Preston College
Redacted[1] Part 1a Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 19 March 2026 at 5.30pm
Preston College Boardroom

Present:

Mr Jose Sedano-Martinez	Chair
Mr Simon Nixon	Principal and Chief Executive
Mrs Helen Curtis	
Ms Giulia D'Ambrosio	
Mr Neil Garnham	
Mrs Tamsyn Haselden	
Mr Cal Leonard	
Mrs Sally Little	
Miss Amanda Morey	
Mrs Andrea Willimott	

Absent:

Mr David Bond
Mr Neil Fletcher
Mr Malcolm Goulding
Mrs Janet Harrison
Mrs Sylwia Jurasz
Miss Katie Malyon
Mrs Laura Mason
Miss Hajara Ugradar
Miss Scarlett Woodruff

In attendance:

Mr Mark Airey	Executive Director of Finance
Mrs Marie Haworth	Vice Principal - Quality, Teaching, Learning and Learner Support
Mr Mick Noblett	Vice Principal - Curriculum Delivery and Planning Until Minute
Mrs Clare Rayner	Director of Governance
Mr Iain Stott	Vice Principal - Resources

1. Welcome and apologies

The Board noted that apologies had been received from: Mr David Bond, Mr Neil Fletcher, Mr Malcolm Goulding, Mrs Janet Harrison, Miss Katie Malyon, Mrs Laura Mason, Miss Hajara Ugradar and Miss Scarlett Woodruff.

It was noted that quorum was present.

[1] Please note that any matters which the Corporation is satisfied should be dealt with on a confidential basis have been removed from these minutes.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and highlighted that the timings might be adjusted as necessary to allow more time for substantive discussions on key topics such as the Principal and Chief Executive's report, strategic plan progress and items from the Quality and Standards Committee.

2. Declarations of Interest

Mrs Helen Curtis declared an interest as an employee of the University of Lancashire and undertook to leave the meeting if required.

No other declarations were made.

3. Minutes of Previous Meetings

The Board approved the minutes of the Board meeting on 11 December 2025 Part 1a and Part 1b minutes and the minutes of the Board meeting on 22 January 2026.

The Board noted the Notes from the Strategy Meeting 22 January 2026.

Resolved: The Board approved:

- **the minutes of the meeting on 11 December 2025 Part 1a and Part 1b minutes;**
- **the minutes of the meeting on 22 January 2026;**

The Board noted the Notes from the Strategy Meeting 22 January 2026.

4. Matters Arising

The Director of Governance referred to a request at the previous meeting to amend Minute 8 of the Minutes of the Meeting on 16 October 2025 and read out the proposed amendment. The Board agreed the proposed change.

The Board noted the matters arising report. Following a suggestion, the Director of Governance undertook where possible to distribute some reports to the Board as soon as they had been reviewed by committees to allow governors more preparation time. The Board noted that while not all documents could be distributed two weeks in advance, some could be made available earlier.

Resolved: To Board noted the matters arising report including the proposed revised target dates/closure for some actions.
Actions: The Director of Governance to:

- **amend the Minutes of the Meeting on 16 October 2025 as agreed;**
- **issue documents to the Board once approved by the committees were possible.**

5. Decisions taken Between Meetings

The Director of Governance referred to the report on Decisions Taken and Information Sent Between Meetings.

The Board noted that the following decisions been made by written resolution between meetings:

- the appointment of Mrs Laura Mason as an independent governor for a second term of four years:

- approval of Mrs Giulia D'Ambrosio induction review;

- approval of Mrs Andrea Willimott's induction review;

- agreement that any further changes to the Board skills and knowledge matrix could be made by the Chair;

- endorsement of the Search and Governance Committee's proposal that an external recruitment agency should be appointed to identify potential candidates for the Quality and Standards Committee;

- approval of an extension of Miss Amanda Morey's (staff governor Business Support) term of office until 31 July 2026.

The Board noted that the Minutes from the Quality and Standards Committee 19 June 2025 and Resources Committee meeting on 4 December 2025 had shared between meetings.

The Board noted the report.

Resolved: The Board noted the report on Decisions Taken and Information Sent Between Meetings.

