

Riverside College

Widnes & Runcorn

Minutes of the Board of Governors Meeting

Date: Monday, 6th July 2026

Time: 4:30 PM

Location: Room D24 at the Kingsway campus

Present:	Katie Anderson	External Governor
	Michele Bacon	External Governor, Chair
	Karen Banks	External Governor
	Louise Frost	External Governor
	Neil McGrath	External Governor
	Andrew MacManus	External Governor
	Mary Murphy	Principal, CEO
	Andrew Parkinson	External Governor
	Steph Power	Staff Governor
	Chris Sikorski	Staff Governor
	Carrolly Torres	Student Governor
In Attendance:	Ben Barton	Vice Principal (Head of Centre, Riverside)
	Leeann Bellfield	Vice Principal (Head of Centre, Cronton)
	Ged Hanley	Assistant Principal (Systems Development & Funding)
	Julie Holland	Deputy Principal (Finance & Resources)
	Andy James	Assistant Principal (Curriculum, Riverside)
	Diane Massey	Observer
	Wesley Rourke	Observer
	Susan Smith	Co-Opted Member
	Catherine Shaw	Head of Governance

The Chair welcomed all attendees to the meeting.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Resolved: The Board received and accepted apologies for absence from Tom McInerney (External Governor)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Resolved: The Board noted the following declarations of interest:

- Diane Massey – agenda item 5.1
- Andrew Parkinson – agenda item 5.2

- Michele Bacon – agenda item 9.2

3. PRINCIPAL'S STRATEGIC REPORT *(previously circulated)*

The Board received the Principal's Strategic Report, which summarised key local, regional and national developments and their implications for the College. Governors noted the changing external landscape, including local political change, Liverpool City Region developments and anticipated national policy shifts relating to skills, curriculum reform and devolution. Governors welcomed the College's continued focus on strengthening strategic partnerships and stakeholder relationships.

Governors noted recent funding announcements, including increases to 16–18 funding, in-year growth allocations, SEND-related funding, capital grants and additional FE pay funding. Members welcomed the positive impact on the College's financial position and noted that prudent planning had enabled the College to benefit from growth funding without relying on uncertain income assumptions.

In relation to curriculum reform and the Strategic Planning Transition Statement, governors considered the implications of new qualification pathways, including T Levels, V Levels and revised Level 2 provision. Members sought assurance on staffing, resources, accommodation and employer engagement. Senior leaders confirmed that detailed workforce, curriculum and estate planning had been undertaken and that key risks, including industry placements, were being actively monitored and mitigated.

The Board discussed the increasing number of young people not in education, employment or training and explored the wider barriers relating to skills, employer capacity and labour market conditions. Governors recognised the College's leadership role within local partnership arrangements to improve progression, employment and training opportunities across Halton.

Governors also considered risks associated with employer capacity to support placements and apprenticeships. Management outlined ongoing engagement activity and governors were satisfied that appropriate mitigation was in place.

The Board noted updates on staff wellbeing, safeguarding, SEND, inclusion, learner satisfaction, leadership development and major capital projects. Governors particularly noted the increasing complexity of learner need and received assurance that investment in staff development, support services and inclusive practice was enabling the College to respond effectively.

Governors noted the forecast operating surplus, continued outstanding financial health and progress against strategic priorities. Members welcomed the achievements reported and thanked staff and senior managers for their continued commitment throughout the year.

Resolved: The Board noted the report, received assurance that appropriate plans were in place to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities, and approved the Strategic Plan 2026-2027 incorporating the amended Vision Statement.

4. CHAIR'S UPDATE

4.1 To receive the Chair's activity report *(previously circulated)*

The Chair provided an update on activities undertaken since the previous meeting, including attendance at Association of Colleges Chairs' and Vice-Chairs' network meetings, regular strategic meetings with the Principal and Head of Governance, attendance at a variety of student celebratory events and involvement in governor recruitment activity. Governors noted the continued engagement of the Chair in sector developments and welcomed the advocacy undertaken on behalf of the College regarding FE funding. Members also recognised the positive contribution made through attendance at student awards events, which provided valuable insight into learner achievement and success. The Chair advised that the signing of the collaboration agreement in respect of WELL Runcorn was imminent with the official opening anticipated to be in September 2026.

Resolved: The Board noted the report.

5. WRITTEN RESOLUTIONS

5.1 Appointment of Diane Massey as an External Governor *(previously circulated)*

5.2 Appointment of Andrew Parkinson as the Careers Link Governor *(previously circulated)*

The Board ratified the written resolutions relating to the appointment of Diane Massey as an External Governor and the appointment of Andrew Parkinson as Careers Link Governor. Members welcomed both appointments and recognised the additional expertise and support they would bring to the work of the Board and the College.

Resolved: The Board approved both appointments.

