

## Minutes of the Governing Body Meeting held on Thursday 23 October 2025 at 17:30-19:30, Jorvik Suite

<b>Present:</b>	Ian Looker (Chair) Helen Crews Dr Ann Lees Andrew Thomas James Farrar	Ken Merry Heidi Fraser-Krauss Julia Histon Neil Ashton (via MS Teams) Sheila Willis
<b>In Attendance:</b>	Carolyn Barker, Director of Governance David Hawkins, Interim Chief Finance Officer Victoria Lindberg, Director of Quality of Education Joy Kettyle, Deputy Principal/CEO Katharine Dent-Jones, Director of Curriculum: Further Education Sarah Leatherbarrow, Director of Marketing and External Partnerships Liam Garside, Director of Student & Apprentice Services Jackson Armstrong, Director of Higher Technical and Professional Education Louise Jones, Director of Information Services Oskar Mordal, Student Governor Ziemowit Hibner, Student Governor Fidelma Washington, Principal/CEO, Isle of Wight College (Observing)	
<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies for Absence / Declarations of Interest</b>	<b>Action</b>
1.1	<p>Apologies received from Dr Rob Hickey, Chris Leng, Victoria Inness and Harpal Sambhi and Matthew Rice.</p> <p>The Chair of the meeting was Ian Looker. He welcomed the student governors who were attending to observe their first Governing Body meeting. He welcomed Fidelma Washington to the meeting as she was visiting the college for a few days and observing the meeting.</p> <p>Notice of the meeting was given at least 7 days in advance. The meeting was quorate.</p> <p>The Chair advised that the agenda had been reformatted to reflect the strategic importance of certain items however due to declarations, the Staff Pay Award was moved to the end of the agenda to allow for discussion by independent governors. This adjustment was made to ensure that sufficient time and attention could be given to the strategic implications of the pay award within the broader context of college priorities and financial planning.</p>	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes of Previous Meeting – Thursday 10 July 2025</b>	
2.1	<p>Governors reviewed the minutes of the last meeting.</p> <p><i>The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.</i></p>	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b>	
3.1	<p><b>Action Summary</b></p> <p>It was noted that there were no uncompleted actions from the last meeting.</p>	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Strategic Matters</b>	
4.1	<b>Chair’s Update</b>	

	<p>The Chair provided a summary update to the Governing Body, including the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chair thanked all independent governors for their time over the summer in participating in one-to-one meetings. The feedback gathered was highly valuable and had been incorporated into the annual self-assessment process. The Chair confirmed that key themes arising from these discussions were shared with the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) and are being reviewed by the People &amp; Governance Committee. Overall, governors expressed satisfaction with the current direction and governance arrangements.</li> <li>• The Chair updated members on the recruitment of the Chief Operating Officer. Responsibility for the process was handed over to the Principal/CEO, and an extraordinary meeting of the Remuneration Committee was held to consider the appointment and remuneration offer. Following a highly competitive process, the role had been offered to a current member of the further education community from the RNN Group. The candidate has accepted the offer, and formal confirmation is to be provided once governor approval is communicated. It was agreed that David Hawkins would continue in the role on an interim basis until the new appointee joins the College in early 2026.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>The Governing Body resolved to note the update.</i></b></p>	
4.2	<p><b>Principal and Chief Executive's Report</b></p> <p>The Principal and Chief Executive's written report was assumed read. The Principal drew attention to several key items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The College's financial position remains under close review, with affordability modelling released earlier in the year informing current planning.</li> <li>• Principal highlighted the Labour Party's strong mandate following the general election and noted positive signals for Further Education (FE) funding. The £800 million referenced in Keir Starmer's speech was seen as a recommitment to existing funding, with Starmer described as a clear advocate for FE. However, concerns remain around qualification reform and the lack of parity in teachers' pay funding for colleges.</li> <li>• The reorganisation of the Curriculum and Student Management (CSM) structure came into effect on 4 November and is already having a positive impact on student outcomes and experience. Staff passion and commitment were noted as contributing factors.</li> <li>• A new partnership with York Knights was noted. The relationship is developing positively.</li> <li>• Victoria Lindberg has been appointed to represent Yorkshire and Humber, supporting sector-wide development. The Principal continues to represent the College in regional and national forums, including LSIP and LSIF boards.</li> </ul> <p>Discussion took place regarding growth funding and the College's position relative to the DfE threshold of 100 students. It was confirmed that no in-year funding had been received yet, although the Department for Education have released their 'growth funding methodology' which suggests there is funding available for colleges who recruit higher than expected numbers.</p> <p>Governors discussed the implications of the white paper, including the future of V Levels and the potential impact of Technical Excellence Colleges. The Principal advised that the College is launching a mixed offer and will monitor developments closely, particularly around definitions and investment risks.</p>	