6. Principal and Chief Executive's Report

The Principal and Chief Executive reported:

- that the College had received the funding assurance audit report the previous day and College had been rated "satisfactory" across all provision;

- that as the only outcomes possible for this audit were "satisfactory" or "not satisfactory", this represented a good outcome;

- on the cost of funding errors . However, in many cases the errors had already been corrected and the amount was well within tolerance levels.

Mr Iain Stott, Vice Principal Corporate Services, provided further detail on the outcome of the audit.

The Board discussed the report with management. In response to queries from members, the Board noted:

- the implications of the funding assurance audit report and that the funding error costs would have minimal financial impact on the 2024/25 accounts;

- that because funding audit reports were not public documents it was not possible to benchmark against other colleges.

The Chair commented positively on the outcome of the audit and the small percentage of errors found in relation the size of the College and the complexity of college funding.

The Principal and Chief Executive outlined the process that would be followed before the Board would be asked to approve the Report and Financial Statements 2024/25 by written resolution.

The Principal and Chief Executive reported:

- on various College events, including a dance-a-thon fundraiser in memory of a student that had sadly died before Christmas which had raised over £5,000 for charity, the Lancashire College skills competition and the Student Voice Conference, all of which showcased the College's community spirit and student engagement;

- that it was the first time the College had held a Student Voice Conference and it had been very successful with excellent engagement from students;

- the forthcoming apprenticeship and employer awards, which Mr Neil Garnham, Vice Chair of the Governing Body, would attend on behalf of the Board and that all governors were welcome to attend;

- on new methods of engagement with parents to improve student attendance and behaviour, with early feedback indicating positive results. He explained that before taking the step the College had taken legal advance to ensure compliance with data protection law;

- recent concerns from staff and students on staff cover arrangements when staff were off sick. He reported that this had been discussed briefly at Resources Committee and referred to initiatives to improve teaching staff workload and reduce agency costs, and in particular potential budget allocations for staff cover arrangements which would benefit staff and students which could be funded by Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) savings over the next three years;

- that strong concerns were being raised in the sector about the funding rate increases for the next year, which were likely to be lower than expected, given the government’s strong commitment to FE and real term increases. However, the outcome for the College was likely to fare better than other colleges due to the College’s mix of provision. He reported that a government announcement was anticipated in July.

Members and management discussed the recent stakeholder engagement session with members of the College Management Team and the request for improved arrangements for staff cover for lessons. The Board noted that the College would not need to contribute as much to the LGPS over the next three years which would save the College c. £650,000 and that some of these funds could be used to support staff cover arrangements. However, a more sustainable solution would also need to be identified.

Mr Noblett, Vice Principal Curriculum Delivery and Planning, reported that staff cover had become a growing challenge as the year progressed and this had coincided with the introduction and implementation of a Workload Strategy. He explained that in the short term it was important to create greater flexibility for directors and managers at an individual School level to avoid managers and curriculum leaders being required to cover classes at short notice.

Following a query on how quickly the changes could be made and communicated to staff, it was noted that the funding would be in place for 2026/27 academic year but there were plans to make some changes in the next term. It was noted the Executive Leadership Team were considering additional resources and introducing flexibility at School level.

The Principal and Chief Executive referred to an opportunity for the College to be able to bid for a Department for Education (DfE) construction capital fund project bid which would increase capacity for construction students. He reported that the tight timescales for this bid meant a submission would need to be made by 17 April 2026, and this date would fall before the next Board meeting. However, unlike previous capital bids, the DfE required Board awareness rather than Board approval for bids. He reported that the bid could be up to £5,000,000, and whilst no match funding would be required there would be an expectation for an employer match.

Mr Stott outlined the narrow criteria for the capital funds and the College’s plan to bid for funds to pay for the reconfiguration of the construction building as a skills building and also adding new lockers and improving the toilets. He explained that the project would allow the College to increase its student numbers for construction trades which was a local priority for the area.

In response to a query on the impact on the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) as a result of the move to the Lancashire Combined County Authority, the Board noted that based on meetings held to date the expectation was that the funding allocation for 2026/27 would be broadly the same as the previous year with the possibility of growth funding later in the year based on affordability.