6. AUDIT COMMITTEE

6.1 To receive a report on the Audit Committee meeting held on 22nd June 2026 to include an update on risk management *(previously circulated)*

The Chair of the Audit Committee presented the Committee's report and highlighted the detailed scrutiny undertaken in relation to audit planning, risk management, internal audit activity and assurance arrangements. Governors noted that the Committee had considered the external audit tender process, the external auditor's proposed plan of work, the Internal Audit Plan and revisions to the Audit Committee Terms of Reference. Members welcomed the positive working relationship between the internal and external auditors and recognised the value this brought to the College's assurance framework.

Governors received assurance that there had been no instances of fraud or whistleblowing and noted the development of the Board Assurance Framework. Members were satisfied that robust arrangements remained in place to manage risk and maintain effective governance oversight.

Resolved: The Board noted the report and the commentary relevant to agenda items 6.2 to 6.5 (inc).

6.2 Appointment of Menzies LLP as External Auditor from 2026/2027 to 2028/2029 (inc) and Letter of Engagement *(previously circulated)*

Resolved: The Board accepted the recommendation made by the Audit Committee and approved the appointment of Menzies LLP as External Auditor from 2026/2027 to 2028/2029 (inc).

6.3 Financial Statements Auditor's Plan for work relating to 2025/2026 Financial Statements *(previously circulated)*

Resolved: The Board accepted the recommendation made by the Audit Committee and approved the Financial Statements Auditor's Plan for work relating to 2025/2026 Financial Statements.

6.4 Internal Audit Plan 2026/2027 *(previously circulated)*

Resolved: The Board accepted the recommendation made by the Audit Committee and approved the Internal Audit Plan 2026/2027.

6.5 Audit Committee Terms of Reference *(previously circulated)*

Resolved: The Board accepted the recommendation made by the Audit Committee and approved the Audit Committee Terms of Reference.

7. QUALITY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

7.1 To receive a report from the Quality and Standards Committee meeting held on 23rd June 2026 *(previously circulated)*

The Board received a report of the Quality and Standards Committee meeting. Governors noted the detailed presentation received on Examination Access Arrangements and the significant increase in the number of students requiring adjustments and additional support. Members discussed the associated pressures on staffing, accommodation and administration and welcomed the actions being taken to improve efficiency through process improvements and appropriate use of technology. Governors were reassured that the College continued to respond effectively to this growing demand.

Benchmarking information, learner voice outcomes and quality indicators were reviewed. Whilst the majority of measures compared favourably with national benchmarks, governors discussed the continued focus being given to adult retention and apprenticeship achievement rates. Members welcomed progress achieved in Foundation Studies and the very small minority of curriculum areas previously subject to enhanced monitoring.

Resolved: The Board noted the report.

7.2 Accountability Agreement 2026/2027 *(previously circulated)*

The Quality and Standards Committee had welcomed the work of the Local Skills Duty Working Group, which had enabled governors to gain a deeper understanding of curriculum planning and local skills priorities. Through this work, governors had provided additional challenge and support in the development of the Accountability Agreement and were satisfied that the final document reflected local and regional employer need.

Resolved: The Board accepted the recommendation made by the Quality and Standards Committee, approved the Accountability Agreement 2026/2027 and authorised its submission to the Department for Education.

7.3 Safeguarding Update *(previously circulated)*

The safeguarding report was considered. Governors noted that safeguarding concerns continued to increase in both volume and complexity across the sector, particularly in relation to mental

health, neglect, domestic abuse and online safety. Members sought assurance regarding the College's arrangements and were advised that safeguarding systems remained strong, supported by effective partnership working, specialist support services and well-trained staff. The Quality and Standards Committee had welcomed the positive assurance provided, including independent feedback from the Safeguarding Link Governor.

Resolved: The Board noted the report.

8. FINANCE & RESOURCES COMMITTEE

8.1 To receive a report from the Finance & Resources Committee meeting held 15th June 2026 (previously circulated)

The report of the Finance and Resources Committee was presented and governors noted the continued strength of the College's financial performance. Members received assurance that the financial forecast remained robust and reflected recent funding announcements, whilst recognising that further positive adjustments would be incorporated into future updates as additional information became available.

Resolved: The Board noted the report.

8.2 Management Accounts to 30th April 2026 (previously circulated)

Resolved: The Board noted the Management Accounts that had been scrutinised by the Finance and Resources Committee.

8.3 Financial Performance and Three Year Financial Forecast for 2026/2027 to 2028/2029 (previously circulated)

Governors reviewed the three-year financial forecast and questioned whether recent funding increases would have a material impact on the College's financial position. Management advised that the updates were expected to be positive and would further strengthen the forecast. Members were satisfied that the assumptions underpinning the forecast remained prudent and realistic.

