

Heart of Yorkshire Education Group Corporation (Group)

Group Board of Governors (Corporation)

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 9 December 2025 at 3.00pm at Castleford College (Meeting)

Present:

- Dmitry Fedotov
- Adam Greenwood (from minute one)
- Jayne King
- Andrew McConnell (Chair)
- Yubi Mohammed
- David Powell
- Tracy Tallant
- Sam Wright
- Freddie Cleaver (until minute seven)

In attendance:

- Daniel Goff, Wakefield Deputy Student Governor attending in Izzy Boocock's place (until minute seven)
- Clare Allcock, Group Executive Director of Student Experience and Support
- Caroline Carter, Group Executive Director of Finance and Resources
- Sam Cremore, Head of Governance and Legal Services
- Lisa Macdonald, Group Executive Director of Curriculum and Quality Standards
- Karen Sykes, Group Executive Director of People
- Richard Lewis – RSM (via Teams at item 21 only)

Apologies:

- Izzy Boocock (student governor)
- Stuart Brenton
- Katie Nicolaou (shadow governor)

- Adam Sawden
- Vijay Teeluck
- Neil Warren
- Tim Welton

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair:

- 1.1. Opened the meeting, welcomed members and attendees, noted apologies for absence and noted that the meeting was quorate and had been called in accordance with the Instrument and Articles.
- 1.2. Outlined the length and structure of the agenda. Members were reminded that papers were assumed to have been read in advance and that presenters should focus on key highlights rather than repeating written content.
- 1.3. Explained that the Search and Governance Committee had recommended the appointment of a new external governor, Adam Greenwood, and a discussion followed regarding his appointment to the Board.
- 1.4. IT WAS RECOMMENDED THAT Adam Greenwood be appointed to the Board for a period of four years subject to a one-year probationary period.

2. Declarations of Interest

- 2.1. The Chair invited declarations of interest. It was noted that conflicts would arise later in the agenda in relation to proposed governance appointments and the pay award and that affected individuals would withdraw from the meeting as necessary, at the appropriate time, and would be unable to vote or count towards the quorum for those matters in which they had an interest. The Chair confirmed that the meeting would remain quorate for all such matters except for the pay award, the methods to approve which, would be outlined at the appropriate time. The noted conflicts were as follows:
 - 2.1.1. Dmitry Fedotov, in relation to his reappointment for a second governance term.
 - 2.1.2. The Chair, in relation to his:
 - 2.1.2.1. reappointment as a governor for the remainder of the academic year and 2026/27 with annual reviews thereafter; and
 - 2.1.2.2. extended chair's role to the end of the academic year.
 - 2.1.3. David Powell, in relation to his:
 - 2.1.3.1. reappointment for a second governance term;

- 2.1.3.2. appointment as Vice Chair for the remainder of the academic year; and
- 2.1.3.3. appointment to the Search and Governance Committee.
- 2.1.4. Adam Greenwood, in relation to his appointment to Audit Committee.
- 2.1.5. Sam Wright in relation to her pay award.

3. Minutes of Meeting held on 9 October 2025

- 3.1. The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed for accuracy.
- 3.2. IT WAS RESOLVED THAT the minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

4. Matters Arising

The Head of Governance and Legal Services referred to an outstanding action. Members had asked how many staff involved in safeguarding investigations had completed the required training. It was confirmed that there were no outstanding issues with training completion.

5. Chair's Business

- 5.1. The Chair reported Chair's Action taken in relation to the approval and signing of the external auditor's engagement letter and a minor change to the Fees Policy.
- 5.2. The Chair also provided an update from Chairs' Group discussions and introduced a proposal for a Governor Link Scheme. The scheme was described as a pilot whereby two governors would be linked to each college site to build deeper understanding of local context, learner experience and operational issues through structured visits and reporting. Members indicated support for trialling the approach which would begin immediately.

6. Update from the Search and Governance Committee including recommendations requiring approval

- 6.1. The Head of Governance and Legal Services presented recommendations relating to the reappointment of governors whose terms were ending, the extension of the Chair's term to the end of the academic year, the appointment of a Vice Chair, and committee appointments.
- 6.2. Individuals withdrew from the meeting where conflicts applied.
- 6.3. The Head of Governance and Legal Services noted the reappointment of the Chair was unusual and reminded members to consider guidance relating to maximum terms of service.
- 6.4. The rationale for the recommendations was explained, including the need for stability and continuity during a period of change.

6.5. Questions and answers:

6.5.1. Q: A member sought clarification as to whether the unusual aspect was the former Chair continuing as an ordinary governor.

A: It was confirmed that this was correct and that the Search and Governance Committee had considered the implications carefully.

6.5.2. Q: Members were asked whether they were happy to proceed with the full set of recommendations

A: Members indicated agreement.

