Bradford College

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
HELD: on Thursday 7 May 2026 at 16:00 in 4F07 DHB

Present	**In Attendance**
Bulbul Barrett (Chair)	Chris Malish (DCEO Finance & Corporate Services)
Chris Webb	Sarah Towan (VP Recruitment & Communications)
Lendy Ho (via MS Teams)	Allison Booth (Governance Director)
John Williams (via MS Teams)	Rachel Henry (Deputy Governance Director)
David Merrett	
Apologies	

L/J Denotes the time any individual left/ re-joined the meeting.

Item		**Action**
	Due to a technical issue, the meeting started at 16:15.	
1.	**Introductions, Apologies for Absence and Disclosures of Interest**	
1.1	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.	
1.2	There were no apologies for absence.	
1.3	There were no declarations of interest.	
2.	**Chair's action**	
2.1	There had been no use of Chair's actions since the last meeting.	
3.	**Minutes of the meeting of 19 March 2026**	
3.1	**RESOLVED:** The minutes of 19 March, including the confidential were approved to be signed by the Chair as an accurate record of the meeting.	
4.	**Matters Arising**	
4.1	The Matters Arising Report was reviewed and the DCEO F&CS provided the following updates: *6.6- The DCEO F&CS to circulate a draft refurbishment budget, projected timeline and associated risk information for the Bowling Back Lane site-* The Report was under item 13. *7.3- The DCEO F&CS to work with HR to provide an annualised staff turnover figure going forward-* the amendment had now been made. *7.5- The DCEO F&CS to add commentary on whether the lower-than-targeted SEND income is recoverable in-year to the Data Dashboard-* the amendment had now been made.	

	13.3- Members to consider additional metrics that benefit from being added to the data dashboard for 2026-27 and contact the GD with any suggestions- Suggestions were presented at item 4a. *14.2 The DCEO F&CS to check the line included within the Modern Slavery Statement which refers to 'adequate explanation' and provide feedback at Corporation*. The revised Statement would be presented to the Committee in July. *17.7- The VPF&CS to provide an update on Inprint & Design at the next F&GP meeting*. Awaiting a final invoice from RSM. 5.2- *The DCEO F&CS to provide the updated Treasury Management Policy and the Terms & Conditions of the cash management platforms at the next meetin*g. The Policy & Procedure had been completed and would be circulated to the SLT for approval along with the Equality Impact Assessment, this would be presented at the next F&GP meeting. The DCEO F&CS advised that he had spoken to three cash management platform providers and that one of those providers, which was DfE approved, had been deemed the most suitable. Further work was being undertaken to ascertain all terms and conditions, along with any associated risk. The Treasury Management Policy had been reviewed to ensure the risks associated with a cash management platform were effectively managed. This would be presented at the next F&GP meeting, along with a more detailed report.	
4.2	**ACTION:** The DCEO F&CS to present a report on the preferred cash management platform provider to accompany the revised Treasury Management Policy.	**DCEO F&CS**
5.	**<u>DCEO F&CS Report</u>**	
5.1	The DCEO F&CS introduced the report, which served to highlight a number of areas within the other reports on the agenda. Key things to note were: 6. F&GP Data Dashboard – Finalised Q2 position included, with most financial metrics being met and 'Good Financial' health. EBITDA was lower than budget and slightly below the FE Commissioner's benchmark of 6%; though this was completed before the revised allocation was received which was £0.2m higher than the Q2 forecast, and before the announcement of exceptional growth funding that should provide a further £0.5m in July. Full information would be provided by DfE by the end of May.	

