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## BORDERS COLLEGE REGIONAL BOARD



Actions from the meeting of the Regional Board meeting held in the Board Room at 17:30 on Thursday 26 June 2025

<b>Item</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Responsibility and Date</b>	<b>Action Status</b>
29/25	Equality & Mainstreaming Report - Contact to be made with H Boyce to discuss areas where support may be provided.	Equalities & Inclusion Officer	H Broatch has contacted H Boyce to discuss further support.
35/25	Due diligence on those shortlisted for Honorary Fellowships will be carried out standard, including a review on social media activity.	Principal / Marketing	Due diligence completed with no issues raised.
37/25	Vision 2030 – Stronger reference to Cyber Security and Entrepreneurial Activity will be made.	VPs / Principal	Completed
47/25	Learning for Leading – Feedback will be progressed.	Board Secretary / VP Student Experience	

## BORDERS COLLEGE REGIONAL BOARD

Meeting of the Regional Board held in the Board Room at 17:30 on  
Thursday 26 June 2025.

ITEM	MINUTE
Present:	<p>Ray McCowan (Chair) Chris Alder (Student President) Heather Boyce Paul Cathrow (Chair of Curriculum, Quality &amp; Student Experience Committee) Mark Catto (Teaching Staff Member) Garry Dickson (Teaching Union Member) Gordon Donald Lindsey Hastie Vernice Key (Senior Independent Member) Ugo Mbaezue (Chair of Finance &amp; Resources Committee) Phil Macdonald Sonia Phythian Dave Roberts (Vice-Chair &amp; Chair of Audit &amp; Risk Committee) Pete Smith (Principal) Nick Sparks Cherene Thomson (Vice President, BCSA)</p>
In Attendance:	<p>Mark Cockburn (Observer) Ingrid Earp (Governance Specialist/Board Secretary) Kirsty Robb (Vice Principal - Finance &amp; Corporate Services) Anne-Marie Sturrock (Vice Principal - Student Experience) Lorraine Sulo (Minutes)</p>
<b>26/25</b>	<p><b>Chair's Opening Remarks</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and highlighted several pieces of positive news. The recent student survey reported an impressive 98% satisfaction rate with 94% of students having achieved positive destinations.</p> <p>The College has been awarded two Great Places to Work (GPTW) additional awards for excellence in staff development and wellbeing. These acknowledgments underline the continued commitment to fostering a supportive and progressive environment.</p> <p>The Chair thanked the outgoing Student President, Chris Alder, for the significant impact he has made on the student experience. Warm wishes were extended for future endeavours. The current Vice President, Cherene Thomson, will be taking over the role for the new academic year.</p>
<b>27/25</b>	<p><b>Apologies for Absence</b></p> <p>Apologies were noted from Jessica Elder and Douglas Ormston. It was noted that Paul Cathrow had a prior engagement and would be joining the meeting slightly later.</p>

<b>28/25</b>	<p><b>Minutes of previous meeting held on 27 March 2025 (Paper A)</b></p> <p>The minutes from the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record.</p>
<b>29/25</b>	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p>The status of actions from the previous meeting were noted.</p> <p>H Boyce requested that the Equality &amp; Inclusion Officer reaches out to discuss any areas where she may be able to provide support.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>ACTION: E&amp;I Officer</b></p>
<b>30/25</b>	<p><b>Declaration of any Conflicts of Interest/Register of Interests Update</b></p> <p>A conflict of interest was noted for Paul Cathrow and Paper C, Hawick Campus, due to his South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) post. It was noted that the paper and confidential minute from the Regional Board March meeting had been retracted from his papers.</p>
<b>31/25</b>	<p><b>Ratification of Financial Sustainability Development Plan (Paper B)</b></p> <p>The Chair introduced the paper, which sought formal ratification of the decision previously made via email to approve the Financial Sustainability Development Plan. Although the paper was scheduled for approval at the Board Development evening on 17 April 2025, the meeting was not quorate.</p> <p>The Board ratified the decision to approve the Financial Sustainability Development Plan.</p>
<b>32/25</b>	<p><b>Hawick Campus (Paper C)</b></p> <p>This was a confidential discussion with a separate minute.</p>