Resolved: The Board noted the report and approved the three-year financial forecast for 2026/2027 to 2028/2029.

8.4 Partnership Contracts 2026/2027 (previously circulated)

Partnership contracts were considered and this included an addendum which had been circulated on 3rd July 2026, subsequent to the Finance and Resources Committee meeting that had been held on 15th June 2026. Governors reviewed the proposed contract amendment relating to Crosby Training and received assurance that the arrangement would support additional learner opportunities whilst providing value for money and supporting local priorities. Members were satisfied that all recommendations reflected the College's strategic and financial objectives.

Resolved: The Board approved the following partnership contracts for 2026/2027:

- Crosby Training – £253,072 total contract value, including the £38,072 addendum circulated on 3rd July 2026.

- Power in Partnership - £327,129
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8.5 **HE Fees 2026/2027** *(previously circulated)*

Resolved: The Board accepted the recommendation made by the Finance and Resources Committee and approved the HE Fees 2026/2027.

9. **SEARCH AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

9.1 **To receive for information a report on the Search and Governance Committee meeting held on 9th June 2026** *(previously circulated)*

The Chair reported on discussions relating to Board succession planning, committee membership, governor training and preparations for the next External Board Review. Governors noted the work undertaken to ensure committees retained an appropriate balance of skills, knowledge and experience following the departure of several long-serving governors. Members noted the continued emphasis on governor development and succession planning.

Resolved: The Board noted the report.

Michele Bacon left the meeting.

9.2 **Appointment of Board Chair 2026/2027** *(previously circulated)*

The Board considered recommendations relating to Board leadership and approved the appointment of Michele Bacon as Chair for a further one-year term. Members expressed their appreciation for her leadership and commitment.

Resolved: The Board re-appointed Michele Bacon as Board Chair 2026/2027.

Michele Bacon re-joined the meeting and was congratulated upon her re-appointment.

9.3 **Appointment of Board Vice-Chair 2026/2027** *(previously circulated)*

It was reported that no expressions of interest had been received.

Resolved: The Board agreed to defer the appointment of Board Vice-Chair to the next meeting.

9.4 **Board and Committee Membership 2026/2027** *(previously circulated)*

Resolved: The Board

- approved the committee membership 2026/2027 upon recommendation of the Search and Governance Committee
- appointed Yona Dyar as the Student Governor (Sixth Form) following a recent election process; term of office 1st August 2026 to 31st July 2027

9.5 **External Board Review 2026/2027** *(previously circulated)*

Resolved: The Board accepted the recommendation made by the Search and Governance Committee to appoint the Association of Colleges as the external board reviewer, with the review anticipated to take place in Spring 2027.

10. GOVERNORS' ACTIVITY / TRAINING UPDATE

Governors received an update on the Education and Training Foundation's governance development programme and the range of training modules available for professional development.

Resolved: The Board noted the report.

11. MINUTES

11.1 To approve the draft minutes of the Board meeting held on 23rd March 2026 *(previously circulated)*

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd March 2026 were approved as an accurate record.

11.2 To receive a progress report on any matters arising from the previous meeting *(previously circulated)*

Resolved: The Board noted that there were no matters arising that had not been addressed elsewhere on the agenda and there were no matters outstanding on the action log.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

13. CONSENT AGENDA

For approval:

- 13.1 Financial Regulations 2026/2027
- 13.2 Procurement Policy
- 13.3 Treasury Management Policy
- 13.4 Supply Chain Fees and Charges Policy
- 13.5 Data Protection Policy
- 13.6 Complaints Policy
- 13.7 Higher Education Bursary Policy
- 13.8 Staff Mileage and Subsistence Rates Policy
- 13.9 Student Disciplinary and Suspension Procedures
- 13.10 AoC Senior Post Holder Remuneration Code
- 13.11 Anti-Bribery Policy
- 13.12 Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy
- 13.13 Anti-Money Laundering Policy
- 13.14 Whistleblowing Policy

Governors noted that all policies included within the Consent Agenda had been considered through the appropriate committee structure. Members were satisfied that the policies remained fit for purpose, reflected current requirements and supported the College's governance and compliance framework.

Resolved: The Board approved all policies presented within the Consent Agenda.

14. VOTE OF THANKS

The Chair paid tribute to departing governors and thanked them for their significant contribution to the College over many years. Governors reflected on the positive impact these individuals had made through their support, challenge and dedication to improving outcomes for learners. Members also recognised the contribution of senior managers, staff and the governance professional in supporting the work of the Board. Departing governors expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to serve the College and reflected positively on its continuing success and strong future position.

Resolved: The Board placed on record its appreciation and best wishes to the departing governors.

15. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: The Board noted this to be Monday 12th October 2026 at 4:00pm.

Signed...Office copy signed by Michele Bacon

.....**Board Chair**

Date.....12th October 2026.....