Preston College

Redacted and Abridged[1] Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 4 December 2025 at 5.30pm Preston College

Present

Mr Neil Garnham	Chair
Mr Simon Nixon	Principal and Chief Executive
Mr David Bond	
Ms Giulia D'Ambrosio	
Mrs Janet Harrison	
Mrs Tamsyn Haselden	
Miss Amanda Morey	
Mr Jose Sedano-Martinez	MS Teams

Apologies:

Mrs Andrea Willimott

In attendance:

Mr Mark Airey	Executive Director of Finance
Mrs Clare Rayner	Director of Governance
Mr Iain Stott	Vice Principal Corporate Services
Ms Gill Thornton	Director of Human Resources

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was noted that apologies had been received from Mrs Andrea Willimott and that Mr Jose Sedano-Martinez was attending via Teams.

The Chair reminded members of the agreed approach of taking reports as read to expedite proceedings and to focus on questions from governors.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Committee reviewed the minutes of the meetings held on 2 October 2025 and 5 November 2025. The Chair invited comments on the minutes.

The Director of Governance highlighted a few amendments:

[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.

- for the 2 October 2025 minutes, minor typographical errors were identified, including missing words in Minute 5 and Minute 10;

- for the 5 November 2025 minutes, it was noted that Ms Gill Thornton's name was incorrectly placed in the attendance list and would be corrected as she had been present and also a minor typographical error on Minute 5.

With these corrections, the Committee approved the minutes of the meetings held on 2 October 2025 and 5 November 2025 as correct records.

Resolved: **The Committee approved the minutes of the meetings held on 2 October 2025 and 5 November 2025 as correct records, with the noted corrections.**

4. Matters Arising

The Committee discussed matters arising from previous meetings, including the HR benchmarking information, at Appendix 1, that had been prepared by Ms Emma Collinson, Senior HR Officer, in response to queries at the meeting on 5 October 2025.

The Chair commended the thorough response and reported that he had forwarded thanks to Ms Collinson for the information on behalf of the Committee.

The Principal and Chief Executive reported that the exercise had been worthwhile as it had identified areas where College HR policies could be developed to further support staff.

The Committee agreed to note the matters arising report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the matters arising report which includes updates on progress of actions from previous meetings.

5. Annual Report and Financial Statements

Mr Mark Airey, Executive Director of Finance, presented the draft financial statements for 2024/25, at Appendix 1. Mr Airey reported:

- that the reconciliation statement had been received;

- on the good financial performance during 2024/25;

- that the recommendation to the Committee was to recommend the accounts to the Board with a caveat regarding a matter related to apprenticeships. He explained that the issue, which was sector-wide for colleges undergoing funding audits, involved discrepancies in End Point Assessment (EPA) costs for apprenticeships. The auditors had requested detailed checks of apprenticeship records, which has significantly delayed the audit process. It was explained that this had been a new requirement from the Department for Education (DfE) and had created significant additional workload for both the College and the auditors.

Mr Stott provided further details on the funding audit, explaining the complexities of comparing historical and current EPA prices and the challenges of obtaining documentation for apprenticeships dating back several years. The auditors had indicated that they would be unable to sign off on the accounts until this work was completed, which might result in a delay in signing the accounts.

Mr Stott explained that this issue was not unique to the College and was being experienced across the sector for colleges undergoing funding audits. Due to the situation, the DfE was likely to grant extensions for account submissions. However, to date, the College had not received a response from the DfE to any queries raised. Mr Stott reported that in the interim, he would send further data to the external auditors which might provide sufficient assurance that the accounts could be signed at the Board meeting.

The Committee noted that the Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2025 had been considered by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 26 November 2025.

The Committee noted that some amends had been made to the draft statements since they had been issued to the Committee following feedback from the Chair of the Resources Committee and the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee. It was noted that these were narrative and formatting changes rather than substantive changes to the accounts. Mr Airey explained that most of the suggestions had been actioned but some narrative relating to Brexit had been left as it set the scene and provided context.