	<p>The Principal confirmed that the date for the Christmas dinner is being finalised.</p> <p><b><i>The Governing Body resolved to note the report and the verbal update provided.</i></b></p>	
4.3	<p><b>Strategic Plan Scorecard</b></p> <p>The Principal introduced the first draft of the Strategic Plan Scorecard, noting that it is an evolving document designed to visually represent performance against the Strategic Plan targets. The use of “progress doughnuts” was explained as a way to show progress across four categories: Brilliant, Getting There, Needs Help, and Needs Intervention. He welcomed feedback via email and highlighted that the scorecard is accompanied by the Strategic Plan Implementation Roadmap.</p> <p>A governor challenged whether staff in “Needs Help” areas had been adequately informed and supported to improve performance. The Principal responded that further communication may be required to clarify expectations.</p> <p>A governor queried the rationale and planned actions for areas marked “Needs Intervention,” specifically around sustainability. The Principal outlined potential interventions including compulsory carbon literacy for students, and that a decision would be on the level of financial investment to support this.</p> <p>A discussion followed on solar panel performance, with the Interim Chief Finance Officer noting that financial statements will include a note on this, as current reporting is approximately 20% down compared to the previous year. A governor advised that sustainability reporting involves different scopes and asked about the College’s previous reporting. The staff governor confirmed that a base line had been established during initial assessments and reporting is within scope 1 and 2.</p> <p>Governors noted the importance of continued monitoring and welcomed the visual approach to tracking strategic progress. The Board was assured that further updates will be provided at future meetings.</p>	
4.4	<p><b>Academic Results 2024-25</b></p> <p>The Board received the Academic Results 2024–25 report, introduced by the Director of Quality of Education. The Chair invited reflection on the annual results and their implications. The director expressed pride in the outcomes, noting headline improvements both compared to the previous year and against national averages.</p> <p>While most areas showed positive progress, it was acknowledged that T Level pass rates, which were exceptionally high last year, were difficult to match. GCSE results showed positive movement, with further improvement anticipated next year. A notable highlight was a 10.1 percentage point improvement in achievement for the 16–18 cohort over two years, which is significant given the size of this group.</p> <p>The Principal reported an 18% improvement in apprenticeship achievement rates, reflecting strong quality in a growing area of provision. Specific work is underway to support current and future T Level tutors in improving outcomes.</p>	

