

Hills Road Sixth Form College

Minutes of the Corporation Meeting: 14 May 2025 (Ordinary Business)

Members Present Kevin Taylor (Chair of the Corporation), Jane Sterling (Vice-Chair of the Corporation), Adrian Clarke, Bruno Cotta (Parent Member), Mark Dawe, Paula Heaney, Anthony Omo, Katie Paton (Staff Nominee Member), Jonathan Russell, Matthew Smalley (Staff Nominee Member), Charlotte Southgate (Student Nominee Member), Alison Taylor, Jo Trump (Principal), Evren Uygun, Richard Westcott.

Governance Services Robert Smith (Governance Professional)

In Attendance Kate Allan (Head of Admissions – Agendum 6 only), Ian Pryer (Deputy Principal), Saira Hanif (Chief Finance Officer), Rachel Hooper (Chief Operating Officer), Theo Gregory-Rabie (Student Observer).

1 Apologies for Absence & Quoracy

Apologies for absence had been received from the following members of the Corporation: Carrie Anne Philbin.

The meeting was quorate.

Ali Kirkman (Vice-Principal: Staff & Student Learning) and Tim Lomas (Vice-Principal: Student Progression & Support) were unable to be in attendance.

2 Declarations of Interest

Reference is made to Minute 2 of the Corporation meeting held on 11 September 2024, the circumstances of which continue to apply.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting: 26 March 2025

It was noted that the draft minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2025 had received approval by the Chair of the Corporation for circulation.

The minutes were approved as a correct record of the business transacted and *prima facie* evidence of the proceedings to which they relate.

4 Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meeting: 26 March 2025

Minute 6: it was confirmed that the Chief Finance Officer had informed Buzzacott of the Corporation's approval of their appointment in relation to the 2024-25 financial statements' audit, and it was also noted that the Department for Education will be advised by the Chief Finance Officer of the appointment of Buzzacott for the said reporting period.

There were no other matters arising except as reported elsewhere in these minutes.

5 Chair's Action Report

None.

6 Admissions Policy and Report

Members received and discussed an interim report. The following matters were noted:

the target for offers is 2,109 with 37 Post-results, based on an offer-to-enrolment rate of 72%;

applications: 2,736. 64% CAP (unchanged), 20% Non-CAP State (down from 22%), 16% Independent (up from 14%);

91% of applicants had progressed to guidance meetings, compared to 81% last year by removing oversubscription criteria;

2,301 guidance meetings had been delivered to 93% of students who booked;

offers: 2,116. 71% CAP (down from 75%), 12% Non-CAP State (up from 11%) and 17% Independent (up from 14%) - every qualified CAP applicant had been offered a place;

places offered on Curriculum Balance subjects had increased from 91% to 94%; and

offer acceptance: 2,084 based on a 99.3% response rate

Members also reviewed and approved the Admissions Policy for Entry in 2026.

In the latter regard it was noted that new over-subscription criteria would be applied to the 2026 entry, with the intention of attracting a greater number of applicants from Cambridgeshire schools, in line with the purpose set out in the Strategic Plan.

7 Departmental Quality Visit Report: Computer Science

The report was received and discussed, with key strengths and areas for further development particularly noted.

Members tested some of the identified action points with the Head of Department, who was present, and asked for progress updates, which were given.

8 Ofsted Inspection Report

It was reported that, although the College delivers an exclusively academic curriculum, the inspection had been conducted under the Enhanced Skills Inspection Framework appropriate to sixth form colleges, most of whom have a substantial vocational provision.

It was noted that publication of the Report is imminent, and that until it is published no direct or indirect reference to gradings or outcomes can be included in documents intended for public access.

9 Principal's Update

A written update was received and considered.

Members noted with sadness the suicide of a student during the Easter vacation, and that his reasons for taking such a tragic step remain matters for investigation by the competent authorities. It was reported that the student had been both gifted and popular, and active in College life, and had not been identified to be at risk. Members expressed their deepest sympathies to the student's family and friends, and noted with appreciation the steps taken to assist the College community to come to terms with what had happened.

The safeguarding governors attested to the College's diligent and compassionate response to this unhappy event.

It was otherwise reported that:

the College is expecting to have to re-frame its annual Self-Assessment Report and quality cycle around a new Ofsted inspection framework; and

interim guidance had been received from the Equality and Human Rights Commission following the Supreme Court ruling on sex and gender – the College's two transgender policies had been removed from its public-facing website following the ruling, and detailed legal advice is being taken concerning the need for their revision – in the meantime the College management expressed confidence that the institution remains legally compliant in the light of the court decision.