The Committee discussed the Report and Financial Statements with management. In response to queries and comments the Committee noted:

- the equity investment referenced in the accounts related to a historic pot of funds donated to the College for education purposes which, due to the way it was set up at the time, was difficult to liquidate. He explained that the funds had been used to support the scholarship students’ programme. A member suggested a note to the accounts might provide further background. The Committee noted plans to close this pot in the future as it had almost been spent;

- that the audit issue relating to apprenticeship and EPA costs was part of the separate funding audit rather than the annual financial statements audit. However, the College’s auditors had indicated that they would not sign the accounts until the funding audit had been completed;

- that the issue was complicated as, due to the length of some apprenticeships, the checks required going back to records from three or four years ago which had created a large workload for colleges and auditors;

- if any issues were detected another sample would need to be undertaken;

- the level of refunds that might be required were small;

- that this level of detailed work was not conducted as part of a financial statements audit.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair acknowledged the efforts of management and staff in navigating these challenges and expressed appreciation for the production of the financial statements despite the complications.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to approve the Report and Financial Statements for recommendation to the Board, subject to completion of minor amendments and ongoing funding audit work on apprenticeships.

Resolved: The Committee approved the Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2025, subject to completion of minor amendments and ongoing funding audit work on apprenticeships

6. Update on Capital Expenditure Works

Mr Stott presented his Update on Capital Expenditure Works report, noting that there had been limited movement since the last report due to the short time between meetings. Mr Stott reported that:

- the roofing project was expected to conclude in early January due to the removal of a water tower and safe removal of asbestos. He reported that whilst initially scheduled for completion by Christmas, a January completion date was within the original timeframe;

- the Health and Wellbeing building recoating project, awarded to Rosslee Construction would commence in February 2026 rather than January 2026, due to temperature requirements for the coatings and logistical considerations for window replacements. He reported that the project was expected to conclude by July 2026;

- the lift refurbishment project and the toilet refurbishment project were progressing as planned.

Mr Stott also referred members to the Grant and College Capital Spend at Period 3 report at Appendix 1.

Mr Stott gave a verbal report on the progress of the tenders for the sports pitch turf replacement. He reported that the tender process had closed on 1 December 2025 and the College had evaluated the tenders on 3 December 2025 and agreed to recommend Blakedown Sport and Play Ltd had as the preferred contractor.

The Committee noted that capital projects exceeding £100,000 required Board approval. The Committee agreed that, on this occasion and given the timings, management's recommendation for the sports pitch tender should progress straight to the Board.

The Committee expressed appreciation for the report at Appendix 1. The Chair asked if progress / changes since the previous update, i.e. variance on spend to date and any variance on the total allocation to each line could be included in the next report.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the Update on Capital Expenditure Works report and agreed that the management's recommendation on the sports pitch should progress directly to the Board.
Action: Management to amend the Grant and College Capital Spend report as requested.

7. Review of Progress of People Strategy

Ms Gill Thornton, Director of Human Resources, presented a review of the People Strategy, which was approved by the Board in 2024 and was now in its second year of implementation. Ms Thornton reported on progress during 2024/25 and 2025/26 to date and reported that:

- the strategy focused on three key areas: staff engagement, wellbeing, and succession planning;

- progress had been positive overall, though some areas had not advanced as quickly as anticipated due to resource constraints and that additional leadership capacity, if approved through business planning, would help accelerate progress;

- the implementation of two pay increases in 2024/25, which aligned with school teacher pay awards by the end of the academic year and maintained differentials;

- the introduction of concessionary days during the Christmas break to allow a full College close down and to benefit staff wellbeing, had been well-received by staff;

- enhanced staff recognition initiatives, including awards for 10 years' service alongside the other long service awards and that a small number of staff had over 30 years' service and one member of staff was coming up to 40 years' service;

- a successful 50th-anniversary celebration event, which fostered staff engagement and morale;

- staff engagement in nominating their colleagues for awards;

- examples of succession planning initiatives, including work to develop apprentices working at the College, including paying the government's minimum wage rather than the apprenticeship rate;

- challenges in further progressing succession planning work, particularly due to staffing changes when trying to set up a network with other colleges alongside internal operational demands. However, work would resume in early 2026;

- the Committee would be asked to consider a report on the Foundation Living Wage at the next meeting;

- staff development days, wellbeing days and team wellbeing days;

- the staff survey response rate for 2024/25 was 41% which was lower than previous years and had prompted a review of engagement strategies;

- that the upcoming Investors in People (IiP) assessment would be used for 2025/26 and in previous years external surveys had generated a higher response rate;

- future initiatives include the development of a wellbeing strategy, including the development of a Volunteer Policy to support community engagement, and continued enhancements to CPD opportunities.

The Committee discussed the report with management. The Chair and the Director of Governance also raised questions outside the meeting. Staff governors reported that staff had welcomed the College close down for Christmas.

