The Axholme Academy
Company Number: 0784080

Minutes of the meeting of the Governing Board
held at the Academy on Thursday 28 November 2024 at 4.30pm

Present:

Mrs Nichola Shaw (Chair)	
Dr Karen Andrews-Longbone (KAL)	Mr Damien Keogh (Principal) (DK)
Mrs Kathryn Forbes (KF)	Mr Ian McNiff (IM)
Mrs Claire Foster (CF)	Mrs Adele Merchant (AM)
Mrs Tamara Fox (TF)	Mrs Tamara Pullan (TP)

In Attendance:

Ms Hannah Gardner – Governing Bodies Support Officer (Clerk)
Miss Sophie Leggott – Business Leader (SL)
Mrs Ellie Jarrett – Governing Bodies Support Officer - Observer

Date and Time of Next Meeting: Thursday 27 March 2025 at 4.30pm

Min. Ref	Actions	Action By
1032	the Clerk would email governors a link to complete and sign their business interests' forms	Clerk
1032	the Clerk would email governors who still needed to ensure they had completed and signed the governors' code of conduct	Clerk
1032	the Clerk would email governors the link to complete the skills audit	Clerk
1034	the Clerk would email governors still to complete the MS form to confirm whether or not they had lived, worked or studied abroad for a period of three months or more in the last five years	Clerk
1034	the Chair would liaise with the Clerk after a period of time regarding all governor's completion of the declaration of interests, code of conduct, skills audit and the overseas confirmation	Chair
1035	the Chair would liaise with governors after Christmas about what to include on a new parent and pupil voice	Chair
1036	the Principal would contact sean.kendrew@northlincs.gov.uk with feedback regarding Gunness and Burringham CE Primary School being named a feeder school	DK
1036	the Clerk would email sean.kendrew@northlincs.gov.uk with details of the governors' resolutions on admissions arrangements 2026/2027. As the school has not consulted since the 2019/2020 arrangements it was recognised a full public consultation needs to be held. It was decided to be included in the council's area wide consultation	Clerk
1040	all governors would read the SEND Information Report	All

1040	governors would consider the Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School Policy	All
1040	the Clerk would provide the Chair a list of policies that should be presented to the full governing body	Clerk
1040	SL would provide the Clerk with a list of all the school policies	SL
1042	the Clerk would follow up with members regarding a date for the AGM	Clerk

Chair 's initials ....

Minute No.		Action By
	Statutory / LA Business	
1030	**Election of Chair** Consideration was given to the length of the term of office for the position of Chair. **RESOLVED:** it was agreed that the Chair would be elected to the date of the autumn term meeting 2025. Nominations and self-nominations were sought for the position of Chair. The following nomination was received, and governors were asked if they wished to accept the nomination: • Mrs Shaw A vote was taken by show of hands. **RESOLVED:** it was agreed that Mrs Shaw be elected Chair to the date of the autumn term meeting 2025.	
1031	**Election of Vice Chair** Consideration was given to the length of the term of office for the position of Vice Chair. **RESOLVED:** it was agreed that the Vice Chair would be elected to the date of the autumn term meeting 2025. Nominations and self-nominations were sought for the position of Vice Chair. The following nomination was received, and governors were asked if they wished to accept the nomination: • Mrs T Fox A vote was taken by show of hands. **RESOLVED:** it was agreed that Mrs T Fox be elected Vice Chair to the date of the autumn term meeting 2025.	
1032	**Apologies, Declaration of Business Interests, Code of Conduct and Chair's / Clerk's Updates** Welcome The Chair welcomed governors to the meeting.	
	Apologies It was reported that apologies had been received from Mrs Brickley and Ms Fairey. It was reported that apologies had not been received from Mr Cooper. **RESOLVED:** consent be given to all the afore-mentioned absences.	

