YORK COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY CENTRE

Minutes of the People and Governance Committee held on Monday 24 November 2025 at 5.30pm, Jorvik Suite

Present:	Helen Crews, Independent Governor Ian Looker, Chair of Governors Ann Lees, Independent Governor Neil Ashton, Independent Governor (via MS Teams) Ken Merry, Principal and CEO (via MS Teams)	
In Attendance:	Carolyn Barker, Director of Governance Chris Leng, Director of Human Resources	
1.	**Apologies for Absence / Declarations of Interest**	**Action**
1.1 1.2	Apologies were received from Julia Histon. There were no declarations of interest. The Chair of the meeting was Helen Crews. 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 1 July 2025. The minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record. ***The Committee resolved to approve the minutes of 1 July 2025.***	
3.	**Matters Arising**	
3.1 3.2	**Action Summary** All actions from the last meeting were closed. **Any other Matters Arising** There were no other matters arising.	
4.	**Committee Assurance Review**	
4.1	**Line of Inquiry – "Culture and Engagement: What the staff survey tells us"** The Committee considered a paper from the Director of Human Resources summarising the outcomes of the 2024–25 staff survey and a follow-up pulse survey. The main survey, conducted in June and July, achieved a 63% response rate (455 staff), which was a significant increase from the previous year. The Director explained that the follow-up survey, completed recently, covered fewer questions but aimed to clarify issues raised in the main survey. A report on this was to be presented to the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) later that week. The Committee noted that the College had committed to listening to staff feedback and proposing actions. Plans include communicating the main concerns to staff and outlining what will be done to address them. It was noted that the launch of the new anonymous feedback system, iTrust, is scheduled to be implemented shortly to support open communication and whistleblowing.	

	The Director talked through the communications strategy and how the College might engage staff more effectively. Workload emerged as a key theme, with academic staff reporting insufficient time for lesson planning due to administrative tasks. This issue had been discussed with unions, and the College intends to reopen dialogue. Governors were advised that these discussions provide useful insight into staff concerns. During discussion, governors raised several points. The Chair asked about staff feeling valued; the Director noted that the "I feel valued" question was not revisited in detail, and it was unclear whether the recent pay award would influence perceptions. A governor queried feedback on leadership and management; the Director reported that 20% of staff attributed concerns to SLT, 13% to line managers, and 33% to both. Comments highlighted SLT visibility and understanding of operational realities as issues, alongside concerns about curriculum managers being overworked. A management development programme has recently been launched to address this. Governors asked what might help address the sense of disconnect. The Director suggested that greater accessibility and visibility of SLT could make a difference. The Chair invited the Principal to comment; he observed that while staff ask for more SLT presence, views were mixed when this was previously the case, suggesting a perception gap. He also noted that some staff may speak on behalf of others rather than themselves and that union messaging around pay may have influenced survey sentiment. A governor agreed that a minority of staff appear unhappy and asked whether the College should accept this or seek to prevent negativity spreading. The Director confirmed that engagement on the survey and highlighting issues with staff is worthwhile and that incremental steps can improve culture. Governors emphasised the importance of contextualising survey results in communications with staff. The Director referred to measures introduced over the past year and the timing of union discussions. The Principal noted improvements in work-life balance but highlighted ongoing union campaigns. A governor suggested professional development might help unlock staff potential; the Director responded that staff often cite lack of time for development, despite extended development days this year. Governors also discussed whether certain activities, such as lesson observations, should remain mandatory and how workload could be better understood across different staff groups. The Director confirmed that this will be explored with unions, recognising variations between curriculum areas. The Principal added that the College remains open to union dialogue and has been for over two years. On a positive note, governors acknowledged that many staff are doing an excellent job, engagement with the survey has increased, and participation in professional development activities is higher. The Committee agreed that a summary of the staff survey should be included in the next People and Governance report for governors. ***The Committee noted the contents of the paper and endorsed the proposed next steps.***	CL
5.	**Strategic Plan Implementation**	
5.1	**Strategic Plan KPI Scorecard**	