In response to queries and comments the Committee noted:

- efforts of management to reassure staff that all responses to the survey would be confidential;

- initiatives to increase participation in the staff survey in previous years, such as a prize draw;

- benchmarking of the College response rate compared to the sector (52%) and wider benchmarking outside the sector;

- that management would explore a member's suggestion to introduce some friendly team competitiveness into the communications plans, to try and increase engagement in completing the staff survey;

- it was difficult to ascertain if there were trends particularly schools or departments were not completing the survey, whilst maintaining anonymity;

- that it was possible that staff were less likely to complete the staff survey if they had no issues;

- the view of staff governors that as staff could raise matters at Staff Voice meetings throughout the year and management responded quickly to issues raised, staff might be less inclined to complete the staff survey as there were other channels to raise issues;

- that as the IiP survey would be used for 2025/26, there would be time to review communications plans for the staff survey 2026/27;

- information on how workload would be calculated for full time work based tutors that were also teaching apprenticeships would be included in the staff utilisation and additional duties Procedure.

Following discussion, the Committee noted the report, commended the progress made and supported the proposed next steps.

The Director of Governance referred to positive feedback submitted from a member outside of the meeting on the inclusion of the People Strategy Road Map 2024 - 2027, at Appendix 1. The member suggested that it would be helpful to add measurable objectives. The Committee agreed that this would be helpful.

Resolved: The Committee noted the report on progress of the People Strategy.
Actions:
- **Management to explore the suggestion to introduce some friendly team competitiveness into the communications plans, to try and increase engagement in completing the survey;**
- **Ms Thornton to add measurable objectives to the People Strategy Road Map.**

8. Employment Policy Review

The Director of Human Resources, presented her Employment Policy Review. She reported:

- on proposed amendments to the: Career Break Policy, at Appendix 1, Disciplinary Policy, at Appendix 3, and Disciplinary Procedure at Appendix 4 and noted that the Career Break Procedure was provided at Appendix 2 for information;

- that the Career Break Policy was never used but was required in case of a request from a member of staff;

- following discussion at the Resources Committee and the Board, the Disciplinary Procedure had been amended to allow dismissals to be delegated to vice principals which would allow the Principal and Chief Executive to hear appeals rather than the Appeals Committee. It was noted that the Appeals Committee would continue to hear appeals where there was a conflict of interest. She reported that staff training had been provided in readiness for this transition;

- the Disciplinary Procedure had also been updated to include a process for addressing 'some other substantial reason' cases and confirmed that legal advice had been sought to ensure the robustness of these updates. She explained that the proposed changes aimed to streamline process and ensure alignment with organisational need.

In response to a query on why the changes regarding disciplinary process had not been delegated further than vice principals, the Committee noted that, based on the number of dismissals and appeals likely to be required, delegation to vice principals was considered sufficient. However, this could be reviewed in the future if the number of dismissals and appeals increased.

The Committee noted the report and agreed to recommend the proposed changes to the Career Break Policy, Disciplinary Policy, and Disciplinary Procedure to the Board for approval.

Resolved: The Committee approved the: Career Break Policy, at Appendix 1, Disciplinary Policy Appendix 3 and Disciplinary Procedure at Appendix 4 to the Board for approval.

9. Staff Survey

Ms Thornton presented the Staff Survey report. The Committee noted that the report had already been discussed during Agenda Item 7. Ms Thornton reported:

- on plans to try and increase the 41% response rate in future years;
- that the survey revealed generally positive feedback, with workload improvements highlighted as a significant area of progress. This was attributed to initiatives such as the introduction of the Workload Strategy and the use of technology to streamline tasks;
- career progression and succession planning had been identified as areas needing further attention, with plans to develop successful progression case studies and clearer pathways for staff.

The Committee discussed the report with management. In response to queries and comments the Committee noted:

- acknowledgement that a response rate of 41% for the staff survey was an area for improvement;
- various strategies to increase engagement were discussed, including leader boards and incentive schemes;
- concerns from some staff that the survey was not confidential and communications to address this which had been discussed earlier in the meeting;
- assurance from management that all staff had access to the staff survey and time to complete it;
- that the College would develop staff case studies to demonstrate the progress of staff at the College;

- acknowledgement of the positive uplift in responses on workload. It was noted that as well as the new Workload Strategy the College had introduced teaching supports such as TeacherMatic which completed tasks to save teaching staff time and that more and more staff were using the technology.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee discussed and noted the Staff Survey report.

