



Minutes of the People and Governance Committee held on 5 March 2025 at 5.30pm, Jorvik Suite

Present:	Ian Looker, Chair of Governors Ann Lees, Independent Governor Julia Histon, Independent Governor Ken Merry, Principal and Chief Executive	
In Attendance:	Carolyn Barker, Director of Governance Chris Leng, Director of Human Resources Victoria Lindberg, Director of Quality of Education Jackson Armstrong, Director of Curriculum: Higher, Technical & Professional Education	
1.	Apologies for Absence / Declarations of Interest	Action
1.1	Apologies were received from Libby Bush (Chair) and Helen Crews.	
1.2	There were no declarations of interest. The Chair of the meeting was Ian Looker. Notice of the meeting was given at least 7 days in advance. The meeting was quorate.	
2.	Minutes of Previous Meeting	
2.1	Members considered the minutes from the 18 November 2024. The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record. <i>The Committee resolved to approve the minutes of 18 November 2024.</i>	
3.	Matters Arising	
3.1	Action Summary There was one action outstanding to raise the matter of colleges not being able to record EDI data (non-binary category for example) into ESFA's reporting systems. This is to be raised at the next college/ESFA meeting. All other actions were recorded as complete.	
3.2	Any other Matters Arising There were no other matters arising.	
4.	Committee Assurance Review	
4.1	Line of Inquiry – Workplace Culture The Committee received a report to scrutinise the various factors contributing to workplace culture at York College. Its aim was to assess the current state of workplace culture through key metrics such as absence rates, ethnicity, disability, turnover rates, industrial relations, staff survey results, pay and conditions, and staff wellbeing. The report highlighted the importance of a healthy workplace culture in achieving strategic objectives and maintaining staff engagement. It provided an analysis of key metrics, indicating an overall RAG rating of Amber bordering on	

	<p>Green. It also discussed the challenges in accurately measuring workplace culture due to factors like low staff survey response rates. Recommendations included increasing survey participation to better gauge staff perceptions and improve the overall assessment of workplace culture.</p> <p>The Chair provided background to members on the purpose of assurance reviews, noting that workplace culture is not the easiest to analyse. The Director of Human Resources then shared his perspective on the current state of workplace culture, attempting to quantify it by identifying key themes and metrics. He highlighted the importance of increasing the staff survey response rate to obtain a better range of data.</p> <p>Governors found the report very helpful and acknowledged the difficulty in measuring workplace culture. They noted that ratings around 80% were considered to be positive compared to other organisations and questioned the need for more survey responses, suggesting that a 40% response rate seems reasonable. Overall, governors felt the report indicated an improvement in workplace culture. The Director of Human Resources agreed that a 40% response rate is statistically reliable, but he emphasised the goal of achieving a 50%+ response rate to better understand staff opinions and deliver on their needs. He mentioned that feedback from tutors suggests York is a good place to work, despite ongoing discussions with unions about workload. He also noted that the college has provided more flexibility in how staff manage their time.</p> <p>The Principal raised the question of whether the turnover rate is healthy, discussing staff movement to other roles for various reasons and higher turnover in specialist areas. The Director of Quality of Education highlighted feedback she was aware of from staff that have expressed interest in the brilliance plan and that they appear invested in its success.</p> <p>The Chair inquired about the reception of tightened accountability through the restructuring of the College Leadership Team. The Principal responded that managers are now clearer on their accountability, and more difficult discussions are being held, though the impact on performance is not yet evident. He expects to see a shift by the end of the year as managers apply better management actions.</p> <p>Governors emphasised the importance of having wellbeing support in place during times when managers are having difficult conversations with staff. The presence of support groups for women was noted with governors suggesting consideration of more diverse (gender balanced) support groups. The Director of Human Resources acknowledged the existing wellbeing support and agreed it was worth further consideration.</p> <p>A governor felt the report missed the culture between staff and students, questioning the prevalence of complaints. The Director of Human Resources admitted it is challenging to capture that aspect definitively but noted that staff understand the need to manage student behaviours. He emphasised the importance of ongoing dialogue with staff to identify areas for improvement. An example of managing students presenting with challenging behaviours was provided by the Director of Curriculum: Higher, Technical & Professional Education with reference to the approach taken by the staff governor who is a tutor in construction.</p>	
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	<i>The committee thanked the Director of Human Resources for the comprehensive report.</i>	
5.	Strategic Plan Implementation	
5.1	<p>Strategic Plan KPI Scorecard</p> <p>The Committee received an updated copy of the scorecard for scrutiny. The Chair asked whether the KPIs would evolve from the new strategic plan. It was confirmed that they would.</p> <p><i>The committee resolved to note the report.</i></p>	
6.	People	
6.1	<p>Staff CPD Report</p> <p>The Director of Quality of Education referenced the ongoing tutor CPD initiatives. She highlighted the upcoming staff development observation cycle and the focused work with Curriculum and Standards Managers (CSMs) following Progress Check 3. She also mentioned the strong contributions from Abby Parkin, Head of Digital Innovation, who recently joined the team, and the successful training day held the previous week, which included sessions from external facilitators. A key session focused on personalised learning for tutors, helping them adapt their teaching styles.</p> <p>Governors inquired about the success measures for the Teaching, Learning, and Assessment (TLA) team, noting that the same statement had been used for some time and therefore progress was questioned. The Director of Quality of Education acknowledged the difficulty in designing success measures but emphasised ongoing efforts to show improvements. She explained that without grading or RAG rating, it is challenging to demonstrate the impact of their work, which is often reflected in qualitative data within the quality report. Governors suggested that achievement results at the end of the year might be the only tangible measure. The Director of Quality of Education assured that further information would be presented at the next Quality and Curriculum Committee meeting.</p> <p>Governors questioned the absence of RAG ratings and how teachers receive feedback on their performance. The Director of Quality of Education explained that feedback is developmental, consisting of verbal and written comments highlighting key strengths, areas for improvement, and actionable steps.</p> <p>Governors asked about the organisational development plan's alignment with the strategic plan, questioning whether it referred to a wider people strategy or an organisational development strategy. The Principal clarified that it encompasses both aspects and that the Director of Human Resources is currently working on it, with further details to be provided at the next meeting. It was stated that the goal is to ensure the plan is integrated with the strategic plan rather than being a standalone document.</p> <p><i>The committee resolved to note the report.</i></p> <p>The Director of Quality of Education and Director of Curriculum: Higher, Technical & Professional Education left the meeting at 18:15.</p>	
6.2	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion update and policy approval	