The Board noted the report.

Resolved: The Board noted the Principal and Chief Executive's Report.

7. Strategic Plan Progress

The Strategic Plan Progress report was briefly considered as most matters had already been covered during discussion of the Principal and Chief Executive report.

The Board discussed the Balanced Scorecard at Appendix 1. The Board noted that the balanced scorecard had been refined to include targets for most metrics, showing positive performance in quality as well as financial terms.

Members suggested further changes in order for the Board to be able to better measure the effectiveness of strategic initiatives.

Following discussion, management undertook to explore the introduction of:

- inclusion metrics (equality, diversity and inclusion);
- staff utilisation metrics;
- data on staff sickness year to date.

Following a query on why student numbers were recorded differently in different reports, Mr Stott undertook to provide a summary of how student numbers were recorded including a glossary of terms.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Strategic Plan Progress report.
Actions: To explore the introduction of inclusion metrics, staff utilisation metrics and data on sickness year to date in future reports.
Mr Stott to produce an explanation for governors on how student numbers were reported and recorded.

8. Report of the Chair of the Quality and Standards Committee

Mrs Curtis presented the Report of the Chair of the Quality and Standards Committee. She reported that:

- Mrs Laura Mason had been re-appointed as the Chair of the Quality and Standards Committee;

- Mrs Michelle Bibby had attended as the new Director of Quality and HE;

- the Committee had discussed Teaching, Learning and Assessment processes in detail. The Committee had noted that all learning walks would be completed by March 2026 and that the new Director of Quality and HE would review the College's processes. The Committee had discussed that importance of ensuring internal review processes were sufficiently robust and accurate for the students' benefit and also in preparation for Ofsted;

- the Committee had noted positive improvements including: in year achievement for apprentices could exceed the 72% target which would be an incredible achievement and attendance was at 89% which was 3 percentage points higher than the same point the previous year. However, it was noted that attendance varied across programmes with GCSE maths/English remaining a challenge;

- the Committee had discussed curriculum with management, including the progress of T Levels, the introduction of V Levels and that curriculum planning needed to reflect the growth in demand for skills related to green energy and digital;

- learnings from recent Ofsted inspections, particularly leadership and governance and improving students' progress in English and maths;

- the Committee had discussed the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Learner Review 2024/25 report which highlighted that 42% of students came from areas of deprivation and 27% of 16 to 18 and adult students disclose a learning difficult or disability;

- the EDI Learner Review 2024/25 report indicated that there were no negligible differences when comparing performance by protected characteristics and the Committee had recorded congratulations to all staff teaching and supporting students;

- the Committee had reviewed a report on governance in the context of the renewed Ofsted framework and the Director of Governance had shared feedback from a recent Ofsted Webinar;

- the Committee had reviewed a curriculum strategy update and the Higher Education update;

- the Student Voice and Student Council report had been positively received, with the Committee noting increased Student Council membership and more active engagement in the Student Council this year. The Quality and Standards Committee had requested updates on actions taken as a result of Student Voice feedback and their impact;

- the Committee had reviewed the annual report on complaints and compliments for 2024/25;

- the Committee had completed its self-assessment and highlighted the importance of appointing two new governors with an education background to join the Committee.

The Board noted that the Committee had highlighted to the Board it had reviewed and constructively challenged management on the progress of the Quality Improvement Plan.

The Director of Governance highlighted that the Committee had agreed to draw to the attention of the Board the importance of governors increasing their knowledge and understanding of SEND, with plans for SEND learning walks before the end of the academic year and a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) session later in the year.

The Director of Governance reported that the College was currently going through a procurement process to identify a recruitment agency to find two governors with the skills and experience to join the Quality and Standards Committee. She explained that whilst the agency appointment did not require Board approval, she asked members to contact her if they wanted to join the panel to review the quotes received.

A member suggested that future EDI Learner Review reports include data of previous years to allow the Quality and Standards Committee and the Board to better identify trends. The Board also discussed including some inclusion data as KPIs on the balanced scorecard.

The Board discussed the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Student Review 2024/25 at Appendix 1.

The Board noted the report.

