YORK COLLEGE

Minutes of the People and Governance Committee
held on 1 July 2025 at 5.30pm, via Microsoft Teams

Present:	Libby Bush, Independent Governor Ian Looker, Chair of Governors Ann Lees, Independent Governor Julia Histon, Independent Governor Neil Ashton, Independent Governor Ken Merry, Principal and Chief Executive
In Attendance:	Carolyn Barker, Director of Governance Chris Leng, Director of Human Resources Vicky Lindberg, Director of Quality of Education

1.	Apologies for Absence / Declarations of Interest	Action
1.1	There were no apologies given.	
1.2	There were no declarations of interest. The Chair of the meeting was Libby Bush. 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 5 March 2025. The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record. ***The Committee resolved to approve the minutes of 5 March 2025.***	

3.	Matters Arising	
3.1	**Action Summary** The Committee reviewed the Action Summary from the 5 March 2025 meeting, noting that all items had been addressed and closed, including updates to the EDI policy, union concerns, governance scheduling, and procedural clarifications.	
3.2	**Any other Matters Arising** There were no other matters arising.	

4.	Committee Assurance Review	
4.1	**Line of Inquiry – Organisational Development** The Committee considered the draft *Organisational Development Strategy 2025–2030*, which outlined a framework to engage, equip, and enable staff in alignment with the College's strategic priorities. The strategy focuses on leadership development, wellbeing, digital capability, and fostering a change-ready and resilient workforce. It was noted that the strategy had been developed by Sharon Devlin, Head of Organisational Development, following a brief to create a clear and shareable	

	document. The intention was to align CPD activities with the strategic plan, supported by a two-year action plan. The strategy is to be reviewed regularly by the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) to ensure effective monitoring. Governors suggested expanding the strategy to include students, noting that principles such as equipping and enabling individuals applies just as well to students. This was supported by the Principal and Director of Human Resources, who agreed that student experiences beyond teaching and learning should be reflected.	CL
	A governor raised concerns about the scale of change and resource implications, asking whether the strategy was feasible with the current resources. While resourcing was acknowledged as a challenge, it was noted that staff across the College were willing to contribute to the strategy's delivery and was therefore considered achievable. Governors welcomed the structured and proactive approach outlined in the strategy, particularly the planned inclusion of national events. The Committee Chair highlighted the importance of career progression and encouraged a balanced focus on both leadership and management development within the strategy.	CL
	Further detail on how the strategy would be monitored and evaluated was requested by governors. In response, it was confirmed that wellbeing metrics would be reported termly, with formal annual reporting to SLT and updates provided to governors. ***The Committee endorsed the strategy and commended Sharon Devlin for producing a clear and ambitious framework.***	
5.	**Strategic Plan Implementation**	
5.1	**Strategic Plan KPI Scorecard** The Committee reviewed the Strategic Plan KPI Scorecard for Priority 3, noting progress in staff engagement, professional development, diversity, and health and safety, with several targets met or exceeded, while areas such as staff survey participation and disability representation remain priorities for improvement. The Director of Human Resources provided an update on the ongoing staff survey, noting that it was in its final week of a four-week window. To date, 438 responses had been received, representing just over 60% of staff, with particularly strong engagement from salaried teaching staff. Efforts to encourage further participation were continuing, with a target of reaching two-thirds of staff. Governors commented positively on the overall trends, and noted a reduction in staff sickness levels, which was welcomed by the committee. ***The committee resolved to note the report.***	
6.	**People**	
6.1	**Staff CPD Report** The Committee received a comprehensive update on staff Continuing Professional Development (CPD), highlighting progress in induction, leadership	

