

Corporation Board

Wednesday 10 December 2025 16.30-18.30

University Centre Rotherham, Seminar Room U115/116

Membership:	Paul Lomas (Chair); Jason Austin (CEO); Katie Asgari; Simon Ashton; Stephen Bulley; Margaret Cobb; Donna Clifford; Shirley Collier; Debbie Marshall; Kay Mulcahy; Fedora Igwe; Alan Srilachai; Carol Stanfield; Ian Sutherland; Hayley Tingle; Louise Woodcock; Sohil Zokari
Attendance:	Tracey Mace-Akroyd (Deputy CEO); Phil Curtis (Executive Director Finance and Estates); Jane Hartog (Executive Director Marketing, HR and OD); Cath Mollart (Executive Director of Strategic Planning and Corporate Services); Ryan Falls (Cooper Parry for item 5); Sarah Connerty (Director of Governance and minutes)

	Item	Action
1	<p>Welcome, introductions and apologies</p> <p>The Chair welcomed colleagues to the meeting. The external auditor from Cooper Parry joined for item 5 on the financial statements and external audit report. Apologies received from Donna Clifford and Fedora Igwe did not attend the meeting.</p>	
2	<p>Declarations of interest</p> <p>There were no declarations received.</p>	
3	<p>Minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2025</p> <p>RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting held on the 22 October 2025 were agreed as a true and accurate record.</p> <p>Written resolutions:</p> <p>Strategic Indicators 2025-6 on 18 November 2025.</p> <p>RESOLVED: The written resolution to approve the final Strategic Indicators for 2025-5 was ratified.</p>	
4	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>All actions are closed with the exception of a briefing session on Health and Safety which was postponed until the new Director was in role.</p> <p>There is assurance that the link governor has been attending H&S college meetings and has met with the new Director, with updates to the FRC Committee. The FRC receives regular updates on H&S and the annual report came to the December 2025 Committee. The new Director has offered estates and health and safety walks around the colleges for governors. The Chair confirmed the Board would also want a briefing session. ACTION: The</p>	

	<p>Director of Governance to arrange a twilight health and safety briefing for governors.</p> <p>The Insights Workshop has been booked for 27 February 2026, with the team effectiveness session with Exec taking place on the 25 March 2026.</p>	Dir of Gov
5	<p>[External auditor joins the meeting – 17:10]</p> <p>External audit report and letter of representation</p> <p>The external auditor provided an overview of the external audit report and letter of representation which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Group has received an unqualified audit opinion, and the financial statements are a true and fair reflection of the financial affairs of the organisation • There are very few findings this year and the auditors are content with the management responses and actions being taken. These relate to debtors and creditors and the process used for credit card payments where delays were incurred as processing did not take place until receipts were received. This process has been revised • The finance team have been very accommodating during the process • It is a really positive audit report for the organisation <p>The ED Finance and Estates added:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That this is the first year that fixed assets has not been included as a management point • The Group has taken account of the findings and advice • The Group is in the third year of significant growth of 20% year on year • There is a good operational surplus of just under £1m • Financial Health is rated as Good <p>Some governors noted that they had not been able to access the External Audit report. ACTION: One governor noted it is poor governance to have different ways to access the papers (open and confidential) which is unclear and this should be addressed. As the report is pending final confirmation from the DfE it was agreed that approval would take place by written resolution once the final report is available.</p> <p>The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee noted that the Financial Statements, External Audit Report and Going Concern had been considered in detail with the auditors at the Joint Audit and Risk (ARC) and Finance and Resources Committee (FRC) and recommended for approval to the Board. In addition the Chairs of ARC and FRC had met with the ED Finance and Estates to run through the paperwork prior to the joint meeting. They are a really good set of reports and financial statements with a huge amount of hard work from the finance team.</p> <p>The Board considered the financial statements and no questions were raised.</p> <p>Going Concern Report</p> <p>The ED Finance and Estates reported that the Group has moved 10 points up in Financial Health.</p> <p>The ED Finance and Estates shared some examples of sensitivity analysis and scenarios from the paper.</p> <p>Governors asked the following questions:</p>	Dir of Gov

