Minutes

Corporation Board

Tuesday 30 June 2026 at Dearne Valley College, Manvers Park, Wath upon Dearne, Rotherham, S63 7EW

Timings:
Stacey Higgs, Director of campus at DVC tours.
15:15 – 16:00 - Governor visit to Iprosurv, drone solutions
16:00 - Opportunity to catch up
16:30 - Board meeting

Membership:	Paul Lomas (Chair); Jason Austin (CEO); Katie Asgari; Simon Ashton; Stephen Bulley; Margaret Cobb; Shirley Collier; Debbie Marshall; Kay Mulcahy; Simon Renny; John Revill; Alan Srilachai; Ian Sutherland; Hayley Tingle; Louise Woodcock; Sohil Zokari
Attendance:	Tracey Mace-Akroyd (Deputy CEO); Sue Saunders (Executive Director Finance and MIS); Jane Hartog (Executive Director Marketing, HR and OD); Cath Mollart (Executive Director of Strategic Planning and Corporate Services); Jet Parker-Brown (student voice); Lucy Barnwell (Director of Marketing and Learner Recruitment) for item 7; Sarah Connerty (Director of Governance and minutes)

	Item	Action
1	**Welcome, introductions and apologies** The Chair welcomed colleagues to the meeting, including new governors Simon Renny and John Revill, and welcomed Jet Parker-Brown who is joining as an observer and to share her experience of being a student at the RNN Group. The Chair passed on thanks to Carol Stanfield who stood down earlier this month, and Alan Srilachai, student governor who is now in Bangkok and has place at Sheffield Hallam in September. Apologies received from Margaret Cobb, Hayley Tingle, Katie Asgari and Alan Srilachai. Debbie Marshall did not attend the meeting. Sohil Zokari will leave the meeting early.	
2	**Declarations of interest** The CEO, ED HR, Marketing and OD, and Director of Governance declared an interest in SPH matters at item 17.	
3	**Update from the Chair**	

	The Chair shared his reflections of the year from a governance perspective. The academic year started with a map of change with a focus on making it easier to be a governor in terms of papers, succinct summaries, aligning governors to strategic outcomes, governor development and value. The Chair and Vice Chair roles are being taking forward and the Board has Shirley Colliers' expertise in governance. This year there has been a focus on governors getting a broader understanding of stakeholder engagement, utilising the expertise of all governors, planning a structured and targeted external governance review for September, preparation for an Ofsted, and the Board's oversight of staff wellbeing. There have been good strides forward. The new FEC has a big focus on governance and leadership and triangulation, and the Board's activities with link governors, stakeholder engagement, twilight briefings, learning walks and college events, meeting with employers and site visits, increased benchmarking and trend data in reports and knowing and understanding data, staff and student governor voice, Jet's attendance at today's meeting, the Group's relationship with SYMCA and EMCCA, close alignment with LSIPs and the Strategic Plan, and the excellent sessions run by the DCEO give governors a strong understanding of the Group and an understanding of governance and leadership. The challenges are how to manage the time needed for governance and the increasing demands, and governors are feeding back on this with five governors stepping down citing capacity and governor workload. On a recent Y&H Chairs meetings there was a presentation on AI and how it is making governance more effective and the Chair has shared with the ED SPCS and this will be an area of focus when the new head of Digital and AI starts. The Board has to be better at understanding the data, trusting Committees in their remits, and ensuring that there is respect to paper writers with scrutiny and challenge on the right areas. The Governor role needs to be at the right strategic level and there is important work to do around that. There are some challenges to come in FE and getting the Board in a strong position to best support the Group is key. All governors will have Chair 121 governor reviews over the summer and governor thoughts on any of these areas are very welcome. The Search, Governance and Remuneration Committee would like to introduce minimum of three-month notice, or an academic term to support succession planning, while understanding this is a voluntary role. To find good governors take time and this will support the operation and effectiveness of the Board. **RESOLVED:** The Board approved including a notice period for governors in the Standing Orders and role descriptions. The Chair thanked senior staff for all their work, the rich content of reporting and sessions this year. It is clear there is transparency which support governors to do their roles. The Group is making excellent progress, including the award of the DTEC.	Dir of Gov
4	**Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2026**	

