

**CRAVEN COLLEGE
FULL GOVERNING BOARD**

Minutes of the meeting held in College on:
THURSDAY 3 APRIL 2025 AT 5.30PM

PRESENT:

Alison Birkinshaw - Chair	Anita Lall - Principal and CEO
Majid Bokhari (via Teams)	Neil Roe
Nicki Crail	Rob Scott
Heather Kerrick	Claire Thomas (via Teams)
Judith Lancaster	Sara Wright (via Teams)
Chris Morgan	

IN ATTENDANCE: Gareth Dixon – Deputy Principal and CEO
Duncan Bulloch/Wesley McGlinchey – Assistant Principals
Susan Francis – Director of Governance

0. Jemma Crozier - Access to Further Education (FE)

- 0.1 Jemma gave a presentation to the Board on the Access to FE program, which had been developed in response to the challenges faced by students from diverse educational backgrounds such as Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), those who were Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET), or those from home education settings. It was explained that these students often struggled when transitioning directly into mainstream study programs, with many experiencing difficulties adjusting to the structure and demands of conventional education. A lot of these learners faced challenges, including low self-esteem, disrupted learning journeys, and a lack of trust in traditional educational institutions. The Access to FE program had been designed to create an inclusive and supportive environment where every learner could succeed. The goal was for students to transition smoothly into mainstream provision, whether it be through further education, apprenticeships, or other training opportunities. This program ensured that students were not only given the chance to catch up academically but also given the time and support to re-engage with education in a way that suited their individual needs. Several case studies were shared with questions from Governors being proficiently answered by Jemma.
- The Board thanked Jemma for attending the meeting and all the work she and the Team were doing in this area.
- Jemma Crozier left the meeting at 5.45pm.*

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 Apologies were received and accepted from John Craig, Dean Langton and Izzy Goulthorpe (Student Governor).
- 1.2 The term of office for John Craig ends on 14 April 2025. On behalf of the Board, the Director of Governance had sent thanks for his valuable contributions and dedicated service throughout his tenure.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- 2.1
- Chris Morgan declared a potential conflict of interest in relation to his role as Director of Education – Employability and Skills/ Director of External Relationships with WEA (The Workers' Educational Association).

ACTION

- Neil Roe declared that he was Chair of Skipton BID (Business Improvement District).
- Anita Lall declared that she was Vice Chair of Skipton BID.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 **Resolved:** That the minutes of the last Board meeting held on 12 December 2024 were agreed as a true record.

Actions

Completed: Most actions had been closed off or were integrated into the agenda.

4. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

- 4.1 The Board had received the Principal's report and Members noted the content on the key activities including policy, funding and skills updates and the recently published draft Curriculum and Assessment Review. The following points were highlighted:

- The College had received a better capital funding allocation than expected, amounting to £544,000. This funding was expected to be received in the summer and be spent by March 2028.
- A Skills Review document was presented on the screen by the Assistant Principal (DB) highlighting efforts in skill development and engagement with employers. This document would be shared on the College's website and used in employer engagements.
- The National Achievement Rate tables ([NART](#)) were discussed, with College ranking above the national average and had achieved notable positions in various categories such as number one for Apprenticeship provision and third for 16-18 provision in Yorkshire and the Humber. The Board was pleased with the positive data.

- 4.2 In response to a question about funding updates, the Deputy Principal gave further details, adding that the lack of communication from the Department for Education (DfE) about grants to support the increase in national insurance made forecasting a challenge.

- 4.3 Details of an increase in recruitment in both 16 – 18 and HE (Higher Education) provision were mentioned. Information on staff and student successes was shared. It was stated that four staff members had been nominated to attend a special education focused Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace in May, for their services to education.

5. STRATEGIC MATTERS

5.1 **Item 5a: Ofsted Feedback**

The Ofsted Monitoring visit took place on 12 – 13 February 2025, with the report published on the 17 March 2025. The report identified the College making reasonable progress in four areas and significant progress in one area. The report can be accessed here:

<https://files.ofsted.gov.uk/v1/file/50271869>

The Ofsted document was reviewed, and the Board discussed the implications of the proposed changes to the new Ofsted toolkit, noting the ongoing preparation and self-assessment that was taking place across College. The Board acknowledged the potential risks of early inspections

under the new framework but expressed confidence in the College's readiness.

