



Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting held on 26 March 2025 at 5.30pm, Jorvik room.

Present:	Ian Looker (Chair) Helen Crews Neil Ashton Andrew Thomas Cathy Waters Julia Histon Rob Hickey Sheila Willis	Ken Merry, Principal/CEO Ann Lees Harpal Sambhi (Staff Governor) Victoria Inness Heidi Fraser-Krauss David Boot James Farrar
In Attendance:	Jason Pepper, Chief Finance Officer Carolyn Barker, Director of Governance Joy Kettyle, Deputy Principal/CEO Victoria Lindberg, Director of Quality of Education Katharine Dent-Jones, Director of Curriculum: Further Education Jackson Armstrong, Director of Curriculum: Higher, Technical & Professional Education Liam Garside, Director of Student and Apprentice Services Sarah Leatherbarrow, Director of Marketing and External Partnerships Mark Gibson, Institute of Technology Hannah Wilson, Institute of Technology	
	Welcome and Introductions The Chair welcomed new independent governors to their first meeting – Neil Ashton, David Boot and James Farrar. He also welcomed Mark Gibson and Hannah Wilson representing the Institute of Technology. Introductions to all members were made.	
0.	York College Institute of Technology Mark Gibson and Hannah Wilson presented to the Board of Governors about the Institute of Technology (IoT). They covered the following key points: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• IoTs provide high-quality technical education in STEM fields, backed by government investment.• York College is the lead partner for the Yorkshire & Humber IoT (YHIoT).• Discussed funding sources and performance indicators.• Highlighted the 2024 relicensing process and strategic objectives for 2024-2029.• Emphasised the vision to excel in technology education and promote regional economic growth.• Outlined strategic themes and objectives for building a sustainable education ecosystem. Governors received in the pack of papers copies of letters from the Minister of Skills and the Chair of the National Network of Institutes of Technology. <i>The Governing Body thanked Mark Gibson and Hannah Wilson for their time and presentation.</i>	

		Action
1.	Apologies for Absence / Declarations of Interest	
1.1	<p>Apologies were received from independent governors Matthew Rice, Libby Bush, Madi Chantry (Vice President of the Student Union) and Charlie Barnes (staff governor).</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest relevant to the agenda.</p> <p>The Chair of the meeting was Ian Looker. Notice of the meeting was given at least 7 days in advance. The meeting was quorate.</p>	
2.	Minutes of Previous Meeting	
2.1	It was resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2025.	
3.	Matters Arising	
3.1	<p>Action Summary</p> <p>All actions, except one, had been completed. The outstanding action pertains to benchmarking targets against previous years and comparing them to other colleges. This will be addressed in a future meeting.</p> <p><i>The Governing Body resolved to note the update to actions.</i></p>	
3.2	<p>3.2 Written resolution appointment – newly appointed governors</p> <p>The Director of Governance advised that for good governance reasons, a note is made at the meeting and within the minutes where a decision has been made via a written resolution. The appointments of James Farrar and David Boot on 12 February 2025 were recorded.</p>	
4.	Strategic Matters	
4.1	<p>Chair's Update</p> <p>The Chair of the Governing Body updated members on several external events and meetings he had attended since the last meeting. Key points to note were –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended a seminar facilitated by the Office for Students the purpose of which was to consult on their new regulatory regime with the aim of gaining additional feedback. The importance of being proportionate was explained by the Chair to the regulator, as they are not the college's primary regulator. • He recently met with the new Chair of Askham Bryan College and York St John University. • Attended the Association of Colleges Chairs Network event covering topics such as new government policy, Skills England and funding routes. • The student champions' lunch was well attended and positive feedback on transport and catering was received. • Highlighted to members that arrangements have been made for David Hughes, CEO of the Association of Colleges, to provide an update on policy changes and spending review at the July board meeting. <p><i>The Governing Body noted the update.</i></p>	
4.2	<p>Chief Executive and Principal's Report</p> <p>Governors received the Principal's report providing an overview of the various projects, initiatives, and relevant college matters since the last report to governors in December 2024. He highlighted a few matters of interest –</p>	

