Cirencester College Corporation Meeting Minutes

Meeting:	Strategy Review	**Chair:**	Fiona Galbraith (FG)
Date:	20th October 2025	**Clerk:**	Hannah Boardman (HB)
Location:	T105		
Time:	17:00 – 17:55		
Corporation members (with voting rights):	Fiona Galbraith (FG), Libby Reed (LR), Gay Wales (GW), Liam Nolan (LN), Matt Reynolds (MR), Matt Bullivant (MB), Simon Foster (SF), Sara Sharkey (SS), Mikey Ezewudo (ME), Jacqui Parry-Jones (JPJ), Ping Li (PL), Paul Tibbetts (PT), Cydie Soriano (CS)		
Guests (no voting rights):	SLT: Giles Robinson (GR), Matt Couzens (MCou), Mahalah Gleed (MG), Jane Fern (JF), Rich Stonebridge (RS), Cath Brace (CB) Observer: Marc Rosato (MRo)		
Apologies:	Brendan Brown (BB), Mike Cadman (MC), Karen Fraser (KF)		
Meeting theme:	Strategy Review		

All meeting papers were circulated in advance of the meeting via the Corporation SharePoint.

ITEM	MINUTES	ACTION
1.	**Welcome:** • **Introductions:** FG welcomed everyone to the meeting and welcomed MRo as prospective co-opted member of the Audit and Finance committee. FG also introduced CB as a new member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). • **Apologies for absence:** Apologies were accepted from BB and MC. • **Reminder of confidentiality** FG reminded attendees of the requirement for confidentiality and that decisions are made collectively. • **Declaration of interests (as related to the agenda):** No conflicts of interest were declared.	
2.	**Start of the Year** FG discussed the role of Governors on the Corporation, highlighting the importance of maintaining an appropriate balance between challenge and support. FG emphasised that achieving this balance enables Governors to act as effective critical friends to the College, noting the value of this relationship, and recognising that constructive challenge contributes positively to the College's development and improvement. Governors acknowledged the importance of providing appropriate challenge and recognised that evidence of this role is likely to be considered by Ofsted. FG also discussed the role of Governors working with the Senior member of the SLT to support the development of the College's strategic direction. Governors recognised that the Corporation's priorities may differ from the College's operational priorities, reflecting its responsibility to take a longer-term view. Discussion focused on the need to consider future regional and national skills requirements, changes within the education sector, and the implications of local priorities when shaping strategy.	
	Approval of Strategy MR delivered a presentation on the Strategic Plan developed following the Strategy Day held during the summer, and further discussed at the Corporation meeting in July.	

MR explained that a new set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) has been developed to support the Strategic Plan and that these will be reflected in future Corporation reports and meetings.

MR noted that the College has achieved strong results and is on a positive trajectory. While the approach adopted by the College has contributed significantly to its success, the College recognises that alternative approaches will be required to secure further improvement going forward.

MR highlighted value added (VA) as a key area of focus within the strategy. Whilst student outcomes remain strong, further work is required to understand why some students achieve only their predicted grades, and how the number who exceed grade expectations can be increased.

Discussion held regarding the College's strong retention and achievement rates with consideration paid to the impact that this may have on VA. MR noted that certain curriculum areas, particularly those with large student cohorts, can significantly influence the College's overall VA position.

MR reflected on the success of initiatives focused on the early stages of the learner journey and emphasised the need to now concentrate on the final stages of study if improvements in VA are to be achieved. RS commented that responsibility for this work now rests largely with faculties, where subject-specific factors can significantly influence outcomes. It is therefore important to understand the individual requirements of each curriculum area. MR added that strengths and weaknesses relating to VA vary considerably between subjects and courses.

Q: Are the parameters used to assess strengths and weaknesses in VA aligned with the *Six Dimensions* framework?
A: MR confirmed that they are separate measures, explaining that *Six Dimensions* provides an assessment of performance, whereas the VA analysis focuses more specifically on teaching and learning within individual subject areas. It is noted that it would be valuable to explore what high-performing subjects are doing differently with regards to VA and how these practices might be replicated elsewhere.

MR discussed the importance of gathering feedback from students, particularly those who did not achieve their expected outcomes, and outlined examples of questions that could provide useful insights.

Q: You referred to a VA asymmetry. Is there evidence of a shift?
A: MR confirmed that this is an area currently under review, as there is significant variation between subjects. MCo added that analysis can be challenging, as some courses perform exceptionally well in one year but less successfully in another. The discussion included consideration of the impact of cohort size on outcomes.

CS provided a student perspective on the process of setting academic goals and noted that students are often asked what they wish to achieve, adding that this can create a sense that responsibility lies with the student, whilst also recognising individual experiences may differ.

Q: At what stage is responsibility assigned for setting student aspirations, and how is the balance determined?

