

**PUBLIC MINUTES OF
THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS STRATEGY BOARD MEETING HELD ON
6 FEBRUARY 2026**

Present:

Mr W Abbott (External Board Member/Board Chair)
Mr D Barrett (External Board Member)
Ms A Berry (External Board Member)
Mr M Burgess (Principal/CEO) (except item 2/26)
Mr T Burrell (External Board Member)
Mr R Cousins (Staff Member) (except item 2/26)
Ms S Dalby (Staff Member) (except item 2/26)
Mr M Fabian (External Board Member)
Mr R Gilpin (External Board Member)
Ms Summer Howarth (Student Member)
Ms M James (External Board Member/Board Vice-Chair)
Mr P Lachecki (External Board Member)
Ms S Robertson (External Board Member)
Mr M Williams (External Board Member)

Apologies:

Mr A Dover (External Board Member)

In Attendance:

Mr A Bates - Chief Financial Officer (except item 2/26)
Mr B Bottomley – Head of Estates (item 16/26 only)
Ms J Cosson – Head of Governance
Dr K Morris – Vice-Principal, Curriculum and Quality (except item 2/26)
Ms H Snelling - Director of People, Facilities, and Infrastructure (except item 2/26)
Mr J Williamson – Consultant to GC (item 16/26 only)

Attendance: 93%

1/26 Membership Proposals

Members reviewed a paper prepared by JC.

PL added that he has agreed to step in as Vice-Chair from May to December, with the possibility of sharing the role if others are interested, and a permanent Vice-Chair to be determined by the end of the year. He invited Members to put their names forward.

RESOLVED: Members approved the recommendations of GRS as set out below:

- 1. The appointment of David Barrett as External Governor, member of C&Q and HE Link Governor from a term of four years from 6 February 2026 to 5 February 2030.**

2. The appointment of Richard Gilpin as External Governor and member of C&Q from a term of four years from 6 February 2026 to 5 February 2030.
3. The appointment of Summer Howarth as Student Governor and member of C&Q from a term to 31 July 2026.
4. The appointment of Sarah Robertson as Chair of C&Q from 10 May 2026 in line with her term of office.
5. The appointment of Matthew Williams as Vice-Chair of the Audit Committee from 6 February 2026 and Chair of the Audit Committee from 18 October 2026 in line with his term of office.
6. The appointment of Peter Lachecki as Vice-Chair of the Board from 10 May 2026.
7. That the current designated Board size is confirmed as 17.

2/26 External Members Only

SSEC Minutes 27 January 2026

Confidential External Members Only Minute.

3/26 Apologies

Noted as above.

4/26 Declarations of Interest

It was confirmed that the Register of Interests recorded all the current declarations of interests of those present. No new declarations were made.

5/26 Confidentiality of Items (C)

As marked (C) for a period of two years. All the marked items were declared confidential on the grounds of commercial sensitivity.

6/26 Minutes of the Meeting of 11 December 2025

The minutes of the meeting were approved as a true record and signed by the Chair.

7/26 Matters Arising from the Minutes and Actions Matrix

The Actions Matrix was reviewed and the status noted.

TB reported that there had been an increase in governor Boxphish training completion. Most were now at least 80%. The remaining governors were requested to complete the modules.

8/26 Adoption of Updated Code of Conduct for Board Members and Approval of Updated SPH Remuneration Policy

Members had been provided with the updated Eversheds Code of Conduct for Board Members (recommended by GRS) and the revised SPH Remuneration Policy (recommended by SSEC) for adoption/approval.

RESOLVED: The updated Code of Conduct for Board Members was adopted and the SPH Remuneration Policy was approved by the Board.

9/26 Strategic Objectives (Purpose, Objectives, Outputs) and Process

MB opened the strategy part of the meeting by setting out the purpose and intent of the day.

The aim was for the Board and Executive Team to consider the College's resilience and response to the environment and key strategic challenges expected between now and 2030. The session was not about redefining the College's mission, which the Board had already agreed, but about determining what strategic priorities the College needs to focus on over the next four years.