	8. Management accounts and Q2, noting the financial position of the College; that whilst income was down, the majority of financial metric were being met, though covenant breaches were forecast from July 2026. However, the Q2 did not include the new allocation statement or the exceptional growth funding, as this was announced after the Q2 had been completed. 9. Student recruitment update – noting the position on applications for 2026/27. 11. Organisational changes noting the request to approval a VR scheme, which was in line with prior years arrangements. 12. Estates Plan – specifically the proposal around the light refurbishment and retention of the Bowling Back Lane site. 13. Capital Plan update – noting the progress on the Junction Mills site.	
Strategic Plan Implementation		
6. 6.1 6.2	**<u>F&GP Data Dashboard</u>** The DCEO F&CS presented the F&GP Data Dashboard which provided the final position on Q2. Members had previously requested that commentary be added on whether the lower-than-targeted SEND income would be recoverable in-year. The DCEO F&CS advised that commentary would be adjusted to reflect that the SEND income would not be recoverable to the budget position in-year. The VPR&C advised that the lower recruitment numbers on Opthalmics was due to a number of reasons; firstly, the provision had been moved out of the core study programme department and into the apprenticeships department. During that handover, ambitious growth targets were set during the Business Planning sessions, however, growth had been lower than expected. The College was expanding its ophthalmic dispensing employer network and had recently agreed new training partnerships with two national opticians, which was expected to bring more balanced growth next year.	
7. 7.1	**<u>Stakeholder Engagement Update</u>** The VPR&C advised that the report outlined key stakeholder engagement activity undertaken between February and April 2026 that supported the College's strategic objectives, with particular	

	emphasis on reputation, income growth, policy influence and future funding opportunities. During this period, the College had continued to strengthen its role as a system leader within Bradford and West Yorkshire, with high-impact engagement across national policy, combined authority strategy, employer leadership, MPs and sector bodies. Notable activity included: • Meeting with key DWP leadership to explore policy and funding opportunities and raising awareness of local Bradford impacts. Follow up would involve a physical visit from the Regional Director of DWP Operations and the Head of Product Policy (Work-based Skills Directorate – DWP). • Hosting the national investigation into NEETs, sharing Bradford College's data, practice and system-wide collaboration to address a national issue (March 2026). The VPR&C advised that the College had received £400k for 2025-26 from WYCA to run a bespoke NEET re-engagement programme for 18-24-year-olds. 70 learners had been supported into jobs or full-time study or apprenticeships through the programme. WYCA had confirmed that they would provide funding for a programme in 2026-27, with their announcement on the level of funding awaited. They were also encouraging the College to work with partners around running the same model in different areas such as Early Years and Health & Social Care. The VPR&C advised that the College had joined the Leeds College of Building's Centre of Technical Excellence (Construction) group to ensure access to resource and capital project funding for construction skills training.	
Finance		
8.	**Management Accounts March and Q2 Forecast**	
8.1	Members considered the Management Accounts for March and the Q2. • The EBITDA to end of March was £2.88m, which was £0.05m favourable to the year-to-date budget. The EBITDA percentage of income to end of March was 6.81% compared to an annual budgeted figure of 7.00%. • Operating Income was currently £1.51m below budget, driven by four key areas: AEB income was lower due to the timing of claims and the phasing of the budget. HE Fees	

	and Apprenticeships was below the plan following under recruitment at the start of the year. • Staff costs were £0.17m favourable to budget for the year. As a percentage of income, staff costs were 68.84% for the year to date compared to an annual budgeted figure of 64.69%. • Non-pay costs were £1.43m favourable to budget for the year-to-date across a number of areas. The favourable variance in occupancy costs was primarily due to actual electricity and gas costs year-to-date being lower than budgeted. Savings in staff training costs related to more in-house programmes being available. • The forecast Financial Health at year-end remained 'Good'. The DCEO F&CS advised that the internal capital spend allocation for Engineering would be spent on the furniture for Junction Mills, for which the tender had just been awarded. The remaining allocation for IT would be spent in preparation for the new academic year; with the current year's capital spend delivering the following year's equipment.	
9. 9.1 9.2	<u>**Student Recruitment**</u> **16-18 Study Programmes:** The recruitment position for 2025-26 was strong. Significant interest in T-levels was being demonstrated across the board. **Adults:** Access to HE was still declining due to increased competition from L0/Foundation Years at HEIs growing their market share. The VPR&C advised that the Adult Skills Academy model was likely to be increasingly adopted and funded in West Yorkshire. The College was seeking to continue to secure funding to ensure wrap-around-care could be extended to 18–24-year-old learners who may have been out of education for some time and require additional support to reengage and attend provision. £0.5m had been secured for 2025-26 to support this work. The VPR&C advised that there were opportunities to strengthen partnership working with the Council, particularly around acting as the Council's NEET re-engagement agency. This would place the College in a stronger position to build relationships with young adults and support their progression into learning. Plans were also being developed to expand programmes within local communities, delivering provision in neighbourhood settings rather than solely from College buildings. The aim was to reduce barriers associated	