	RESOLVED: The minutes from the meeting held on 25 March 2026 were agreed as a true and accurate record. **RESOLVED:** The Board ratified the following written resolutions: 2.4.26 – Chair of Quality and Standards Committee 2.4.26 – appointment of an independent governor 12.5.26 – endorsement of the Rotherham Plan 2026-36 13.5.26 – appointment of an independent governor 18.5.26 – Subsidiary director roles 12.6.26 – Committee membership	
5	**Matters arising** All items are completed with the exception of strategic discussions around people which runs into next year.	
6	**Student Voice** Jet Parker-Brown joined the Board to share student voice and experience of being a student at the Group. Jet joined a Health and Social Care course straight from school in 2013 and then again as a mature student studying Light Vehicle maintenance at Level 2 at DVC and Level 3 at NNC and talked about the positive changes and improvements second time round. Processes are much better with faster enrolment and better communications and welcome for new students. Jet shared her feedback as a mature student, the difficulties at DVC for mature students with family and work commitments over a five-day timetable, how enrichment was fantastic for younger students to keep engagement, but not always relevant or suited to adults, and how the two day a week course at NNC was much more accessible as a working parent. As a mature student Jet felt comfortable respected and supported the younger students on the course. Student Services ran a student voice feedback session in the careers lounge with 15 students from different courses and Jet shared feedback around how students want to be taught and treated. This included media students feeling the course was not as they expected, more experiences for practical work and field trips would be welcomed as practical jobs do need students to have practical experience; public Services students commended the very helpful staff with good advice on careers and a good map of where to move onto in the future; Joinery students would welcome more guidance around apprenticeships. Students have seen the FREDIE posters but further work from tutors to really understand it would help as it is such an important thing. Monitoring of learner behaviour is important, especially in the younger groups coming in from school. One student talked about bullying inside and outside of college, and one student raised concerns over support for a medical issue. One governor asked for further details but this was not available. [after note: student services shared further details confirming that support was already in place for individual students and notes from student voice sessions are shared with Directors of Curriculum to provide support and share with their teams.] Jet raised the issue of social media and the importance of being clear around social media use when students start at the college as there is a fine line	

	between use for learning and other uses and it can be a major distraction from learning. Providing lots of taster days and advice for school children on careers is really important as lots do not know what they want to do and need help. Jet noted that she had been very happy on both the Childcare and Motor Vehicle courses. The governors thanked Jet for having the courage to come and talk about life at RNN Group so openly and were pleased that she is leaving with a positive impression of the Group. The insights from the student voice session are really helpful to hear and will be taken forward. The Chair thanked Jet for all the work preparing for the student voice report. Governors always want to hear more student voice and the insights and comments have been excellent and give a clear view of a student's journey, the progress the Group has made, and areas for further work to improve student experience.	
7	**Stakeholder Engagement Strategy** The Director of Marketing and Learner recruitment shared a presentation on the Strategy (see presentation for full details). All stakeholders are crucial to the Group and the new Strategy supports curriculum planning and has been widened with a governance focus. The Group has moved from a £36m to a £56m income in four years and this is a huge responsibility. The Strategy is *about ensuring that every significant decision made is informed by the people we exist to serve—our learners, employers, staff and communities. By embedding stakeholder engagement into governance, curriculum planning and organisational culture, we strengthen RNN Group's ability to deliver exceptional education, support regional growth and remain a leading anchor institution for South Yorkshire and North Nottinghamshire.* The Strategy builds on the previous one which was focused on building up relationships and networks where the Group is now a leader in the region. Governors have three important roles: strategic assurance, constructive challenge, and opening networks. **ACTION:** Success is defined by measurable outcomes and SMART targets will be included. It is about doing. The new Strategy is the best marketing tool by being proactive and talking about the RNN Group. **Questions and discussion from governors:** **Have the five pillars in the Strategy been mapped against their impact on the four pillars of the Strategic Plan?** Yes, the Strategy is written from the Strategic Plan, and they resonate with our vision, mission and beliefs. It is a really good document and the success measures focus the mind. Some colleges fail because they listen to the same voices so **how will the Group ensure that new stakeholders will be identified and their voices will be heard?** There is a need to look at the entire database and speak to those on all tiers. This will be built into a communication strategy. With the new DTEC the Group has been inundated with stakeholders wanting to be involved and the	Dir of Marketing and Learner Recruitment