33/25	<p><b>Budget 2025/26 - 2027/28 and FFR (Paper D)</b></p> <p>Paul Cathrow joined the meeting.</p> <p>The VP Finance &amp; Corporate Services presented the draft annual budget for 2025/26 and Financial Forecast Return (FFR), following a review and discussion at the Finance &amp; Resources Committee on 17 June 2025.</p> <p>The longer-term financial sustainability of the College sector across Scotland has never been more challenging. Audit Scotland's Scotland Colleges 2024 report highlighted a 17% real term cut in funding between 2021/22 and 2024/25. At a recent Finance Directors' meeting, it was confirmed that only three colleges are currently in a break even or surplus position. By year three, no colleges will be in a break even or surplus position.</p> <p>The reduction in funding has been managed by the College, reducing wherever possible spend on non-staff budgets and increasing external grants and commercial income. Despite these the overall staffing has been reduced by 5% whilst protecting the services to students.</p> <p>Due to a flat cash settlement, inflation on supplies, NI increases and ongoing pay negotiations the 2025/26 budget process has been very challenging. These factors have resulted in a draft deficit budget position for all 3 years. The FFR guidance issued requires College to aim to achieve a balance budget each year. This paper will provide SFC with the narrative to explain why the College has been unable to meet this requirement.</p> <p>Several scenarios have been prepared for 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28 and these are detailed, along with the assumptions used, within the report. The College has implemented savings over the last 5 years and has included additional savings in the draft budget. Further savings will have a direct negative effect on delivery and students and have therefore been excluded. The scenarios include the Level 1 and 2A savings identified in the "Sustainable Academic and Business Model 2024/27" (formerly the Financial Sustainability Development Plan) agreed by the Board.</p> <p>Capital funding increased marginally for the 2025/26 allocation and has been fully allocated across a number of projects. The future campus re-development works will require most of the capital budgets for future years.</p> <p>A covering letter will be attached to the FFR when submitted to SFC advising that the College has been able to make savings over the last 3 years to ensure pay awards and inflation of over £2m has been funded without having a detrimental impact on students, within a flat cash funding position. The College is unable to absorb any further savings without directly affecting students and outcomes.</p> <p>Points/questions from Members:</p> <p>a) Section 8.5 and cash position in 2027 – what is the possibility of money running out? There is a strong possibility of being cashflow negative. An advance on the following year's grant does not improve the situation in the longer term given that this amount is deducted from the following year. Cashflow assumptions are based on income being received when due, with Heriot-Watt University currently having a large number of unpaid invoices outstanding with the College (detailed in section 8.6).</p>
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	<p>b) The Board asked for clarity on “trigger dates”, ie when it will be necessary to implement some of the additional actions identified and which will have significant impact on the curriculum offering and the student experience with the College reducing in size and potentially being unable to meet the region’s skills needs. The Board asked that they be informed well ahead of any action being taken. The Scottish budget announcement in December 2025 will be a key trigger point.</p> <p>c) Is there a concern that the College may lose out if other colleges are receiving cash earlier? SFC do recognise the work which is being done with the additional financial pressure from HWU vacating. The College continues to meet its credit allocation, while other colleges have not fulfilled theirs and are instead utilising funds for transitional purposes.</p> <p>d) How much of the financial situation is known externally and by students?</p> <p>The challenges facing the college sector have not featured highly in the media.</p> <p>The savings already planned will allow the College to minimise the impact on students, with student support services continuing as a priority. The Student President noted that students have a positive outlook on the increase in campus footprint following the HWU move and are not particularly exposed to the challenging financial situation at the moment.</p> <p>The Principal added that Colleges Scotland is preparing a submission for the next round of budget negotiations which requires to be hard-hitting, outlining the critical funding gaps across the sector. Without increased investment, key government policies risk failure. The Chair noted that while it’s essential to advocate strongly for the sector’s needs there is a delicate balance to be struck when lobbying effectively.</p> <p>The Principal reported on stronger collaboration with Scottish Borders Council. Schools Academy applications have continued to increase and there is a stronger collaboration with key industry sectors.</p> <p>e) It was suggested that the College starts to think about local initiatives during the election period.</p> <p>The Board approved the paper for submission to the SFC.</p>
34/25	<p><b>Committee Terms of Reference (Paper E)</b></p> <p>The Board Secretary provided an overview of the paper with current Terms of References (ToRs) having been discussed at each of the latest meetings for the three main sub-committees. The ToRs will be effective as from 1 August 2025.</p> <p>The Board approved the paper.</p>

