Bishop Auckland College (BAC) Group

Corporate Board meeting

Wednesday 25th March 2026

5.00pm-7.00pm

Room 203, Bishop Auckland College, Woodhouse Lane. DL14 6JZ

MINUTES

Present:
Christopher Hutchinson (CH), Vice Chair of Corporate Board, BAC
Alyson Shields (AS), Corporate Board member, BAC
Carol Gaskarth (CG), Corporate Board member, BAC
Dominic Raymont (DR), Corporate Board member, BAC
Kim Nielsen (KN), Corporate Board member, BAC
Matthew Hedley (MH), Corporate Board member (student rep), BAC
Michelle Andelin (MA), Corporate Board member (staff rep), BAC
Paul Brennan (PB), Corporate Board member, BAC
Sarah Harris (SH), Corporate Board member, BAC
Shaun Hope (SH), Principal/Chief Executive Officer, BAC

In attendance:
Anne-Marie Chiswell (AMC), Assistant Principal Business and Community, BAC
Judith Layfield (JL), Vice Principal Curriculum and Quality, BAC
Lisa Campbell (LC) (Observer), Executive Director of People, BAC
Lynn Heighton (LH), Assistant Principal Finance and Resource, BAC
Marie Nigrelli (MN) (Minutes), Clerk to Corporate Board, BAC

NO	ITEM	ACTION
1	**Annual paperwork pack - to complete** Packs completed. ***<u>Action</u>*** *Arrange for those not in attendance to complete packs by end of May 2026.*	**MN**
2	**Welcome and apologies for absence**	

	Apologies received from Mo Dixon, Chair, Joy Allen and Keith Ivory, Corporate Board members, BAC. Lisa Campbell, Executive Director of People was in attendance as an observer and was formally invited to future Corporate Board meetings. 2.1 Chairs address Salient points noted were; • Achievements and success so far. • Plan for the rest of the academic year and beyond. • Detailed Curriculum Plan 2026-27 was being prepared whilst still ensuring 2025-26 students received an outstanding experience. • The impact of the Iran war on a student's trip to Cyprus. • Policy change to special education needs and disability (SEND), apprenticeships and other areas determined how the college will succeed in its mission of creating positive change through education and learning. Senior leaders and Board members needed to be aware of such change and be ready to adapt, where appropriate, to ensure the college remained fit for purpose and was effective. • *Redacted due to commercial sensitivity*. • The college would continue to explore new funding opportunities to support long-term financial stability and success. • The excellent success seen so far in 2025-26 needed to be built on. Growth in student numbers needed to continue and the outstanding success rates in apprenticeships needed to be maintained. • The outward facing work of the college continued to grow. • Board members to keep upto date with training when due. • Board members were thanked for the time they dedicated to the college and were encouraged to continue to constructively challenge operations to support a healthy organisation, as well as to attend college events beyond the Corporate Board and its committees.	
3	**Declarations of interest** Recorded: Carol Gaskarth, Pioneering Care Partnership (interest) Kim Nielson, Hewitts Solicitors (apprenticeship partner) Paul Brennan, Livin (apprenticeship partner)	
4	**Minutes of the last meeting held 4th December 2025 for approval** The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record.	
5	**Matters arising from the minutes of the last meetings held 4th December 2025 and action log.** The action log was updated.	

6	**Committee's update** – all minutes shared and accepted. 6.1 Remuneration Committee 27th November 2025 6.2 Curriculum and Quality Committee 18th February 2026 6.3 Search and Governance Committee 18th February 2026. 6.4 South West Durham Training (SWDT) executive council 24th February 2026. *Redacted due to commercial sensitivity.* 6.5 Audit Committee 9th March 2026 The finance team was thanked for achieving a positive audit outcome. Focus remained on IT, with numerous actions implemented to strengthen it, including a revised IT policy. Paul Brennan(PB) questioned how BAC ensured its staff read and understood college policies? Shaun Hope (SH) confirmed read receipts were on emails when sharing policies and that business critical policies could mean more training. Smartlog recorded training outstanding, which included Cyber training. 6.6 Resources Committee 9th March 2026 Paul Brennan (PB) asked if McIntyres had considered external catering to boost commercial income due to low footfall? Anne Marie Chiswell (AMC) confirmed it was being considered with a few events already planned on site. Links were also made with The Artists Hub to cater for children's parties. However, increasing commerical income solely depended on footfall to the town.	
7	**Finance & Resources** 7.1 Q2 forecast and group forecast 25-26 (inc Partnership Plan 2025-26) shared and approved. • Improved projected outturn in quarter 2 re-forecast. • Remained in 'Good' financial health with cash generated. • Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) revaluated which saw BAC's contributions decrease. • Apprenticeship incentives change 2026; one change would see improved incentives to small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) in October. As a result, BAC would see a delayed uptake to programs and a temporary reduced income. A new strategy to be considered for other areas of incentive change. • Partnership Plan; no change. Now added to the report. • It was not anticipated to see a significant increase to costs due to the Iran war.	