	<p>The Director of Human Resources presented the updated EDI policy, highlighting the sharper focus and reduced length compared to the previous version, aiming for greater clarity. He emphasised the intention to broaden the scope of the committee's work.</p> <p>Governors commented that while the policy is adequate, it could apply to any college and suggested that it should reflect York College's unique identity. They recommended linking the policy to the Brilliance Plan objectives and ensuring that EDI is integrated into all aspects of York College's operations. Governors also noted that the policy should capture any relevant regulatory frameworks.</p> <p><i>The committee agreed that, subject to personalisation, they were happy to approve the policy.</i></p> <p>The Director of Human Resources agreed to update the policy accordingly and circulate it to the EDI Committee for feedback prior to approval.</p>	CL
6.3	<p>Union meetings update including minutes of JCNC meetings</p> <p>The Director of Human Resources reported that the relationship with unions remains healthy. The Chair noted that workload is frequently mentioned in union communications and asked if there is a wider concern within the college. The Director of Human Resources responded that he is not aware of significant complaints and that the college has addressed workload issues, which were part of a dispute over a year ago. He advised that he does not see any tangible evidence that the workload is excessive, although teaching work is inherently challenging. The college remains open to suggestions for improvement and this view has been shared with the unions.</p> <p>The Chair inquired if there is an indication of actual staff working hours compared to contracted. The Principal confirmed that there is a staff utilisation report, shared with the Finance and General Purposes Committee that shows that most teachers are close to their contracted hours but not exceeding them. He explained that while some staff may occasionally work beyond their contracted hours, particularly around exam times, there are flexibilities in annual leave and start/end times of the working day. The Principal advised that the current approach to workload management seems to work well, and a review will be conducted at the end of the year.</p> <p>A governor raised a concern regarding the change to timetabling, which was mentioned as a point of contention at a student union lunch and noted as non-negotiable in the union minutes. She questioned why there is dissatisfaction among students. The Principal explained that the new timetable allows students to start a little later, providing a buffer for both students and staff. The timetable switch, including doubling up lunch periods, aims to create more space for students following concerns being raised last year of a lack of space. He acknowledged that any new timetable takes time to settle, and it is the second-year students who can find it challenging but that moving forward, it will become the norm. The Principal agreed to explore the issue further to understand the concerns, noting that they do not appear in student surveys.</p> <p>Governors referenced a comment in the union minutes to knives in college, which had not been previously discussed. The Principal advised that it was</p>	KM