	development, teaching and learning enhancement, and staff wellbeing. The CPD activity is closely aligned with the proposed Organisational Development Strategy and the Strategic Plan 2025–30. The Director of Human Resources reported that the revised staff induction process has been highly successful and that a structured approach to 360-degree professional development observations is now in place and plans are underway to launch the new aspiring leaders programme for the next academic year. The Principal highlighted the positive impact of the revamped Brilliance Awards, noting the enthusiasm among nominated staff. The Director of Quality of Education provided an update on teaching and learning developments, including a successful Festival of Learning event with increased staff engagement and participation. The number of internal presenters was praised, and the Teaching and Learning team was said to becoming well-established as a source of mentoring and support. Their work with new-to-teaching staff had contributed to strong retention, particularly in hard-to-recruit areas. A recent best practice visit, from former colleagues highlighted the strength of current staff and student activity, with early indications suggesting some of the best results in recent years. A governor raised a question regarding the CollegeIP platform, referencing earlier optimism about its potential. The Director of Quality of Education explained that while parts of the platform are being used effectively, particularly for setting team objectives, there are current limitations in visibility of assigned activities. Developers are working on a solution, but no timeframe is yet available. Governors asked about the discontinuation of the HOW2 platform. The Director of Quality of Education responded that it had served its purpose during a time of limited support for teaching staff and has now been embedded into practice. With a strong internal Teaching and Learning team now in place, the College was thought to be well-positioned to support innovation without reliance on external platforms, though alternatives may be considered in the future if needed. ***The committee resolved to note the report.***	
6.2	**Staff Forum Update** The Director of Human Resources reported that he was unable to attend the most recent Staff Forum meeting, and that limited feedback had been received. However, it was noted that concerns around the confidentiality of the staff survey remain ongoing. The Director of Quality of Education added that there had been some initial confusion regarding end-of-term activities, but prompt communication from the Deputy Principal had helped to reassure staff and resolve the issue effectively. ***The committee resolved to note the update.***	
6.3	**Union meetings update including minutes of JCNC meetings** The committee received the minutes from recent JCC and JCNC meetings, noting continued constructive engagement with union representatives on key	

	matters including pay, policy updates, workload, and staff wellbeing. While most meetings have been positive and productive, one recent meeting involving external union pay officials was described as more challenging. Overall, relationships remain strong.	
	Governors welcomed the opportunity to review the minutes and noted some apparent disconnect between the tone of union meeting minutes and subsequent email communications with the union representatives, particularly regarding performance data. The Principal clarified that the College's communication, issued by the Deputy Principal, was balanced and highlighted improvements in headline achievement rates. The Director of Quality of Education added that union representatives had expressed concerns about the comparability of data, preferring comparisons with like-for-like colleges. She confirmed that such comparisons could be provided. Governors supported the use of performance data to inform improvement and welcomed continued engagement in this area.	
	In response to a question from governors regarding any new concerns being raised, the Principal confirmed that there were no new concerns raised by unions that had not already been discussed or that would give cause for concern.	
	The committee resolved to note the minutes of meetings with the unions.	
6.4	**Gender Pay Update** The Committee received the Gender Pay Gap Report for 2024–25, noting that the mean gender pay gap had increased to 8.2%, while the median pay gap had decreased to 5.1%. The report also included analysis of gender representation across pay quartiles, which continues to be monitored. The Director of Human Resources noted that the College compares favourably with other local institutions and that the report had been prepared ahead of the statutory publication deadline. It had not yet been published on the government website. Governors acknowledged that the figures were not concerning but suggested the inclusion of a statement outlining how the College plans to address the gap in future. They also highlighted the potential for future reporting requirements on disability and ethnicity pay gaps, which governors should be prepared for. The Director of Human Resources agreed to incorporate this into future reporting and noted that the introduction of the Real Living Wage may support efforts to reduce the gap. ***The Committee noted the contents of the report.*** The Director of Quality of Education left the meeting at 18.30.	CL
6.5	**EDI Action Plan** The Committee received the *EDI Action Plan 2024–25 Outturn*, noting progress across several key areas including inclusive policy development, workforce diversity, curriculum representation, and community engagement. The final year outcomes were presented, with the next action plan currently under development and due for finalisation at the start of the 2025–26 academic year.	