	Group are being measured in their approach and using the Strategy to decide where it wants to go. This is a much more sophisticated approach and is proving very helpful. **Are there any key players the Board needs to engage with and are there any key skills missing from the Board?** This would be an area for the Exec to look at with the Board. Governors are there as a key stakeholder and an enabler. The CEO noted that the Search, Governance and Remuneration Committee has agreed to look at opportunities to bring in a governance specialist linked to the DTEC. It was agreed it is important to look at what the DTEC means to people and to take the time to find the right person. Big tier one companies in the Rotherham region around industrial manufacturing areas are another area to look at. **How far is there to travel in the Strategy to get to where we want to be?** There is a great base to start from and the change from silo working to a central space in stakeholder engagement will make it much easier to move forward. It is about the business and not about the person. **How will the Board monitor the Strategy?** Updates will come to the Quality and Standards Committee with targets and progress. It will also come to each Board meeting as an explicit update for the Board to review progress and achievement. **How will the Strategy manage the differences between employers and learners versus other stakeholders, and how to improve learner satisfaction which is different to getting stakeholders on Board.** Customer experience is critical. The aim is to treat experiences differently and we want all to have a great experience. Opportunities coming out from the DfE can be looked at as part of the Strategy. It was agreed that the Strategy shows the evolution of the Group and is purposeful. The DCEO explained that the Strategy needs to be really agile. It has been drafted by four members of SLT and is relevant for what the Group needs. It is much more complex out there and there is a need to be more forward thinking. **ACTION:** A visual on a page will be produced for governors. **RESOLVED:** The Board approved the Stakeholder Strategy. [Dir of Marketing and Learner Recruitment departs: 17.23]	Dir of Marketing and Learner Recruitment
8	**Finance** **Draft Budget 2026/7- and three-year forecast** The ED Finance and MIS shared a presentation on the budget (see presentation for full details). The Board considered the budget and governors asked the following questions: **Is the assumption on HE numbers reasonable? And is there any drop off around student loan concerns and returns on HE?** Current applications are slightly down. The Group don't just go through UCAS and there are direct applications and last year HE numbers bucked the national trend. The figures are based on attend to achieve and progression meetings and increases come from progressing learners and the benefits from marketing.	

	How realistic is the 2% growth given the demographic bulge? The Group is taking in more students pro rata due to the fantastic work from marketing and the teams. Applications suggest much higher figure of 4772 and this is included in the Curriculum Plan against an allocation of 4300. **Cash days are low. Is there a concern if there is no in year growth when recruitment is so high that might be a risk and lead to a difficult year in 2026-7?** The budget is resourced for the extra numbers and no in year growth is included. The Group is expecting in year growth in July for this year. The Board agreed that strategic discussions should take place around the risks of underfunded over recruitment. The CEO assured governors that applications are regularly reviewed through the summer. So far no one has been turned away, but with an increase of 500 learners on top of two years of growth a close eye needs to be kept on the quality of education and resources. The Board has a fiduciary responsibility to ensure the Group does not go bankrupt as well as offering opportunities for people. **What is the lowest point in 2026-7 and how does this compare to the FE Commissioners target on cash days of 40 days?** The ED Finance and MIS explained that the FEC has been clear this is guidance not a target. There is no penalty of not being able to achieve, but it affects financial health categories. The cash days is a concern, but they build up over the next three years to build stability for when the demographics slow down. Cash days will be under 40 days for the majority of next year with a dip down in March 2027. **ACTION:** The ED Finance and MIS will report back in further detail offline. **With the DTEC award what are the cost implications and does it impact on cash?** There is £10m in total over a four-year period (£8m for capital and £2m for income). The Group has submitted a proposal and will find out by the end of June. It is not accounted for in the budget. The money is claimed in arrears, and it will be very important to be clear on restricted and unrestricted cash. **Is there scope for additional financing as it would be a liquidity rather than a solvency issues?** The Group is working through the metrics and looking at a similar model to the National Fluid Power Centre (NFPC) with employer contributions and time. The Group will need to approve a budget before the DTEC funding is clear. The budget supports the Curriculum Plan with another 44 staff budgeted for next year. The Dinnington land sale proceeds are not included in the budget. They can be used to pay off the DfE loan but it is not a requirement. No additional in year growth has been included in the budget. The view is that there will be some funding but not at the same level. There is no AoC recommendation to date on pay awards. 2% is the average across the sector due to affordability with some colleges not being able to afford any pay award in 2026-7.	ED Finance and MIS