MB framed the College's starting position as strong, citing a history of successfully navigating turbulence, but made it clear that part of the day's purpose was to honestly assess where the organisation is exposed. The aim was not to solve every challenge but to contribute insights, perspectives and questions that would shape the development of the College's new strategic plan.

MB clarified that the session would focus on what the College needs to do (strategic priorities), while a later session with the College managers would concentrate on how the organisation will deliver this (culture, processes and implementation). The output from the day would form the foundation of a broader process informing the drafting of the plan and subsequent consultation with stakeholders across the College.

10/26 Where Are We Now (C)

Ofsted

KM provided a comprehensive review of the recent Ofsted inspection, highlighting the College's overall performance, strengths in safeguarding, inclusion, leadership, and areas for further development.

The presentation recapped the College's strong Ofsted report: expected standard across all areas with many strong features. Strengths include partnerships, inclusion, leadership, governance and teaching in several areas. The College was one of the first to be inspected under the new Ofsted framework introduced in November 2025, and is currently the only college under the new framework without any orange dots, indicating there are no areas needing attention. However, the inspection did identify the need for greater consistency across some areas.

KM took Members through the inspection report outlining Ofsted's assessment of each provision type and elaborating on the narrative with more detailed feedback received during the process.

The Chair summed up that there was nothing in the report that the Board and Executive Team were not aware of which was a powerful indicator that the College's self-assessment process is effective. He concluded that it was a great achievement and that everyone should be very proud.

Finances and Resources

AB presented an overview of the College's financial position, highlighting recent strong cash generation, projected demographic-driven growth, key income streams, and risks related to funding changes, pension liabilities, and curriculum reforms.

The College retains a strong cash position and high-quality estate, but several financial dependencies create medium-term vulnerability. Declining demographics and unfunded pressures mean solvency past 2030 cannot be assumed without strategic action.

The Chair observed that the presentation showed that the College is financially resilient but that it must preserve its resources as the position is expected to be challenging over the coming years.

11/26 What to Expect By 2030 (C)

MB provided an overview of the challenges facing the College over the next five years, many of which the Board had previously discussed. He covered the implications of the government's skills white paper, projected workforce needs, curriculum reforms, and the evolving funding landscape, amongst others. All of these external drivers pointed to the turbulence shaping post 16 education towards 2030.

12/26 PESTLE Analysis and Identification of Key Strategic Drivers (C)

Members reviewed a list of the external factors affecting the College and were asked to select priorities for their tables.

They were invited to carry out a PESTLE analysis on the strategic drivers with the objective of scanning the external environment, reflecting on the implications and considering which factors will be most significant over the next five years.

13/26 Resilience Testing: Applying SWOT to Key Strategic Drivers (C)

Members were invited to carry out SWOT analyses for their chosen themes to assess the College's resilience and adaptability against the challenges presented, reviewing strengths such as financial diversity and local partnerships, weaknesses like dependence on public funding, opportunities in industry collaboration, and threats from policy changes and competition.

14/26 Scenario Planning Against Strategic Drivers

Members were asked to work through various scenarios related to the drivers discussed above, to consider current and future implications, possible mitigation strategies, and leadership challenges related to the topics discussed.

15/26 Determining Strategic Priorities and Next Steps (C)

After group discussions, Members were asked for their key takeaways from the work completed, that the Executive Team will we need to do well to be successful.

WA summarised that, although the presentation and discussions together had painted a picture of increasing uncertainty, the College begins from a position of strength - financially stable, Ofsted validated, with strong leadership and mission aligned - but faces mounting pressures in curriculum change, vulnerable learner demand, financial dependencies, and external volatility. However, he considered that the College is well placed to meet the challenges.

Members commented that the process had been helpful in understanding the connections between the different strategic drivers and building a clearer picture of the direction of travel for the College.

16/26 Specific Strategic Opportunities (C)

17/26 Date of Next Meeting

Business Board Meeting – 26 March 2026, 4.00pm, Cheltenham Campus, S101.

It was noted that it was JC's last Board meeting before leaving the College. MB and WA thanked JC for her contribution to the College, expressing the Board's appreciation for her leadership of governance and support over the past almost 10 years.

Signed:

Dated: