

Minutes of the People and Governance Committee held on 14 April 2026 at 5.30pm, Jorvik Suite

Present:	Ian Looker, Chair of Governors Ann Lees, 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 & Organisational Development Heather Cross, Rockborn Associate – joined via MS Teams	
1.	Apologies for Absence / Declarations of Interest	Action
1.1	Apologies were received from Helen Crews and Julia Histon.	
1.2	There were no declarations of interest. In the absence of Helen Crews, chair of the committee, Ian Looker agreed to chair. 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 24 November 2025. The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record. <i>The Committee resolved to approve the minutes of November 2025.</i>	
3.	Matters Arising	
3.1	Action Summary Members noted the Action Summary. The majority of actions were closed, including those relating to the staff survey summary, the Governance Quality Improvement Plan, governor attendance reporting, and the revised Standing Orders approved by the Board in December. Three actions remained open: the EDI Annual Report, which will be finalised once Government workforce data is available, and two governance review actions scheduled for November 2026, both of which are on track. The action relating to Modern Slavery supplier monitoring was closed, with assurance in place and proportionate further work planned. The Chair requested that the Director of Governance review and clarify the action relating to leading governance reviews, and report back in due course.	CB
3.2	Any other Matters Arising There were no other matters arising.	
4.	Committee Assurance Review	
4.1	Line of Inquiry – Pay Strategy and Principles	

	The Committee undertook a detailed deep dive into the College's Pay Strategy and Principles, which was introduced by the Chair and presented by the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development. Members considered the College's ability to attract and retain staff, particularly in <i>hard-to-fill</i> curriculum areas, noting increasing competition from industry and other FE providers. Comparative benchmarking data across the region was reviewed, alongside analysis of schoolteacher pay as a reference point. It was noted that while starting salaries compare favourably, the gap becomes more pronounced at the upper end of the pay scale, with experienced schoolteachers potentially earning significantly more. The Committee discussed the College's approach to progression, including the use of Advanced Teacher Status (ATS), and welcomed proposals to extend access to the highest spine point in designated hard-to-fill areas. Members recognised this as a proportionate alternative to market supplements or recruitment incentives, helping mitigate affordability, equal pay, and staff morale risks. The definition of hard to fill roles was explored in detail. Members were assured that designations are informed by recurring recruitment difficulties, sector benchmarking, and alignment with government priorities. The proposal to align the College's hard to fill list with the Government's targeted retention scheme, including the addition of Early Years (and Accounting/AAT), was supported in principle, subject to affordability and annual review. It was further agreed that any future additions to the hard to fill list should be subject to governor scrutiny and approval, recognising the potential financial implications and the difficulty of reversing such designations once applied. Total reward considerations were discussed, including annual leave, pension provision, and how the full staff offer is communicated to prospective applicants. Members encouraged continued focus on presenting a clear and compelling total reward package in recruitment activity. The Committee noted that the paper focused on teaching staff and requested that a future paper include consideration of pay principles and market positioning for both professional services staff and PTVH staff, to provide fuller assurance across the workforce. Overall, members welcomed the clarity of the benchmarking, the emphasis on affordability, and the intention to keep pay strategy under regular review. <i>The committee resolved to approve the measures in the paper.</i>	CL
5.	Strategic Plan Implementation	
5.1	Strategic Plan KPI Scorecard The Committee received and considered the Strategic Plan KPI Scorecard for Priority 3 (Talented Staff team). It was noted that several of the KPIs relate to staff survey outcomes; however, the most recent staff survey results were not yet available. The Committee agreed to await the outcomes of the staff survey before drawing conclusions on progress against those measures.	

	In relation to Health and Safety KPIs, the Chair was advised that the reported figure includes students who were sent home due to being unwell, which has impacted the overall numbers. Work is underway to improve the precision of the data, with a clearer distinction between accidents, incidents and other health-related issues. The more detailed data is not yet available. The Chair further noted that there is currently no explicit KPI relating to the staff survey within the Strategic Plan, despite the importance of staff feedback to delivery of the strategy and recommended that consideration be given to introducing a KPI aligned to staff survey outcomes. It was also requested that KPIs relating to staff turnover be included, reflecting its status as a strategic priority but its absence from the current KPI set. <i>The Committee noted the update and the ongoing development of the KPI framework.</i>	CL
6.	People	
6.1	Staff CPD Report The Committee received and considered the Staff Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Report. It was noted that the report demonstrated greater alignment of CPD activity across teaching staff and professional services, with clearer linkage to the Strategic Plan. Members welcomed this more coordinated approach and observed that it would be helpful to review outcomes and impact as further data becomes available. Governors queried whether there was a guideline specifying the required level of CPD for tutors. The Principal/CEO advised that there is no longer a formal professional membership scheme requirement; however, CPD forms part of the appraisal process and staff are actively encouraged to engage in ongoing professional development. The Chair asked whether teaching staff are required to hold a teaching qualification. The Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development confirmed that, while there is no legal requirement, the College requires teaching staff to obtain a teaching qualification within two years of appointment and has consistently supported staff to do so. Reference was made to the report's emphasis on the College's commitment to supporting staff development. The director also advised that staff development needs are largely identified through the College IP process and annual reviews. The Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development further informed the Committee that a new Head of Organisational Development will be joining the College shortly and will be relocating from Bradford. A governor commented that the range of CPD activity outlined in the report was impressive and clearly aligned to the Strategic Plan and commended the breadth of provision described. However, it was noted that recent staff survey results indicated disappointing feedback in relation to development opportunities and expressed a desire to see improvements in this area. In response, the Principal/CEO clarified that opportunities for progression are subject to open and competitive recruitment processes and that progression is not an automatic internal step. He emphasised the distinction between	

	opportunities to progress and opportunities to develop, noting that the CPD offer is intended to equip staff with the skills and experience needed to apply for roles as they arise. Governors concluded that the report demonstrated that the College is providing a wide range of development opportunities, which support staff to build capability and be well-prepared to apply for progression opportunities when available. <i>The Committee noted the contents of the report.</i>	
6.2	Staff Survey Summary Report The Committee received and considered the Staff Survey Summary Report, which outlined the further analysis undertaken following the 2024/25 staff survey and the actions implemented to address areas of concern, particularly staff voice, leadership and management, communications, and workload. The Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development highlighted the significant programme of work undertaken in response to the survey, including the introduction of the i-Trust app, strengthened staff forum arrangements, the development of a communications policy, and ongoing joint working with trade unions on workload. Members noted that the survey questions remained consistent with the previous year, enabling year-on-year comparison. Members questioned the nature and purpose of initiatives referenced within staff feedback, including “Bird Box Day”, and were assured that this had evolved into a broader wellbeing and engagement activity with multiple participation options. The Committee explored feedback received via the i-Trust mechanism. Members noted the increase in the number of submissions to 37 and sought assurance on whether this indicated emerging systemic concerns. It was confirmed that the feedback did not reveal new or unexpected themes and largely reflected issues already known through other channels, alongside some helpful and constructive suggestions. Members welcomed the facility for staff to submit feedback anonymously or to identify themselves if they wished to be contacted directly and noted that the content received was not considered alarming. Members challenged whether curriculum-related concerns raised through i-Trust were being appropriately addressed. In response, it was confirmed that these were fed into existing quality, complaints, and performance management processes, and that some feedback reflected misunderstandings about established procedures rather than failures of process. The Committee discussed survey findings on communications. Members observed that feedback suggested both information overload and lack of clarity and welcomed assurance that a communications policy was in development to improve prioritisation, targeting, and transparency. Members specifically noted staff calls for clearer communication of the rationale behind senior leadership and Board decisions. Workload was identified as the most significant area of concern, particularly for salaried tutors. Members challenged whether the issues raised, including the	

	A-level timetable, were being sufficiently addressed. It was confirmed that workload discussions with trade unions were ongoing and focused on setting clear parameters that were not regarded as unreasonable, with further progress anticipated as remission time is built into next year's timetable. Members specifically raised continued concerns about the A-level timetable. The Principal advised that while there remained a small pocket of dissatisfaction focused on perceptions of teaching hours and available time for preparation and marking, checks had confirmed compliance with agreed hours, and student feedback on the timetable had been positive. It was noted that flexibility had been offered, with the expectation that preparation and assessment activity is factored into the working day. Overall, Members were reassured that the findings did not indicate any previously unidentified or high-risk issues and welcomed the structured and transparent approach being taken in response. The Committee requested continued oversight of staff feedback themes and progress against the agreed action plan through future reports. <i>The committee resolved to note the report.</i>	
6.3	Summary of Employment Rights Act 2025: Impact on York College The Committee received and considered the paper summarising the Employment Rights Act 2025 and its implications for York College. Members noted that the Act received Royal Assent in December 2025 and represents a significant strengthening of employment protections. The Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development advised that an impact assessment had been undertaken and that the paper focused on the provisions most relevant to the College. He noted that the purpose of the summary was to highlight the key areas requiring attention rather than provide an exhaustive legal analysis. Two specific areas were highlighted for discussion. Firstly, Members considered the proposed reduction in the qualifying period for unfair dismissal from two years to six months, due to come into force from January 2027. It was noted that the College's probation policy currently operates over a ten-month period. The Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development advised that while some organisations are considering reducing probationary periods to align with the new six-month qualifying service, his view was that this would be counter-productive. He emphasised that the focus should be on ensuring probation is robust and effective, with a particular emphasis on getting the first probation review right rather than simply reducing timescales. Secondly, the Committee discussed the strengthened duty on employers to prevent sexual harassment in the workplace, including the requirement to take reasonable steps and to undertake risk assessments. The Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development confirmed that sexual harassment is being taken very seriously and that this represents a significant change in employers' obligations. Work will be undertaken over the summer to develop and review sexual harassment risk assessments, ahead of the new duty coming into force in October. Members noted the actions outlined in the paper in relation to policy, training and monitoring compliance.	

	The Chair noted that this update completed the people-related elements of committee's agenda and asked the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development if he would like to take the opportunity to leave the meeting or stay for the remaining governance items. The director left the meeting. <i>The Committee noted the contents of the paper.</i>	
7.	Corporate Governance and Assurance	
7.1	The Committee received an update on the current recruitment campaign for new governors, supported by Peridot Partners, and noted that progress was positive and on track. Members were advised that since the previous update, advertising and targeted search activity had generated strong early interest across all priority areas, including committee chair roles and governors with specialist expertise. Four formal applications had been received to date, alongside a healthy pipeline of prospective candidates in active discussion with Peridot. The campaign remained live, with the closing date of 22 April, and was not reliant on a fixed pool at that stage. The Committee sought assurance that the emerging candidate pipeline reflected the required skills mix, particularly in relation to safeguarding, finance and risk, digital and cyber, and employer representation. It was confirmed that early indications from Peridot suggested strong interest across these priority areas and that the search remained on track to deliver a robust shortlist. Members noted the planned next stages of the process, with shortlisting scheduled for 29 April and interviews due to take place on 15 May. The importance of governor participation in interview panels was highlighted, and the Director of Governance confirmed that a further reminder would be circulated to encourage availability, thanking those governors who had already offered their support. The Committee also noted strong interest in the Staff Governor vacancy, with informal discussions to be planned with interested colleagues. In discussion, Members emphasised the need to ensure that expectations around time commitment are clearly explored with potential appointees, particularly where candidates hold senior leadership roles elsewhere, to ensure roles are manageable and sustainable. Members noted the update and confirmed their ongoing support for the recruitment process.	
7.2	Governor engagement (training and attendance) The Committee received the update on governor attendance and training and noted that overall engagement during the 2025/26 academic year remained broadly positive. Governing Body attendance was reported at 64.7% and Committee attendance at 76.4%, with combined attendance at 68% across meetings held to date. Members noted a slight dip in attendance figures compared with previous periods and sought assurance that this did not indicate a broader issue with	

	engagement. It was confirmed that this variation largely reflects recent changes in Governing Body membership earlier in the year and was not considered a cause for concern at this stage. The Director of Governance agreed to check and confirm the accuracy of one individual's attendance figure (Neil Ashton). The Committee welcomed the progress reported on governor training and development. Members noted the introduction of a new suite of role-specific induction modules covering safeguarding and Prevent, health and safety, cyber security, and EDI, and supported the plan to pilot and refine these with incoming governors. Members also welcomed the development of refresher micro-learning modules for existing governors, focused on statutory duties and regulatory responsibilities, and noted that this work directly supports the Governance Quality Improvement Plan. <i>Members noted the report.</i>	CB
7.3	Governance Quality Improvement Plan 2025–26 The Committee considered the Governance Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2025–26, which had been developed following the annual governance self-assessment exercise, including the governor questionnaire, and assessment against the AoC Code of Good Governance. Members noted that the plan directly reflected governor input and consolidated identified development areas into a focused and prioritised programme of work. The Committee welcomed the clarity of the five priority themes: student voice and inclusion; governor recruitment and succession planning; higher education oversight; board visibility and insight; and the effective use of co-opted members and link governors. Clear ownership, timescales and assurance routes were noted. Members challenged how the QIP would strengthen governance <i>in practice</i>, rather than operating solely as a paper exercise. In response, it was highlighted that the plan would drive more structured consideration of student voice at committee level, clearer and more consistent assurance on higher education quality and Office for Students requirements, better use of governor expertise outside formal meetings, and more defined expectations for link and co-opted governor roles. The Committee discussed the importance of the plan being treated as a live document. Members noted that priorities may evolve over the year and that the framework allows for additional actions to be incorporated where required. It was confirmed that ongoing progress against the QIP would be reviewed at future meetings of the Committee. The Principal commented that the plan appropriately reflected the scale and substance of current governance challenges and welcomed the continued engagement and support of governors. Members confirmed that the plan was sufficiently flexible to evolve over time and supported its adoption. <i>The Committee recommended the adoption of the Governance Quality Improvement Plan to the Board.</i>	
8.	Policy and Other Matters	

8.1	Annual Schedule of Governance Meetings The Committee considered the proposed Annual Schedule of Governance Meetings for the 2026–27 academic year ahead of recommendation to the Governing Body. Members noted that the proposed schedule broadly mirrors the current year’s meeting pattern. Members raised specific observations and challenges in relation to proposed dates. It was noted that the Audit Committee meeting scheduled for March may clash with the AoC conference, and members agreed that this should be reviewed. In addition, members discussed potential alignment between the Finance & General Purposes Committee and the AoC Annual Conference, noting that moving the Committee meeting could free up governor availability and allow wider attendance at the conference. The Committee also discussed governance deadlines linked to the Accountability Statement. Members highlighted the recurring challenge of ensuring sufficient time for scrutiny ahead of the 30 June submission deadline. It was suggested that consideration be given to enhanced arrangements, such as a small subgroup or additional scrutiny opportunity, to support more detailed review if required. Members agreed that this was a reasonable and helpful suggestion. Members further queried the timing of the May and June Finance & General Purposes Committee meetings, noting that these fall early in the month. Assurance was provided that the Committee would still be able to review and recommend items appropriately for Board consideration, and that no material issues were anticipated as a result. Subject to the minor points raised and potential date refinements, the Committee supported the proposed schedule. <i>The Committee agreed to recommend the Annual Schedule of Governance Meetings for 2026–27 to the Governing Body, subject to any minor date adjustments.</i>	CB
9.	Key Meeting Outcomes and/or Actions	
9.1	Matters for report to the Governing Body (if any) - Pay Strategy and Principles deep dive exercise - governance items including governor recruitment, annual schedule of meetings and the Quality Improvement Plan - Update on employment rights	
9.2	Matters for report to the Audit Committee (if any) - There were no items noted for reporting to the Audit committee.	
10.	Summary Matters	
10.1	Any Other Business The Chair noted that consideration was being given to whether the current committee structure remains appropriate, particularly the rationale for governance and people matters being combined within the same committee. It was observed that this arrangement is largely historic and that the people agenda has expanded significantly over time.	

10.2	It was proposed that people-related matters should sit within a separate committee, reflecting the increasing scale of the agenda and the need for specific expertise to support it. It was further proposed that governance matters should sit alongside the Remuneration Committee (as a separate formal committee but scheduled on the same day), recognising the potential for greater overlap in membership and improved alignment. It was confirmed that this was a reflection rather than a formal proposal, and no decision was taken at this stage. Date of next meeting 9 June 2026	CB
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