Resolved: The Board noted the Report of the Chair of the Quality and Standards Committee and noted the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Student Review 2024/25 at Appendix 1.

9. Renewed Ofsted Framework

Mrs Marie Haworth, Vice Principal - Quality, Teaching, Learning and Learner Support, presented the Renewed Ofsted Framework report.

Mrs Haworth referred to the presentation at Appendix 1 on the Renewed Education Inspection Framework which had been delivered to the College Management Team and Quality Practitioners in preparation for Ofsted.

Mrs Haworth reported:

- likely timings for the College's next Ofsted inspection;

- that the College continued to review Ofsted inspection reports as they were published;

- that for previous inspections College staff had implemented a supportive, inclusive process and worked co-operatively.

The Director of Governance reported on the key takeaways from the Ofsted webinar on the new framework which were summarised in the report and that a recording of the webinar was now available and would be shared with governors.

The Board discussed the report with management. Members highlighted the importance of governors being able to articulate how the College supported Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) students and other inclusion initiatives.

The Board noted that an inclusion statement, case studies and a summary document for staff and students which provided an overview of the College would be developed in preparation for Ofsted. It was noted that CPD sessions would be planned for August or September.

In response to a question on subcontracting arrangements it was noted that the Board received an annual report on subcontracting provision. The Board noted that the College's subcontracting provision was small and included Preston North End and the Lancashire Fire and Rescue (part of the King's Trust). Following a suggestion, it was agreed that governor visits to these organisations would be arranged. Management also undertook to invite governors to forthcoming subcontracting celebration events.

The Board noted the report.

Resolved: The Board noted the Renewed Ofsted Framework report.
Actions: To:

- **share the Ofsted webinar recording with governors;**
- **arrange governor visits to subcontracting partners;**
- **invite governors to forthcoming subcontracting celebration events**

10. Curriculum Strategy Update

Mr Noblett presented the Curriculum Strategy Update report. He reported:

- on progress against the existing strategy for the current academic year;
- on recent information from the DfE regarding T levels, V Levels, and Level 2 reform and how these could impact decision-making for the next academic year;
- on the introduction of combined study programmes, with plans to retain certain programmes and adapt others based on new T level requirements;
- on changes to apprenticeship funding and the impact on current programmes;
- on the College's flexibility in funding and programme delivery allowed for agile responses to changes in the education sector;
- during the last term the College would be asked by the DfE to provide a return which outlines the suggested transfer of curriculum against the new models and this return would align to the College’s accountability statement.

The Board discussed the report with management. In response to questions from members, the Board noted:

- changes to apprenticeship funding and the impact of students on withdrawn provision. The College would “teach out” the small number of apprentices on impacted programmes.
- the College had flexibility in terms of funding and student programmes as the College contract provision could be changed throughout the year, rather than set each September and apprenticeship students could be enrolled throughout October, December and January.

The Board noted the report.

Resolved: The Board noted the Curriculum Strategy Update report.

11. Higher Education Update

Ms Haworth presented the Higher Education Update. She reported on:

- strong academic performance, high attendance, and committed student engagement;
- strong partnerships with the University of Lancashire and lifelong learning initiatives including preparations for January 2027;
- the National Student Survey (NSS) and Student Voice meetings outcomes had identified areas for improvement. It was noted that there had been feedback on room changes and inconsistent use of HE learning spaces following estate refurbishments and centralised timetabling changes;
- small capital investments in equipment, including dance equipment and mobile devices.

The Board noted the report.

Resolved: The Board noted the Higher Education report.

12. Report of the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee

Mrs Sally Little, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, presented the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee's report. She reported that:

- the Committee had been pleased to review three internal reports at the last meeting, with two graded strong and one graded substantial;
- the Committee had agreed the recommendations of the panel for the appointment of new external auditors;
- the Committee had discussed plans for tendering internal auditors over the next few months;
- for most internal audit reports, the College had less management recommendations than the college benchmark;
- at the time of the meeting, the assurance funding review audit had not been published.

The Board reviewed the Audit and Committee's suggestion for the Deep Dive session on 23 April 2026 to focus on risk management/risk appetite CPD rather than starting discussions on the College's risk register and risk appetite. The Board noted that the student stakeholder engagement session would also take place as planned. The Board approved this suggestion.