6.5.3. Q: It was asked whether the appraisal report should be covered at this point in the meeting.

A: It was agreed and a brief update on appraisals was provided, including reference to the Chair's appraisal, which reflected positive feedback from the previous year. Improvements made to governance arrangements following the process were noted.

6.6. IT WAS RESOLVED TO APPROVE:

6.6.1. The reappointment of all governors (except the Chair) with a term end date of 1 March 2026 for a further period of four years.

6.6.2. The reappointment of the Chair, who also has a term end date of 1 March 2026, as a governor for the remainder of the academic year and 2026/27, with annual renewals thereafter subject to review by the Search and Governance Committee and appointment by the Board. This recommendation was given after careful consideration of the advantages and disadvantages of extending the Chair's term beyond the end of his chairship. Members considered his experience and knowledge as a National Leader of Governance invaluable to the Group and that he would provide mentoring to the incoming Chair.

6.6.3. The extension of the Chair's role as Chair of the Board to end following the last meeting of the academic year.

6.6.4. David Powell's appointment as Vice Chair of the Board until the end of the academic year.

6.6.5. The appointment of Adam Greenwood to the Audit Committee.

6.6.6. The appointment of David Powell to the Search and Governance Committee.

6.6.7. The Search and Governance Committee Annual Report.

7. Student Update

7.1. Student governors and the Group Executive Director of Student Experience and Support presented an update on student voice activity, including the Student Leaders' Conference and wider engagement across the Group.

- 7.2. The update highlighted how student feedback had influenced improvements to enrolment processes, catering, bursary awareness and mental health support.
- 7.3. Areas for further improvement were identified, including induction communication, timetabling clarity, access to exam information and the availability of suitable social and activity spaces.
- 7.4. Governors asked the following questions:
- 7.4.1. Q: Members asked how effectively governors and senior leaders listened to student experience.
- A: Students stated that listening was generally good and that student feedback was taken seriously.
- 7.4.2. Q: Members asked whether students had suggestions for improving engagement further.
- A: Students noted that engagement worked best when familiar staff were present and suggested that additional support could be helpful in situations where trusted staff were not available, particularly for students who lacked confidence.

8. Principal's Business (including Annual Report and Emerging Risks)

- 8.1. The Principal provided an update covering attendance and retention, recruitment and applications, sector policy developments, curriculum reform, inclusion and belonging work, sustainability activity, external recognition and emerging risks.
- 8.2. Attendance and retention were reported to be improving against the previous year, applications were strong, and significant work was ongoing to respond to curriculum reforms, funding, demographic and cyber security challenges.
- 8.3. Governors asked the following questions:
- 8.3.1. Q: Members asked what the biggest challenges were over the next 12 months.
- A: The Principal identified recruitment, capacity management and preparation for the new Ofsted inspection framework as the main challenges.
- 8.3.2. Q: Members asked about current space utilisation and whether this limited growth.
- A: It was explained that a formal utilisation survey had not been completed last year but alternative methods were being developed and physical space had already been reconfigured to improve utilisation.
- 8.3.3. Q: Members asked what had caused increased applications.
- A: It was explained that earlier engagement with schools had led to earlier applications, alongside an increase in school leavers.

8.3.4. Q: Members asked whether the downturn in higher education provision was sector-wide.

A: It was confirmed that this was a wider sector issue and that the strategy focused on stabilising, rather than growing, higher education provision.

9. Growth Strategy

9.1. The Growth Strategy was presented as a recommendation from the Finance, People and Resources Committee, focusing on growth in 16–18 provision, apprenticeships and high needs learners, alongside stabilisation of higher education and a cautious, criteria-led approach to mergers and acquisitions. Key sectors for growth would be Construction, Engineering and Health.

9.2. Governor asked the following questions:

9.2.1. Q: Members asked about the position of combined authorities on future adult funding growth.

A: It was explained that there was no confirmed position for 2026/27.

9.2.2. Q: Members asked how estates capacity affected growth ambitions.

A: It was acknowledged that there were short-term constraints, but planned developments and flexible use of space provided mitigation.

9.2.3. Q: Members asked when KPI alignment with the financial strategy would be considered.

A: It was confirmed that this would be reviewed through the Finance, People and Resources Committee ahead of the budget process.

9.2.4. Q: Members raised concerns about agency staff and teaching quality in specific areas.

A: It was acknowledged that this was an area to monitor, with further detail to be considered separately.

9.3. IT WAS RESOLVED THAT the Growth Strategy was approved.

10. Update from the Curriculum and Quality Committee

10.1. The Chair of the Curriculum and Quality Committee reported on validation of the Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) carried out by the Committee during a deep dive session.