	<p>The Chair of Quality and Curriculum Committee welcomed the results, recognising the hard work of staff and requested that the Chair of the Board send a message of appreciation to staff. A governor asked how student achievement had been celebrated and recognised by the college. The Principal confirmed that celebratory activities including postcards and media coverage, notably from Look North.</p> <p>A governor commented on the importance of fostering a culture where students thrive, and a student governor shared a personal reflection on the inspirational impact of the College's achievements, particularly in apprenticeships.</p> <p>The Director of Information Services provided an update on student recruitment, reporting strong numbers in the 16–18 cohort, currently around 4,100 and expected to reach approximately 4,050. Growth funding is anticipated, with the Principal estimating a potential £630k based on previous methodology (but subject to change). Recruitment growth is spread across vocational areas rather than A Levels, with demographic data showing a slight increase and the college's growth being greater than that, indicating a growth in market share.</p> <p>The Director of Information Services also reported a positive start for adult learners, with increased funding across three contracts and strong apprenticeship performance. HE numbers were noted to be slightly down, with ongoing work to address this. The staff governor advised 964 adult learners enrolled under the Advanced Learner Loan.</p> <p>A governor challenged the effectiveness of enrolment support in reducing withdrawals and transfers. The Principal explained the revised approach and its positive impact.</p> <p>The Director of Student and Apprentice Services raised SEN learner support, with a governor and the Director of Curriculum: Further Education confirming new frameworks and project funding to support transition. A governor raised concerns about the downward trend in HE enrolments and questioned the College's strategy to address this. The Principal outlined plans for better alignment and new partnerships.</p> <p><b><i>The Governing Body noted the report and welcomed the improvements, while recognising areas for continued focus and development.</i></b></p>	
4.5	<p><b>Staff Pay Award</b></p> <p>This item was taken as the last point on the agenda. The staff governor and members of the Strategic Leadership Team left the meeting. Ann Lees left the meeting.</p> <p>The Governing Body received the Staff Pay Award paper, presented by the Principal in the absence of the Director of Human Resources, outlining the context and considerations for the 2025/26 pay award, effective from 1 January 2026.</p> <p>The paper provided benchmarking data comparing York College's tutor salaries with other regional colleges and national averages. York College's average FTE salary currently stands at £40,205, above the national average of £34,700.</p>	

	<p>The AoC's 2025/26 pay recommendation is 4%, subject to affordability, while the joint union pay claim includes a 10% or £3,000 increase, Foundation Living Wage accreditation, and workload reforms. York College had historically met or exceeded AoC recommendations.</p> <p>The Governing Body noted that the College had budgeted for a 5% consolidated pay award from January 2026, alongside a £350 gross staff wellbeing payment in December 2025, and an uplift for the lowest paid staff to the Foundation Living Wage. The total staffing cost increase for 2025/26 is £1.72m, including a £200k vacancy factor.</p> <p>The Governing Body was informed of a formal dispute notice from UCU following the College's commitment to commence pay negotiations after half term. A ballot for industrial action is underway, with potential strike action possible before the end of term or early in the new year.</p> <p>The Governing Body noted the contents of the paper, pending negotiations with recognised trade unions and in line with the College's legal obligation to undertake collective bargaining on pay. The Governing Body were supportive in principle of the proposal and highlighted their role to scrutinise and challenge pending a decision in December.</p>	
<b>5.</b>	<b>Quality Education and Students</b>	
5.1	<p><b>Q&amp;C Committee Chair's Report</b></p> <p>The Chair of the Quality &amp; Curriculum Committee provided an overview of the first meeting of the academic cycle, held on 23 September 2025. The Committee undertook a deep dive into Additional Learning Support (ALS), receiving assurance that a strong start had been made under the new leadership structure. The integration of ALS with curriculum areas was noted as a positive development, with clear reporting lines and support mechanisms now in place.</p> <p>Increased workload had been highlighted in ALS, particularly due to a 20% rise in students with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). The Committee was reassured that this area, which had previously not received sufficient attention, is now benefiting from focused work led by the Deputy Principal. Progress is being tracked through defined check-in points at the beginning and end of the support process, with continued close monitoring.</p> <p>The Committee had welcomed the improvements and acknowledged the strategic and purposeful approach being taken to ensure quality and inclusivity in curriculum delivery.</p> <p><b><i>The Governing Body resolved to note the report.</i></b></p>	
5.2	<p><b>Student Experience Report</b></p> <p>The Director of Student &amp; Apprentice Services, presented the Student Experience Report, highlighting a range of developments focused on wellbeing, student engagement, and enrichment.</p> <p>He reported that retention among students receiving wellbeing support was exceptionally high, with a 97% retention rate. The College hosted a Wellbeing Festival and introduced 24/7 mental health support via Spectrum Life. Suicide awareness workshops and exam decompression activities were also delivered in response to student feedback.</p> <p>Student engagement was strengthened through the Student Union and Student Champions initiatives. Events were held across the College, including themed engagement weeks and Student Champion lunches with</p>	