	The Committee reviewed the Strategic Plan KPI Scorecard "*To develop, retain and invest in a talented staff team*". The Director of Human Resources highlighted that the outturn from the staff survey was significantly higher than the previous year, with engagement rising to 63% compared to 40% last year. While overall staff satisfaction fell short of the 85% target at 70%, the Director noted that the results were not all negative and that only a small percentage change on two measures would bring them closer to target. The Committee discussed health and safety indicators. A governor commented positively on the increase in reported near misses, observing that this reflects a culture where staff feel comfortable reporting issues. The Director confirmed that a new Health and Safety Manager had recently been appointed, and, as director, he is managing the area temporarily. He noted that near misses had been previously reported and discussed, and that the introduction of the iTrust app will provide an additional channel for staff to report health and safety concerns anonymously. The Committee acknowledged progress on several KPIs, including improved staff engagement with the survey, increased uptake of salaried PTVH contracts, and positive diversity indicators. While some targets, such as overall satisfaction and professional development, remain below target, governors agreed that incremental improvements and continued focus on staff engagement will support progress. ***The Committee noted the contents of the KPI Scorecard and the discussion on next steps.***	
6.	**People**	
6.1	**Staff CPD Report** The Committee considered the CPD Report presented by the Director of Human Resources. He noted that 77% of staff now have objectives set within CollegeIP, reflecting progress since last year and aligning with the Organisational Development strategy. Building on the success of last academic year, the College aims to increase staff engagement with development activities and expects to see further progress as the year advances. The Director also informed the Committee that Sharon Devlin, Organisational Development lead, will be leaving for a director-level role at another college. Governors asked whether there would be a focus on AI within CPD and queried staff openness to AI. The Director explained that while the staff survey indicated some reluctance to using AI to alleviate workload concerns, there is potential to build confidence through practical examples. A governor suggested that showcasing successful case studies would help encourage adoption. The Director agreed and confirmed that AI remains a priority area for development. The Committee was advised of staffing changes affecting CPD delivery, with Luke Zwalf, who has played a key role in training, leaving to join a training provider. The Director confirmed that he, the Director of Quality of Education and the Principal are reviewing the post to ensure continuity. Governors welcomed the emphasis on professional development and innovation, noting that the College's approach to AI and leadership development will support workload management and staff engagement.	

	The Committee noted the contents of the CPD Report and endorsed the continued focus on development priorities.	
6.2	**Staff Pay Award** The Director of Human Resources reported that UCU had confirmed acceptance of the proposed pay award earlier that day. He advised that pay negotiations are now settled and expressed confidence that the strike mandate will dissipate. However, the College has requested formal confirmation that the strike mandate is withdrawn before submitting the award for Board approval. In discussion, governors noted that national pay bargaining remains outside the College's control and can only be resolved at government level. He asked whether there was any intelligence on what other colleges are offering. The Director confirmed that most colleges are offering 4% or less, typically split as 2% now and 2% later, and that York College's proposed 5% award is above sector norms. A paper will be submitted to the Board setting out the details of the award and the financial implications. Governors highlighted the importance of ensuring that the differential for lower grades remains positive, reflecting the College's commitment to addressing pay bunching and supporting lower-paid staff. ***The Committee noted the update on pay negotiations and endorsed submission of the pay award paper to the Board once confirmation of strike mandate withdrawal is received.***	
6.3	**Minutes of Joint Consultative and Negotiating Committee (JCNC) meetings** The Committee received the minutes of recent JCNC meetings for information. No queries were raised by members, and the Committee noted the contents. ***The Committee noted the JCNC minutes.***	
6.4	**EDI Annual Report** The Committee considered the EDI Annual Report, which summarised progress against the 2024–25 implementation plan and sets out proposed objectives for 2025–26. The Director of Human Resources highlighted that the report focuses on the outturn of last year's actions and the new priorities for the coming year. Key points include a slight increase in the proportion of staff from ethnic minority groups (3.1% compared to 3.0% last year) and a recruitment figure of 5.7% for new starters from ethnic minority backgrounds. The Committee noted that the proposed objectives aim to improve workforce diversity, enhance inclusive practices, and strengthen communication and engagement. Governors asked when the follow-up report for approval would be provided and queried recruitment figures. They also commented that while there were many positive aspects, the plan did not appear to include significantly different actions. The Director explained that improvements are planned, such as enhancing the recruitment landing page, showcasing "what it's like to work here," and including videos and role models from minority groups. The Chair acknowledged the challenges in achieving these goals. A governor asked	

