

MEETING OF THE CORPORATION OF MACCLESFIELD COLLEGE

TUESDAY 3 FEBRUARY 2026 AT 10:15AM

VELOCITY BOARDROOM

Clerk: Ms S Gardiner

In attendance	C Johns, (Chair), M Wright, G Bristow, R Kay (Principal), P Hunter, H Taylor, D Rutley, R Charlton, M Botwe, J Lewis (joined at 11:00am)
Apologies	R Milkins, I Cass, B Oultram (Student)
Non-governor attendance	A Farrar (Director of Finance) Nic Tomlinson, Rockborn (Item 1 only) Nathan Lucas, Eversheds (Item 1 only) David Wright, BDO (Item 1 only) S Lord (Director of Estates) (Item 6 only) D Few (Head of IT, MIS & Exams) (Item 7 only) M Sheehan-Slade (Director of HR) (Item 8 only) S Martin (Interim Deputy Principal) (Item 9 only)

ACTIONS	RESPONSIBLE	DEADLINE
Temperature test to be undertaken against the SAR	SM	April 26
Impact on Enrichment Programme to be shared with the Board	SC	April 26
Ofsted Training to be arranged for 24 February	SG	ASAP

MINUTES

Item Title

1. Merger – Due Diligence Feedback and Progress Update

i. Public Consultation & Progress Update

Nic Tomlinson, Rockborn, provided the Board with a comprehensive verbal update on progress confirming that the legal and financial due diligence has now completed and welcomed both David Wright and Nathan Lucas to the meeting.

NT advised that the Public Consultation was now available for Board approval and confirmed the statutory timeline for consultation as follows:

- Consultation launch planned for **end of March 2026**.
- Consultation period of **one calendar month**.
- Responses to be collated and reviewed following closure.
- Outcomes to be reviewed initially by the **Transition Steering Group in May 2026**, followed by formal consideration by both Corporations.

- Publication of the consultation outcome planned within two months of consultation closure, by **end of June 2026**.

NT confirmed that the consultation will be available on the College website, together with FAQs, and supporting documentation. Feedback will be collated electronically and the outcome provided to both Boards in May 2026.

CHALLENGE: A Member queried who would be preparing the Public Consultation Outcome Report. NT confirmed that she would be the author of the report.

CHALLENGE: A Member queried how the Board progresses if the public consultation returns negative responses and if so, how would the negative feedback be managed. NT confirmed that the Board has an obligation to consider all responses, however noted that consultation feedback does not in itself prevent progression. If the Board is satisfied that the merger is in the best interests of learners, staff and stakeholders, then the merger can still progress.

NT advised that headline themes will be presented to enable the Board to make an informed decision. If further clarification is required post public consultation, then additional communications can be provided.

Following this update, the Board shared their views on possible amendments to the Public Consultation document. These suggestions were collated by the Director of Governance and will be passed to NT for the marketing teams to review and make any updates if required.

NT advised that workstream meetings are continuing across key departments. Marketing activity over the coming month will focus on updating college websites with consultation materials and FAQs, agreeing key stakeholder communications and messages and issuing statutory notices in both regional and national publications.

IT teams have been developing an integration plan, focusing on systems required to be operational from 1 August 2026, systems that will need to be aligned in the first two months of merger and the long-term systems integration activity, particularly for MIS, HR and Finance.

NT confirmed that work is underway with regards to TUPE and development of staff communications is progressing.

NT provided the Board with an update on the merger risk register, confirming that operational risks are being well managed by the Transition Steering Group who are meeting regularly.

ii. Legal Due Diligence Update

Nathan Lucas, Eversheds, presented a detailed overview of the findings of legal due diligence undertaken on both colleges, confirming that no material legal issues were identified that would prevent the merger from proceeding.

The Corporation noted the findings and confirmed that all identified legal risks will be incorporated into the merger risk register and tracked through the Transition Steering Group.

iii. Financial Due Diligence Update

David Wright, BDO, presented the financial due diligence covering historic performance, current financial position and forward projections for both colleges.

The Corporation agreed that, overall, the financial position of the merged college is forecast to strengthen over time, subject to effective delivery of the transition plan.

2. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting. Apologies were received from I Cass and R Milkins. B Oultram was absent.

The Director of Governance informed the Board that Member Isabelle Jones had resigned from the Corporation with immediate effect, due to increasing work commitments.

3. Declaration of Members' Interest

There were no declarations of Members' interest.

Papers received had been uploaded to Decisions and were available to Governors one week prior to the meeting.

4. Minutes from the meetings held on 9 December 2025.

To confirm and approve the Part 1 Minutes of the meetings held on 9 December 2025.

The minutes of the Corporation meetings held on 9 December 2025 were approved as an accurate record.

5. Matters arising from the meeting held on 9 December 2025

The Director of Governance confirmed that all outstanding actions have been deferred to the next meeting.

6. Annual Health and Safety Report 24/25

Stuart Lord, Director of Estates, attended the meeting for this item only to present the Health and Safety Report for Term 1. SL noted the following points:

- Department inspections have been carried out in 9 curriculum areas, identifying 8 H&S actions. 6 of these actions have been completed.
- Accidents in the first term increased to 16, compared to 8 last year.
- First Aid incidents reduced, with only 1 student requiring assistance.
- 10 members of staff completed an Emergency First Aid course or refresher training in October 2025. The College now has 69 first aiders to cover both day and evening delivery.

7. Business Continuity

Dave Few, Head of IT, MIS and Exams, joined the meeting for this item only to present a detailed overview of the Business Continuity Plan and procedures. DF provided the following key assurances:

- Clear distinction between localised incidents and major disaster scenarios, with defined escalation thresholds.
- Documented recovery time objectives (RTOs) and recovery point objectives (RPOs) for all critical systems.
- Robust backup arrangements, including encrypted cloud backups, on-site appliances and offline tape storage.
- Regular testing of backups and recovery processes, including full system restorations.

DF explained the phased approach to system restoration following a major incident, prioritising identity, MIS, HR, payroll and finance systems. DF added that additional localised backups are being developed for critical business functions.

Members welcomed the assurance provided and noted the importance of resilience during the merger process.

8. HR Update

i. HR Annual Report 2024/25

Marie Sheehan-Slade, Director of HR and Culture, joined the meeting for item 8 only. MSS presented the HR Annual Report noting the following:

- Retention and stability improved significantly, with overall turnover of 13.23% (below the sector average of 16-18%).
- Recruitment is effective.
- Sickness absence remains low at 2.16%.
- Safeguarding and safer recruitment compliance is strong.
- Staff engagement is improving – the Happiness Index shows 82% of staff are happy at the College, an increase from 78% the previous year.
- The College were proudly awarded with the Training and Development Award in the East Cheshire Chamber of Commerce Annual Business Awards.

CHALLENGE: A Member queried whether the HR team had approach large construction companies to assist with the vacancy gaps in those curriculum areas. MSS confirmed that the College use marketing campaigns, such as 'Trade to Teaching' which have been effective. Staff members are supported through their teacher training whilst passing on their in-depth industry knowledge to their students.

ii. EDIE Report

MSS presented the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Equity Report. MSS confirmed that the College continues to demonstrate progress in workforce diversity. Inclusive practices are embedded through staff development and learner engagement activity. The College recently hosted their culture day, at which over 800 students were in attendance.

CHALLENGE: A Member queried whether the College provides a prayer room for both staff and students. MSS confirmed that the College has a 'Reflection Room' which is accessible to all no matter what faith or beliefs.

iii. Gender Pay Gap Report

MS provided Board with the recent Gender Pay Gap Report, confirming Macclesfield College's pay gap was 0.4% in favour of men.

The Corporation noted and approved the content of the Gender Pay Gap Report.

9. Teaching & Learning

Sue Martin, Interim Deputy Principal, joined the meeting for this agenda item only and present the following reports:

i. Lesson Observation Report

SM confirmed that there have been a total of 224 observations undertaken, consisting of 121 learning walks, 92 observations of teaching and learning 4 observations of learning facilitator practice and 7 specific observations of Apprenticeship team members. SM noted that there has been a significant increase of newly appointed teaching staff who have joined the College direct from industry. To further develop high quality teaching and learning, the College has invested in an external platform called HoW2. This is a digital CPD platform which guides teachers through a structured process to review areas of development.