	<p>governors and senior leaders. The Student Union played an active role in campaigning on local issues, engaging with MPs, and contributing to EDI-focused events.</p> <p>New Student Union roles have been introduced to support targeted work on equality, diversity, and inclusion, with additional staff support planned. A qualitative data review is underway to better understand student feedback and impact.</p> <p>A governor asked for clarification on the scope and impact of enrichment activities. The director explained the range of events and their role in enhancing student experience.</p> <p>The Chair noted the breadth of activity and welcomed the report, acknowledging the College's commitment to creating a positive and inclusive environment for students.</p> <p><b><i>The Governing Body resolved to note the report.</i></b></p>	
5.3	<p><b>Safeguarding Report</b></p> <p>The Director of Student &amp; Apprentice Services presented the Safeguarding Report for the academic year 2024–25, supported by the Safeguarding &amp; Wellbeing Manager. The report highlighted the scale and impact of safeguarding activity, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1,016 CPOMS cases managed and support provided to 662 individual students.</li> <li>• 58 external referrals to agencies such as Social Care, IDAS, and the Halo Project.</li> <li>• Attendance at 13 multi-agency meetings.</li> <li>• Delivery of 41 awareness events covering topics such as hate crime, sexual violence, knife crime, and Prevent.</li> <li>• Receipt of the Leaders in Safeguarding GOLD Award, recognising excellence in safeguarding provision.</li> </ul> <p>The director noted the integration of student experience and safeguarding functions, reflecting the crossover between the two areas. York Mind has been introduced on-site five days a week to reduce reliance on internal staff. The College is also preparing to launch the “Call it Out” campaign to challenge inappropriate behaviours.</p> <p>A governor raised a query regarding bursary budget allocation, noting that the 2024–25 figures appeared to show underspend. The Principal confirmed that some of the bursary spend in 2024-25 had been self-funded by the college to enable the bursary reserves to be built up slightly. The director confirmed an increase in student applications, and the Chair of the Governing Body noted this had been discussed at the Quality &amp; Curriculum Committee. The Principal added that a grant application had been received from the Williams Trust to support vocational students.</p> <p>The Principal placed on record his thanks to the Safeguarding Manager and team for their achievement of the GOLD Award and the progress made in safeguarding. Governors echoed this appreciation.</p> <p>The Chair of Audit Committee also noted that the internal audit had resulted in no recommendations, further affirming the robustness of safeguarding practices.</p>	

	<b><i>The Board noted the report and commended the team for their continued commitment to student welfare and safety.</i></b>	
<b>6.</b>	<b>Audit &amp; Risk</b>	
6.1	<p><b>Audit Committee Chair's Report</b></p> <p>The Chair of the Audit Committee provided an overview of the September meeting. The Committee reviewed and approved the Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26, with cyber security identified as a key focus area in light of recent sector-wide concerns. The plan also included audits on payroll and curriculum planning, with only minor issues identified in the payroll audit.</p> <p>The Committee received the follow-up audit report, which confirmed that 79% of previous recommendations had been implemented. A governor scrutinised the implementation rate of audit recommendations, seeking assurance on outstanding actions. The Chair clarified the status and improvement compared to previous years.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the internal auditors' overall assurance rating of "reasonable assurance." While this was the highest rating available, members felt it did not fully reflect the positive findings and substantial assurance noted in several areas.</p> <p>The Business Continuity Plan (BCP) remains a follow-up action. The Committee Chair noted that it continues to be reviewed as other related areas are identified. A cyber-attack simulation is planned for the current term to test resilience.</p> <p>The Committee also considered the annual effectiveness review and approved updates to its Terms of Reference. Areas for improvement included succession planning, ensuring staff voice is considered in audit challenges, and clarifying committee composition.</p> <p>The outcome of the external audit by RSM is expected to be presented at the November meeting.</p> <p><b><i>The Governing Body resolved to note the report.</i></b></p>	
6.2	<p><b>Strategic Risk Monitoring</b></p> <p>The Principal presented the updated Strategic Risk Register, noting that the format remains consistent with previous iterations and is revisited periodically by the Strategic Leadership Team and relevant committees.</p> <p>Positive developments were highlighted, including a reduction in the residual risk rating for Core Purpose, following strong student and apprentice results in Summer 2025. Similarly, the risk rating for Financial Sustainability had been lowered due to a robust budget position and increased 16–18 recruitment, which is expected to positively impact income for 2026/27.</p> <p>The Principal confirmed that the College had received its formal letter from the Department for Education earlier in the week regarding Subcontracting. The outcome removes the College from audit requirements for the next three years, allowing continued delivery without DfE restrictions. This was welcomed as a significant assurance.</p> <p><b><i>The Governing Body noted the report and the positive direction of travel across key strategic risks.</i></b></p>	
<b>7.</b>	<b>Finance &amp; Resources</b>	