	ACTION: The Board asked to see the impact on cashflow after processing the DTEC position. It was agreed to share an updated cashflow projection around December. **ACTION:** With the vulnerability in the finances from in year funding and the year on year growth in student numbers the Board asked for the financial position including the impact on cash days to be shared more regularly through 2026-7. The ED Finance and MIS confirmed there is more work to do around reporting of cash flow and cash management and will work on this with the new Chair of FRC. The Board considered the Finance report and April 2026 management accounts. **RESOLVED:** The Board approved the draft Budget 2026/7 and three-year forecast. The CFFR will be submitted following approval of the budget. The Board considered the Finance report and April 2026 management accounts. **RESOLVED:** The Board approved the use of the seal on the 10-year renewal lease, with a break clause of three and six years, for Rawmarsh Road.	ED Finance and MIS
9	**CEO update** (see presentation for full details) **Annual Accountability Statement including Local Needs Duty** The Exec has reviewed last year's Statement and themes remain prominent so it was agreed to continue with slight changes around AI and digital and continuing with NEETS as a key priority. There was no objection to the rollover at the Annual Strategic Conversation. **RESOLVED:** The Board approved the Annual Accountability Statement for 2026-7 **Strategic Transition Planning statement for 2027-8** A lot of work has been done by the VP Curriculum on the statement and it is shared with the Board as a new submission for this year. It looks at the number expected in different qualifications, preparedness for transition from legacy provision, and is likely to change as details are finalised around the qualification reforms around T Levels, V Levels and Level 2 Occupational Certificates and Foundation Certificates. **ACTION:** The Board agreed that the new qualification landscape is a strategic discussion and it would be useful to stress test thinking at one of the strategy days. The Chair shared the FEC's advice that the reforms will be slow to start and then come onto colleges very quickly so colleges and Boards need to be ready. **Strategic Indicators monitoring** (see document for full details) The Board considered the summary for June with the four themes and five KPIs, noting that some areas are not reportable as data is not yet available. Further updates were received on:	CEO/Chair

- **Place in the Community** – green, amber areas are being monitored. This has been a really useful exercise on the effectiveness of Group systems and the accuracy of showing progress
- **People and Culture** – green and amber. Staff sickness is improving. The staff opinion survey response was 46% which is higher than previous years, but remains amber against a target of 50%. There was a huge push with staff. Targeting, upskilling and CPD had an ambitious target to ensure that 100% of monitored CPD is captured with F/T staff completing 25 hours annually. The team are gathering a huge amount of data and this is a cultural change of completion and reporting. Competencies have been delayed from a KPI point of view due to an extensive pilot, this was a very valuable exercise. This is not a governor concern and is the right thing for the organisation.
  The staff governor noted that there was more excellent CPD last week at the staff development day. The ED HR, Marketing and OD explained that the work around the targets has provided a much greater focus for the team.

Headline financial position (full details at item 8)
Strategic risks, growth, and opportunities for the Group were considered.