	The Director of Human Resources highlighted that the EDI Committee had maintained strong focus throughout the year, with broad engagement and a balanced approach. He expressed optimism about continuing this momentum into the next cycle.	
	Governors commended the progress made, particularly in aligning staff diversity more closely with the student population and praised the enthusiasm of the EDI Committee members. The Director of Human Resources confirmed the College's commitment to further improvement and sustained progress.	
	Governors queried a reference in the report to economic disadvantage, seeking clarification on its context. The Director of Human Resources explained that this related to feedback from lower-paid staff, particularly cleaning staff, who had noted higher pay in comparable roles outside the College. This had been addressed in part through recent pay awards and wellbeing payments.	
	The Committee noted the contents of the report.	
7.	**Policy and Other Matters**	
7.1	**Procedure – complaints against governing body** The Committee reviewed the updated *Procedure for Complaints Against the Governing Body*, which incorporates changes suggested at the previous meeting. These included clarification of responsibilities for appointing an investigator and the introduction of flexibility around the 21-day interim reporting timescale to support fairness and transparency. Governors identified a discrepancy between the number of investigation days (21) stated in the executive summary and the procedure itself (20). They also recommended strengthening the wording in paragraph 3.4 regarding anonymous whistleblowers, suggesting it should clearly state that the College is unable to respond to anonymous complaints. The Director of Governance agreed to make the necessary amendments prior to submission to the full Governing Body. ***The Committee was satisfied with the revised procedure subject to the changes being made and agreed to recommend it for approval to the Governing Body.*** Item 7.3 was taken at this point in the meeting. The Director of Human Resources and Neil Ashton left the meeting at 19:08.	CB
7.2	**Policy – Governor Appointments** The Committee considered the updated *Governor Appointment Policy*, which reflected recent changes to the Governing Body Standing Orders. A key addition was the introduction of a formal review process for the Chair and Vice Chair roles after two years in post, aimed at strengthening accountability and supporting effective governance. ***The Committee agreed to recommend the policy for approval by the Governing Body.***	

	During discussion, a governor raised concerns about the current process for appointing student governors, noting limited feedback from student representatives and a missed opportunity to fully capture the student voice, including that of apprentices. She suggested the need to review the model to ensure it is fit for purpose. The Principal agreed and noted that the Director of Student and Apprentice Services is currently exploring best practice from other organisations. A review is planned for the autumn term, with a proposal to follow. He also referenced current recruitment for roles focused on student voice and engagement, which may help address the issue. Governors emphasised the importance of aligning any changes with the annual governance cycle to ensure students are aware of and prepared for the roles available. Governors discussed whether a deep dive would be useful and welcomed the Director of Student and Apprentice Services involvement in shaping future roles. Consideration is to be given as to whether a deep dive will be planned to cover this topic.	CB
7.3	**Policies** The Committee considered four policies: 1. **Updated Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy** – incorporating amendments suggested at the March meeting. 2. **Updated Whistleblowing Policy** – with minor revisions. 3. **Updated Antisemitism Statement** – refreshed in response to current context and reviewed by the EDI Committee. 4. **New Sexual Harassment Policy** – introduced in anticipation of new legal duties on employers from October 2024. The Director of Human Resources introduced the policies, noting the sensitive nature of the **Antisemitism Statement**. He confirmed it had been carefully worded with input from a student member of the EDI Committee and endorsed by that committee. Governors queried whether any elements might be controversial or expose the College to risk. During discussions governors suggested refining the language to avoid dating the document or conflating criticism of governments with antisemitism. The Director of Human Resources agreed to review the final paragraph of the Antisemitism Statement for balance and clarity. Governors acknowledged the difficulty of striking the right tone but supported the statement overall, referencing recent updated government guidance. Governors enquired whether the EDI committee included Jewish or Muslim representation; it was confirmed to be the case and that the statement reflected those perspectives. Governors also asked about the practical application of the statement, whereby the Director of Human Resources clarified that it was considered to be a government requirement that had been in place for some time for colleges to publish such a statement. Regarding the **Whistleblowing Policy**, governors raised a concern about potentially contradictory wording in the gender reassignment section. The Director of Human Resources agreed to review and clarify the glossary.	CL CL