	<p>The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee noted that the sensitivity analysis is very good and useful to understanding the potential risks facing the Group and the impact.</p> <p>If a number of the scenarios came to pass and the Group moved into Requires Improvement would the auditors still treat the Group as a Going Concern?</p> <p>The external auditor reported that the Group would become a higher priority and a deeper level of sensitivity analysis would be required. It was noted that this year’s Going Concern statement is lighter because of the comfort of the Group’s current financial position.</p> <p>RESOLVED: The Board approved the Going Concern report and inclusion in the financial statements.</p> <p>Annual report of the Audit and Risk Committee</p> <p>RESOLVED: The Board noted the Annual report of the Audit and Risk Committee and the assurance it brings.</p> <p>ACTION: Due to outstanding final confirmation from the Department for Education (DfE) for the auditors to sign off the external audit report, and some governors being unable to access the external audit report it was agreed to circulate the report and financial statements for the Group, NFPC, RES Ltd, and the Student Union by written resolution for approval once final DfE confirmation is received.</p> <p>The written resolution will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External audit report and letter of representation <p>Financial statements for approval:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RNN Group Annual Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2024 • National Fluid Power Centre Directors Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2024 • Rotherham Education Services Ltd Directors Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2024 • RNN Group Student Union Financial Statements for the period ended 31 July 2024 <p>The Chair thanked the external auditor for his report. [The external auditor departs: 17:28]</p>	<p>Dir of Gov/ ED Finance and Estates/ External auditor</p>
6	<p>Self-Assessment Report 2025</p> <p>The DCEO reported that the SAR scrutiny panel took place on 4 November with the Deputy Principal from Hull College attending as the external member, and the Chair from the Board in attendance. Changes proposed at the panel have been incorporated into this version. The SAR then went to the Quality and Standards Committee for review and recommendation for approval.</p> <p>Grades are:</p> <p>Good overall with Outstanding features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quality of education is good; • All types of provision are good, with the exception of adult learning programmes which are outstanding; 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All key judgements are good, with the exception of behaviour & attitudes, personal development and leadership & management which are outstanding; • Safeguarding is effective; • The contribution of the Group to meeting skills needs is strong. <p>The DCEO reported that there was a big debate at the panel around the Leadership and Management grade. More evidence was checked against the criteria and it has been moved to Outstanding.</p> <p>The Group made the decision that it was better to have the trajectory rather than using a very new framework. Leaders & managers will carry out a thorough and systematic mapping exercise against the renewed Ofsted framework in January 2026. This process will ensure that the Group’s self-assessment remains fully aligned with the updated inspection criteria, supporting the accuracy and reliability of judgements and enabling ongoing improvement across all areas of provision.</p> <p>Governors asked the following questions:</p> <p>What contributions did the external panel member make to the SAR validation?</p> <p>The external panel member is highly experienced and showed how to tell the story about Leadership and Management and Level 1 and to look at the impact and the data and evidence behind the statements. The Chair agreed that it was very helpful.</p> <p>The areas of focus in the SAR are very clear. Are these embedded across the colleges?</p> <p>Yes. All staff have been working on the areas of focus since September, and the QIP is already mapped out. The next step is to assign the areas of focus over to the new framework. T Levels and E&M will stand alone.</p> <p>The SAR is a really good read, interesting, and well written.</p>	
7	<p>Student Governors – open session</p> <p>The Student Governor has been busy with ten different engagements for student governance since the start of the year. These included an Unloc event at City of Westminster colleges with a tour of their Maida Vale and Paddington Green college. It was a good experience sharing student governor experiences with other students from across the FE sector. There was a useful session on the biggest challenges FE colleges face which can be shared with the Board.</p> <p>UNLOC have invited all students to an end of year event.</p> <p>The AoC conference in Birmingham was good, the staff and student governor summit was not as relevant for student governors.</p> <p>The Student Governor has been elected to the National Association of Colleges board of governors.</p> <p>Governors asked the following questions:</p> <p>What is the feeling and mood in the three colleges from students?</p> <p>This really depends on curriculum areas. In all departments there are small concerns but there is no negative feedback on overall decisions made by the college.</p> <p>How do you engage with the student body to get that broader view of student voice?</p>	Student Governor