Other updates were considered including:
Application data
There have been 614 extra applications for 2026-7 with some improvements in adult numbers; HE is showing lower numbers to this time last year and a lot of work is being done on progressions so there is the opportunity to meet the target.
Open days on all sites have seen an increase in attendance, particularly for study programmes. There is a slight decrease at the UCR.
Retention data
The Group is above national benchmark for current retention as shown in the charts.
Achievement rates have improved on last year. English and maths adults have gone up which is really positive. Apprenticeships are predicting 67.4% with teams working very hard to support learners.
National tables have been published this year with the Group's average ranking 5th overall in the country (adults 3rd highest and 16-18s 126th).
The Board agreed that overall, the Group is doing really well and making a lot of progress and recognises where there is work to do, particularly in E&M.
Disadvantage context
The Group has 58.3% of disadvantaged learners and it is important to show this context because it is not the same across FE colleges. A lot of work is done around inclusion, support and development. The Group recruited an inclusion lead two years ago. 1100 3 year plans are in place and many students sit in more than one disadvantage category with the majority of learners who are disadvantaged sitting in E&M and vocational curriculum areas.
One governor asked if there is a benchmark or national average for disadvantage and the DCEO confirmed there is for high needs and Looked

	after Children (LAC) which can be looked at. In the Group's own internal systems it is possible to backtrack on trends. **Demographic context** There is growth in 16-19 numbers each year which should flatten out 2027-8 at Rotherham and North Notts, and there will be more emphasis on SEND learners. **DTEC** The first workshop was held at the Group two weeks ago attended by the Ministry of Defence and the Department for Education. There is collaborative working with a request for a focus on the South Yorkshire region and colleges. **SYMCA and EMMCA intent and agenda** and how this links to the Group's curriculum and Strategic Plan. A headline provision summary was shared by the CEO as a reminder to governors. **Regional updates** were shared including demographics, projections and pathways for learners, the Bassetlaw housing wave, the Rotherham inclusion wave and the Group's strategies around curriculum, estates and digital to best meet these changes. Progress on the **Creative village** is ongoing. The Group has signed an **Armed forces covenant** to support the armed forces community. **Annual Strategic Conversation (22 June 2026) feedback** The meeting had gone very well and was attended by the FE Commissioner. **ACTION:** The notes from the meeting will be shared when available.	Dir of Gov
10	**Safeguarding and Prevent** The Quality and Standards have considered a full update on safeguarding and Prevent from the Director of Student Services. The Group still continues to experience year on year increases which is challenging for staff and is expected to rise further with the SEND reforms. The team are working very hard and there is assurance that safeguarding arrangements in place are very effective. There is a lot of work in progress and the Group is in a good position refining systems to make them really effective. The new safeguarding administrator is in role and will support the triage around referrals. The team has moved over to the CPOMs system, alongside ProMonitor, which will be beneficial for staff and align with school systems. Training is underway. The national threat stays at severe and the Group ran another lock down procedure that went really well working with staff and students. A Health and Wellbeing Strategy is being brought up to the next level with trauma informed practice. More work is being done around the wellbeing escalation model and improving tracking. **Questions and discussion from governors:** The new administrator is positive to support the team and improve systems. The Board has focused on staff wellbeing this year. **What is the impact on staff from changes to staffing and systems and where that is captured?** HR collect data on staff welfare, and information is shared at Attend to Achieve meetings, with the ability to put specialist support in quickly when required. The example of Art and Design at Rotherham College and the	

	amount of mental health and wellbeing support required was shared. The team worked with the HR team and put external specialist help in to support. A lot the work being done can directly align to improvements in learner behaviour. **ACTION:** There was a suggestion to pick up through Finance and Resources Committee if resources are right to support our senior staff. The DCEO explained that many young adults are dealing with phenomenal issues and this is something for governors to be aware of. The CPOMs system will reduce workload for staff which is a significant concern.	Chair/ CEO/ Chair of FRC
11	**Risk - Risk update and proposed new risks and risk appetite categories** The ED Finance and MIS updated on the work from the Executive Risk Committee (ERC), the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee and the risk appetite working group, and the Audit and Risk Committee to streamline and ensure the Group's risk management is effective and fit for purpose. All managers with a responsibility for risk have been fully involved in the process. The system has been temporarily taken offline from 4risk system. The risk register has been streamlined to 13 strategic and 36 operational risks and eight risk appetites. There is assurance no key risks have been missed. The new spreadsheet summarises the risks, cause and effect, inherent score, controls in place, residual score and actions. The ERC will review risks on a monthly basis. An outline map of the risks was included for governors to review with some changes in risk appetite, for example recruitment of staff which is currently above risk appetite moves to cautious and within risk appetite. **Questions and discussion from governors:** **How often the Board will review risk appetite?** Given the environmental volatility it was agreed there should be a frequent review. The Chair noted that risk is a Board responsibility and highlighted the work that Henley Business School has done on risk, and the view that boards should be looking at risk appetite a lot more than they think. Looking at risk as a strategic tool rather than as risk compliance, and asking the question how will our risks stop us from achieving our strategic plan is key. Looking at what don't we know that we think we should know that will affect us in the future. **Are there any instances where the proposed risk appetites will stop achievement of ambitions?** Quality and the breadth of education was reviewed as an example. The CEO reported that this was discussed at length and the VP Curriculum is happy with the category. It was agreed that if there is a constant struggle around fit then the risk appetite would be reviewed and a more regular review by the Board of risk appetite provided a more agile and flexible approach to risk management. **RESOLVED:** The Board approved the revised risk register, risk appetite categories and allocation of risks	
12	**Committee Chairs report:** **Search, Governance and Remuneration Committee** – 28 January 2026 **RESOLVED:** The Board approved the Instrument and Articles of Government	

