

The Committee noted that several actions were already complete or underway.

### **Comments for change in the plan**

- Diversity actions should be amended to reflect earlier discussions.
- Items 3.3 and 3.4 were covered under Item 5.
- Cyber Security (4.1). It was shared that a deep dive was being undertaken in the Business Services committee and BS on cyber resilience and service restoration.
- Health & Safety:
  - It had been recommended that the college seek an external individual to provide equivalent challenge to that of a governor and as the current link governor had stepped down, this was a priority.
- Board and Committee Effectiveness (4.2)
  - Discussion time at Board meetings to be protected.
  - Presentations to be limited to **10/15 minutes**
- Targets for January:  
Regardless of merger outcome, a paper should be taken to the Board to continue improving college effectiveness.
- Other items up to **6.5** were confirmed as appropriate with no changes required.

## 5. **Governors**

### 5.1 **Vacancies and Appointments**

A CV was considered for a candidate to join the Audit and Risk Committee

The Committee:

- Accepted the recommendation
- Noted strong alignment with required skills
- Agreed to recommend the appointment to the Board and make the offer.

### 5.2 **Governor Attendance 2024/25**

Governor attendance was discussed with some issues noted and agreements to work with those governors to understand what support could be given through the Chair and the Head of Governance.

## 6. **Governance Matters**

- 6.1 Role Descriptions:
- Chair
  - Vice Chair
  - Committee Chair
  - Governor
  - Student Governor
  - Staff Governor

The role descriptors were all approved

6.2 **Lead Governor Role**

It was confirmed that the Health and Safety external expertise should be moved forward on. The roles of lead governor for careers was confirmed as Wilf Hudson and in Safeguarding Antony Hart.

6.3 **Scheme of Delegation**

It was agreed that the scheme of delegation would be reviewed as part of the merger process by the external governance advisor in collaboration with the Principal and CEO and Head of Governance.

7. **Future Meetings**

7.1 Items to take to Board

- CV of co-optee for the Audit Committee

7.2 Items for the next meeting

- Policies
- Cycle of Business

7.3 Dates of meetings for 2025/26

- 26 January 2026
- 16 March 2026

8. **Reports for Information**

8.1 Board Diversity

8.2 Terms of Office

8.3 Committee Membership

**HofG**

**HofG**

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12. **Any Other Business**  
Neil Hitchings advised of his intention to relinquish his role as lead governor for Health and Safety after four years. Members of the Business Services Committee would be asked for their interest in undertaking the role.