	<p>mentioned in the minutes but is not a particular concern. Governors raised questions about security measures and emphasised the need to avoid complacency. They mentioned a planned lockdown drill that they had noticed displayed as you enter college. They asked if staff feel threatened. The Director of Human Resources responded that staff do not usually feel threatened and are trained on how to approach students and de-escalate situations.</p> <p><i>The committee resolved to note the minutes of meetings held with unions.</i></p>	
6.4	<p>Leadership restructure update</p> <p>The Principal provided a verbal update on the restructure of the College Leadership Team, effective from November 4th. The process involved 22 people, and aimed to provide progression opportunities and create smaller areas of responsibility to clarify accountabilities. He explained that no one lost their job, although some were appointed to different roles, which allowed for clearer accountability. A dashboard is being produced to monitor retention, cost-to-income ratio, performance, etc.</p> <p>The Principal also mentioned that a wider range of support is being put in place for Curriculum and Standards Managers (CSMs), with events planned off-site. One of the recent events focused on curriculum planning.</p> <p>The Director of Human Resources noted that since the restructure the enthusiasm from managers and their commitment to applying college policies accordingly has been positive.</p> <p>The Chair inquired if there were any grievances, complaints, or appeals resulting from the process. The Principal confirmed that there were none.</p> <p><i>The committee resolved to note the update.</i></p> <p>The Director of Human Resources left the meeting at 18.50.</p>	
7.	Corporate Governance and Assurance	
7.1	<p>Governing Body Membership Review and Succession Planning</p> <p>The committee received a report covering membership and succession planning. The purpose was to ensure effective governance by reviewing the current membership of the Governing Body and its committees, and planning for medium to long-term succession. The report outlined recent changes in membership and asked members to discuss committee allocations and address succession planning challenges.</p> <p>The paper emphasised the importance of maintaining continuity of membership and effective governance. It suggested immediate actions, such as appointing a committee chair and allocating new members to committees, as well as medium to long-term strategies for succession planning.</p> <p>Members discussed the membership of the Audit Committee and the need to consider succession planning when Andrew Thomas and John Ennis' terms of office end in 2026. A governor suggested considering if there is anyone within professional networks who might be encouraged to join the board but noted,</p>	

	<p>following discussion and reference to the expressions of interest pipeline, that there didn't appear to be anyone with the necessary accountancy experience.</p> <p>A governor proposed having more frequent observers from other committees join alternative committees to share their expertise, referencing the matched skills and experience of the two new independent governors. Governors discussed the impact of Libby Bush's departure and suggested Helen Crews chair the People and Governance Committee for a one-year period, followed by succession planning to ensure someone with the necessary knowledge and background is ready in the short term. The Chair advised that a conversation had already been held with Helen Crews to ascertain her interest in taking on the role on an interim basis, and she had confirmed her willingness.</p> <p>Regarding the allocation of new independent governors to committees, <i>it was agreed that David Boot would join the Finance and General Purposes (F&GP) Committee, and James Farrar would join the Audit Committee.</i> The committee agreed to use the expertise of these members to observe and strengthen the Audit Committee as part of the next round of recruitment.</p> <p><i>Helen Crews was approved as the chair of the People and Governance Committee from the end of July 2025.</i></p>	
7.2	<p>Governor engagement (training and attendance)</p> <p>The committee received a report on governor engagement, covering attendance and training. training requirements for governors was provided with the report. The Director of Governance advised that it was pleasing to report that overall attendance rates are currently at 88% year to date, a significant improvement from the 80% attendance rate at the same point last year.</p> <p>In terms of compliance training, good progress was being made, and work is ongoing to create streamlined and specific compliance training modules for governors, with a priority on safeguarding and prevent training. The Director of Governance also highlighted the recent opportunity for governors at their seminar in February to hear from PS Hallowell from North Yorkshire Police on Prevent.</p> <p><i>The committee noted the attendance record and the progress on compliance training.</i> A document highlighting the mandatory and recommended</p>	
7.3	<p>Governance Self-Assessment Report and QIP</p> <p>The committee received the Annual Governance Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). Overall, the recent self-assessment exercise yielded a very positive outcome.</p> <p>The survey 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>Respondents provided useful feedback highlighting opportunities for improvement:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on succession planning and recruitment to fill skills gaps and enhance diversity. • Ensure adequate time for open discussions during board meetings. • Consider specific topics suggested by survey respondents for future discussions. <p>In terms of the Governance Quality Improvement Plan the Director of Governance advised that good progress had been made in responding to the actions set following the external governance review in 2023. The plan had been updated with suggested actions based on the recent survey outcomes.</p> <p>A governor questioned a respondent's rating where they had disagreed with a question, she asked for further clarification. The Director of Governance advised that she could look closer at the spreadsheet data to ascertain the detail but from recollection thought it wouldn't have been significant to include in the report for members.</p> <p>Governors were pleased that engagement with students had improved significantly, referencing discussions with the new Director of Students and Apprentice Services.</p> <p><i>The committee noted the positive outcome of the self-assessment exercise and agreed on the recommended actions included in the Quality Improvement Plan however asked that further consideration should be given to the action referencing building improved stakeholder relationships.</i></p>	CB
7.4	<p>Governor Internal Review Action Plan</p> <p>The Principal provided an update on the Governor Internal Review Action Plan, highlighting the progress made. He advised that while some actions are still being worked on, significant progress has been achieved, with only three actions remaining. The review of a whistleblowing reporting system is in progress and will be considered at the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) meeting in early March, with plans to explore the option of extending it to students and apprentices.</p> <p>The Principal also mentioned ongoing efforts to improve performance development reviews (PDRs) and the use of CollegelP, aiming for a more effective PDR process. The final action being addressed is the capacity in the HR department. He advised that an administrator supervisor had been appointed, and the team is expected to be fully staffed by the next report. Significant progress has been made in this area.</p> <p>A governor raised a point regarding the action on page 12 of the report about ensuring advisory capacity in the HR team. She emphasised the need to consider whether the staff member would have the confidence and capabilities to report to the SLT any wrongdoing issues. The Principal responded that a process of regular reporting from HR regarding exit interviews has been put in place to allow the SLT to review and consider any emerging themes.</p> <p><i>The committee resolved to note the progress being made on the action plan.</i></p>	
8.	Policy and Other Matters	