<p><b>35/25</b></p>	<p><b>Honorary Fellow 2025 (Honorary F)</b></p> <p>The Principal advised on this year’s recommendation for the Honorary Fellowship appointment which will be awarded at the College Graduation 2025. Management considered a number of individuals this year and recommend that the Fellowship be awarded to Bruce Aitchison. Further details on Bruce’s background were provided within the paper.</p> <p>A Member recommended that due diligence on individuals who are shortlisted for the honorary award be carried out as standard, including a review on social media activity.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>ACTION: Principal</b></p> <p>The Board approved the award of the Honorary Fellowship to Bruce Aitchison, subject to the satisfactory completion of the recommended due diligence checks.</p>
<p><b>36/25</b></p>	<p><b>Tweedbank Lease (Paper G)</b></p> <p>The VP Finance &amp; Corporate Services introduced the paper.</p> <p>A new lease agreement is being pursued in alignment with the Estates Masterplan with funding being sought from SFC to support the relocation from Tweedbank to Galashiels. While planning is progressing well and is due to be submitted to SB Council next month, no further assurance with regard to funding from SFC has been provided.</p> <p>The current lease at Tweedbank is due to expire in August 2026, which is one year earlier than anticipated. An attempt was made to extend the lease by one year; however, due to a strong market and lack of long-term assurance, the landlord initially proposed doubling the rent. Negotiations have since progressed, with two options from the landlord. Option 1 has been discounted with option 2 ensuring certainty of premises.</p> <p>The situation has been highlighted to SFC. The proposed lease includes a break clause in 2027, however, there is a slight risk due to the uncertainty of funding and whether the new facility will be ready in time. To mitigate this risk, a five-year break clause has been requested, along with additional break options. Work on this is ongoing. It was noted that the facility at Tweedbank is essential, and the organisation cannot risk being without suitable premises.</p> <p>Comments and questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there any costs associated with break clauses? No</li> <li>• Is the landlord fulfilling their obligations? Yes</li> <li>• A request for annual break clause for first five years would not be unreasonable.</li> </ul> <p>The Board approved the request for the Principal and senior team to have the delegated authority to proceed with negotiations for a new lease under the terms of option 2.</p>
<p><b>37/25</b></p>	<p><b>Vision 2030 (Paper H)</b></p> <p>The Principal outlined the paper which presented the final draft of the College’s new Corporate Vision seeking input from Members prior to being finalised and launched in the Autumn. The design of the document has changed following input from the marketing department and graphic design lecturer with images</p>

	<p>provided by graphic design students. It was noted that some quotes and further statistics are still to be updated.</p> <p>The College logo and corporate colour palette has also been reviewed with more defined guidance on usage.</p> <p>Comments and questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The landscape format of the document was welcomed, noting that it is highly accessible and supported by a good collection of testimonials, however a broader range would ensure a better balance.</li> <li>• Who is the document aimed at? A broad audience – Students, staff, SFC and other external agencies.</li> <li>• There is currently little reference to Cyber Security or Entrepreneurial Activity. This will now be added.</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>ACTION: VPs &amp; Principal</b></p> <p>The Principal thanked everyone for their input and requested that any further comments are sent directly to himself.</p>
<p><b>38/25</b></p>	<p><b>Audit &amp; Risk Committee Report (Paper I)</b></p> <p>The Chair of the Audit &amp; Risk Committee outlined the main points of business from the meeting held on the 22 May 2025.</p> <p>Overall, the internal audits have been very positive over 2024-25 in terms of organisational structures and policies. Internal audits are undertaken by auditors appointed outwith the College. The cyber security audit has been brought forward given the associated risks with this area. In addition, Cyber Essentials Plus certification is completed on a regular basis. A desktop expert will also be brought in to conduct a cyber security exercise.</p> <p>A change for the upcoming year is that the draft Annual Report will be reviewed in detail at the October A&amp;R meeting rather than the December one which left too little time for amendments. The Audit Committee also discussed the risk register, noting its role in providing an overview of key risks and the interactions between them. It was proposed that as strategy days are not formally recorded, a full review of the risk register be held at the full Board meeting in October.</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the paper.</p>
<p><b>39/25</b></p>	<p><b>Finance &amp; Resources Committee Report (Paper J)</b></p> <p>The Chair of the Finance &amp; Resources Committee outlined the main points of business from the meeting held on 17 June 2025.</p> <p>The Committee reviewed the budget and FFR, engaging in robust discussions to scrutinise all underlying assumptions and associated risks prior to submission to the Board. The procurement for roof repairs was formally ratified, following prior approval via email. The Committee also discussed the lease arrangements at Tweedbank and welcomed the positive results from the recent GPTW survey.</p> <p>The Chair of the Finance &amp; Resources Committee expressed thanks to all staff involved, with particular appreciation extended to the Director of Finance, for whom this was their final meeting before retiring from the College..</p>