	<p>The Student Governor noted he is involved in every role – the student union, as a student ambassador he meets students all the way from open events, application and enrolment process, and as students.</p> <p>How big are the Student Union groups?</p> <p>They include the wider representation of the student body.</p> <p>The Student Governor noted he goes around the different subject areas, from HE to Level 1. Away from the SU meetings he is able to talk with students in most areas and it takes a lot of effort.</p> <p>The Board thanked the Student Governor for all his work. Having a wide an opinion as possible on the experiences of the Group’s learners is really important.</p> <p>As a Student Governor do you get a chance to go into student rep meetings?</p> <p>No, just into SU meetings.</p> <p>Are you aware of the rep for aviation?</p> <p>No.</p> <p>The Board agreed more support for students to attend student rep meetings was really important, and this would be a good opportunity to find student feedback.</p> <p>There are a number of student representation groups and it would be useful to understand what they are and how they work together.</p> <p>The Staff Governor explained that Course reps provide 15 minutes out of a tutorial to give time for learners to voice opinions and share feedback.</p> <p>Where does feedback from those meetings go?</p> <p>It is collated and shared with departments and tutors and feedback goes to the Personal Development team for action.</p> <p>The Student Governor noted that other colleges hold fortnightly meetings with the Student Governors and the CEO, and Exec members attend course rep meetings, and go on learning walks.</p> <p>It was agreed that it would be helpful for the Student Governor to understand the amount of work that goes on around student voice from the Exec and all staff.</p> <p>ACTION: The DCEO and the Director of Safeguarding and Student Support to meet with the Student Governor to share opportunities</p> <p>The Chair thanked the Student Governor for all of his engagement and work in since being in role.</p>	<p>DCEO/ Dir of Safeguarding and Student Support/ Student Governor</p>
8	<p>CEO and Principal update</p> <p>The CEO and Principal shared a presentation including updates on safeguarding and prevent, Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement (FREDIE), achievement and enrolment data, an update on the Group’s partnership with Rotherham NHS partnership trust. (see presentation for full details)</p> <p>Key points raised included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There were no drops in achievement rates for 2024-5 • There was a 6% improvement in E&M, recognising there is still further improvements needed • DfE enrolment numbers are +339 on plan which is 546 above last year • Attendance at open events is 50% up on last year 	

- Safeguarding is effective. There are positive data trends around enhanced support. There has been a strategic expansion of specialist support. Significant investment has been made in staff development including trauma informed practice which is a key element of the new Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy
- The Prevent action plan is fully compliant with regular review and close contact with regional Prevent co-ordinators
- Investors in Diversity reaccreditation took place this term with a positive reaccreditation and the FREDIE action plan is being updated in line with recommendations which include work on unconscious bias, and ensuring mental health and wellbeing training meets colleagues needs.

Governors asked the following questions:

Is the further work being put in place from the liD recommendations a big task?

Yes, it is in terms of staffing resource and CPD, but it is part of the Groups' day to day business and is something we want to focus on.

Monitoring against Strategic Indicators

The Chair shared the first reporting against the new Strategic Indicators that were approved by the Board following the last meeting in October.

Reporting is against targets due in December, noting that some areas of work will be ongoing until January 2026.

In the March Board it will be a lot easier as targets report in February so there is time to effectively monitor and report into the Board. See appendix one for the progress against the Strategic Indicators.

Governors asked the following questions:

With the number of adults increasing on study programmes does this cause any safeguarding issues?

The Group has always had mixed cohorts, and there are also a lot of stand alone adult programmes. There is a robust process at enrolment and any issues flagged up are considered to ensure the Group can accommodate a learner on campus and risk assessments are put in place.