	Regarding the **Sexual Harassment Policy**, the Director of Human Resources explained that although sexual harassment was previously addressed within the broader harassment policy, the introduction of a standalone policy reflects increased national focus and classifies such behaviour as gross misconduct. Governors asked how staff would be made aware of the policy and its definitions. The Director confirmed that the policy had already been shared with staff, accompanied by a note indicating it was subject to governor approval. There was a discussion about uploading the policy to the compliance training platform (IHASCO) to ensure staff formally acknowledge having read it. The Principal questioned whether this step was necessary, noting that the policy relates to expected workplace behaviours. It was agreed that the Director of Human Resources would consider the most appropriate method for disseminating the Board-approved policy to staff. The Committee agreed that the **Antisemitism Statement** should be reviewed further before final approval. The **EDI Policy**, **Whistleblowing Policy**, and **Sexual Harassment Policy** were approved for recommendation to the Governing Body.	
7.4	**Instrument and Articles of Government** The Committee reviewed the updated *Instrument and Articles of Government*, which incorporated recent guidance from the Department for Education (DfE) and internal updates to ensure legal compliance, alignment with charity law, and the adoption of modern governance practices. The Director of Governance advised that the updates were prompted by a recent letter from the DfE outlining key changes, including updates to student governor voting rights, quorum definitions, virtual attendance provisions, and trustee disqualification clauses. The revisions reflected both external regulatory requirements and internal improvements. ***The Committee resolved to recommend the revised Instrument and Articles for approval to the Governing Body.***	
8.	**Corporate Governance and Assurance**	
8.1	**Governing Body Membership Review and Link Governor Arrangements** The Committee received an update from the Director of Governance on the current Governing Body membership and the status of the Link Governor scheme. The paper invited the Committee to consider the future use of co-opted members and the potential re-establishment of the Link Governor scheme. **Membership Update** The Committee noted the leave of absence of Cathy Waters (Quality & Curriculum Committee) for personal reasons. They also noted the resignation of David Boot (Finance & General Purposes Committee), who will be stepping down due to a new role he has accepted outside of York. **Co-opted Members** The Committee discussed the future use of co-opted members bearing in mind there remains two members on the audit committee, with one stepping down in July 2025.	

	The Committee supported the continuation of having co-opted members within the membership, particularly for addressing skills gaps and supporting succession planning. Feedback from members suggested targeting mid-career professionals and being clear about the purpose of the role should be considered when discussing succession planning. Governors suggested the co-opted role would be a valuable stepping stone to full governorship and emphasised the need for clarity around expectations, citing past challenges with role ambiguity. The Chair of Audit Committee noted that co-opted members had been effective on the committee and referenced a successful model used at York Housing. The Principal supported using co-opted members to address specific skills gaps and proposed a development programme for them. He also recommended a skills audit to inform future appointments. **Link Governor Scheme** There was broad support for re-establishing the Link Governor scheme, but members highlighted the need for a revised and more effective approach. Committee members provided feedback on their experiences and useful suggestions to support the development of a new model. This included - • The challenges experienced by governors covering specialist areas such as SEND and that there was a need for better preparation and support. • The importance of thoughtful pairing between governors and SLT members was stressed to ensure meaningful engagement. • Greater clarity on expectations was needed. • The suggested hybrid model was supported, and that clearer role definitions were essential. • Importance of defining the purpose, process and expected outcomes of the role for both governors and staff. • A more focused scheme with a limited number of link roles aligned to governors' skills and interests. • Develop a clear framework for the scheme, including role descriptions, matching processes, and support mechanisms. • A smaller number of clearly defined link roles in priority areas. The Chair of the Governing Body acknowledged that the current model was not working effectively and welcomed the constructive feedback. ***The Committee agreed in principle to re-establish the Link Governor scheme, recognising the need for a revised model. It was also agreed that further discussion is required to refine the approach to co-opted members, with a more detailed discussion to be scheduled at a future meeting to develop clear proposals for both.*** ***The committee resolved to note the report.*** Julia Histon left the meeting at 19:44.	CB	
8.2	**Governor engagement (training and attendance)** The Committee received an update on governor engagement, noting a strong attendance rate of 81% and progress on tailored compliance training modules, alongside recent safeguarding training and guidance shared with all governors.		