	RESOLVED: The Board approved the Standing Orders **The Board noted the updated** Scheme of Delegation and progress against the Governance Improvement Plan and decision to carry the Plan over to 2026-7 with the inclusion of a Board assurance framework and data dashboard and draft a new plan following the outcome of the external governance review. **Audit and Risk Committee –**21 May 2026 **RESOLVED:** The Board approved the External audit Plan for the year ended 31 July 2026 **RESOLVED:** The Board approved the Counter Fraud, Bribery and Corruption Policy **Quality and Standards** Committee – 16 June 2026 **RESOLVED:** The Board approved the Admissions Policy **RESOLVED:** The Board approved the Curriculum Planning and Resource Strategy 2026-7 The Board noted the Quality Improvement Plan and Risk report and EDI update and FREDIE action plan. **Finance and Resources Committee –** 17 June 2026 **RESOLVED:** The Board approved the Subcontracting Strategy **RESOLVED:** The Board approved the Subcontracting arrangements for 2026- **RESOLVED:** The Board approved the Policy on Preventing Hidden Labour Exploitation and annual signing of the Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement which was signed by the Chair and CEO and will be published on the Group's website.	
13	**Board and Committee Governance** **RESOLVED:** The Board approved: • A second term of office as an independent governor for Debbie Marshall effective from the 18 October 2026 for a four-year term of office • A second term of office as an independent governor for Paul Lomas effective from 13 December 2026 for a four-year term of office • A one-year renewal as a co-opted governor on Audit and Risk Committee for Sharron Blackburn effective from 10 October 2026 • Simon Renny to Chair Finance and Resources Committee and become a member of Search, Governance and Remuneration Committee • Internal Committee changes through the year to support effectiveness, including Steve Bulley to move from Audit and Risk Committee to Finance and Resources Committee when a person is available to join Audit and Risk Committee • The Board and Committee annual cycle of business for 2026-7 • Terms of reference: o Audit and Risk Committee o Finance and Resources Committee o Quality and Standards Committee o Search, Governance and Remuneration Committee	

	○ Special Committee The Board noted the Meetings schedule for 2026-7.	
14	**Any other business** There were no items raised.	
15	**Date of next meetings:** **Wednesday 21 October 2026** – Strategy Day and Board at Step Fusion, timings tbc **Wednesday 9 December 2026** – 16.00-18.00 Board in the UCR, followed by Christmas dinner in the Wharncliffe **Wednesday 17 March 2027 –** Strategy Day and Board timings and venue tbc. **Thursday 24 June 2027 –** 16.30-18.30 venue tbc. **All Board meetings are in person.** The Chair thanked colleagues for all their time, wished everyone a happy summer, and thanks to Jet for the student voice and every success for the future. [CEO, staff governors, student, Exec (with exception of ED HR, Marketing and OD departs: 18:40]	
16	**Confidential Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2026** **RESOLVED:** The Board approved the confidential minutes of the meeting held on the 25 March 2026	
17	**Confidential Committee Chairs report** *[confidential item]*	

Meeting closed: 19:00