	whether external advice or guidance could help set realistic targets, and suggested seeking Julia Histon's views on the 2025–26 action plan. Governors also raised a point from a recent student champions lunch, where a student mentioned not knowing how to report abuse. This was noted by the Committee as an area for improvement in communication. The Committee agreed to recommend approval of the EDI Annual Report and the proposed implementation plan for 2025–26 to the Board, subject to updates being made and feedback from Julia Histon. ***The Committee recommends approval of the EDI Annual Report and 2025–26 Implementation Plan to the Board, subject to the agreed updates.*** The Principal and Director of Human Resources left the meeting.	CL
7.	**Corporate Governance and Assurance**	
7.1	**Chair of Governing Body 360 Review Report** The Committee considered the annual 360 review of the Chair of the Governing Body, which included feedback from governors and designated senior postholders alongside the Chair's self-assessment. The Director of Governance confirmed that the review process was thorough, with 12 responses received. The report showed strong alignment between the Chair's own reflections and the feedback provided, with both highlighting key strengths in strategic leadership, meeting management, and inclusive governance. Governors noted that the self-assessment conducted by the Chair of the Governing Body correlated closely with the views of others and acknowledged the challenges and decisions faced during the year. Development priorities identified included succession planning, enhancing strategic debate, and improving visibility and engagement. The Committee discussed the importance of involving individuals in more active roles, using the Board as a critical friend, and encouraging debate while maintaining clarity of the Chair's own views. It was also noted that voice projection can be affected by the acoustics of the meeting room. Governors suggested that spending more time with SLT would help strengthen relationships. A governor questioned whether the annual review of the Board's performance should include a section on leading the response to governance reviews and this was agreed. The Committee agreed that including SLT in next year's 360 review would be appropriate. The Chair of the Governing Body rejoined the meeting. The Committee Chair congratulated the Chair of the Governing Body on the positive feedback and confirmed that the proposed development priorities, succession planning, strategic focus, external engagement, and communication style, are appropriate. The Committee agreed to recommend approval of the report and development plan to the Board. ***The Committee noted the report and agreed the proposed development priorities for the Chair for 2025–26.***	CB CB

7.2	**Governing Body Membership Review and Succession Planning** The Committee considered a report on Governing Body membership and succession planning. The Director of Governance advised that there are currently four vacancies following recent resignations, with further term completions anticipated in 2026. Recruitment is therefore a priority to maintain compliance and strategic capacity. The report also outlined refreshed frameworks for co-opted members and link governors. The Committee noted that there are currently four vacancies on the Governing Body and agreed a two-phased recruitment approach: • Phase 1: An immediate search focused on recruiting a governor with safeguarding experience as a priority, alongside efforts to secure a second candidate by February through connections from existing governors and the Principal. • Phase 2: A broader search using a recruitment partner to identify individuals with skills gaps in HR, finance, education, and employer representation. The Committee discussed the proposed recruitment approach, which focuses on securing candidates with expertise in HR, safeguarding, finance, education, and employer representation. Governors agreed that clarity on role descriptions is essential and suggested sharing the governor role description as a crib sheet when discussing opportunities with potential candidates. A governor proposed developing a Gantt chart to phase recruitment activities and meetings with key stakeholders. The Committee supported engaging a broader search through Peridot and other networks to reach a wider audience. On link governors, the Committee endorsed proposals to strengthen engagement and clarify expectations, including the more formal roles of safeguarding and careers, and opportunities for governors to participate in curriculum visits and learning walks. For co-opted members, the Committee agreed the objective is to build a balanced and skilled group aligned to committees, addressing skills gaps and supporting succession planning. The Committee noted the importance of articulating realistic expectations regarding time commitment as part of recruiting new governors. ***The Committee approved the recruitment approach and endorsed the proposed frameworks for link governors and co-opted members.***	
7.3	**Governor feedback – Governance effectiveness** The Committee received a summary of governor feedback gathered through one-to-one discussions and the annual governance effectiveness review. The Chair explained that governors were asked about their confidence in governance and assurance processes. Overall, governors expressed positive views on governance effectiveness and their involvement, noting that they feel able to challenge management appropriately and value the transparency of information provided. Key themes highlighted included the importance of clear and concise reporting, with cover pages setting out what governors are being asked to do. Governors also emphasised the need for greater engagement with student voice and employer feedback, alongside continued opportunities for strategic debate. It was noted that governors appreciate the use of deep dives to explore issues in detail and welcome their continuation.	