	<p>Office for Students (OfS) It was brought to the principal's attention by the Office for Students that, in their opinion, the college was incorrectly using the term 'University' as they did not believe we had permission to use the styling "York College & University Centre," despite using it this way since 2019. Their position was that the college had permission to call itself "York College" or "York College University Centre," but not an amalgamation of the two. Lengthy discussions had taken place with the OfS following the college's email requesting a non-objection letter to use the word 'University' in the college's business name. The Department for Education has responsibility for approving the use of the word in company or business names. The DfE confirmed that they had no objection to the use of the word 'University' in the proposed business name "York College & University Centre." The college is now required to make a formal application to Companies House, seeking approval of the proposed business name under the Companies Act 2006.</p> <p>Funding The 16-18 funding rate was confirmed in early March, providing a positive increase to the base funding rate equivalent to 3.78%.</p> <p>National Insurance (NI) update: The Principal advised that there was an initial indication that all our increase in contributions would be funded; however, subsequently, there has been an increasing sense that this will not be fully funded, with local authorities only being allocated funding to cover 60% of their increased costs. Final numbers and methodology are expected by the end of March to help understand what we need to do from a budgetary perspective to cope with the change in national insurance contributions.</p> <p>Good News Stories, Events, and Sponsorships York Sports Awards sponsorship on June 19. Sponsored Bishopthorpe White Rose Purple team. Highlighted chess club achievements and upcoming competitions. Upcoming events included the REACH and Construction Awards and Graduation Ceremony. The Director of Governance handed out invitations to governors for the REACH awards.</p> <p><i>The Governing Body resolved to note the report.</i></p>	
4.3	<p>Progress against Strategic Plan/Scorecard The report confirmed a positive picture on the KPI scorecard, particularly around retention, recruitment, and the financial position.</p> <p>The Board was invited to note the contents of the progress update, which included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Attendance and Retention is holding reasonably well and tracking consistently better when compared to last year. • English and Maths attendance and retention is also stable. • Data indicates that high needs students are performing well in line with their peers, which is a positive sign. • Two student surveys are currently in circulation to gather feedback. • Positive trends are being observed in recruiting staff from underrepresented groups. • Financial position remains strong. <p>Governors noted that achievements seem low. The Director of Quality of Education clarified that achievement rates are lower than the national average but have improved year-on-year. She advised that changes</p>	

	<p>contributing to this include the introduction of hour-long lessons for Maths and students moving together within their curriculum groups, which have had a positive impact.</p> <p>The Director of Quality of Education also mentioned that the model scorecard for the next academic year is still being worked through.</p> <p><i>The Governing Body resolved to note the update to the scorecard.</i></p>	
5.	Education & Students	
5.1	<p>Q&C Committee Chair Report</p> <p>The chair of the committee advised members of several matters discussed at their recent meeting, including student destinations, general positivity and good progress, and the Health, Science, and Humanities Directorate review. She mentioned that the humanities directorate review was a positive experience with good discussions. The committee is to receive further updates later in the year regarding the review of the directorate structure.</p> <p>Members noted the committee's request for management to gain a greater understanding of student choices regarding their destinations. In terms of student outcomes, the committee observed that although there were improvements from last year, the outcomes were still not as expected, particularly in higher grades. This remains an ongoing concern for the committee.</p> <p><i>The Governing Body noted the chair's report.</i></p>	
5.2	<p>Student Experience Report</p> <p>The Director of Student and Apprentice Services reported on key elements within the report, including wellbeing activities, careers and work placements, student funding and travel, student voice forums, and the Student Union's activities and future plans.</p> <p>He advised of the priorities of the student experience function, including shaping the direction of the team and enhancing the student voice. He mentioned the mechanisms for gathering student feedback in a tiered approach to ensure equity.</p> <p>He shared feedback on his personal experience of being in post for a short period, including feeling trusted and supported, and noted that the college has strong staff and a student-centric approach.</p> <p>Key areas of focus for the student experience team were noted as being mental health and wellbeing, as well as addressing skills gaps linked to the brilliance plan and showcasing these to employers.</p> <p>Governors raised questions about the Student Union and its effectiveness. The Director of Student and Apprentice Services discussed mechanisms for supporting the Student Union members, building training programs, and gathering student feedback through surveys and student champions.</p> <p>A governor inquired if students receive information about the Student Union when they join the college. The director confirmed that this is provided through the student experience team.</p> <p>A governor mentioned the need for a glossary to understand acronyms related to wellbeing and external referrals noted in the report.</p>	LG