The Board noted the report.

Resolved: The Board noted the Report of the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee and approved arrangements for the Deep Dive session on 23 April 2026.

13. Risk Management Register

Mr Iain Stott presented the Risk Management Report. He reported:

- committees were reviewing the risks related to their committee area and providing feedback. He referred to a proposal for a cross-committee task and finish group to be set up to consider the format and content of the risk register and review this feedback;

- the impact of the situation in the Middle East on utilities costs and supply chains, which was not currently reflected in the risk register;

- ongoing cyber risk as the national cyber risk rating was high and rising;

- proposed changes to the Risk Management Register at Appendix 1; including the addition of a risk related to the appointment of a new principal and chief executive and the removal of the "Changes in Board membership have adverse impact on College strategic direction and/or oversight" risk;

- the Committee had considered talent management, organisational development, and succession planning.

The Principal and Chief Executive reported that following the meningitis outbreak in Kent it was importance for the College to be agile in response to emergent risks, such as infectious diseases. The Board noted that the College was following local authority and national health guidance and progressing plans for communication and education pieces for staff and students on not sharing drinks, food or vapes and education on the symptoms of meningitis and the importance of seeking medical care quickly.

The Board discussed the report with management. In response to queries from members, the Board noted;

- that gas and electricity prices were increasing and noted that the College was using a bio mass boiler burner to reduce gas costs and was considering initiatives such as further increasing the number of wind turbines and solar panels in College to reduce electricity costs;

- the importance of business continuity plans for potential events such as a meningitis outbreak;

- that pre reading on risk appetite would be shared with the Board before the CPD session on risk management/risk appetite;

- the College operated local risk registers that would feed into the main risk register.

The Board agreed a proposal for a cross-committee task and finish group to be set up to review the format and content of the risk register and review the feedback from committees on the risks relevant to their committee. The Board noted that the task and finish group would make recommendations to the Audit and Risk Committee. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee encouraged members to indicate if they would like to join the task and finish group.

The Board noted the Risk Management Register report and the Risk Management Register and approved the proposed changes to the risk management register.

Resolved: The Board:

- **noted the Risk Management Register at Appendix 1;**
- **approved the proposed changes to the risk register - the addition of a risk related to the appointment of a new principal and chief executive and the removal of the "Changes in Board membership have adverse impact on College strategic direction and/or oversight" risk**
- **approved the recommendation to set up a task and finish group to review the format of the risk register.**

Actions: Members to contact the Director of Governance if they would like to join the Risk Register Task and Finish Group.
The Director of Governor to share pre reading on risk appetite before the CPD session on risk management/ risk appetite.

14. Approval of the External Audit Contract

Mr Airey, Executive Director of Finance, presented the report on the Approval of the External Audit Contract. The Board noted:

- that the current contract would end on 31 July 2026;
- that CPC framework had been used to seek tenders, with five bids received;
- the evaluation process and the composite scores at Appendix 1;
- following review of the panel's process and recommendation the Audit and Risk Committee had agreed to recommend to the Board the appointment of HaysMac LLP as the College's external auditor.

Following discussion, the Board approved the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee to appoint HaysMac LLP as the College's new external auditor for a period of three years, with an option to extend this by a further two years at the discretion of the Board.

Resolved: The Board approved the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee to appoint HaysMac LLP as the new external auditor for a period of three years, with an option to extend this by a further two years at the discretion of the Board.