- 5.2 Governors commended the College on the notable progress that had been made over the last 18 months and asked what they could do to support the College on this journey, to which the Assistant Principal explained that the triangulation of information during Governor visits, constructive scrutiny and challenge in meetings alongside the regular presentations from Managers ensured the Board knew the College well as had been evidenced in the most recent report.

5.3 **Item 5b: Strategic Operating Plan 2025-2026**

The Principal summarised the strategic operating plan, highlighting the College's progress against its strategic aims and objectives. The plan's wordiness was noted, and it was agreed that this would be presented more succinctly in future meetings.

ACTION: Improve the presentation of the plan for future meetings.

AL

- 5.4 The Board discussed improvements in teaching and learning, staff absence, financial oversight and the triangulation from external sources such as Landex and the FEC (Further Education Commissioner), with a consensus that the College was moving in the right direction.

- 5.5 It was noted that some adjustments had been made to the KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) following feedback from the People, Search and Governance (PSG) Committee. The importance of ensuring that actions underpinning the strategic plan were impactful was emphasised. The red, amber, green table used to track progress was deemed helpful. Further questions were raised about sickness absence levels/use of agency staff and the financial impact of this on College, which were fully answered by the Deputy Principal who provided explanations about long-term sickness driving agency spend. **RESOLVED:** The **Strategic Operating Plan 2025/26** was approved by the Board.

5.6 **Item 5c: Progress update of Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2024-25**

The paper informed the Board of significant progress in teaching quality, CPD (Continuing Professional Development) engagement, internal quality assurance consistency, and student outcomes, with strong walkthrough success and adult retention. The key risks included gaps in assessment for learning, digital CPD uptake, and workload pressures, all of which were being actively addressed. These areas had been discussed at length at the Quality and Curriculum Committee, the minutes from which had been shared as part of the meeting bundle. In future, the QIP would include a colour-coded table for better visibility of progress in various areas.

ACTION: To include a colour-coded table for better visibility of progress in various areas.

DB/WMc

- 5.7 In response to a question about whether College had taken suggestions from staff on how AI (Artificial Intelligence) could help them be more effective and efficient, the Principal noted the College had an EdTech and AI working group, information from which fed into the Quality/Teaching and Learning team to allow things to be piloted. This was also discussed at the staff workload group.

- 5.8 Following a discussion about the challenge of finding work placements for some curriculum areas and ways in which this area could turn to “green”, it was agreed that a consistent taxonomy of what constituted red, amber and green (RAG) be provided and used consistently across all papers.
ACTION: Produce consistent taxonomy of what constituted red, amber and green (RAG).

DB/WMc

5.9 **Item 5d: People Strategy**

The People Strategy had been updated following feedback from the People, Search, and Governance Committee.

RESOLVED: The Board approved the **People Strategy** as recommended by People, Search and Governance Committee.

5.10 **Item 5d: Annual Accountability Statement**

The College’s accountability statement highlighted the key priorities taken from the LSIPs (Local Skills Improvement Plan) with a limited number of aims and target outcomes that reflected national, regional and local skills priorities. The Board commented on the marketing opportunity it presented, to which the Principal stated that a more cosmetically appealing version would be produced by the marketing department following approval.

RESOLVED: The Board approved the **Annual Accountability Statement** with minor amendments suggested for clarity.

6. **REPORTS AND UPDATES**

6.1 **Item 6a: Quality and Curriculum report**

The Assistant Principal presented the report to assure the Board about overall performance, progress towards targets, and key improvement actions. The following points were highlighted:

- Overall performance remained strong, with predicted achievement for February 2025 ranging from 88% to 93%, exceeding targets in key areas.
- Retention and attendance rates continued to be positive, reflecting effective interventions.
- Teaching and learning improvements were embedded through CPD, coaching, and peer support.
- Apprenticeship achievement was projected to increase slightly, with a focus on reducing out-of-funding (OOF) learners.
- Adult education enrolments remained stable, with new partnerships expanding provision.