	<i>The Governing Body noted the positive progress being made.</i>	
6.	Audit & Risk	
6.1	<p>Audit Committee Chair Report</p> <p>The committee chair provided a verbal update summarising discussion at the last meeting, including AI integration, internal audit recommendations, strategic risk monitoring, and upcoming audits.</p> <p>The chair advised that it was the first time the committee had undertaken a deep dive into a subject. Artificial Intelligence in college operations was discussed, including its future use. There were mixed reactions from staff on its current use across the college, with some not being so keen. Rob Hickey and Abby Parkin (Head of Digital Innovation) attended for this item to provide insight. The committee was grateful for their contributions on what may have been a difficult topic to discuss. A governor highlighted the significant opportunities available to colleges given current government policy to invest in AI-related improvements, including funding for up-to-date equipment and infrastructure to support AI integration. The Principal emphasised the importance of preparing students for future jobs that don't yet exist and the need for ethical use of AI and mitigating against plagiarism, with a focus on different assessment methods. Heidi Fraser-Krauss advised that she had agreed to meet with Abby Parkin to offer support.</p> <p>A governor inquired about leadership oversight of the AI agenda. The Principal confirmed that Abby Parkin is the lead, with the Strategic Leadership Team supporting her.</p> <p>The chair of the audit committee advised members of the review of internal audit recommendations and that two were still pending. The Business Continuity Plan (BCP) testing has been pending for some time, with a complete rewrite of the plan being progressed to strengthen it. Two internal audit reports were discussed – governance reclassification and safeguarding – both of which had received substantial assurance ratings.</p> <p>The committee had also discussed the approach to strategic risk monitoring.</p> <p><i>The Governing Body resolved to note the update from the committee.</i></p>	
6.2	<p>Strategic Risk Monitoring</p> <p>The Chief Finance Officer summarised the risk register, highlighting significant changes, new risks, and detailed mitigations. He reported on a Strategic Leadership Team away day where new risks were discussed. The risk register had been comprehensively updated, resulting in a reduced number of risks. The most significant identified risk is a cyberattack, necessitating the replacement of IT infrastructure switches to further mitigate this risk.</p> <p>Key points included the improved financial position, work on safeguarding, the rewriting of the Business Continuity Plan, and plans to increase investment in IT infrastructure to reduce cyberattack risks.</p> <p>Discussions were held at the audit committee regarding the review of subcontracting arrangements to ensure compliance and effectiveness. A formal audit of subcontracting arrangements is planned, and further work is needed to improve student outcomes.</p>	