7.1	<p><b>2024/25 Draft Financial Statements</b></p> <p>The Interim Chief Finance Officer presented the draft Financial Statements for 2024/25, noting that items 7.1 and 7.2 were considered together. The College is reporting a positive financial position, with an operating surplus of £82k prior to year-end pension accounting entries. This compares favourably to the projected £17k surplus reported in June.</p> <p>The external audit fieldwork by RSM had been completed, and while minor adjustments may follow as part of their review and final income reconciliation for adult funding and apprenticeships, the statements were substantially complete and would progress to the relevant committees for review.</p> <p><b><i>The Governing Body noted the report and welcomed the early completion and positive financial outcome.</i></b></p>	
7.2	<p><b>Management Accounts Pd 12 2024/25 and Initial Financial Position 2025/26</b></p> <p>The Interim Chief Finance Officer presented the Management Accounts for Period 12 and the initial financial position for 2025/26. The Board noted an operating surplus of £82k for 2024/25 and a healthy cash balance of £6.5m, including £1.5m in restricted capital grant funding.</p> <p>The Interim Chief Finance Officer highlighted that much of the financial improvement was driven by strong apprenticeship income, which is forecast to reach approximately £5m. Early projections for 2025/26 suggest apprenticeship income will exceed budget by over £300k.</p> <p>Positive news was shared regarding the Local Government Pension Scheme triannual review. From April 2026, the employer contribution rate will reduce from 20% to 6.3%, reflecting the fund's strong performance and the College's reclassification as a public sector body, which lowers its risk profile.</p> <p>Growth in student numbers was also noted as a positive factor. However, challenges remain in delivering support for High Needs learners, with ongoing work to secure funding from local authorities.</p> <p>The Chair of the Governing Body noted for members that they will receive the full Financial Statements at the next meeting.</p> <p><b><i>The Board noted the report and welcomed the positive financial outlook, while recognising areas requiring continued attention.</i></b></p>	
8.	<b>PART 2</b>	
8.1	<p><b>Health and Safety Report</b></p> <p>The Principal introduced the Health and Safety Report, noting a continued downward trajectory in accident statistics year-on-year, which reflects the College's strong health and safety culture and management. Governors welcomed the positive trend and acknowledged that further progress is still being pursued.</p> <p>The Principal confirmed that a replacement Health and Safety Manager had been appointed, with a planned handover to ensure a seamless transition following the departure of the current postholder.</p>	