In curriculum planning every area should plan for adult offerings and the Group has a number of EHCP adult learners on programmes. The three year plan is in place which provides the best support for learners and this is a very strong process this year to ensure the right learners are on the right course.

Support runs across tutors, support workers, pastoral and security teams.

The biggest jump of adult learners is in the community rather than on campus.

Other updates included:

- A new way of having a multi management approach. It is using a lot more data from the system to improve and show impact and is providing lifelong learning opportunities
- A tracker for social justice. The focus is on learners using their trackers, in February there will be user scores available for the next Board meeting

- Sustainable development – the Group is using Navigate and to date 7.3% of learners are recording their activity. The focus is now reviewing if the learners are inputting on navigate as most learners are doing their activities
- Succession planning - Job families are progressing very well and Exec received an excellent presentation update. This action is on track and further details will be available in March
- Supported health and wellbeing – there is a 3.9% average sickness trend. At present this is higher due to long term sick. Reporting is very accurate
- Upskilling – all training is logged on I Trent, and staff are being encouraged to record
- Reward and recognition - Kudos usage is high and has increased with the staff awards coming up
- Developing skills needs – is on track with planning. There is a lot of evidence to show curriculum areas working with new employers
- Driving regional and national impact – the Group is adjusting its marketing offer, with an enhanced focus on courses and a lot of new marketing is starting in January
- Commercial income is up by 5% on full cost income. There has been an 8% drop across the Group which is being looked into further with the dip suspected to be related to seasonal figures
- There has been a 2.6% increase in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEAM) enrolments
- The Group is embracing technology and sustainability
- A new employability board has been set up working with Barnsley Chamber of Commerce for construction
- Digital transformation – Community provision is being reviewed to ensure learners have access to online platforms. The team is looking at how it can measure if community courses are digital and accessed online. There is still a significant amount of people in the country who do not have digital skills

The Board discussed how it will be clearly able to see progress against the Strategic indicators and the impact. The CEO and Principal explained that this will become easier to measure further into the year and links very closely to the inclusive learning agenda

- Rotherham NHS foundation trust – the trust has been awarded teaching hospital status and have asked for support. The Group is already featured in the brochure for providing T Levels. There may be opportunities to use the DVC facilities. One governor noted that Sheffield health and social care have just partnered with the university and this is a common theme in the NHS.

Dinnington progress update

The ED Finance and Estates reported that the purchase of the site is very close. *[confidential item]* More questions on presenting the data and clarity on what is included in the offers is in progress. The ED Finance and Estates is working with land agents and external parties to get to net figures and level

	<p>playing fields. It is about getting governors the right information to move forward to make a decision.</p> <p>The Chair asked for timescales and the ED Finance and Estates confirmed he would be in a position to bring a final paper to the Board in the next few days.</p> <p>Additional support has been brought in from Ian Sackree who has experience of working with the Group, the expertise as a project manager, and has worked with the Board previously.</p> <p>This will be a direct sale taking anything between 12 and 24 months.</p> <p>RESOLVED: The Board agreed to receive a final recommendation on the sale of Dinnington by written resolution.</p>	<p>ED Finance and Estates/Dir of Gov</p>
<p>9</p>	<p>Risk</p> <p>The Board considered the revised Strategic Risk register and the update on risk. Key points included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The register is now consolidated into 15 high-level risks • The Exec risk committee is established and working well • The action from the last Board to align risk through the Exec Risk Committee, Audit and Risk Committee, delegations to Committee and reporting to the Board has been taken forward • The Audit and Risk Committee is in agreement with the revised risk reporting and has asked for full board involvement in discussions and agreement on risk appetite. The Exec Risk Committee will consider at its December meeting and bring back to the ARC in January • To ensure the ARC and FRC have the latest information on key items such as risk, finances, and compliance the Chairs have requested extraordinary ARC and FRC meetings in January 2026 before the ED Finance and Estates takes up his new role. <p>One member of the Audit and Risk Committee explained that accountability for operational risks does sit with the Exec and this role is taken by the Executive Risk Committee. The ARC does have access to the 4risk register if they want to review risks. The ED Finance and Estates confirmed this is welcomed by the Executive Risk Committee.</p>	
<p>10</p>	<p>Committee Chairs report</p> <p>The Board considered the work of the Committee’s over the last term and the recommendations for approval.</p> <p>Joint Audit and Risk and Finance and Resources Committee –20 November 2025:</p> <p>RESOLVED: The Board approved the pay award of 4% for all eligible staff effective from December 2025.</p> <p>Audit and Risk Committee – 20 November 2025:</p> <p>RESOLVED: The Board approved Cooper Parry as the Group’s external auditors for a further year.</p> <p>RESOLVED: The Board approved the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedure</p> <p>Search, Governance and Remuneration Committee – 24 November 2025</p>	