	<p>The financial health of the college is considered good. There will be a focus on both internal and external audits to maintain and improve financial stability.</p> <p>Governors inquired about the format of the risk register. The Principal confirmed that the same format as previously used is to be submitted to the next Audit committee and then to the Board.</p> <p>A governor asked whether both strategic and operational risks are being addressed. This was confirmed.</p> <p><i>The Governing Body resolved to note the strategic risk monitoring report.</i></p>	KM
7.	Finance & Resources	
7.1	<p>F&GP Committee Chair's Report</p> <p>The committee chair provided a summary of the F&GP Committee meeting, where the following reports were received: management accounts, estates, budget challenges, subcontracting audit, and financial regulations. Key points from the discussions included the positive financial outlook, the need for IT and infrastructure investment, a decline in HR absence rates, and discussions on financial regulations and approval limits.</p> <p>The committee chair reported that income is very positive. The college is on track to achieve an outstanding financial health rating. Regarding estates and IT investment, the committee received a report outlining the need to replace the sports pitch and all core IT switches that are out of warranty. It was reported that a bid for funding is being produced to replace the switches. Additional funding is also being sought to replace screens for plugging in laptops.</p> <p>The committee was advised that the Business Continuity Plan (BCP) is being rewritten to strengthen it.</p> <p>The committee chair advised of discussions at their meeting regarding increasing the sign-off limit for the Principal from £20k to £140k within the Financial Regulations to provide more autonomy and authority. Changes in the reserves policy were also discussed.</p> <p>Members of the governing body had a lengthy debate on the approval limits specified in the Financial Regulations. The Principal clarified that the point was to introduce a sign-off limit specifically for the Principal. The £20k limit mentioned is not for general expenditure but for single tender sign-off, which requires approval by the chair of the audit committee. The chair of the finance and general purposes committee inquired about the limit the board is expected to authorise. The Principal referenced the procurement threshold of £189,330, noting that a formal tendering process is required. This aligns with the ESFA's procurement rules and the Public Sector Procurement Act, ensuring transparency and compliance with regulations.</p> <p>A governor highlighted the difference between procurement and sign-off, emphasising that they are two different things and should not conflict. There is a clear distinction between the procurement process and the sign-off authority. The procurement process involves selecting suppliers and ensuring compliance with tendering rules, while the sign-off authority pertains to the approval of expenditure.</p>	

	<p>Governors stressed the need for clarity in the sign-off/approvals process to ensure staff have a clear understanding.</p> <p>The Principal committed to revisiting the Financial Regulations and providing clarity on the background of what has changed from the previous version.</p> <p><i>The Governing Body resolved to note the committee's update.</i></p>	KM
7.2	<p>January management accounts and end of year financial forecast</p> <p>The report provided a summary of the January management accounts, highlighting the positive financial outlook and the potential for achieving outstanding financial health. Key points included the reduction in costs, additional income generation, and the expectation of a significant cash position by year-end, before accounting for capital grants from the ESFA. Initial guidance indicates an increase in funding allocation for 2025/26, with a 3.78% increase per student, taking the funding to £5,026 per learner.</p> <p>The Principal expressed hesitation regarding the potential achievement of an outstanding financial health rating due to the need for investment in infrastructure. Challenges indicate that the college has available resources, but careful management is required.</p> <p><i>The Governing Body resolved to note the accounts.</i></p>	
7.3	<p>Potential 2025-26 Budget Challenges</p> <p>The Chief Finance Officer highlighted the expectation of an ESFA funding increase, the challenge of making a substantial pay award, and the importance of long-term financial sustainability. He reported that the funding increase will help the college's financial position and that there is an underspend on staffing, putting the college in a strong position. Governors inquired about staffing levels. The Principal mentioned under-recruitment and some vacancies.</p> <p>Governors emphasised the need for medium-term investment in infrastructure, IT, and facilities and suggested building up reserves to create a 3–5-year capital strategy for investment. Governors also questioned if appearing too financially healthy could be a concern for external bodies. The Principal noted that while colleges with reserves might be expected to return funds to the government, this has not happened yet. Additionally, the Principal highlighted the need for investment and the importance of balancing this with maintaining a sustainable financial position, ensuring that the college can meet both immediate and long-term needs.</p> <p>The Principal highlighted the importance of feedback from curriculum areas that is in progress regarding growth and needs. The need for a longer-term plan was stressed, with government grants shaping infrastructure investments. Governors suggested revisiting the topic at a future Finance & General Purposes Committee.</p> <p>A governor observed the principle of using funds wisely for current students while also saving for future investments.</p> <p>The Chair of the Audit Committee reflected on the reserves policy, questioning if building up to £7M is better than investing now and suggesting that the governing body may wish to defer approval of the policy until a longer-term investment plan is reviewed and approved.</p>	