	7.2 Group management accounts ended 31st January 2026 Management accounts 28th February 2026 shared by email. A positive position remained despite forecasted income being lower due to Adult Skills Fund (ASF) not reaching profile. ASF was a risk. Work was needed to increase the profile. 7.3 Financial Matters The Department for Education (DfE) proposed a sector-wide streamlined approach to budgeting and reporting to align with Government's reporting requirements, while keeping the financial year-end unchanged. A dry run was planned for 2026-27 and would be implemented in 2027-28. Dominic Raymont (DR) questioned whether the finance team had the capacity to manage this? Although the level of detail required was unknown, Lynn Heighton (LH) informed that it was data already being collated and the updated finance system would help produce reports. Set-up may prove time consuming which would be done by management. 7.4 Risk Management Report and Risk Register – shared The review meetings of 2025-26 had ended. The Risk Register contained five risks, none of which were currently classed as significant. Paul Brennan (PB) asked if the risk profile was benchmarked against other colleges? Although it was not, Judith Leyfield (JL) assured that the five agreed headings were standard across the sector. PB further asked if local elections would impact the register due to policy change? It was expected, as JL had seen a change with English Speaking for Other Languages (ESOL) courses already affected.	
8	**Curriculum** 8.1 Curriculum Progress Report - shared Salient points were; • Improving attendance remained a priority with lots of work underway to identify issues. Time was spent on improving timetables and staffing. A cohort of 30% continued to be low attendees with Durham Gateway at an all time low - *benchmarked against level 3 students*. However, some progress was seen by the department's head and overall, attendance had improved compared to school. Corporate Board discussed options for multi-agency practitioners, but it was uncertain as to where that could be funded from. • Changes to Apprenticeship Reform 2025-26 and the impact to BAC.	

	8.2 Quality Improvement Plan Q2 - shared The Plan showed how progress was made against points with some measurable only at year-end, though work continued in the year.	
9	**Growth & Partnerships confidential** *Redacted due to commercial sensitivity.*	
10	**Safeguarding and Prevent** **Minutes of the meeting 19th January 2026 confidential** – *Redacted due to commercial sensitivity.*	
11	**Strategic developments confidential** *Redacted due to commercial sensitivity.*	
12	**Governance** • Training; two members outstanding at SWDT and three at BAC. All were aware to complete as soon as possible. • Link Governor Careers; PB had kindly offered to be link governor Careers. That brought all link governor roles filled: – Equality and Diversity; Kim Neilson – Safeguarding, Prevent and Health and Safety; Chris Hutchinson – Higher Education; Mo Dixon – SEND; Alyson Shields • Appraisal of Chair and CEO; the appraisal for both took place in February with 360 surveys being carried out by those they line managed. Actions were put in place for both to work towards and an interim review was scheduled for September 2026. No concerns were raised during the process. • Meeting Schedule 2026-27; shared. Invites to be sent. • Student Awards; (optional) 10th June 2026, morning (Aspire) session and afternoon (main college) session. Invites sent. • Code of Good Governance review 2025-26; the action plan was in place and would continue to be worked on throughout 2026 by CEO and Clerk. Updates would continue to feed into Corporate Board in year. ***Action*** *Those with outstanding training; to be completed as soon as possible.* *2026-27 meeting schedule invites to be sent.*	**ALL** **MN**
13	**Policies for approval**	

	13.1 Fee policy, shared. This annual policy was updated to reflect NECA's recent changes. Approved by Resource Committee 9th March 2026. Ratified by Corporate Board.	
14	**Board member activity** A reminder was given to Board members to inform clerk of any additional time spent on college matters outside of Board and its committees.	
15	**Any other Business** There was no other business.	
16	**Redacted items for public minutes agreed;** Item 9 Item 10 Item 11	
17	**Date of next meeting** Wednesday 8th July 2025, 5pm-7.00pm, Room 203 Woodhouse Lane, Bishop Auckland. DL14 6JZ	

Signed on behalf of the Corporate Board by Chris Hutchinson, Vice Chair of Corporate Board.

Date: 8th July 2026

Contact for meeting Clerk to the Corporate Board; marie.nigrelli@bacoll.ac.uk