- 6.2 The College was asked about the staff induction programme and the inclusion of Power BI in staff training. It was noted that while Power BI was mentioned in inductions, its detailed usage was primarily rolled out through team meetings led by Heads of Departments.

- 6.3 Apprenticeships were discussed, with explanations provided about learners being out of funding (OOF) due to various reasons, including missed learning and the impact of Covid. The College's efforts to prioritise these learners and ensure their completion were noted.

6.4 **Item 6b: Gender Pay Gap Report**

The Gender Pay Gap Report was presented, as it had been scrutinised at the PSG Committee, no questions were raised.

RESOLVED: The Board approved the **Gender Pay Gap Report**, as recommended by People, Search and Governance Committee.

6.5 Item 6c: Finance and Estates Update

The paper updated the Board on the finance position and performance of the College along with an overview of estates developments. Progress on T-level works and the College's financial position were noted.

6.7 Questions were raised about the alignment of strategy documents and the use of AI tools, with assurances given about the College's cautious approach to data security and the use of AI.

6.8 An update on the lockdown practice that had taken place across College sites that day was provided. That everything went well, and the drill had highlighted a few areas where improvements would be made.

7. FINANCE MATTERS

7.1 Item 7a: Course Fee and Refunds Policy and Fees Appendix

The Course Fee and Refunds Policy, which had been reviewed at the Finance, Resources and Investment Committee (FRI), was discussed. The College was asked about the analysis of fees compared to competitors. It was noted that the policy and pricing had been updated following feedback at the FRI meeting.

RESOLVED: The Board approved the **Course Fee and Refunds Policy and Fees Appendix** as recommended by the FRI Committee with minor clarifications suggested.

7.2 Item 7b: Financial Regulations

The Financial Regulations were also discussed and approved, having been recommended by the Finance, Resources, and Investment Committee.

RESOLVED: The Board approved the **Financial Regulations** as recommended by the FRI Committee.

8. 8a) Membership Matters

8.1 The Board were informed that membership matters had been discussed at recommended by the PSG (People, Search and Governance) Committee.

RESOLVED:

- That Claire Thomas joins the Quality and Curriculum Committee.
- The continued appointment of Sara Wright as Independent Governor following a successful probationary year.
- The appointment to the Board of Naomi Sharples, Professor at Salford University with a background in teaching and learning. Replace the skills gap left by John Craig. That Naomi Sharples be appointed as an Independent Governor for a four-year term of office, April 2025 to April 2029, subject to a 12-month probationary period.

8.2 Item 8b: Governance KPIs 2025

The Board was asked to approve the Governance KPIs as recommended by the PSG Committee in February 2025.

The Director of Governance explained that the order of the KPIs had been changed to prioritise the more strategic. They had been updated to tie in with the AoC Code of Good Governance. More information had been added following feedback from the PSG Committee.

RESOLVED: The Board approved the Governance KPIs 2025 as recommended by People, Search and Governance Committee.

8.3 **Item 8c – Link Governor Visits**

The PSG Committee had approved the template and protocol documentation to be used during and after Link Governor visits which set out clear processes to follow. The Board noted the report from the Equine Link Visit. A Safeguarding Link visit was scheduled to take place on Friday 25 April 2025, and a Health and Safety visit would take place on 19 May, reports from which would be shared with all Governors.

Governors were reminded to liaise with the Director of Governance (DoG) for all contact and visits to ensure evidence of engagement and triangulation were recorded.

8.4 **8d) External Board Review due 2025**

The DoG explained that the Skills for Jobs White Paper included the requirement for FE Corporations to have an External Board Review every three years. The Association of Colleges (AoC) undertook an External Board Review by Carole Drury in December 2022. It was proposed to commission the AoC to carry out the next External Board Review at a price of £6,300. The cost and timing of the review were discussed with Governors acknowledging the positive feedback from Ofsted regarding the Governors' effectiveness, justifying the decision to opt for the less expensive review.