	<p>The Chair of the Governing Body inquired about the current status of the investment plan. The Principal advised of the intention to outline the plan at the next Finance and General Purposes Committee, with input from curriculum teams.</p> <p>The governing body decided to defer approval of the policy until a reserve policy and a longer-term investment plan are reviewed together to ensure the right balance is achieved.</p> <p><i>The Governing resolved to note the report.</i></p>	
8.	Governance	
8.1	<p>P&G Committee Chair Report</p> <p>The Chair informed members that he was reporting from the last People and Governance Committee meeting in the absence of the regular chair. A report was included in the board pack outlining updates received at the committee, including workplace culture, staff CPD, EDI policy approval, leadership restructure, governor engagement, and governance self-assessment.</p> <p>The committee had undertaken a deep dive covering workplace culture. The Chair noted that the indicators did not point to a major concern; nevertheless, the committee had noted plans to improve the response rate to the staff survey and re-energise the staff forum as way of improving staff feedback. The committee had also enquired about staff attitudes towards tightening accountability and change related to the new strategic plan. governor questioned whether the survey environment feels safe for staff to submit honest responses and if the culture around the survey is appropriate. The Principal advised of concerns raised previously regarding the anonymity of the results and that steps had been taken to improve in this area.</p> <p>A governor asked the staff governor's thoughts on the survey. The staff governor mentioned advising staff not to complete the ethnicity checkbox previously if they felt uncomfortable doing so, and that changes in the survey questions had helped encourage staff to participate. A governor noted that some staff are suspicious of the reasons for using the survey responses, which is common in other organisations.</p> <p>The Chair asked the Director of Governance to share key points from the governance self-assessment survey. She advised that the survey outcome indicated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strong governance culture and effective board leadership. • The board is committed, works well with the Principal, and maintains strategic focus. • Effective coordination of governance support, with the board confident in meeting legal requirements and managing risks. <p>She also advised of useful suggestions given by respondents, which included topics for debate such as climate change and sustainability, and exploring opportunities for the college in relation to regionally devolved funding.</p> <p>Overall, the Board's performance grading was rated as good to excellent by survey respondents.</p> <p><i>The Governing Body resolved to note the report.</i></p>	
8.2	Board and Committee Membership Review and Succession Planning	

	<p>A report was provided summarising governing body membership, recent changes and succession planning. Highlights from the report included the appointment of Neil Ashton as Chair of Finance and General Purposes, the allocation of new members to committees, and the focus on long-term succession planning.</p> <p>Planning for succession to ensure the board continues to have the necessary expertise was highlighted as a key focus moving forward. Search and recruitment of new members to the Audit Committee in 2026 is planned to ensure continuity, when two members will come to the end of their terms of office.</p> <p><i>The Governing Body resolved to note the report.</i></p>	
9.	PART 2	
9.1	<p>Health and Safety Report</p> <p>There were no questions or concerns raised regarding the report.</p> <p><i>The Governing Body resolved to note the report.</i></p>	
9.2	<p>Schedule of Delegation</p> <p>The schedule was presented with the Director of Governance highlighting the review process, minor changes, and the new regulatory condition. It had been reviewed by the People and Governance Committee and was therefore submitted for Governing Body approval.</p> <p>Some minor changes were made to the wording for greater clarification however did not materially alter the requirements but provided better understanding.</p> <p>The inclusion of a new regulatory condition stipulated by the Office for Students regarding sexual harassment arrangements had been highlighted within the schedule, for information.</p> <p><i>The Governing Body resolved to approve the Schedule of Delegation.</i></p>	
9.3	<p>Annual Schedule of Governance Meetings</p> <p>The Director of Governance advised that the schedule had been reviewed at the People and Governance committee prior to submitting for Governing Body approval.</p> <p>One change was highlighted to the July 2026 board meeting, bringing it forward a week as it was originally after term had ended.</p> <p><i>The Governing Body resolved to approve the schedule of governance meetings.</i></p>	
9.4	<p>Policies for Approval</p> <p>A copy of the Financial Regulations and Financial Reserves Policy were submitted for approval.</p> <p><i>Governors advised returning to these policies at the next meeting.</i></p>	
10.	SUMMARY MATTERS	
10.1	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>There were no further matters highlighted for discussion.</p>	
11.	Date of Next Meeting	

	10 July 2025	
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Approved