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	Declaration of Interest / Governors' Code of Conduct Governors were requested to give consideration to any pecuniary or non-pecuniary interests they may have with regard to the agenda items. Governors were also asked to complete and sign the new business interests form sent in a link by email. No declarations were made with regard to items on the agenda or governor interests. **ACTION:** the Clerk would email governors a link to complete and sign their business interests' forms. Governors were reminded that all governors were required each year to review the governors' code of conduct, this had been sent in a link via email and governors were required to complete this confirming their agreement to the code. **ACTION:** the Clerk would email governors who still needed to ensure they had completed and signed the governors' code of conduct. **ACTION:** the Clerk would email governors the link to complete the skills audit.	Clerk Clerk Clerk
	GIAS The Clerk reminded governors of the requirement to update GIAS with governors' information and the register of interest to be included on the school website.	
	Chair's Comments The Chair reported that no urgent action had been taken, and no correspondence had been received since the last meeting.	
1033	**Membership of the Board of Governors** Membership Governors noted the following membership changes: • Ms Fairey had been appointed as a co-opted trustee with effect from 2 October 2024 • Mrs Forbes had been appointed parent trustee with effect from 9 September 2024 • Mrs Brickley had been appointed parent trustee with effect from 2 October 2024	
	Committee Structure **RESOLVED:** governors reviewed and approved the membership and terms of reference for the committees which included the management of the school budget. Please see structure appended to these minutes ***(Appendix A)***.	

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	Appointment of Governors with Special Responsibilities Consideration was given to reviewing the appointment of governors with special responsibilities. Governors also noted the following delegation of Chair for the finance committee and the standards committee: • finance committee – Tamara Fox • standards committee – Claire Foster **RESOLVED:** governors reviewed and approved the revised governor responsibility links appended to these minutes ***(Appendix B)***.	
1034	**Overseas Confirmation** Governors were advised that a DBS check was a check of their criminal record in the UK, this could not currently assess criminal records held overseas. Consequently, if governors had lived, studied, or worked outside of the UK for more than three months in the past five years they would need to obtain a criminal record check from the country they lived/worked/studied in. This was commonly referred to as a 'Certificate of Good Conduct' but has many different names including 'Certificate of Clearance' and 'Certificate of no Criminal Conviction'. Due to areas raised in recent Ofsted inspections safer recruitment would be followed in full for all new governors and re-appointed governors, this included the oversees check and a request for two references to be provided. The administration processes within Governor Services had changed to incorporate the request for oversees checks and two references which meant there was no additional work required from schools. Confirmation of these would need to be added to the SCR. It was noted governors were required to confirm whether they had lived, worked or studied abroad for a period of three months or more in the last five years. **ACTION:** the Clerk would email governors still to complete the MS form to confirm whether or not they had lived, worked or studied abroad for a period of three months or more in the last five years. **ACTION:** the Chair would liaise with the Clerk after a period of time regarding all governor's completion of the declaration of interests, code of conduct, skills audit and the overseas confirmation.	Clerk Chair
1035	**Previous Minutes** **RESOLVED:** governors approved the following minutes which had been circulated with the agenda: • full governors' meeting held on 11 July 2024 • standards committee meetings held on 26 September 2024 and 14 November 2024 The Chair informed governors the minutes from the most recent finance committee had also been uploaded to the Google Drive.	

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	Governors noted they were happy with the recent standards committee content and thanked BC for his in-depth data reports. The Chair noted that the recent pupil voice highlighted that students were not happy with the DEAR time. The Chair expressed she would like to carry out another pupil voice and suggested a parent voice might also be useful in highlighting any areas to focus on. **ACTION:** the Chair would liaise with governors after Christmas about what to include on a new parent and pupil voice. **IM: Where is the DEAR time review data?** Chair: It was discussed in the standards committee and has been uploaded to the Google Drive. The data highlighted good chronological reading ages. It is good to see students are excelling beyond where they need to be.	Chair
	Matters Arising from the Minutes There were no matters arising from the minutes.	
1036	**Policies and Reports from the Local Authority** Consideration was given to the following points: • adopting the updated safeguarding and child protection policy • to note that the annual safeguarding audit needed completing and returning by 15 December 2024 • adopting the 2026/2027 Admissions Arrangements Policy The Principal noted that the safeguarding audit was on the Google Drive for governors' approval. The Principal informed governors that there was now an expectation that there was 24-hour availability to a member of the safeguarding team. The Principal noted that throughout past summer holidays there had been issues that had arisen and had been dealt with, but he did not feel comfortable committing the full safeguarding team for 24-hour availability. **RESOLVED:** governors approved the annual safeguarding audit. The Principal informed governors that he had spoken with Miss Sowerby, the Headteacher at Gunness and Burringham CE Primary School regarding the number of students that attended the academy from the primary school. Gunness and Burringham CE Primary School was not classed as a feeder school for The Axholme Academy and the Principal would like to discuss with the Local Authority that the primary school be officially confirmed as a feeder school to the academy. **ACTION:** the Principal would contact sean.kendrew@northlincs.gov.uk with feedback regarding Gunness and Burringham CE Primary School being named a feeder school. **IM: What would be the cost implication of Gunness and Burringham CE Primary School being named a feeder school?** Principal: Transport costs would be reduced. At present, the parents of students	DK