	with entering formal educational environments and improve accessibility for young people.	
9.3	**Higher Education**: There was a limited portfolio this year due to delays with the University of Greater Manchester validating any new courses. The VPR&C advised that The University of Greater Manchester had currently paused all its decisions around validating, revalidating and awarding. The College's ability to bring new products to market had therefore stalled, due to not holding its own degree awarding powers. Although policy connected to the Lifelong Learning Entitlement promotes modular learning and the ability for learners to build towards an 'open degree', Government mechanisms to support this in practice had not yet been established. The College anticipated that its own modular offer would therefore not be available until September 2027, subject to external validation processes. It was noted that growth was dependent on releasing new products to market. Given the constraints around approval and validation, the VPR&C advised that it was likely that the College would experience a dip followed by a plateau in recruitment until issues were resolved.	
9.4	**Apprenticeships & Employer Responsive:** The College had 468 Pharmacy Technician L3 apprentices enrolled which was a national portfolio. In view of wishing to provide a next step for these learners, the College had written and were now seeking validation for a foundation Pharmacy Technician degree which the NHS had agreed to fund. Once validation had been secured, this would provide a progression route into Higher Education in this area. The VPR&C advised that Apprenticeships leading to Higher Technical qualifications was an additional route of potential growth for the College. The new Government policy on the Growth and Skills Levy aimed to provide greater flexibility for large employers, enabling them to use levy funds to pay for modules and units of apprenticeships. However, the College has not yet been granted permission to deliver modular provision under this scheme and the policy currently appeared to be less flexible in practice than originally proposed.	
Resources		
10.	**<u>People Strategy Update</u>**	

10.1	The DCEO F&CS presented the Employee Engagement Survey 25/26 results: In summary, the participation rate was 73.1% (target 80%), which was an increase of 11.8% from the previous year of 61.3%. The engagement score remained high at 89.2%, which was only a slight decrease of 1.4% compared to the previous year, but lower than the 90% target. Overall, the results provided a positive view of participation and engagement within the College as they compared favourably with many other public sector organisations that typically achieve participation rates of 50-75% and engagement rates of 55%-65%. The results would be discussed with each department during their Performance Review meetings with action plans being created to address any issues. In addition, the VPED&I and the Director of HR would review the commentary in more detail and provide overall direction and prioritise actions to improve scores where the target engagement rates were not being delivered. The DCEO F&CS advised that the dip in staff agreeing that *the College's wellbeing programmes and resources are effective in supporting their health and wellbeing* would be addressed through SO4 to improve how engagement with wellbeing initiatives was tracked and to ensure the offer remained appropriate. Members discussed the increase in staff selecting the *Prefer not to say* option in the survey. It was noted that this had been taken as an action at the Corporation meeting in March for SLT to explore approaches to encourage disclosure of information related to protected characteristics in future surveys. The DCEO F&CS advised that the College's 'Great Place to Work' survey would be rolled out to all staff on Monday 11 May. Members agreed that the College's Employee Engagement Survey participation rates and engagement scores were positive.	
11. 11.1	**<u>Organisational Changes</u>** *A separate confidential minute was recorded – see annex.*	
12. 12.1	**<u>Estates Plan Update</u>** The DCEO F&CS advised:	

	The outsourced Facilities Management (FM) tender had been completed and now moved to contract award, following a full and compliant tender carried out in conjunction with an external company (Litmus FM) and the procurement team. The outcome was that CBRE scored highest and therefore the next step was to work through the contract to be awarded. The new FM contract would start in August 2026 based on a three year, plus one, plus one, contract. In addition, forecasted costs were provided for expected reactive maintenance for the coming academic year, which was the reason for the costs quoted being higher. Though this element of work was subject to review and approval by the Head of Estates and Facilities. The fire remedial works were being planned for Trinity Green, with the required capital funding being part of the proposed capital budget for 2026/27. The wider works were also being planned to ensure non-term-time was fully utilised to minimise disruption to teaching and learning. Four final offers had been received on 27 April for the CTS building in Little Germany, ranging from £0.73m to £1m. The valuation undertaken in 2024 was at £1.0m. These offers would now be reviewed in detail before recommending a way forward. Proof of funds had been requested for all offers. There had been no change to 1 Energy securing energy procurement for the Heat Network as they continued to monitor the market for the best opportunity to procure. Exam planning was in full flow with record numbers of resits expected in May/June. The College estate on the key GCSE exams dates would be fully utilised and focussed on delivering a calm and organised environment to support students' exams experience. The increased requirement for one-to-one exam spaces, meant all suitable space would be released to allow for this. Summer works and room changes were in the planning stages, with works expected to be completed before September to ensure no impact to the learning environment.	
13. 13.1	**<u>Bowling Back Lane Report</u>** The DCEO F&CS advised that there was continued demand for construction provision and that during the 2025/26 academic year waiting lists were required for construction courses, meaning not all students got their first choice of provision due to lack of suitable space at the College. In light of this, it was proposed that the Bowling	