15. Report of the Chair of the Resources Committee

Mr Neil Garnham, Chair of the Resources Committee, presented the Chair of the Resources Committee's report. He reported that:

- the Committee had reviewed proposed changes to various policies including Parental Leave Policy, Performance Improvement Policy, Managing Allegations of a Safeguarding Nature Procedure and the Fees Policy 2026/27;

- the Committee had reviewed the Travel and Expenses Policy which going forward would be regularly reviewed by the Resources Committee and the Board. As the previous policy had not been reviewed since 2014, the Committee had asked management to review if there were any other policies in operation in the College that were not currently regularly reviewed. It had already been identified that a new Treasury Policy would need be developed;

- the new Information Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy was discussed, focusing on server hardware replacement and improved disaster recovery arrangements with plans to replace the hardware over the summer;

- the Committee had reviewed proposals for budget contingency including splitting funds between capital and operational expenses to support the ICT Strategy;

- the Committee had noted that there would be a small underspend on the Sports Pitch project;

- the Committee had agreed to recommend the Gender Pay Gap 2025 report;

- the Committee had agreed to support management recommendations on Foundation Living Wage;

- the Committee recommended the continuation of EBS for the data centre;

- the Committee had recommended all reviewed policies and proposals for Board approval.

The Board noted the report of the Chair of the Resources Committee.

The Board approved the proposed changes to the Parental Leave Policy at Appendix 1, Performance Improvement Policy at Appendix 2; Managing Allegations of a Safeguarding Nature Procedure at Appendix 3, Fees Policy 2026/27 at Appendix 4 and the new Travel and Expenses Policy at Appendix 5.

The Board noted the Workforce Profile 2024/25 Report at Appendix 6

Resolved: The Board:
- **noted the report of the Chair of the Resources Committee**
- **approved the proposed changes to the: Parental Leave Policy at Appendix 1; Performance Improvement Policy at Appendix 2;**
- **Managing Allegations of a Safeguarding Nature Procedure at Appendix 3, Fees Policy 2026/27 at Appendix 4;**
- **approved the new Travel and Expenses Policy at Appendix 5;**
- **noted the Workforce Profile 2024/25 Report at Appendix 6.**

16. Gender Pay Gap Report 2025

Ms Thornton, Director of Human Resources, presented the Gender Pay Gap Report 2025. Ms Thornton reported:

- that the report showed an increase in the gender pay gap from 7.1% to 8.24% and explained that the increase was due to historic vacancies in traditionally male-dominated areas, which had required incentivised pay during 2024/25 to attract candidates;

- that in business support the mean gender pay gap was 2.31% and academic mean gender pay gap was 3.07% and the management mean gender pay gap was 20.04%. It was noted that the Executive Leadership Team was mainly male.

The Board noted:

- that the Gender Pay Gap Report 2025, at Appendix 1, needed to be published by 31 March 2026;

- the report on comparison with local colleges at Appendix 2.

The Board approved the Gender pay Gap Report 2025 for publication of within the legislative timeframe.

The Board discussed the data and the proposed actions arising from the Gender Pay Gap data outlined in the covering report.

Resolved: The Board approved the Gender pay Gap Report 2025 for publication of within the legislative timeframe and noted the proposed actions arising from the Gender Pay Gap data outlined in the cover report.

17. Foundation Living Wage – Pay

Ms Thornton presented the Foundation Living Wage (FLW) - Pay report. Ms Thornton highlighted the College's commitment to paying FLW to staff on the lowest pay rate and to maintain pay differentials for staff in Job Family Group 6.

The Board noted that the proposal had been considered by Resources Committee at its meeting on 12 March 2026 and recommended to the Board for approval.

The Board discussed the implications and benefits of implementing the new FLW and agreed to approve the new FLW rate and make the tapered adjustment as detailed in the report.

A member queried the potential response of staff and the unions as for 2026 the College would be paying FLW rather than paying over the FLW as it had the previous year. Ms Thornton explained how the two part pay award had impacted on the FLW the previous year and that the messages to staff and the unions had always been that the College would meet FLW rather than exceed it. Management summarised informal discussions with the unions to date.

Resolved: The Board:
• approved the implementation of the new FLW rate of pay i.e. £13.45 to SCP 9 with effect from 1 April 2026; and
• agreed to make a tapered adjustment to Spinal Column Points 10 to 15 as set out in Table 1 with effect from 1 April 2026 to ensure pay differentials are maintained.

18. Period 6 Management Accounts

Mr Airey presented the Period 6 Management Accounts, noting an updated forecast and surplus compared to budgeted surplus. He explained that the improvement was attributed to various factors, including reduced employer contributions, the local government pension scheme and prudent forecasting for apprenticeships. Mr Airey reported:

- on the impact of a slight drop in student numbers following the College's submission of the final Individual Learner Record (ILR);
- that as a lot of colleges in the sector were above their adult funding targets for 2025/26 the DfE had not made any guarantees for additional funding above allocation and therefore the College was not planning to exceed higher than 5% over targets and had budgeted 3%;
- on apprenticeships performance for Period 6 with an position improved for Period 7;
- on a recent notification from the LGPS that the employer rate would reduce from 16% to 7.6% from 1 April 2026 which would generate in year savings;
- the recommendations for contingency funds which would be considered in the next report and the anticipated College surplus if approved.

The Board noted the report and the Period 6 Management Accounts at Appendix 1 and commentary at Appendix 2.

Resolved: The Board noted the Period 6 Management Accounts.

19. Budget Contingency Proposal 2025/26

Mr Airey presented the Budget Contingency Proposal 2025/26 report and proposed the allocation into the capital budget and revenue funding to address pressures on various revenue budgets. The Board noted that the proposal had been considered by Resources Committee at its meeting on 12 March 2026 and was recommended to the Board for approval.

Mr Airey explained that these changes would allow procurement work to progress and some work to be completed over the summer.

The Board discussed the implications of the updated forecast and approved the utilisation of the budget contingency, moving the proposed amount into the capital budget and revenue funding for the items listed in the report.

Mr Airey reported that the required permissions had been given by the College's bank.

Resolution: The Board:
- **approved the proposed increase in the capital budget for 2025/26;**
- **approved the utilisation of the balance revenue funding on the items listed.**

20. ICT Strategy

Mr Stott presented the proposed new ICT Strategy, at Appendix 1, emphasising the importance of resilience, cybersecurity and disaster recovery. He reported:

- that the challenge to recover as quickly as possible faced by colleges in the sector that had experienced significant cyber attacks;

- that the proposed strategy was to move to a cloud-based disaster recovery solution, with costs broadly aligned with the current solution.

The Board noted ICT Strategy, the DRass – Options report at Appendix 2 and the summary of Infrastructure Options at Appendix 3.

The Board discussed the various potential solutions as part of the ICT Strategy.

The Board approved the ICT Strategy for 2026-2031 and the release of capital funds to begin the detailed procurement process for the proposed priority areas.

Resolved: The Board approved the:
- **ICT Strategy 2026 – 2031, at Appendix 1, for approval as the strategic framework for ICT resilience, cyber security and disaster recovery investment;**
- **release of capital funds to allow a detailed procurement process to begin for the proposed priority areas**.

21. Tribal EBS Procurement

Mr Stott presented the Tribal EBS Procurement report and referred to the Crescent Purchasing Consortium (CPC) Student Record Tender Scoring Extract at Appendix 1.

The Board approved the award of a five-year contract to Tribal Group for the continued provision, support, and development of the EBS data recovery systems from 1st August 2026.

Resolved: The Board approved the award of a five-year contract to Tribal Group for the continued provision, support and development of the EBS

student records system, commencing 1 August 2026, via direct award through the CPC framework.

The Chair closed Part 1a of the meeting and thanked the Executive Leadership Team and Ms Thornton for their attendance.

Mr Airey, Ms Haworth, Mr Noblett, Mr Stott, Ms Thornton left the meeting.

Preston College
Part 1b Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 19 March 2026 at 5.30pm
Preston College Boardroom

Present:

Mr Jose Sedano-Martinez	Chair
Mr Simon Nixon	Principal and Chief Executive
Mrs Helen Curtis	
Ms Giulia D'Ambrosio	
Mr Neil Garnham	
Mrs Tamsyn Haselden	
Mr Cal Leonard	
Mrs Sally Little	
Miss Amanda Morey	
Mrs Andrea Willimott	

Absent:

Mr David Bond
Mr Neil Fletcher
Mr Malcolm Goulding
Mrs Janet Harrison
Mrs Sylwia Jurasz
Miss Katie Malyon
Mrs Laura Mason
Miss Hajara Ugradar
Miss Scarlett Woodruff

In attendance:

