Meeting of Kendal College Corporation
28th January 2026 5.00 pm Conference Room 2
MINUTES

Present:
Rob Trimble (Chair)
Kevin Boles (Vice Chair)
Jane Barker (Staff Governor)
Neil Boggin (Governor)
Molly Downes Student Governor)
Elaine Davies (Governor)
Tracy Houlden (Governor)
Andrew Lord (Governor)
John Mansergh (Governor)
Mary Osmaston (Governor)
Richard Quinn (Governor)
Jason Turton (Principal/CEO)
Daniel Waterhouse (Governor)

Attendance: 87% 13/15

In attendance:
Tamara Breeze (Director of Governance and Compliance) DGC
Michelle Croukamp (HR Manager) HRM
Richard Evans (Deputy Principal, Education and Standards) DPES
Craig Owen (Vice Principal, Data, Finance & Funding) VPDFF
Alison Robinson External Board Reviewer (Observing)

2466	**Apologies for Absence** Sue Keenan, (Governor) and Niamh Holliday (Student Governor) The Chair introduced and welcomed, Alison Robinson, the External Board Reviewer as an observer to the meeting. The Chair expressed the board's sadness at the death of the Director of Inclusion and sent condolences to her friends and family and work colleagues.
2467	**Declaration of Interests** There were no declarations of interest not already noted in the register.
2468	**To approve the Minutes of the last meeting** The minutes of the meeting held on 10th of December 2025 were approved as an accurate record.
2469	**Matters Arising from the Minutes & Action Plan** The action plan was considered and all items were either to be discussed in the meeting or in the March meeting of the Corporation.
2470	**HR** The Board received the termly HR and People Report for January 2026, which provided an overview of workforce performance, emerging risks, and key indicators across staffing, sickness, recruitment and wellbeing. Governors welcomed the presentation of all HR information in one place. They noted that the Employee Workload Pulse Survey, conducted 12–19 January with 143 respondents, had highlighted significant workload pressures across all staff groups, with the greatest strain reported by teaching staff. Nearly half of all respondents indicated their workload was not manageable, and a substantial proportion reported frequent

	overtime and a notable impact on wellbeing. Staff also cited duplication of systems, insufficient time for planning and marking, staffing gaps, inconsistent communication, and administrative burdens as key contributors to pressure**.** The Board discussed the immediate risks arising from these findings, including retention concerns, workload-linked sickness, and the potential impact on the quality of education and Ofsted readiness. The Principal and HRM provided feedback from the team meetings they had attended and commented that the "You Said, We Did" had been received positively, with staff valuing leadership presence. Key concerns raised by employees centred on fragmented communication, poor system integration affecting data accuracy, shortages in IT resources and suitable teaching spaces, high workload and capacity pressures, and a lack of strategic clarity and visible leadership across campuses. The Governors welcomed the proactive approach of the leadership team and noted the actions taken by the College to address the issues but asked for a timeline associated with those actions so that they could be assured that they had been carried out in a timely way. **Board requested, "You said, We did", timeline of actions in response to staff voice for May meeting.** Reviewing workforce metrics, the Board noted that labour turnover had decreased, with only three known leavers for the remainder of the academic year—representing the lowest number at this stage in three years. Sickness absence, however, has risen, with 692 days lost in the last three months (4.12%), primarily due to physical health-related issues. HR was strengthening short-term absence management processes, streamlining return-to-work procedures and providing manager training, while continuing to oversee long-term cases. Governors asked whether capability structures needed to be used to address those with long-term sickness, they were assured that there was scrutiny of the cases and that appropriate measures would be taken where necessary. The board noted the improved accuracy of sickness absence information with the implementation of iTrent, and that this enabled HR to conduct return to work interviews in an evidence-based way. Recruitment activity remained high, particularly for hard-to-fill engineering and construction posts, although most roles continued to be filled within 4–6 weeks. New posts had also been created in IT and CIS to address operational gaps, and recruitment was underway for the replacement Chief Operating Officer**.** The Chair thanked the HRM for the report and they then left the meeting.
2471	**Finance and Funding** **2471.1 Report from Finance and Resource Committee** The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee provided feedback on the two meetings since the last board, one on the 21st of January and one on the 27th of January. The board welcomed the news that Financial Intervention from the DfE would cease when the Levelling Up Fund (LUF) was paid to the College. They presented two key approvals required from Corporation members. The first was the appointment of the contractor to refurbish the Westmorland Campus. The Committee had considered the circulated tender evaluation report from the Crescent Purchasing Consortium (CPC) for the appointment of a contractor (architectural services) in relation to the Westmorland Campus development and had received assurance that the process was compliant with the financial regulations and Managing Public Money regulations. The Committee recommended the appointment of Redbridge as the successful contractor. **The Corporation approved the appointment of Redbridge.** The Chair of FRC then outlined that the Committee had scrutinised the Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) with Westmorland and Furness Council (WaF) that would enable the release of the Levelling up Fund. After acceptance of legal advice they recommended