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	who travel from the village are unhappy with the cost of the bus. **RESOLVED:** governors were happy to approve the safeguarding and child protection policy. A paper had been circulated to head teachers, chairs and vice chairs reminding governing bodies of own admission authorities of their statutory duty to consult on any proposed changes to their admissions criteria and any proposed decrease in their school's admission number. Where the governing body had no wish to change their admission arrangements and published admission number for 2026/2027, there was no requirement to consult provided that the admission authority had consulted upon their admission arrangements within the last seven years. The governing body was advised that no changes were suggested for 2026/2027. The governing body must determine their admission arrangements for the 2026/2027 academic year by 28 February 2025. For those own admission authorities who purchase the council's admissions SLA, the council offered support to governors to ensure that any proposed changes to admission arrangements were compliant with admissions legislation as well as offering to undertake any public consultation on behalf of schools. **RESOLVED:** the draft admissions policy for 2026/2027 was approved. **ACTION:** the pupil admission number of 115 for September 2026 was approved. **ACTION:** the Clerk would email sean.kendrew@northlincs.gov.uk with details of the governors' resolutions on admissions arrangements 2026/2027. As the school has not consulted since the 2019/2020 arrangements it was recognised a full public consultation needs to be held. It was decided to be included in the council's area wide consultation.	Clerk
1037	**Pupil Admission Number** Governors discussed the admission arrangements for the academic year 2026/27. The Principal noted that he would like to gather detailed demographic information. **RESOLVED:** Governors were happy to maintain an admissions number of 115.	
	Academy Specific Business	
1038	**Principal's Report** The Principal reported that the below document had been uploaded to the Google Drive, containing high-level data:	

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	Principal's Summary Report November 20… The challenge partner's report had also been submitted. A significant quality assurance activity had been undertaken that term and would be discussed later in the meeting. The RTL and ATL teams were being embedded, and evidence of their impact had been observed in the standards committee. Governors had been provided with an overview of attendance as below: Attendance Summary November 2024.pdf There was one anomaly in the template; attendance figures differed from FFT. Attendance had improved compared to the same point last year, with 6% less persistent absenteeism. The work was having a positive impact, although attendance was still slightly below the national average. Suspension rates continued to show a reduction, although there were still some suspensions. A small number of students did not meet expectations. Conversely, there were more students being rewarded compared to last year, with 30% more students eligible for rewards. Students were becoming more engaged in academy life. The Principal informed governors that finance had been referred to throughout his performance management. There was a real challenge to remain viable in the longer term without diminishing the quality of education. Strategic decisions were made to protect the academy in the long term, rather than being reactionary. There were no indications of an increase in funding. SL reported on staff absence, noting that there had been more absences this term compared to the same period last year. Staff had been off for longer periods, typically three to five days instead of just one day. SL was monitoring staff who were hitting absence triggers, those absences were having an impact on their colleagues. **Chair: Are the absences related to illness rather than childcare or family responsibilities?** Principal: Yes, the absences are due to illness. It was noted that staff were required to identify the reason for their absence. If they were looking after dependants, it reached a point where they were expected to be at work, so the time off became unpaid. Steps had been taken to address absences, but monitoring would continue. The Principal invited questions on the SEF which had been circulated prior to the meeting.	

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Summative SEF 2024_25.pdf

Governors were happy with the content and noted this had been discussed in detail at the standards committee.

RESOLVED: governors approved the SEF.