	Back Lane (BBL) site lease be extended by a further three years plus the option to extend for a further two years and that a light refurbishment takes place at a cost of £1.2m. This would provide space to accommodate demand and prevent any learners being turned away. The DCEO F&CS advised that the recent condition allocation fund of £2.05m would be fully utilised over the next two years to cover the condition capital estates need, which had historically been funded by College cash reserves. The BBL refurbishment could therefore be funded by the College's own cash reserves as part of College's £2.5m annual internally funded capital budget. This proposal was based on conservative growth of up to an extra 134 16-18 learners per annum by 2029/30; delivering additional income of £4.1m over the period, with the payback period being just under four years. This additional provision also aligned with the Local Skills improvement plan as well as West Yorkshire Combined Authorities', DWP's, DfE's and the Government's Industrial Strategy. In addition, this would support Bradford Council's planned infrastructure projects such as the City Village, straight through infrastructure and the Southern Gate Way project. These would also provide opportunities for students in the form of work experience, placements and ultimately meet the skills demand. The project also directly underpins the College's strategic objectives and the delivery of the College mission of working together to transform lives. The CEO advised that feedback was being sought from staff and students who were currently using the site and these responses were being addressed. The proposed refurbishment would improve the student experience on this site. Curriculum HoDs and the AP for Students would be involved in the planning discussions to ensure the provision of wrap around support.	
13.2	**RECOMMENDATION:** That the project to refurbish Bowling Back Lane with a budget of £1.2m be recommended to Corporation for approval.	
14.	**Capital Projects Update**	
14.1	The College currently had the following Estates Capital projects open and in train, which were:	

	<u>Junction Mills</u> – Works were progressing well on site and were still on programme for the building to complete in May as planned. The building would be made available to Estates and IT by the end of May to commence the internal fit-out in conjunction with the Projects and Motor Vehicle Departments. Though work on the car park would continue throughout June. As reported in the last CSIG, the costs for the construction works on the car park had come in higher than expected due to the requirements from Bradford Council and Yorkshire Water. The costs for all these works had now been quantified and listed in the dashboard that was presented to the CSIG in April. <u>Salix (Heat District Network</u> – The College's final claim had been submitted, drawing down all the funds that had been awarded. The remaining works were being completed at the expense of 1Energy as per the College's contract. The focus was now shifting to look at heat-on planning with the wider network partners.	
Policies and Statements		
15.	None	
Governance and Risk		
16. 16.1	**<u>Strategic Risk Monitoring</u>** The Committee reviewed the strategic risks for which it has oversight. The DCEO F&CS advised that the Risk Register had been updated to reflect the Q3 position; there were no proposed changes to the scoring. Commentary had been added to reflect: • SR1- To factor in the recent revised 16-18 allocation and the notification of exceptional growth funding. • SR6- The positive position with regards to the staff survey results. • SR12- To acknowledge the national joint union pay claim, submitted to the AoC at the end of March.	
Any Other Business		
17. 17.1	**<u>Items for report to the Corporation</u>** • Minutes of meeting - 7 May 2026 • Management Accounts and Q2 Forecast • Bowling Back Lane Report • People Strategy Report	
18. 18.1 18.2	**Any other business** There was no other business. The Chair closed the meeting at 18:10.	

19.	**Meeting Evaluation**	
19.1	**ACTION:** To be circulated by the Deputy Governance Director.	**DGD**

Approved by the Committee:

……B. Barrett….. **……02.07.26……..**

Signed by the Chair Date

Agreed actions

No	Minute	Action	Who?
1	4.2	The DCEO F&CS to present a report on the preferred cash management platform provider to accompany the revised Treasury Management Policy.	DCEO F&CS
2	19.1	Meeting Evaluation to be circulated by the Deputy Governance Director.	DGD