Mrs Clare Rayner Director of Governance

3. Report of the Chair of the Search and Governance Committee

The Director of Governance presented the Report of the Chair of the Search and Governance Committee. She highlighted several key points from the meeting on 29 January 2026. She reported:

- that here were still two vacancies on the Senior Post Holder (SPH) Remuneration Committee. She had invited interested members to contact her if they would like to join the Committee, highlighting that certain restrictions apply, such as the Chair of the Audit Committee and staff and student governors being ineligible;

- if the membership could not be increased then the Search and Governance Committee might decide to review the size of the SPH Remuneration Committee, as it was likely to be larger than many remuneration committee in the sector and the College was annually reporting that there were vacancies on the SPH Remuneration Committee;

- the Search and Governance Committee had recommended to the Board that due to the involvement of many members in the principal recruitment process, the staff governor appointment process should he postponed until later in the academic year and the term of the current staff governor, Miss Amanda Morey should be extended and this had been agreed by the Board by written resolution;

- other recommendations from the Search and Governance Committee included approving the draft protocol for transcribing or recording meetings, and making changes to various role descriptions and the Board/committee report template.

The Board discussed:

- that the governors appointed to fill the two Board vacancies might be able to join the SPH Remuneration Committee;

- that the membership of the SPH Remuneration Committee had been designed to include a balance of chairs of committees and other independent governors;

- the possibility of recruiting new members to the Committee using the Board skills matrix. It was noted that the skills matrix template had been agreed by the Board and a draft would be considered at the next Search and Governance Committee meeting.

The Board noted that it would be possible to integrate the work of the SPH Remuneration Committee to another committee. However, it was considered best practice to have a stand alone committee.

The Board noted Report of the Chair of the Search and Governance Committee and the draft Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 January 2026 at Appendix 1.

The Board approved the draft protocol for transcription/recording meetings at Appendix 2.

The Board approved the changes to the Chair of the Governing Body Role Description and Person Specification at Appendix 3, Vice Chair of the Governing Body Role Description and Person Specification at Appendix 4, Audit and Risk Committee Chair Role Description and Person Specification at Appendix 5, Quality and Standards Committee Chair Role Description and Person Specification at Appendix 6, Resources Committee Chair Role Description and Person Specification at Appendix 7, Search and Governance Committee Chair Role Description and Person Specification at Appendix 8 and the Senior Post Holder Remuneration Committee Chair Role Description and Person Specification at Appendix 9.

The Board approved the minor changes to the Board/committee template at Appendix 10.

Resolved: The Board:
- **noted Report of the Chair of the Search and Governance Committee and the draft Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 January 2026 at Appendix 1;**
- **approved the draft protocol for transcription/recording meetings at Appendix 2;**

- **approved the changes to Role Description and Person Specification:**
    - **Chair of the Governing Body at Appendix 3;**
    - **Vice Chair of the Governing Body at Appendix 4;**
    - **Audit and Risk Committee Chair at Appendix 5;**
    - **Quality and Standards Committee Chair at Appendix 6;**
    - **Resources Committee Chair at Appendix 7;**
    - **Search and Governance Committee Chair at Appendix 8;**
    - **Senior Post Holder Remuneration Committee Chair at Appendix 9;**

4. Principal and Chief Executive Recruitment- Verbal report

The Director of Governance gave a verbal update on the recruitment process for the Principal and Chief Executive. She reported:

- that the microsite for the recruitment has gone live;

- the recruitment agency, Peridot, was working on plans for the assessment day, which would involve the wider board, including staff and student governors and Board members if they were available;

- the assessment centre date was scheduled for 11 May 2026 and members were asked to keep the date free in their diaries if they would like to participate;

- plans for the Principal and Chief Executive to conduct tours with candidates;

- a separate Board meeting would be arranged to consider the Senior Post Holder Selection Committee's recommendation due to the anticipated long assessment day. It was noted that it was likely that this meeting would be held on MS Teams.

Resolved: The Board noted the verbal updated on the Principal and Chief Executive Recruitment.

5. Date of Next Meeting - Deep Dive 23 April 2026

The Board noted that the next meeting would be the Board Deep Dive which was scheduled for 23 April 2026. The Chair thanked everyone for their participation and closed the meeting.