10.2. The validation process tested grade accuracy, narrative alignment and the robustness of improvement actions.

10.3. It was reported that the QIP had been significantly streamlined.

10.4. Additional scrutiny had been applied to reports on learners with additional needs and the impact of agency staffing on teaching quality.

10.5. Governors asked the following questions:

10.5.1. Q: Members asked how judgements aligned with the new inspection framework.

A: It was explained that curriculum areas were already self-assessing against the new toolkit, with oversight through executive review.

11. Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan

- 11.1. Members considered the documents, recommended by the Curriculum and Quality Committee, and discussed the importance of allowing sufficient time for Board consideration of the QIP.
- 11.2. Governors asked the following questions:
 - 11.2.1. Q: Members asked how the Board could ensure proper scrutiny given timing constraints.

A: It was agreed that comments would be submitted by a set deadline and approval completed via written resolution.
- 11.3. IT WAS RESOLVED THAT approval of the SAR and QIP would proceed via written resolution following receipt of member comments.

12. Update from the Finance, People and Resources Committee (People Updates)

- 12.1. The Board received an update on people-related matters considered by the Committee. This included discussion of the annual people report, which brought together workforce data, staff engagement indicators and culture-related measures. Members had discussed how the report might evolve in future to move away from narrative reporting towards clearer dashboard-style metrics to better support scrutiny.
- 12.2. The Committee also considered progress on people policies and workforce management, noting that there were no matters of concern requiring escalation. Engagement activity to support development of the People and Culture Strategy was highlighted, including consultation with staff and alignment with organisational values.

13. Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring Report 2024/25

- 13.1. The report was presented as a monitoring document setting out workforce and learner data. It was noted that the report helped the Board discharge its responsibilities regarding EDI and provided assurance regarding the Group's practices relating to the same. Members discussed representation, belonging and data presentation.
- 13.2. Governors asked the following questions:
 - 13.2.1. Q: Members asked whether employee resource groups informed EDI actions.

A: It was confirmed that small groups existed and that engagement with community groups informed ongoing work.

13.3. IT WAS RESOLVED THAT the Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Monitoring Report was approved.

14. Staff Pay Award (including consideration of framework for setting pay and conditions of all staff)

14.1. The Group Executive Director of People gave an update regarding the staff pay award negotiations and presented the associated framework for setting pay and conditions which has been recommended by the Finance, People and Resources Committee.

14.2. It was explained that the framework set out the principles for pay decision-making, including affordability, consistency and alignment with sector practice.

14.3. Governors asked the following questions:

14.3.1. Q: Members asked whether including a fixed financial tolerance within the framework could create a need for annual policy revisions.

A: It was agreed that removing fixed monetary amounts and agreeing tolerances annually alongside the budget would provide greater flexibility and reduce unnecessary policy changes.

14.4. IT WAS RESOLVED THAT the staff pay award framework was approved subject to the minor suggested amendments.

15. People and Culture Strategy

15.1. The Group Executive Director of People presented the People and Culture Strategy, explaining that it had been developed through extensive engagement, aligned to key organisational priorities and came recommended by the Finance, People and Resources Committee.

15.2. Governors asked the following questions:

15.2.1. Q: Members asked how success against the strategy would be measured beyond internal indicators.

A: It was explained that external recognition, staff engagement outcomes and benchmarking would provide additional assurance.

15.2.2. Q: Members queried whether digital confidence alone was sufficient, or whether digital competence should also be referenced.

A: It was acknowledged that competence and confidence were both important and that wording could reflect this more clearly.

15.3. IT WAS RESOLVED THAT the People and Culture Strategy was approved.

16. Update from the Remuneration Committee

- 16.1. The Chair of the Remuneration Committee provided an update on committee activity, including consideration of remuneration matters and committee recommendations.
- 16.2. It was noted that certain decisions required approval by written resolution due to quorum requirements and conflicts of interest.

17. Pay Award of Senior Postholders and the Head of Governance and Legal Services (including Performance and Remuneration Review)

- 17.1. The Group Executive Director of People presented the proposed pay awards for the Principal, as sole Senior Postholder, and the Head of Governance and Legal Services, noting that these had been recommended by the Remuneration Committee and followed the agreed framework and performance review outcomes.
- 17.2. Members confirmed that they were in agreement with the Committee's recommendations.
- 17.3. It was confirmed that the recommendations would be progressed by written resolution due to conflicts and quorum requirements.

18. Remuneration Committee Annual Report

- 18.1. The Remuneration Committee Annual Report was presented, summarising the Committee's work over the year 2024/25..
- 18.2. Members were satisfied that the report provided appropriate assurance and met the good governance requirements, particularly relating to transparency, recommended by the Association of Colleges.
- 18.3. IT WAS RESOLVED THAT the Remuneration Committee Annual Report was approved and should be published as necessary.