	<p>The Board noted the contents of the paper.</p>
<p><b>40/25</b></p>	<p><b>Curriculum, Quality &amp; Student Experience Report (Paper K)</b></p> <p>The Chair of the CQSE Committee outlined the main points of business from the meeting held on 29 May 2025.</p> <p>The Committee commended the Corporate Parenting Plan, noting it as an inspiring reflection of the College’s commitment to supporting its most vulnerable learners. Members were encouraged to read the plan in full, as it highlights the meaningful and compassionate efforts being made.</p> <p>The Mental Health Strategy was also discussed. Although not a formal requirement from SFC, the Committee recognised that mental health support has been very effectively embedded across the College. As such, it was agreed to retire the formal strategy, with a review scheduled in 12 months to ensure continued progress.</p> <p>The Committee received a presentation from the VP Student Experience and reviewed the student induction process, acknowledging it as a critical part of the student journey. It was noted that the induction continues to evolve each year to better meet student needs and is well received by students.</p> <p>In terms of performance, the Committee was pleased to note improvements across nearly all measures. While part-time higher education performance showed a slight decline, it was recognised that the small cohort size can easily skew results. The Committee also acknowledged the valuable contribution of the Student President in supporting these outcomes.</p> <p>The Regional Board Chair expressed sincere thanks to all Board members for their contributions and extended particular appreciation to the Chairs of the sub-committees. The quality of the reports presented stands as a testament to the excellent work being carried out across the organisation.</p>
<p><b>41/25</b></p>	<p><b>Chairs’ Committee Report (Paper L)</b></p> <p>The Chair outlined the key items of approval by the Chairs’ Committee between March and May 2025. As part of the College’s restructuring in order to achieve efficiencies and as part of the voluntary severance scheme, four staff settlement agreements were approved. The exact nature of each settlement remained confidential.</p> <p>A committee member noted that there is a robust process and strong diligence in place with clear business cases for each agreement.</p> <p>The Board noted the paper.</p>

<p><b>42/25</b></p>	<p><b>Business Growth and Employer Engagement Strategy Update (Paper M)</b></p> <p>The Vice Principal for Student Experience provided a summary of the key points, noting that the paper had been taken as read. Appreciation was also noted to the CQSE Chair for their understanding of the workload associated with papers, which has contributed to a reduction in the volume of documentation required.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good progress has been made across a number of performance measures.</li> <li>• Table 5.2.2. provides the latest position and reflects the forecast position against the 24/25 approved budget with an increase of 20% against the 22/23 baseline.</li> <li>• Student start-up project has been a great success and benefited a number of students.</li> <li>• SDS MA Contract – 49 additional starts have been awarded.</li> <li>• Additional sources of funding have been applied for including LEP application for £239k.</li> <li>• There is an ever decreasing pot of funding but optimistic structures are in place to respond quickly.</li> <li>• New Skills &amp; Enterprise Strategy will be launched in December 2025.</li> </ul> <p>The Board noted the good progress which has been made.</p>
<p><b>43/25</b></p>	<p><b>Principal’s Report (Paper N)</b></p> <p>The Principal highlighted the following key points from the report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• He has recently been appointed as Vice Chair to the College Principals’ Group.</li> <li>• Four applications for voluntary severance accepted with a one off cost of £75k and a recurring saving of £164k per annum.</li> <li>• Considerable work has been ongoing with national pay bargaining to reach agreements for support staff pay awards and it is hoped for a resolution soon.</li> <li>• National Recognition and Procedures Agreement (NRPA) – UNISON and Unite have resigned from the current NRPA. A revised NRPA is underway with each individual college Board required to sign up to this which could be ready around September 2025. Electronic approval may be required if outside Board meeting dates which the Board confirmed would be appropriate.</li> </ul> <p>The Board noted the contents of the paper.</p>
<p><b>44/25</b></p>	<p><b>BCSA Update (Paper O)</b></p> <p>The paper provided an update on the activities of the Student’s Association for 24-25. The Student President reported that the Essential Information Days had been highly successful and also included participation from Schools Academy students.</p> <p>He extended his thanks to all Board members for their support over the past two years and advised that he would be officially handing over the role to Cherene Thomson.</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the paper.</p>