CHALLENGE: A Member queried whether the HoW2 programme would affect teaching methodology score. SM advised that the impact of the programme would be seen at the academic year and an update will be shared with the Board.

ii. Learner Voice Report

SM confirmed that the College has placed a strong emphasis on learner voice as a key mechanism for understanding student experience, informing improvement and strengthening engagement. SM advised that the first Student Council meeting took place in term 1, providing a direct forum for students to raise issues impacting them across the College. Student Council meetings have enabled students to raise practical and wellbeing related concerns to the College Leadership Team. Key findings from these meetings have led to the launce of a 'Being Me' support group, providing a safe space for students who feel less included to meet peers and access support.

iii. HE Self Evaluation Summary Report 2024/25

SM confirmed that in the 2024/25 academic year, the College enrolled 12 HE learners across Engineering, Business and Teacher Education pathways. Performance data demonstrates strong retention and achievement outcomes (91.67%), surpassing national benchmarks of 85%.

The HE Self Evaluation demonstrates the College team deliver high quality, well regulated HE provision with outcomes above national benchmarks. Learners benefit from strong academic support, high quality teaching and clear progression pathways.

iv. Quality Improvement Plan Summary Update

SM confirmed that regular reviews of the progress against areas for improvement will ensure the College maintains a strong and effective achievement profile and ensure quality improvement is embedded in everyday activities. SM advised that the College overarching areas for improvement have been mapped against the headings of the revised education inspection framework.

CHALLENGE: A Member requested an update on maths and English given the increase in cohort numbers. SM confirmed that achievement in both areas is above national average.

The Director of Governance confirmed that training on the new Ofsted Framework would be provided to Members on 24 February via teams.

10. KPI's 2025/26

The Principal presented the KPI's for 2025/26. It was noted that attendance for 16-19 had dipped slightly to 82.6% against the target of 90%, however it was explained that there are some pockets of low attendance in various curriculum areas which was affecting the attendance rates. RK confirmed that this is being closely monitored and support to improve meetings are taking place to assist both students and staff.

RK confirmed that the 16-19 allocation for 25/26 was 1236, with our actual numbers at 1360, meeting in the year growth payment requirements. Applications for 26/27 are strong at 658, with an additional 700 students progressing.

CHALLENGE: A Member requested whether the Board could see distance travelled for those students whose attendance has been a concern. RK confirmed that 3 case studies will be made available to Board at the next meeting.

11. Business

i. Management Accounts for period ending 31 December 2025

Annika Farrar, Vice Principal Finance and Estates, presented the Management Accounts for period ending 31 December 2025 and noted the following points:

- The financial health of the College remains good and is forecast to remain so to year end.
- Staffing costs remain stable, however the College has seen a slight increase in agency costs due to sickness and vacancies in specialist areas,
- Pay as a percentage of income is currently 65.53% which is slightly above target of 65%.
- The balance sheet remains stable, however cash balances remain under pressure. We await confirmation from the DfE reference the in year growth payment, which will improve the cash position if received.

12. Link Governor Update

Member, Rachael Charlton, confirmed that she had recently met with Tracy Cosgrave to discuss apprenticeships and industry links. Topics of discussion included delivery of KPI's, team development, the College relationships with industry/local businesses and student enrichment. A discussion was also had around the curriculum and the impact of AI.

13. Date and Time of the Next Meeting

The next Corporation Meeting will take place on Thursday 19th March at 1:00pm via Microsoft Teams.

14. Impact

The Board agreed that the discussion and feedback on the merger progress and due diligence was extremely valuable and gives a clear direction on next steps. Improvements can be seen in teaching and learning and student engagement.

The Board were also pleased to hear that the Marketing Team received the Silver Award for the Prospectus at the FE First Awards and congratulated the team for their achievement. Automotive team has been nominated for Partner of Year at the Motor Industry Awards.