	to the Corporation that the College entered into and executed the Heart of Kendal Grant Funding Agreement with WaF and Authorised the Chair (or a nominated signatory) to sign the Grant Funding Agreement on behalf of the Corporation subject to completion of final legal and property due diligence, including the Certificate of Title and any required searches or indemnity arrangements. **The Corporation approved the signing of the GFA** The FRC informed the board that they had requested from the finance team a detailed plan to retrieve the budget position updated at each meeting and would continue to bring this information to Corporation meetings. **2471.2 Monthly MI and Financial Position** The Board received the November Management Accounts Commentary and the accompanying Deficit Recovery Plan, presented by the Interim Director for Finance. Members noted that for the four-month period to 30 November 2025, the College's financial performance was broadly in line with expectations, with income at £6.4m and pay expenditure £0.2m below budget due to vacancies and timing of casual staffing costs and operating profit of £155k exceeded the budget by £206k. Non-pay expenditure was broadly on budget. The Board discussed the forecast outturn for 2025/26, which was now £231k—representing a £302k adverse movement from the original budget. Members were advised that this shift reflected a series of updated assumptions and new information, including increased pay costs arising from long-term sickness cover and vacancies, partially offset by the return of LGPS funds. In reviewing cashflow, members noted a strong position at £3.7m in November (including £3.0m unrestricted), with year-end balances forecast at £2.5m. Cash days remain above FE Commissioner expectations, though members were reminded of risks associated with the timing of Levelling Up Fund (LUF) income, with the possibility of earlier receipt of the full £2.1m allocation being explored. Liquidity and financial health metrics remained within "Good" parameters, and the College was compliant with banking covenants. The summary of the financial position was welcomed by the board members and the Director thanked. Governors asked whether with a strong cash position investment may be an option to maximise income. The Director was asked to consider the Treasury Management Policy and report back to FRC on options for that. With regard to the Deficit Recovery Plan, the Board recognised the urgent need to reduce expenditure to move the College closer to its original budget position. Benchmarking suggested that pay expenditure was currently 5% above sector norms, indicating potential for significant savings. Management has already identified several measures contributing to an improved position, including reallocating £72k of costs to LUF. Further planned actions included stricter oversight of casual staffing, a thorough review of non-pay expenditure with suspension of non-essential spending, and the withdrawal of corporate credit cards except for Finance and Executive teams. Members also discussed the proposed long-term approach to reducing agency cover costs by revising directed hours for teaching staff. The Board welcomed the clear identification of risks and the structured approach to managing them. Members emphasised the importance of continued close monitoring of both pay and non-pay expenditure and acknowledged that improvements rely on timely recruitment, effective management of sickness, and successful realisation of anticipated savings. The Committee agreed that the commentary and recovery plan provided assurance that management was actively addressing the financial challenges and would continue to report progress through forthcoming monthly management accounts.