	<p>The principal issue highlighted was the 3G pitch, which is currently being re-laid. While this has been a concern, the matter is being actively addressed, with completion expected by 20 November.</p> <p><b><i>Governors asked that their thanks be passed on to the Health and Safety team for their continued efforts and improvements in this area.</i></b></p>	KM
8.2	<p><b>Approval of committee recommended documents</b></p> <p>The Board received a set of documents recommended for approval following review by the relevant committees. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Updated Terms of Reference for the People &amp; Governance Committee and the Audit Committee.</li> <li>• Revised Schedules of Business for the Quality &amp; Curriculum, Audit, Finance &amp; General Purposes, and People &amp; Governance Committees.</li> </ul> <p>All documents had been scrutinised by their respective committees, with tracked changes available for reference. A governor highlighted a date error in the People &amp; Governance Committee schedule due to recent rescheduling of one meeting. The schedule is to be updated accordingly.</p> <p><b><i>The Governing Body approved the documents, subject to the noted amendment.</i></b></p>	CB
8.3	<p><b>HE Validation Options</b></p> <p>The Principal presented a report seeking governor approval to proceed with a new Higher Education validation arrangement and to delegate authority to the Principal to sign the agreement with the selected partner.</p> <p>The proposal recommended York St John University (YSJ) as the new validation partner, replacing current arrangements with The Open University and the University of Huddersfield. The YSJ proposal includes validation of all existing and planned HE provision, a three-year agreement with no upfront fee, and an annual cost of £140,000 for up to 200 students, with additional benefits for staff and students.</p> <p>The Chair of the Governing Body welcomed the proposal but suggested that governors would be more comfortable if a governor were involved in the selection process. The Principal confirmed that the recommendation had been informed by an external consultant's report and extensive engagement with YSJ. The Chair of the Governing Body supported the delegation of authority to the Principal, subject to governor involvement in future decision-making stages.</p> <p>A governor questioned the suitability of YSJ as a validation partner for specialist programmes such as Media Make-up. The Principal confirmed YSJ's capacity to support validation through relevant expertise.</p> <p>The Governing Body agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To proceed with the proposed change in validation partner.</li> <li>• To delegate authority to the Principal to sign a three-year agreement with YSJ (or another university, subject to procurement outcomes), up to a value of £430,000.</li> <li>• That a governor should be involved in the final decision-making process, particularly if alternative providers respond to the VEAT notice.</li> </ul>	

	<b><i>Governors asked that their support for the proposal be recorded, and that thanks be passed to the team for progressing this work.</i></b>	KM
8.4	<p><b>Approval of PadelPro proposal</b> The Principal presented the proposal to enter into a lease agreement with PadelPros for the redevelopment of the disused tennis courts at the Sim Balk Lane campus. The proposal includes the construction of five padel courts, a clubhouse, and external seating under a 25-year lease, with a projected opening in Spring 2026.</p> <p>He confirmed that the proposal had been discussed with the Department for Education (DfE) regarding compliance with Managing Public Money requirements. It was advised that the arrangement does not constitute a disposal of assets and is not considered novel or contentious.</p> <p>Governors challenged the proposal on grounds of noise impact, opportunity cost and reputational considerations. The Principal responded with planning mitigation, alternative site options and communication plans.</p> <p><b>Following discussion, the Governing Body resolved to approve the proposal in principle, subject to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirmation of any required DfE approval.</li> <li>• Finalisation of legal and technical due diligence.</li> <li>• Delegation of authority to the Principal and Interim Chief Finance Officer to execute the agreement for lease and subsequent lease.</li> </ul> <p><b><i>Governors asked that their thanks be recorded for the work undertaken to bring the proposal forward.</i></b></p>	
8.5	<p><b>York Knights Partnership document</b> The Principal presented the York Knights sponsorship proposal, noting that the opportunity had been shared in advance with the Chairs of the Audit and Finance &amp; General Purposes Committees due to the value being slightly above the Principal's delegated authority. The proposal was approved by both committee representatives and was therefore presented to the Governing Body for information only.</p> <p>The sponsorship involves York College becoming the back-of-shirt sponsor for the York Knights first team during the 2025/26 season, at a discounted rate. The arrangement aligns with the College's marketing strategy and builds on the existing partnership with the club, including the York College x York Knights player development academy.</p> <p>The Principal confirmed that the proposal had been reviewed against the Department for Education's Managing Public Money guidance. It was advised that the sponsorship is not considered novel or contentious.</p> <p><b><i>The Governing Body noted the proposal and the assurance provided through external consultation and committee-level approval.</i></b></p>	
	<b>SUMMARY MATTERS</b>	
9.	<p><b>Any Other Business</b> There were no other matters discussed.</p>	
10.	<b>Date of Next Meeting – 4 December 2025</b>	