	Governors reiterated the earlier point about increasing interaction with SLT to strengthen relationships. A governor stressed the need to make consistent use of governors' skills and experience for advice and encouraged SLT not to be hesitant in seeking input. A governor agreed with the summary and suggested involving governors earlier in strategic discussions before reports are produced. The Committee noted that an external review of governance is scheduled for 2026 and agreed that these themes should inform ongoing improvements. ***The Committee noted the summary of governor feedback and agreed to continue actions to enhance engagement, reporting quality, and strategic debate.***	
7.4	**AoC Code of Good Governance Self-Assessment** The Committee considered the report on the self-assessment against the six core principles of the AoC Code of Good Governance. The Director of Governance explained that the Code represents sector best practice and aligns with regulatory expectations. The review assessed the College's governance arrangements against the updated 2024 Code and identified areas for improvement. The Chair was thanked for her input in reviewing and challenging the draft report. The Committee noted that overall, the College demonstrates strong alignment with the AoC Code. Recommendations arising from the assessment include continuing to focus on board diversity, further developing the involvement of student governors, and enhancing oversight of Higher Education and Office for Students compliance arrangements. The Chair commented that the review was useful and timely ahead of the planned external governance review. Governors suggested that the findings from this self-assessment and the annual governance self-assessment should be combined into a governance improvement plan. ***The Committee noted the outcome of the self-assessment and agreed to recommend adoption of the updated AoC Code to the Governing Body***.	CB
7.5	**Governor engagement (training and attendance)** The Committee received a report providing an update on governor engagement, including attendance at meetings since the start of the academic year and progress on training. The Committee noted that new compliance training modules for governors, covering Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Cyber Security, Health and Safety Essentials, and Safeguarding and Prevent, have been developed and are awaiting final checks before release. These modules are intended to replace the previous IHASCO system and provide a streamlined approach to compliance training. Recent training opportunities offered to governors were highlighted, including sessions on the Prevent Duty, Ofsted's renewed approach to inspection, and a webinar on fraud prevention and AI awareness. The Committee welcomed these opportunities and noted the importance of maintaining engagement with training and development activities.	

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<tr><td></td><td>Governors commented that the attendance report appeared to be out of date and requested that it be updated and recirculated.

The Committee noted the report.</td><td>CB</td></tr>
<tr><td>8.</td><td>Policy and Other Matters</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>8.1</td><td>Governing Body Standing Orders
The Committee considered a paper reviewing proposed updates to the Governing Body Standing Orders following changes to the Instrument and Articles approved in July 2025. The Director of Governance outlined the key amendments, which covered three areas:
Student governors now have full voting rights on all matters except where conflicts of interest apply;
Expanded disqualification criteria to align with charity law and statutory provisions; and
Introduction of a formal written resolution procedure in line with the revised Instrument and Articles.
The Committee discussed the proposed changes and noted the importance of ensuring that all communications and papers are appropriately managed for student governors, including disclosure agreements and clear guidance on confidentiality.

The Committee agreed to recommend approval of the revised Standing Orders to the Governing Body.</td><td>CB</td></tr>
<tr><td>8.2</td><td>Modern Slavery Statement
The Committee considered the updated Modern Slavery Statement as part of the annual review process. The Director of Governance confirmed that the statement remains compliant with the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and that the only amendment made was the addition of a sentence referencing the UK Modern Slavery & Exploitation Helpline to strengthen safeguarding and support.

Governors asked whether the College checks that suppliers have reviewed their own supply chains and confirmed compliance. The Director noted that due diligence processes are in place, that the College promotes the use of consortiums with contractual requirements in place, and confirmed that she would also check with the Finance team to ensure supplier compliance is appropriately monitored.

The Committee agreed that the statement is comprehensive and endorsed the update. Members were satisfied that the College continues to demonstrate its commitment to ethical procurement and safeguarding.

The Committee reviewed the updated Modern Slavery Statement and agreed to recommend its approval to the Governing Body.</td><td>CB</td></tr>
<tr><td>8.3</td><td>Schedule of Delegation Update
The Committee considered a paper proposing updates to the Schedule of Delegation following recent Department for Education guidance and lessons</td><td></td></tr>
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	learned from the Weston College case. The Director of Governance outlined that the key changes clarify two distinct lines of responsibility: • One for appointments and employment actions; and • Another for remuneration and conditions of service. The revised wording also confirms that the Remuneration Committee will recommend pay decisions to the Governing Body for ratification, rather than approve them directly, ensuring compliance with governance best practice. The Committee reviewed the proposed changes and agreed that the updated Schedule of Delegation provides greater clarity and strengthens accountability. Members were satisfied with the approach and confirmed their support. ***The Committee approved the revised wording and agreed to recommend adoption of the Schedule of Delegation to the Governing Body.***	
9.	**Key Meeting Outcomes and/or Actions**	
9.1 9.2	**Matters for report to the Governing Body (if any)** - Governance Code Self-Assessment and annual governance self-assessment - Governing Body Standing Orders - Deep dive – staff survey - Adoption of AoC Code of Good Governance - Modern Slavery Statement - Pay award - EDI report - Membership recruitment and succession planning - Chair’s Appraisal - Schedule of delegation **Matters for report to the Audit Committee (if any)** There were no matters to report to the Audit Committee.	
10.	**Summary Matters**	
10.1 10.2	**Any Other Business** There were no items submitted for inclusion under any other business. **Date of next meeting** 3 March 2026	