	2471.3-4 Senior Post Holder Remuneration (SPHs left the meeting) The Chair of the Remuneration Committee reported back from the meeting of the 13th of January. The Committee had considered whether the standard 4% annual pay award given to all staff in October 2025 should also apply to Senior Post Holders (SPH). After reviewing relevant policy context and recognising issues with previous performance measures, the Committee had agreed to award the same increase to the SPH group from August 2025. It was also agreed that the SPH Employment Policy required clarification to remove ambiguity, and that the Remuneration Committee would meet in September to confirm the pay award for 26-27 based on 25-26 performance. Updates on interim performance reviews for SPH had been received. The Committee recommend the 4% SPH pay award to the Corporation. **The Corporation approved the award and noted future changes to policy and process.**
2472	**Chair's Report** The Chair reported that he and the Principal had attended the AOC Chair's and Leaders conference in London in December, meeting the new FE Commissioner, Ellen Thinnesen. The use of a Board Assessment Framework for College was highlighted during the conference and, whilst acknowledging that most of the information contained in one was already monitored by the board, it would be advantageous to have everything in one place. The DGC confirmed that this work was underway and would be reported to the May board. **BAF to be presented in May 2026**
2473	**1. Principal's Update** The Board received the Principal's Update for January 2026, which provided a concise overview of progress during the first academic term. The Principal reported that leadership had deliberately prioritised strengthening communication, culture and organisational clarity, responding to staff feedback that highlighted fragmented messaging, unclear priorities and duplicated systems. Weekly all-staff briefings, predictable communication rhythms and increased SLT visibility had helped to stabilise the organisational environment. The Board noted improvements in wellbeing support, including clearer acknowledgement of workload pressures, introduction of a pre-Christmas learner-free planning day, and reinforcement of recognition activities. Additional administrative posts and early workload-reduction measures, such as AI marking pilots and a review of teaching hours, were welcomed by the board. Progress on CPD was highlighted with a confirmation of a full Staff Development Day scheduled for February, aligned to Ofsted and quality priorities. Leadership visibility and transparency around inspection readiness and strategic planning were also strengthened. The updated risk profile was reviewed. The Financial health risk had increased due to issues relating to casual staff and sickness cover, though controls had been strengthened. Recruitment remained slightly below target, and workforce pressures—particularly in technical and core teaching areas—had increased sickness-related risk to Red. Safeguarding remained strong, with updated compliance and additional DSL capacity in place. The Board also noted progress across estates, digital transformation and project delivery, including Westmorland Campus developments, security improvements and the rollout of Power BI dashboards. The Governors questioned whether the ITrent system was fully implemented and whether that would prevent a recurrence of overpayment to staff members that had been noted previously. The Exec team acknowledged that the system should have had a project manager and in the absence of one, there were significant difficulties. The DGC noted that these had been identified by the Internal Audit team, with the final report expected shortly. It was agreed that would be scrutinised at Audit and Risk and reported back to the next Corporation meeting. Work in teaching, learning and assessment was progressing well, supported by external expertise, with increased staff confidence noted. The College's national engagement continued to grow through WorldSkills activity and sector representation.

	The Board endorsed the focus on communication and cultural consistency as an appropriate foundation for the next phase of improvement and requested a further update later in the year to evidence impact on systems, workload and capacity.
2474	**Safeguarding** The DSL had submitted a written report ahead of the Corporation meeting based on the verbal update shared in December. The Corporation were asked to contact the DGC or the DSL directly with any questions. The Safeguarding Governor noted that the DSL and the Head of Inclusion services had worked with him in the production of the report and he had used the AOC standards and guidance to agree the key reports to the board on a termly basis, Governors welcomed the format and the thorough approach from the team and the Safeguarding Governor. The Prevent risk assessment and action plan, was submitted in draft form for consultation and for approval at the next board, comments and questioned were to be directed to the VPES.
2475	**Student Voice** **Feedback to Student Governors and responses to the Student Strategy Event.** Feedback was provided by the VPES to the student governor and addressed the points they had raised in October and December meetings. **Themes & Findings** • **Induction and Grouping** Students reported that post-induction group changes negatively affected early friendships. The College explained that late surges in applications required splitting groups to improve learner experience and individualisation, acknowledging the disruption caused. • **Social & Physical Environment** A consistent theme was the lack of adequate social spaces—particularly at Westmorland (WmC) and MRC campuses. The College confirmed this is a priority within wider estate development plans, including new external seating at WmC and future indoor provision. • **Digital Access & Equipment** Slow laptop speeds and WiFi issues were raised. IT confirmed laptop ageing and WiFi load as contributing factors. Planned improvements—particularly new access points at WmC—were expected to significantly improve connectivity. • **Transport & Access to Learning** Students reported overcrowded buses and significant delays to council-funded taxi arrangements, which had caused some learners to miss classes. The College was engaging with Stagecoach and the local authority to escalate those issues. Mitigations such as timetable adjustments and safeguarding attendance marks were implemented. • A-Level students also noted inflexible private bus timings that reduced access to work and study opportunities; the College acknowledged the constraint and explained the cost and logistical limitations. • **Campus Experience at Westmorland (WmC)** Students described WmC as feeling unfinished. Leaders confirmed that the campus was between development phases, with significant improvements planned. • **Curriculum & Progression Support** Student Governors praised the A-Level UCAS support and commended the Curriculum Leader. They suggested starting UCAS preparation earlier, which the College had now built into induction and Year 1 tutorial processes. • **Catering & Facilities** MRC café was praised for quality, affordability, and service. AMC café was viewed as too small; staffing has been increased and space would be considered within wider estate planning. Industry-standard facilities, particularly in Animal Care and Engineering, were positively highlighted. • **Impact of Staff Absence** Students reported that lessons covered by non-specialists during staff absence affected learning quality. SLT acknowledged this and was reviewing staffing models to reduce reliance on external cover.

	Teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) experiences The Student Governor reported their experiences of TLA at the AMC and those of her fellow Student Governors at the other two campuses. These were mostly very positive with reports of responsive, supportive teachers who made adaptations for learners and ensured all were fully included. They mentioned that the classes were of a very good standard. One student governor from MRC had reported that behaviour management in English and Maths classes was hard for teachers and sometimes it was hard to learn due to poor behaviour. The A level student governor had greatly appreciated the one-to-one feedback and support offered in very small classes.
2476	**Strategic Focus WmC** The Chair noted that this item had been substantially covered in agenda items 2471 and 2473. The Corporation noted that the focus group for the campus had been established and had a strong governor presence.
2477	**Quality of Education** **1. Report from the QSC of the 15th January 26** The Chair of the QSC provided a summary of the meeting on the 15th of January and asked the wider board to discuss three of the key items that had come to that Committee meeting, as they were considered to have significant importance for all board members. **2. Attendance** The Committee had undertaken a detailed deep dive into attendance, recognising its continued status as a strategic priority with direct implications for learner outcomes, safeguarding and retention. Although overall attendance remained stable across vocational programmes, the Committee expressed concern regarding persistently low attendance in English (75%) and maths (74%), both below sector norms and presenting a material risk. Governors noted a range of recent interventions—including strengthened policy expectations, increased follow-up by the SEPO team, more robust parental communication and enhanced data visibility via RAG-rated dashboards. Early improvements in recording accuracy and identification of concerns were noted, alongside new initiatives such as AI-driven automated calls. The Corporation endorsed continued embedding of the revised systems and were reassured by the increase in committee-level attendance monitoring as a standing agenda item at QSC until sustained improvement was evident. **3. Progress Monitoring** Updates on student progress and predicted achievement showed that 55% of full-time learners and 54% of those with EHCPs were on track to meet their aspirational target grades, representing a strong position for term one based on summative coursework grades. Apprenticeship performance remained positive, with high-grade outcomes at 52%, first-time EPA passes above 85%, and overall achievement tracking at around 70%. Governors sought assurance on assessment validity and were satisfied that AI-supported validation tools and annual reliability checks were in place. **4. Inclusion Update** A comprehensive Inclusion update had outlined team realignment and recruitment that increased specialist capacity, particularly for English and maths. Qualitative feedback on the support provided was positive. The Committee had welcomed clarified SENCO roles, confirmation of 100% compliance with EHCP annual reviews, and work underway to improve target quality. EHCP numbers continued to rise, forming 10% of the College's cohort, above national averages. The Corporation members noted a strengthened professionalism within Inclusion services and a shift to permanently employed staff team members rather than casual staffing. **5. Quality of TLA** The Term 1 Student Satisfaction report demonstrated strong teaching, learning and assessment outcomes, with an 81% response rate and overall satisfaction rising to 4.35/5. Most areas exceeded KPI expectations. However, a minority—including Engineering, Business,

	English & Maths and some Functional Skills—showed amber or red indicators and were already subject to focused intervention. Governors asked whether there was a correlation between courses or departments in improvement plans and those with lower satisfaction rates. This was confirmed and members noted that poor satisfaction scores would trigger an investigation into the quality of student experience and that improving satisfaction rates were monitored as part of the evaluation of intervention impact.
2478	**Reports and Policies** 1. Annual Health and Safety Report had been submitted to board for approval, however, the Chair asked that inline with other policies and reports the report be scrutinised by the Health and Safety Committee before being recommended for approval. 2. The Student Protection Plan was recommended for approval by the Quality and Standards Committee and **approved by board.**
2479	**AOB** There was no AOB
2480	**Next Meeting** Wednesday the 25th March 5pm
2481	**Reserved Business (Independent Governors only)** Confidential minute