	A: MR confirmed that the subject teacher is responsible for setting appropriate goals based on assessment of the student's work and progress. Governors discussed the Monitoring Grades (MG) meetings that take place throughout the academic year. **Q:** Do the outcomes of MG meetings inform UCAS predicted grades? **A:** LN confirmed that they do. **Q:** Are there opportunities for benchmarking within MG meetings with colleagues teaching similar subjects? **A:** LN confirmed that benchmarking does take place within curriculum teams where applicable, adding the process is highly data-driven. LN also noted that work has been undertaken to improve the accuracy of MG predictions. MR added that the College also collaborates with the *Wessex Group* to support wider professional benchmarking and moderation across institutions. MR discussed *Project Apex* as a further strategic priority. MR explained that *Project Apex* builds upon the work undertaken through projects *Apollo* and *Artemis* and focuses on refining and embedding previous improvements. MR advised that the Strategic Plan had necessitated a review of the College's KPIs, this included the removal of some KPI's and the inclusion of new KPI's. MR highlighted that 87% of KPIs had been achieved during the previous year and discussed areas where targets had not been fully met. ***CS left the meeting at 5.55 pm.*** Governors discussed developments to the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) model. RS explained that the approach is moving away from centrally directed activity towards a model led increasingly by faculties. Differences in student cohorts, academic backgrounds and curriculum requirements mean that approaches must be tailored to individual areas. Work is underway with Heads of Faculty to establish what quality-first teaching should look like across the College. While the current focus remains on *Project Apex*, the following 12 to 18 months will involve developing a clearer understanding of core teaching expectations and how these should be adapted across different curriculum areas. Governors considered the importance of ensuring that strategic priorities, KPIs and improvement activity are clearly aligned and demonstrate progression over time. MR advised that each KPI is linked to one of the nine strategic themes, allowing progress to be monitored throughout the year and against longer-term objectives through to 2030. Governors commented that it would be helpful to see how the various strategies fit together within the overall framework and to better understand key dependencies. **Q:** The strategy document refers to sustainable growth. What does this mean in practice? **A:** MR explained that this refers to ethical and sustainable growth. Consideration must be given to the capacity of the site, the impact on the local community and the College's ability to maintain educational quality. MR emphasised that growth should not place the institution at risk or result in declining standards. MR suggested that approximately 50 additional students per year would represent a cautious and sustainable rate of growth, and noted that	

	the current model of approximately 3,000 to 3,500 students supported by around 400 staff remains strong. **Q:** What is the projected level of future demand? **A:** MR acknowledged that some institutions have experienced declining demand. JF reported that the College is well positioned due to its large catchment area and that, while demand may reduce in some locations, growth is anticipated in others. Governors confirmed that RS is working closely with Heads of Faculty to ensure that improvements are translated into effective teaching and learning practice. RS discussed the significant progress made with the data dashboard and that the next stage is to ensure data is used effectively to drive improvements in teaching and learning. Governors discussed the complexity of operating across several Local Authority (LA) areas facing different challenges. MR emphasised the importance of establishing realistic expectations and recognised the need for the College to work within the context of its own operating environment. **Resolved: Governors approved the Strategic Plan as presented.**	
4.	**Receive Building Grant Award Report** GR presented the building grant award report and confirmed that the portacabins now placed on the field are intended to replace the classrooms and office accommodation that will be lost as part of the demolition of the Davies Building, rather than providing capacity for additional student growth. GR reported that progress on the project had been delayed following the discovery of a bat within the demolition area. This has necessitated ecological surveys and the submission of a bat licence application. The licence process is expected to take approximately 15 days, and an ecologist will be required to be present during demolition works. The overall construction programme remains 52 weeks; however, the delayed start is likely to have implications for stages of the project next year due to increasing student numbers. GR advised that contractors are aware of the College's requirement to have facilities available for the start of the next academic year and are exploring options to facilitate phased occupation of completed areas where possible. GR reviewed the financial position of the project. The original bid was submitted for £5.1 million (five million, one hundred thousand pounds), with the College contributing approximately 20% of the total project cost, equivalent to just over £1 million. Updated cost estimates are currently around £700,000 (seven hundred thousand pounds) higher than initially budgeted. GR explained that a value engineering exercise is underway to mitigate as much of the additional cost as possible. The increase is largely attributable to inflationary pressures between the submission of the bid and commencement of works, together with amendments to the building design. GR reassured Governors that such reviews are a normal part of major construction projects. **Q:** Where are the additional funds coming from? **A:** GR confirmed that the additional expenditure will be funded from the College's cash reserves. GR outlined the bidding process and explained that, unlike previous funding rounds, the grant was not awarded through a scoring mechanism. The College had therefore elected to commit a 20% contribution, which secured the funding award.	

	Q: What subject matter expertise is available internally to support the value engineering process? **A:** GR confirmed that the process is being led by the appointed surveyors. They are effectively the project managing and quantity surveying, we have previous positive experience of working with them. JF confirmed that we are involved throughout. **Q:** Are any of the value engineering measures likely to compromise the needs of students or the College? **A:** GR confirmed that no proposed changes would compromise the educational needs of students or the operational requirements of the College. JF added that savings are primarily being achieved through adjustments to hidden engineering elements and, in some cases, alternative material selections rather than changes that would affect functionality or user experience. **Q:** Has a building lifespan been specified for the new development? **A:** GR confirmed that there is a standard expectation of 50 years. **Q:** Will demolition works overlap with the College Open Day? **A:** GR advised that this remains uncertain at the present time and will depend on the final construction schedule. **Resolved: Governors received and noted the Building Grant Award Report.**	
	Meeting End: 18:26	

Actions from the meeting on 14th of September 2026

ITEM	ACTION	LEAD

Signed as an accurate record of the meeting:

Name

Date