8.1	<p>Adoption of the New Association of Colleges Code of Good Governance</p> <p>The Director of Governance presented a report outlining the approach for the board to adopt the new Association of Colleges (AoC) Code of Good Governance. She highlighted that the new code, which is principles-based, replaces the older version that has been retired. She also mentioned that adopting the new code is crucial to ensure alignment with best practices and compliance with current regulatory requirements.</p> <p>The proposed approach to adopting the code involves assessing the college's current governance practices against the new code to identify any gaps or areas for improvement. The Director of Governance recommended involving governors in the process to ensure a robust and impartial assessment.</p> <p>Governors were happy with the suggested approach and queried the type of involvement needed. The Director of Governance explained that a significant portion of the assessment would be completed by herself to make the best use of governors' time, and therefore governors would be required to provide challenge and support through the exercise. The Director of Governance advised that she contact all governors to seek volunteers to support the assessment against the new code.</p> <p><i>The committee resolved to adopt the proposed assessment approach and the involvement of one or more governors in the assessment process.</i></p>	
8.2	<p>Schedule of Delegation</p> <p>The Director of Governance advised members of the annual review of the schedule and proposed changes highlighted in the report. The following points were noted -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-referencing of the schedule with the requirements of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), the Office for Students (OfS), and the Department for Education (DfE). • A few minor wording changes to the main delegations spreadsheet to provide greater clarification (highlighted for ease of reference). • OfS spreadsheet tab indicating minor role description changes and added the new OfS Condition E6 regarding sexual harassment and misconduct. <p>The committee was requested to recommend the approval of the updated Schedule of Delegation to the Board.</p> <p><i>The committee resolved to recommend the approval of the updated Schedule of Delegation to the Board.</i></p>	
8.3	<p>Annual Schedule of Governance Meetings</p> <p>The Director of Governance presented the annual schedule of governance meetings for 2025/26. Since sharing the draft schedule via email, she advised that there have been some very minor adjustments to the meeting dates in June and September.</p> <p>The committee considered the schedule and requested the following changes and checks to be completed prior to recommending approval to the Governing Body –</p>	CB

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check the availability of those governors who also have board responsibilities with other organisations. • The last board meeting is scheduled for 16th July, which is after the end of term. It was suggested it moves forward by a week. • The provisional date for the Reach Awards is set for 25th June. <p><i>The committee resolved to recommend the approval of the updated Annual Schedule of Governance Meetings to the Governing Body.</i></p>	
8.4	<p>Procedure – Complaints against the Governing Body The Chair highlighted that within the procedure, reference is made to the ESFA. Considering the ESFA will soon be integrated into the Department for Education (DfE), he suggested changing the reference to the DfE.</p> <p>Governors queried where the responsibility would lie if there was a need to undertake an investigation. They requested further consideration be given to this aspect of the procedure. Additionally, governors questioned the 21-day timescale mentioned in the procedure and requested a review to highlight there would be an aim to deliver within the suggested time period rather than it being absolute.</p>	CB
9.	Key Meeting Outcomes and/or Actions	
9.1	<p>Matters for report to the Governing Body (if any)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies • Debate on workplace culture • Succession planning headline points, 3-4 vacancies in the next few months. 	
9.2	<p>Matters for report to the Audit Committee (if any)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership succession planning in light of forthcoming vacancies on audit committee. 	
10.	Summary Matters	
10.1	<p>Any Other Business Julia Histon asked if the next meeting would be held in person or remotely as she would be unable to join in person. The Director of Governance was asked to check with Libby Bush and confirm to members.</p>	CB
10.2	<p>Date of next meeting 1 July 2025</p>	