19. Update from the Finance, People and Resources Committee (Finance Updates)

- 19.1. The Board received an update on finance and resources matters considered by the Committee.
- 19.2. This included review of the management accounts, confirmation that the IT and Digital Strategy had been approved at Committee level, consideration of debt write-offs and waivers, treasury management activity and assurance relating to health and safety reporting.
- 19.3. It was reported that financial performance remained stable and that risks continued to be actively monitored.

20. Finance Update

- 20.1. The finance update covered additional 16–18 funding, pressures arising from reduced higher education numbers, staffing investments and an update on FE Commissioner benchmarks. It was noted that the Group was expected to achieve a calculated health rating of ‘Good’ for the year and that cash remained above budget due to lagged spending which would correct itself during the year.
- 20.2. Governors asked the following questions:
- 20.2.1. Q: Members asked why pay costs exceeded sector benchmarks.
A: It was explained that this reflected direct employment of services, high needs learner support staffing and the absence of borrowing.
- 20.2.2. Q: Members asked whether high vacancy levels were concentrated in particular areas.
A: It was confirmed that vacancies cut across multiple areas, including construction-related roles.

21. Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2025

- 21.1. RSM presented the audit findings, confirming an unqualified audit opinion and no material regularity issues.
- 21.2. The Chair noted that the Report and Financial Statements and associated documents had been subject to scrutiny from a deep dive group and the Audit Committee.
- 21.3. Arrangements for electronic signing were agreed.
- 21.4. IT WAS RESOLVED TO APPROVE THE:
- 21.4.1. Internal Audit Report;
- 21.4.2. Audit Committee Annual Report 2024/25;
- 21.4.3. Audit Findings Report;
- 21.4.4. Letters of Representation;
- 21.4.5. Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2025; and
- 21.4.6. Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire.
- 21.5. The Board thanked the Finance Team and RSM for their good work.

22. Estates and Infrastructure Strategy

- 22.1. A mid-point refresh of the strategy, which had been recommended by the Finance, People and Resources Committee, was presented. Members suggested minor changes to language to strengthen ambition and references to technology.
- 22.2. Governors asked the following questions:
- 22.2.1. Q: Members asked whether the strategy could be approved subject to agreed minor wording changes without returning to the Board.
A: It was agreed that this approach was acceptable.

22.3. IT WAS RESOLVED THAT the Estate and Infrastructure Strategy was approved subject to agreed amendments.

23. Climate Action Plan

23.1. The Climate Action Plan was presented, outlining commitments across decarbonisation, biodiversity, resilience and green skills.

23.2. It was noted that student and governor input, provided at an expert-led deep dive, had strengthened the plan. Governors were thanked for attending this session.

23.3. Governors asked the following questions:

23.3.1. Q: Members asked how targets would be set given ongoing technical work.

A: It was explained that detailed targets would be informed by forthcoming engineering and energy audits.

23.3.2. Q: Members asked about carbon literacy training for staff.

A: It was confirmed that work was underway to develop this.

23.4. IT WAS RESOLVED THAT the Climate Action Plan was approved.

24. Update from the Audit Committee

An update from the Audit Committee was provided, confirming consideration of internal and external audit reports, progress against audit recommendations, and assurance over governance, risk management and internal controls.

D. Policies

25. The policies were reviewed carefully by members; each having been recommended by the relevant committees.

26. IT WAS RESOLVED THAT EACH OF THE:

26.1. Health and Safety Policy

26.2. Treasury Management Policy

26.3. Additional Learning Support Policy

26.4. Curriculum and Quality and Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference

26.5. Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement

26.6. Policy on the Quality Improvement of Teaching, Learning and Assessment,
Were approved

27. Briefing Papers

27.1. The Chair asked for questions relating to the briefing papers.

27.2. Q: Members asked how safeguarding training completion was monitored given the disclosure of a technical issue resulting in uncertainty around completion rates.

A: It was confirmed that completion records could be checked and would be followed up.

28. Review of Effectiveness of Meeting and Identification of Emerging Risks

The Chair invited feedback on the effectiveness of the meeting.

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on 24 March 2026, and the Chair declared the Meeting closed.

The Chair thanked Yubi Mohammed, who was attending his last meeting, for his contribution to the Board during his membership.

Signed:  **Date:** 24.03.2026

Actions

No.	Item	Details	Deadline	Responsibility
1	11.3	Members to submit comments on the QIP for written resolution.	Immediately	Governors and Head of Governance and Legal Services
2	11.3	Complete written resolution for SAR and QIP approval.	Immediately	Head of Governance and Legal Services
3	18.3	Publish Remuneration Committee Annual Report	Immediately	Group Executive Director of People