	The committee resolved to note the report.	
8.3	**Governance Quality Improvement Plan Reflection** The Committee received a reflection on progress made against the *Governance Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2023–2025,* which was developed in response to the external governance review conducted in 2022-23. The update highlighted ongoing efforts to strengthen governance practices across six key areas, including governor engagement with stakeholders, student voice, equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), and strategic debate. The Director of Governance explained that the paper summarised progress over the past two years and provided assurance on the positive steps taken to enhance governance and fulfil stakeholder engagement responsibilities. The report was presented for information and assurance. Governors commented that the summary was clear and helpful. They also advised that seeing the progress documented demonstrated the significant work undertaken and noted that activities such as BPM visits, supported by governors, were also worth highlighting within the document. The Committee Chair suggested the document would be a useful resource for new governors. *The committee resolved to note the report.*	
8.4	**External Governance Review Proposal** The Committee received a report outlining the proposed approach, scope, and timeline for the 2025–26 external governance review, which is a mandatory requirement every three years. The review is scheduled to commence in January 2026 with the aim of assessing the effectiveness of governance structures and processes in line with Department for Education expectations. The Director of Governance advised that three proposals had been received from Association of Colleges, Rockborn, and Advance HE. She advised that all providers met the key criteria, with cost-effectiveness identified as the main differentiator at this stage. Due to time constraints the Director of Governance suggested taking the item outside of the meeting and seek views from members with a view to compiling and recommending the preferred approach and supplier to the committee for approval. *The Committee resolved to note the report/proposals and agreed to provide views and approval outside of the meeting.*	CB
8.5	**Committee effectiveness, terms of reference and schedule of business** The Committee reviewed its annual self-assessment, noting strengths in governance oversight and committee composition. The Director of Governance advised that four responses were received, with most areas rated as 'Good'. Mixed feedback was noted in relation to the People Strategy, staff development, and the Committee's remit regarding KPIs and risk. Key areas for improvement included - • Strengthening the relationship with the People Team. • Clarifying the People Strategy.	

	• Considering the addition of an external member with HR expertise to enhance effectiveness. The Committee reflected on its annual self-assessment and discussed ways to enhance its effectiveness going forward. Members noted the following: • There was broad support for involving co-opted members with HR expertise to strengthen the Committee's capacity and bring in external perspectives. • The scope and volume of business handled by the Committee was acknowledged as substantial. Suggestions were made to improve forward planning and prioritisation. Options to better manage the workload of the committee included adding an additional meeting to the annual schedule or extending the duration of existing meetings. • Members considered whether the current structure and format of the committee remained fit for purpose and agreed that this should be kept under review. • Despite these considerations, members expressed general satisfaction with the current Terms of Reference and Schedule of Business. ***The Committee agreed to recommend approval of the existing Terms of Reference and Schedule of Business to the Board, while noting the suggestions for improved planning and potential structural adjustments to be explored in future cycles.***	CB
8.6	**Governor Internal Review Action Plan** The Committee received an update on the Governor's Internal Review Action Plan, noting substantial progress across the majority of areas. The Principal advised that most actions were now complete, with only a few remaining in progress. A new whistleblowing tool (iTrust) is being launched for both students and staff, enhancing the College's ability to support and protect whistleblowers. This complements existing systems and processes. It was noted that further work is required to improve engagement with CollegeIP, particularly in relation to Personal Development Reviews (PDRs). While progress has been made, the system remains an area of challenge and is referenced in the College's Organisational Development Strategy as a priority. The Principal advised that an internal audit of performance management is scheduled for 2025–26, which will provide a more formal evaluation of the PDR process and its effectiveness. The Committee discussed the potential to formally close the internal review, with the remaining elements (e.g. PDRs) to be monitored through standard reporting mechanisms. There was general agreement that the action plan has largely served its purpose. The Committee Chair expressed that the progress made had been significant and suggested that a final discussion at Committee level would be beneficial. Governors supported the Principal's view that the document had outlived its usefulness but emphasised that certain elements, such as CollegeIP, should remain in focus through other reporting routes. ***The committee resolved to note the update.***	KM

8.7	**Governor briefing – Weston College** The Committee received a briefing on the governance and financial failings at Weston College, which served as a valuable case study highlighting the risks associated with weak oversight, poor compliance, and lack of transparency. The Director of Governance advised that the paper was presented for information and reflection and emphasised the importance of strong governance arrangements. The briefing also provided an opportunity to reflect on York College's own strengthened governance practices in response to sector-wide expectations. ***The Committee noted the report and agreed it should be submitted to the Governing Body for information.***	
9.	**Key Meeting Outcomes and/or Actions**	
9.1 9.2	**Matters for report to the Governing Body (if any)** • Weston College report • Policies with a summary explaining changes (separate folder, link) • External Board Review • Organisational Development Strategy **Matters for report to the Audit Committee (if any)** • None.	
10.	**Summary Matters**	
10.1 10.2	**Any Other Business** There was no further business. **Date of next meeting** 18 November 2025	