The Principal made particular reference to the Challenge Partners Report which had been uploaded to the Google Drive.

Challenge Partner Review November 6tl

Challenge Partners visitors had worked from Wednesday through Friday, with a focus on various areas of the school.

Activities:

- they initially met with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to discuss priorities and challenges
- they explored the Self-Evaluation Form (SEF) in Google Drive and reviewed the improvement plan. A copy of the key questions they asked was placed in the folder
- the process had the rigour of an Ofsted inspection but with a different school improvement approach
- the next day, they held a strategy and impact meeting, which the SLT had prepared for. Compared to Ofsted, the SLT felt in a stronger position to respond to questions about strategy
- at the end of the reflection, it was noted that the academy was in a stronger place. They spent time in lessons, observing across year groups and subjects, and provided collective feedback. The focus was on team performance rather than individuals, identifying strengths in practice
- staff responded well, and the quality of teaching appeared stronger than under the pressures of Ofsted. The real benefit was the involvement of leaders who were also Ofsted inspectors or senior leaders elsewhere.

Every activity included a member of the school team, ensuring collaboration. The Principal and IM attended a maths lesson with the lead reviewer for quality assurance.

Report:

- the report captured the essence of the academy without being excessively long. The lead reviewer listened, contributed, and took notes throughout the process
- there was still work to be done, but the Principal was very pleased, particularly with the challenge regarding SEND. They wanted a seating plan clearly identifying Pupil Premium (PP) and SEND children. It was felt there was no significant difference in the quality of work produced, and the adaptations in lessons were strong. While there was still work to do, the school was in a strong position

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	Meetings: • meetings were held with middle leaders, the SEND team, and students. The activities were not limited to the SLT but extended throughout the school, including roll calls and classroom observations. The aim was to cover all aspects of the academy. The report allowed the academy to compare practices with other schools Staff Development: • staff were visiting other schools to gain an understanding of their own position and to observe other practices Key Takeaways: • the Principal emphasized the importance of highlighting successes. For example, students voted for changes in the reading program, and Liane Cook was preparing content for the website to showcase the impact. The lead reviewer, who was an Assistant Headteacher in Doncaster, recognized the efforts in parental engagement. She had similar experiences in another part of North Lincolnshire, which helped in engaging the parental body **IM: Do you produce a parent newsletter?** Principal: Yes, we produce newsletters for Christmas, Easter, and summer. We encourage students to contribute as much as possible. We were active on social media, particularly Facebook, highlighting all the positives. We also posted these on the website. This report could be included on our website. We were comfortable keeping it within the school. What are your thoughts? Governors concluded they were happy to keep the Challenge Partners report within the school. The Principal noted they had worked on the EBI's and recognized where the academy was on the improvement journey, with Mr Creasy commenting at the time it was good to have the data recognised. The Principal noted the academy had established a partnership with other schools and for the next time, consideration would be given to scheduling the visit towards February or March. The academy wanted the initial visit earlier this time to ensure it was on the right track and would have a year to work through it, then put it forward for the Certificate of Excellence. **Chair: Have you committed to this year?** Principal: It was an annual commitment. **Chair: Did you get linked with different schools?** Principal: Yes, there was a menu of schools and dates of reviews. We could choose which one we wanted to participate in. As an SLT, we tried to stagger it so that not two of us were off-site or if key things were happening. The Chair noted it would be interesting to hear feedback from other members of staff that had gone on visits to other schools. The Principal elaborated further by noting they were outward facing on their visits. They could go down to London where Sir Kevin Collins and Becky Francis were keynote speakers. The academy had paid to be a part of Challenge Partners, and sometimes there were costs associated with transport. The Principal had attended a conference in London, participated in webinars, and networked.	