RESOLVED: The Board approved the appointment of the AoC to carry out the next External Board Review.

8.5 **8e) Proposed Calendar of Governor meetings 2025 – 2026**

The proposed meeting dates for 2025-26 were discussed briefly, with a request that the Board check their diaries. An updated version was shared following the meeting.

RESOLVED: The Board approved the meeting dates for 2025 – 26 subject to minor changes if required.

9. **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

The Board noted the minutes and the paper which outlined the main items of business discussed at the: Audit, Quality and Curriculum, Finance, Resources and Investment (FRI), People, Search and Governance (inc Remuneration) Committees.

All items below had been thoroughly reviewed and recommended by Committees:

9.1 **Audit Committee held on 4 March 2025**

The Board approved the risk management policy and procedure based on the minutes and input from the Committee Chair and Deputy Principal who highlighted the main changes, including the updated risk approach.

RESOLVED: The **Risk Management Policy and Procedure** was approved by the Board.

9.2 **Finance, Resources and Investment Committee on 13 March 2025**

The key points from the FRI minutes were discussed which included the dissolution of CRaBSC (Craven Rural and Business Skills Limited), gas safety inspections, and funding updates. Thanks were given to the Health and Safety Governor for their support with various areas.

RESOLVED:

- The Board **approved** the dissolution of CRaBSC (Craven Rural and Business Skills Limited) and the signing of new leases.
- Approved - Course Fee and Refunds Policy and Course Fees (*dealt with under 7a*)
- Approved- Financial Regulations (*dealt with under 7b*)

9.3 People, Search and Governance (PSG) (inc Remuneration) on 6 February 2025

The People, Search and Governance Committee minutes dealt with various areas and the People Strategy (*dealt with under 5d*). Concerns about newly appointed staff leaving quickly were raised, with explanations provided that the issue was due to a misunderstanding of the role, which was being addressed by reviewing job descriptions.

9.4 Quality and Curriculum Committee held on 20 March 2025

No further questions were raised on the Quality and Curriculum Committee minutes.

10. RISK REVIEW

- 10.1 The Deputy Principal presented the report and summarised the current risk register and action plan. The Board noted the increased risk around College estate and gas safety certificates, and the reduced risk of staffing issues. The positive outcomes from the recent Ofsted monitoring visit and ongoing improvement activities were mentioned.
- 10.2 The importance of monitoring long-term sickness absence and recruitment retention was discussed. It was confirmed that the KPIs (key performance indicators) were regularly monitored.
- 10.3 The Board agreed on the need for visibility when decisions were made outside the risk appetite, suggesting updates to the risk policy to reflect this. The discussion concluded with the Governors expressing satisfaction with the risk identification and mitigation processes, with no additional risks identified.
- ACTION:** Update the risk policy to reflect the need for visibility when decisions are made outside the risk appetite.

GD (actioned)

11. Part 2: Confidential item

Remuneration of SPH (Senior Post Holders). All staff, the Principal and Director of Governance left the meeting. These were captured in a separate, confidential minute.

12. REVIEW OF MEETING

- 12.1 No issues were raised about the effectiveness of the meeting.

13. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

- 13.1
- | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Board Meetings in College | Away Days in College |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|

Thursday 3 July 2025 at 5.30pm	Thursday 26 June 2025 at 2pm – 7pm.
--------------------------------	-------------------------------------

The meeting closed at 7.30pm.

Action Summary

Item	Action	Owner	Due
5.3	Strategic Operating Plan 2025-2026 Improve the presentation of the plan for future meetings.	AL	July 2025
5.6/5.8	Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To include a colour-coded table for better visibility of progress in various areas. Produce consistent taxonomy of what constituted red, amber and green (RAG). 	WMc/DB	July 2025
10.3	Risk Management Update the risk policy to reflect the need for visibility when decisions are made outside the risk appetite.	GD	Completed