Key non-financial performance indicators were also reported for the year to date (staff retention and student attendance). Members noted the College's improved performance in each respect.

10 Academisation

A report prepared by the Deputy Principal was received, reporting actions taken with regard to:

consultation and communication (including the formal public consultation);

draft Articles of Association, which have been prepared for approval by the Department for Education, and adoption by the Members of HET Ltd;

repayment of the bank loan in advance of the winding-up of the Corporation;

insurance arrangements following conversion to academy trust status; and

TUPE arrangements.

A conversion timeline was also received and noted.

Members had met to determine the proposed future composition of the Academy Trust from 1 September 2025, it being desirable the Trust should be smaller than the current Corporation. Kevin Taylor would shortly write on Members' behalf to each member of the Corporation regarding the implications for their own involvement in the future governance of the College.

The Deputy Principal undertook to advise members in writing of the outcome of the statutory academisation consultation exercise.

11 East-West Rail (EWR) Project

A verbal report was received from the Chief Operating Officer.

It was reported that works relating to Long Road bridge are expected to impact significantly on the College playing fields, but detail has yet to be received permitting a full evaluation.

12 Strategic Planning Report

A verbal report was received from the Chief Operating Officer.

It was reported that an abridged model report will be presented to the Corporation at the next meeting.

13 Management Accounts 2024-25 (to Period 8: 31 March 2025)

A report, prepared by the Chief Finance Officer, was received and considered.

It was noted that:

the year-end surplus is currently forecast to exceed that budgeted by £23,000 due to additional in-year funding for student growth, but there are still several risks to consider (summarised in the report);

capital expenditure is projected to meet the relevant approved budget;

the year-end cash position is forecast to show a c£1,036,000 outflow. This has been revised downwards as the prior cashflow contained a c£377,000 error which occurred when the team was transitioning work, which has now been corrected - cash in hand days will remain above target, and a budget and cashflow internal audit review will be conducted in May;

the Financial Health Category is forecast to be 'Good' at the end of the year – the College will notify the Department of Education (DfE) of the forecast cash outflow for the 2024-25 period following the loan repayment (a result of exceptional circumstances, this is now a limiting factor in the revised calculation of Financial Health); and

the Free Reserves position in March was £1,409,000, which is below the threshold (£1.500,000) for reporting to the Corporation.

Proposed arrangements attending academisation were also noted, in particular those relating to the additional month applying to the last reporting period of the Corporation. In the latter regard, outline estimates of income and expenditure for August 2025 were received and noted. It was further noted that formal estimates for August 2025 must be approved at the meeting of the Corporation being held on 25 June 2025.

Formal confirmation from the Department for Education of the College's Financial Health Grade (2023-24): Good was also received and noted.

14 Draft Annual Estimates of Income and Expenditure 2025-26

A report, prepared by the Chief Finance Officer, was received for information.

It was noted that the estimates will be submitted in due course for approval by the Trustees of Hills Education Trust Limited.

The assumptions informing the estimates were also noted.

It was reported that:

estimated VAT recovery is based on historical accounting evidence: and

the pay expenditure ratio (as a proportion of income), currently projected to be 75% in the reporting period to 31 August 2025, is forecast to rise to 76% in 2026-27, reflecting the College's operational requirements.

15 Governance Professional's Announcements

None.

16 Dates of Governing Body Meetings 2025-26

The following dates, formally approved by the Board of Trustees (Hills Education Trust Limited), were noted:

Wednesday 17 September 2025 (6.30pm)

Thursday 6 November 2025 (6.30pm)

Wednesday 10 December 2025 (6.30pm)

Wednesday 4 February 2026 (6.30pm)

Wednesday 25 March 2026 (6.30pm)

Wednesday 13 May 2026 (6.30pm)

Wednesday 24 June 2026 (6.30pm)

16 Date and Time of Remaining Corporation Meeting

The following approved date and time were noted:

Wednesday 25 June 2025 (6.30pm)

15 Any Other Competent Business

None.

See next page for action arising from the meeting.

Action Arising from the Meeting (by reference to the above Minutes)

<i>Person(s) Responsible</i>	<i>Action(s) Required</i>
10 Deputy Principal	Advise members in writing of the outcome of the academisation consultation exercise.