10. Health and Safety Annual Report 2024/25

Mr Stott presented the Health and Safety Annual Report 2024/25 at Appendix 1. He reported:

- that the report was also considered by the Audit and Risk Committee;

- that the number of incident reports had increased from 299 to 421 and this increase was likely to be attributed to the appointment of a new Health and Safety Officer and the staff training delivered on the importance of recording incidents and increased staff communications;

- that there was a significant incident in 2024/25 and a number of major incidents which required ambulances to be called;

- that the incidents often related to sporting and dance related injuries;

- that there had been no Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) incidents during 2024/25;

- that the number of near misses had reduced from 15 to 12 and that there was currently a communications push to highlight the importance of recording near misses and staff could use a QR code to quickly report them;

- on ongoing first aid and mental health training, review of Personal Emergency Escape Plans and additional training for Estates staff.

In response to a query on the increase in the number of injuries, it was noted that the number of incidents fluctuated each year and was more common in some of the College's Schools such as sports. He reported that College activities varied year to year and risk assessments were in place for each School.

The Committee noted that the education work that the College staff and management had undertaken during 2024/25 on awareness of vaping alongside increased disciplinary sanctions had been successful and no ambulances had been required during 2024/25 due to vaping.

Following a suggestion, Mr Stott undertook to ascertain if benchmarking data could be accessed from the Health and Safety Executive to enable the College to benchmark against other colleges of a similar size and provision.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the draft Annual Health and Safety Report 2024/25 at Appendix 1.
Action: To ascertain if benchmarking data could be accessed from the Health and Safety Executive to enable the College to benchmark against other colleges of a similar size and provision.

11. Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations Reports

Mr Stott presented the RIDDOR Report. He reported:

- on the criteria for reporting RIDDOR incidents to the Health and Safety Executive;
- that there had been two RIDDOR incidents in the autumn term and the reports had been provided as appendices;
- on the incidents which had occurred and the nature of the injuries;
- since the report had been issued the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) had been in touch with the College. The HSE had reviewed information provided by the Health and Safety Officer and the College was not expecting any further action.

The Committee discussed the report with management. In response to queries and comments the Committee noted potential risk and learnings taken forward.

The Chair asked referred to questions and comments submitted by a member outside of the meeting, that two RIDDOR reports in a term was serious, if similar incidents had occurred at the College before, if risk assessments were in place why had the incidents occurred and action the College had taken to prevent further incidents. The Committee noted:

- that the last RIDDOR incidents had been in 2021/22 and related to an incident on the pitch when a number of students were injured;
- that it was considered an unfortunate coincidence that the two incidents were in the same area as they were unrelated;
- assurance that the staff and students involved had received the appropriate training.

The Committee welcomed reporting of RIDDOR incidents in year, rather than at the end of the academic year.

The Committee noted the report.

Resolved: The Committee noted the two RIDDOR incidents that have been reported to the Health and Safety Executive in 2025/26.

12. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

The Principal and Chief Executive presented his report on the proposed changes to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy at Appendix 1 and the College's EDI statement, at Appendix 2, as part of the ongoing review of College policies. He reported that the proposed key changes related to**:**

- adding reference to the concept of equity to the policy to align with the College's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy;

- a proposal to remove the specific paragraph relating to anti-Semitism which had been introduced some years ago following communications from the then Secretary of State for Education and Office for Students. He provided assurance that in removing it, the College was not saying that it did not agree with the statement, but instead that it was unusual to single out one specific group when the College's EDI policy and commitment applied equally to everyone as per the College's inclusive nature;

- replacing the references to 'gender identity' with 'gender reassignment' in the policy and the EDI statement to reflect the terminology used in the Equality Act 2010.

In response to a query on whether there had been consultation with staff and students on the changes, the Committee noted that the College's EDI Working Group had reviewed the policy, including the proposal to remove the specific paragraph relating to anti-Semitism, and was supportive.

The Committee reviewed the proposed changes to the College's EDI Policy at Appendix 1, and College's EDI statement, at Appendix 2 and agreed to recommend the changes to the Board for approval.

Resolved: The Committee agreed to recommend the proposed changes to the EDI Policy, Appendix 1, and College's EDI statement, Appendix 2 to the Board for approval.

13. Items to Draw to the Attention of the Board

The Committee agreed that there were no items to draw to the attention of the board on this occasion.

14. Date of Next Meeting: 12 March 2026

The Committee noted that the next meeting would be held on 12 March 2026.