<p><b>45/25</b></p>	<p><b>Strategic Implementation Plan 2024-26 Update (Paper P)</b></p> <p>An updated report was provided for June 2025, confirming that the figures presented aligned with the development plan and the ongoing savings monitoring, which is regularly reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team.</p> <p>On behalf of the Board, the Chair extended sincere thanks to the Senior Leadership Team and staff for the volume and quality of work. He acknowledged the significant efforts involved in delivering the Strategic Improvement Plan, while continuing to meet the day-to-day needs of students. Progress across the key areas has been outstanding. The forward-looking work towards 2030 was also highlighted as a vital part of the College’s long-term vision.</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the paper.</p>
<p><b>46/25</b></p>	<p><b>Strategic Risk Register Update (Paper Q)</b></p> <p>The paper provided updates on the five risks allocated to the Board with details under Appendix 1. The VP Finance &amp; Corporate Services advised that risk 1.2 was discussed at the Finance &amp; Resources Committee and reflects the financial challenges facing the college sector.</p> <p>An in-depth review of the full risk register will take place at the October Board meeting.</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the paper.</p>
<p><b>47/25</b></p>	<p><b>Learning for Leading (L4L) Annual Report (Paper R)</b></p> <p>The Vice President for Student Experience thanked those members who had completed a Learning for Leading visit during the 2024/25 academic year, with a total of seven visits completed. These engagements provide valuable opportunities for staff to connect with Board Members, and feedback is always welcomed.</p> <p>The Chair encouraged Members who had not yet participated in a visit to prioritise doing so in the coming year, noting that such experiences enhance knowledge and understanding.</p> <p>The following points were noted from discussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perhaps Members could also attend team meetings?</li> <li>• Rather than specific leads for each area, could it be set up for any member to drop in rather than being allocated?</li> <li>• There appears to be “distance” between staff and Board. Some English establishments have Board Members included in staff grievances. It was noted that there is a national grievance policy implemented for the sector which does not include Board Members.</li> <li>• Members are encouraged to advise on any other opportunities of interest.</li> <li>• Visits also provide a good opportunity for Board Members to interact with students.</li> </ul> <p>Members were thanked for their valuable feedback which would be progressed.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><b>ACTION: Board Secretary/VP</b></p>

48/25	<p><b>Board Development Plan Update (Paper S)</b></p> <p>The Chair introduced the paper which provided an update on the Board and Chair’s Development Plan for 2024-25 with an assessment on each of the elements/objectives.</p> <p>Overall, there has been encouraging progress. There has been collective engagement with the Board and increased external engagement with an opportunity to bring further focus to this area. Efforts will continue to ensure that Members are kept informed at the earliest possible opportunity. Members were asked to highlight if this does not occur.</p> <p>The setting of KPIs with the aim of driving further improvement will be aligned with agreed timelines and discussed as individual strategies are approved at Board meetings.</p> <p>The Board noted the contents of the paper.</p>
49/25	<p><b>Board Secretary’s Update (Paper T)</b></p> <p>The paper was noted as a paper for information.</p>
50/25	<p><b>Community Empowerment Act (Paper U)</b></p> <p>The paper was noted as a paper for information.</p>
51/25	<p><b>Standing Items</b></p> <p><u>Health &amp; Safety</u></p> <p>The VP Finance &amp; Corporate Services reported that a RIDDOR reportable incident had occurred which would be fully reported on at the next Health &amp; Safety Committee meeting.</p> <p><u>Equality &amp; Diversity</u></p> <p>No items were raised.</p> <p><u>Environmental &amp; Sustainability</u></p> <p>No items were raised.</p>
52/25	<p><b>Board Papers for Publication</b></p> <p>No draft or confidential papers will be published.</p>
53/25	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <p>No items were raised.</p>
54/25	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>The Chair thanked all Members for their contributions and wished everyone an enjoyable summer.</p> <p>The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 22 October 2025 at 5.30pm in the Board Room, Galashiels campus.</p>