	<p>RESOLVED: The Board approved the pay award of 4% for all Senior Post Holders effective from December 2025.</p> <p>The Board noted that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • finance governor interviews are taking place on the 14 January 2025 and there are four shortlisted candidates • Morgan Hunt have started the search and recruitment for a new FD and an interim is being recruited to start the first week of next term. <p>Finance and Resources Committee – 2 December 2025</p> <p>RESOLVED: The Board approved the Capital and Estates Plans:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. the £1.6m (2025/26) projects from the £1.7m FECA allocation (critical backlog) b. to move forward with the expected allocation and the strategic principle of using part of the c£3m annual self-generated capital (EBITDA) to guarantee critical strategic projects, such as the Digital Skills Hub, thus fully mitigating the risk posed by the pending DfE 2026/27 FECA allocation confirmation c. the approach to ring-fencing and allocating the capital generated from the high-value Dinnington disposal for strategic reinvestment and essential match funding and large-scale bids similar to the post 16 capacity funding of c£4m <p>RESOLVED: The Board approved the Procurement Policy</p> <p>The Board considered the October 2025 management accounts</p> <p>The Board noted that there was a breach of the fin regs in approval of two contracts over £250k (insurance and copiers) which has been raised, retrospective approvals made and reported to the auditors and Chair of Audit and Risk Committee.</p> <p>Quality and Standards Committee – 25 November 2025</p> <p>The Board considered the Quality Improvement Plan and risk report.</p>	
10a	<p>Subsidiary Chairs report</p> <p>Rotherham Education Services Ltd (RES) – 2 December 2025</p> <p>National Fluid Power Centre (NFPC) – 3 December 2025</p> <p>The Board noted the minutes and the updated NFPC Articles of Association. Governors asked the following questions:</p> <p>Whether the updated Articles provided the Group with enough control over the subsidiary?</p> <p>The ED Finance and Estates confirmed that the updated Articles provided the Group with both control and flexibility.</p> <p>RESOLVED: The Board approved the updated Articles of Association for the NFPC, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the deletion of the operative clauses in the memorandum of association • the deletion of a legacy provision of North Notts Charity Trustees 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a filing of the new articles of association with Companies House • a filing of the notification of a change of objects with Companies House 	
11	<p>Governor link visits and engagement Due to time discussions on visits and engagement was carried to the Committees and the next meeting.</p>	
12	<p>Any other business There were no items raised. The Board passed on their thanks to the ED Finance and Estates for all his work and congratulated him on his new role.</p>	
13	<p>Date of next meetings: Wednesday 25 March 2026 followed by dinner in the Wharcliffe Tuesday 30 June 2026 All meetings start at 16.30 Board strategy days: Wednesday 25 March 2026 Insights: Friday 27 February 2026 10.30-16.30 – workshop Wednesday 25 March – morning of the strategy day – team effectiveness All Board meetings are in person. [Staff and student governors and Exec depart for the confidential agenda: 17:48]</p>	
14	<i>Confidential items</i>	

Meeting closed: 18. 25