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	IM: Did it go into more detail than the report on the Google Drive? Principal: No, not really. Liane Cook had all the flip chart pages and would get them typed up. After every learning exploration, we came back and wrote on a post it note. Questioning was one of the areas we consolidated into a summary. We needed to keep that. The Chair invited any further questions regarding the Challenge Partners Report. Governors were happy with the level of detail and the Principal concluded by stating it had been a good start, and they planned to review at the end of the year. There was a cost, but so far, the academy was benefitting. As a single academy trust, it did not receive the estimates of Ofsted-type grades this time. The academy sought the commentary and in-depth analysis and felt they were strong. Perhaps next time, estimates would be requested.	
1039	**<u>Business Manager's Report</u>** SL informed governors the accounts were on the Google Drive. The management letter was easier to read and broke the information down in a much clearer way. Last year, there was a surplus of £46,000. The budget was on track, with £46,000 to carry over to this year. Month-end reports were all in the finance committee folder for governors to see. **IM: Was there anything in the reports that set off alarm bells?** SL: No, everything was on track. The budget for this year was presented to the finance committee, and in June, an in-year deficit budget was set for this academic year, which the governors agreed to. The aim was to reduce it this year and remove the full deficit next year. If there were alarms, solutions were proposed, and a list of everything worked on so far was provided, along with suggestions to remove the deficit. The goal was to maintain standards within the school while reducing the deficit, without reducing the provision for the students. A detailed plan would be presented to finance in March, outlining how the deficit would be removed. The plan for March was pending the announcement of next year's income, which would determine the exact budget. The finance committee had reviewed the accounts in detail and recommended them for approval by the governing body. **RESOLVED:** governors approved the accounts. **Chair: There had been discussion around removing small groups and reviewing the curriculum to see if it was affordable. What would you like to teach?** Principal: We were dropping a language. We had not replaced the MFL leader. We could maintain two Year 10 and two Year 11 French classes, but Spanish would be removed, leaving only French. An advert had been out since May 2024 with no interest in the head of MFL position. **Chair: There was a discussion around music and D&T. It was decided to bring back D&T and let music go. Media studies would be included within English staffing. Is there an update regarding that?** Principal: We considered the needs of the community and what was affordable. We looked at a five-year profile. We needed to remove emotional and unconscious bias from the decision-making process. We focused on the balance	

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	sheet while ensuring quality education for the long term. If people started to pull away from the academy, we would lose students and funding. SL reported that Year 7 and Year 8 were the most expensive year groups, while Year 9 was cost-effective. The school operated with a five-group structure, with an average class size of 23 students. The Chair noted that Years 8 and 12 were integrated across four groups. The Chair inquired about the average class size if Years 8 and 12 were excluded. SL responded that the average class size would be 25. The Principal hoped this would enable staff to cope and SL mentioned that plans were in place and needed to be reviewed to determine the best approach for the school. The Principal emphasized the importance of confidentiality. The teacher pay increase was approved at the finance committee meeting. The increase would be reflected in the December pay, effective from 1 September for teaching staff and 1 April for support staff. Governor approval was sought to submit two SIF bids. An application would be put in to bid for government funding for capital improvement projects. It was understood that a full rebuild was likely and timely, as waiting four years would mean replacing things that had already been replaced. A consultant was engaged to review the school and make suggestions most likely to be awarded. Payment for the consultant would come from the government grant, not affecting the school's costs. If the bid was unsuccessful, no payment would be made. **Chair: Does the consultant take a percentage?** SL: Yes, it was based on a percentage, either 10% or 20%. Without their assistance, it was quite unlikely to be successful with the bids. Principal: The skill of writing the bids was crucial. The consultant was hands-on throughout the entire project. Heating, roofing, and fire compliance projects had all been successful in the past. The turnaround time was short, with a submission deadline of 13 December 2024. Surveyors had been out this week, and the strongest bid was for the flat roof, PE changing rooms, and the main three-storey roof replacement. The tech arts block roof needed replacement due to leaks and pooling water when it rained. It was believed that this would be a strong bid. The heating distribution system was another strong bid. The heating in the school was either on or off, with the top floors getting hot while the downstairs remained cool. The system lacked sensors to redirect heat, making it cost-ineffective. These were the two strongest bids. The mobile science class bid had been submitted twice but was not successful. It was decommissioned this year. **Chair: Did we pay for that?** SL: No, it just stood there empty. It meant having to swap around with science classes. SL informed governors there were no funds available to contribute additional points, so the government had to fully fund those projects. **RESOLVED:** governors approved the submission for government funding.	

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	The Health and Safety main audit was scheduled around March/April. The union representative from the NLC branch moved it to September 2024, which was agreed upon for 5 September 2024. At the end of the audit, no issues were found, and everything was satisfactory. However, no report was received back, although it was stated that a report would be sent to the members. Nothing further came of that. The fire risk assessment was due this year and had been completed on 23 September 2024. It was still being reviewed, as it had only been received this week. It would be highlighted at the next risk meeting. There were no high-priority red items. The recycling audit took place in October 2024. It was the first time this audit was conducted. It was a proactive meeting that made the academy aware of upcoming regulations and how it could assist in the academy meeting them. There were areas that needed promotion to encourage students to recycle more in school. **Chair: Was there anything significant?** SL: No, nothing significant. It involved the separation of recycling, including electronics, batteries, and clothes collections. It also focused on food waste and packaging, with separate bins purely for food. Kitchen staff were already doing this, and we needed to work with students to improve it. Education on plastics would start in January. SL informed governors a letter would be sent home to students next week requesting students to bring their own water bottles and stop using single-use plastic. All single-use plastic had been removed from the canteen, using only cardboard going forward. This change had been a lot better and took place after the October half-term. Actions to note were: • a ban on students using single-use plastic: Non-negotiable items included a black pen, ruler, and drink container • supply to all PP students: water bottles were stocked on ParentPay to promote this initiative. These practices would start in January 2025 SL updated governors on the risk register review. This year's top risks were in the finance audit and risk committee file. The full risk register included the top five risks: • funding cuts • failure to attract and maintain staff • admitting a disproportionate number of high-needs students • unable to meet provision for SEND, PP, and most able students • outcomes reduced significantly below other local secondary schools There had been 13 stage 1 sickness meetings conducted. Some absences seemed random odd days, some longer, but none were long-term more than a few weeks. SL was monitoring staff who went over the triggers. If staff had more than six days or four periods of absence in a 12-month rolling period, it triggered the policy. Stage 1 meetings were held with SL, and targets were set. Stage 2 consisted of two formal written warnings. Depending on the different circumstances, they were following formal procedures, hoping to reduce the need to go to stage 2 or 3. The end stage was stage 3, and they were trying to manage that absence.	

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	IM: Were those figures consistent with last year? SL: They are higher. **IM: Were the absences longer?** SL: The number of absences had increased, especially since September, due to Covid, cold, and flu. Staff were taking a few days to recover. They hoped to pick up with everyone in absence meetings. **The Chair thanked SL for her detailed business report.**	
1040	<u>**Policy Review**</u> The following policies were discussed by governors: • SEND information report • children with health needs who cannot attend school • grievance policy SEND information report: **IM: I am mindful one of the risks was accepting too many children with SEND. How do you balance that?** Principal: It is not realistically possible to do that for everybody. We are an inclusive school, and the SEND information currently available was quite short. **Chair: What is our obligation for taking a child out of the catchment area?** KAL: The school could be asked to take a child with an EHCP. Even if the school said they could not meet the need, they could still be required to take the child anyway. **ACTION:** all governors would read the SEND Information Report. The Clerk advised governors to look at creating a children with health needs who could not attend school policy. **ACTION:** governors would consider the Children with Health Needs Who Cannot Attend School Policy. Governors noted that dates were changed and updated on the grievance policy. **ACTION:** the Clerk would provide the Chair a list of policies that should be presented to the full governing body. **ACTION:** SL would provide the Clerk with a list of all the school policies.	 All All Clerk SL
1041	<u>**Governor Reports**</u> Governors noted there were no reports to discuss at the meeting.	
1042	<u>**Dates of Future Meetings**</u> **RESOLVED:** the following meeting dates were agreed: Full Board Meetings: • Thursday 27 March 2025 at 4.30pm • Thursday 26 June 2025 at 4:30pm	

Minute No.		Action By
	Finance Committee: • Thursday 6 March 2025 • Thursday 26 June 2025 Standards Committee: • Thursday 23 January 2025 at 4.30pm • Thursday 13 March 2025 at 4.30pm **ACTION:** the Clerk would follow up with members regarding a date for the AGM.	Clerk
1043	**Any Other Business** There was no other business to discuss.	

Chair 's initials ....