

## BUSINESS COMMITTEE

### CONFIRMED MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 17 MARCH 2026 AT 4:00PM CITY COLLEGE NORWICH, THETFORD BOARDROOM

#### Present:

Noel Bartram	NB	Chair
Jerry White	JW	Principal and Governor
Phil Gormley	PG	Governor
Sarah Appleton	SA	Governor ( <i>remote, via MS Teams</i> )
Shirley Barker	SB	Staff Governor ( <i>until 6:45pm</i> )
Lacey Ross	LRo	Student Governor, SU President ( <i>until 6:31pm</i> )
Lillian Rackham	LRa	Student Governor ( <i>until 6:45pm</i> )

#### Attendees:

Chris Caddamy	CC	Executive Director for Data, Digital and Transformation ( <i>until 6:45pm</i> )
Jen Eves	JE	Chief Operating Officer
Jodie Mitchell	JM	Director of Governance and Legal
Marcus Bailey	MB	Governor ( <i>remote, via MS Teams</i> )
Martin Colbourne	MC	Chief Finance Officer
Matt Poll	MP	Director of Estates and Facilities ( <i>until 4:50pm</i> )
Sarah Tate	ST	Executive Director for People
Claire Harber	CH	Governance and Legal Officer

#### Apologies:

Joe McNeill	JMc	Governor
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## 1. Area Updates

### 1.1 IT Update

The IT Update, Digital Strategy and DfE Digital Standards status update were circulated prior to the meeting. The following points were highlighted:

- Cyber Security
  - Cyber security and data protection training compliance rates are good.
  - Cyber Essentials work is on track.
- Artificial intelligence (AI)
  - The AI Framework has been deployed.
  - The College has become a member of the AoC Technology Reference Group which will assist the College to keep updated on sector AI developments.
- IT Projects
  - Of 52 priority projects, 13 are complete and 20 are in progress, including a new achievements and progression system supporting the Quality Improvement Plan.
  - More one-to-one devices are being rolled out to enable more agile working.
  - Phase 1 of the Individual Learning Plan redevelopment work is underway and will be rolled out early next term. Customer Relationship Management and Finance systems work is also in progress.

Governors asked about the 'Bring Your Own Device' programme and were informed that laptops were being procured for all year 1 (of 2) Level 3 bursary students and the College

is working with suppliers to support discounted devices for non-bursary students. Where those options do not apply, the student would need to bring their own device. Governors asked how non-college devices would be kept secure and were informed that services are cloud-based. It was confirmed that student behaviour and digital skills will be monitored and there will be work on digital etiquette standards for staff and students.

In response to Bus 3 Action 1 (exploring enterprise-wide systems), the Committee were informed that there is no complete 'off the shelf' enterprise-wide system for the sector. It was noted that implementation of an enterprise-wide system would be a significant cost and would require extensive organisation-wide training.

The Committee were informed that as part of the Digital Skills Strategy, Paston will be developed into a 'digital campus' where agile working will be promoted, each student is able to have a laptop, and additional digital tools will be implemented. This will enable the College to remain comparable to competitors. Feedback through the Paston staff forum has been positive. The Committee were also informed about work to develop Microsoft 365 and a building management solution as well as to update the WiFi at Easton. There will be a mapping exercise to ascertain existing staff and student digital skills to assess the training required to support digital updates.

In response to Committee questioning, it was confirmed that there is a 3-year Digital Strategy Implementation Plan which will be monitored by a Digital Planning and Change Board and the inclusion of associated KPIs in the performance dashboard will be considered. Governors asked about the 'Governance' section and were informed that this is internal governance rather than actions required by the Governing Body. It was agreed that wording would be amended to more accurately reflect this. Further, it was confirmed that the Digital Planning and Change Board reports to JE and CC through to the Group Leadership Team. It was agreed that a reporting diagram would be included.

**ACTION 1: Amend wording in the 'governance' section of the Digital Strategy to clarify that these are SMT actions rather than for the governing body (CC).**

**ACTION 2: Include a diagram in the Digital Strategy to show reporting lines (CC).**

The Committee expressed support for the Digital Strategy and stressed the importance of remaining current in the digital arena. It was noted there is cross-over with the transformation programme and estates strategy work.

Governors asked what sustainability impacts have been considered in relation to the digital drive and were informed that there will be college-wide education on the use of AI and that equipment is energy efficient. Governors also asked whether the strategy could be expedited. It was noted that there would be challenges around curriculum, but that once the digital skills survey has been completed, there will be a clearer picture of the starting point. Governors stressed that the Committee should be informed if there are any holdbacks due to investment constraints.

**ACTION 3: Implement method of tracking goals within Digital Strategy for reporting to Governors (CC).**

## 1.2 Estates and Facilities Update

The Estates and Facilities Update was circulated prior to the meeting. The following points were highlighted:

- Various projects to improve the quality of the College environment are in progress enabled by £2.35m capital condition funding. The College has received

notification that there is likely to be similar conditions funding available in April, so a new list of required compliance and lighting work is being devised.

- The College will be applying for additional post-16 construction skills capacity grant funding available due to the expected increase in student numbers in the area. The Norwich site stands a good chance of securing the funding due to being at 85-90% capacity. If the funding is received, it is likely to be used to build 12 new classrooms.
- The DfE conditions survey results were received today. The College will review and respond to the survey and challenge results where necessary.
- The catering contract procurement is underway, and supplier presentations are planned for next week.
- The College has received approval for a grant of £30k to install electric vehicle charging across all sites.
- A part-funded solar panel roof project is being considered at Easton (Governors asked for due diligence to be carried out and reported back).
- The Estates Strategy is in its final draft and will be presented to the next meeting.

**ACTION 4: Carry out due diligence on the Easton solar panel roof project and report to next Business Committee (MP).**

**ACTION 5: Add Easton Solar Panel Roof Project to agenda of next Business Committee (CH/JM/JW).**

**ACTION 6: Add Estates Strategy to the May Business Committee Agenda (CH/JM/JW).**

A discussion took place surrounding the catering vacancy on hold due to financial pressures. The Committee requested to see a record of all vacancies currently on hold.

**ACTION 7: Present a record of all current vacancies on hold due to financial pressures (MC).**

*MP left the meeting at 4:50pm.*

**2. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received and noted as above.

**3. Declarations of Conflict**

No declarations were made.

**4. Unconfirmed Minutes of the Meeting Held on 27 January 2026**

The unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2026 were agreed as a true record of the meeting and will be signed by the Chair at the next available opportunity.

**5. CONFIDENTIAL - Unconfirmed Confidential Minutes of the Meeting Held on 27 January 2026**

**5.1 CONFIDENTIAL - Unconfirmed Confidential Minutes of the Meeting Held on 27 January 2026 (Set 1)**

The unconfirmed confidential minutes (set 1) of the meeting held on 27 January 2026 were agreed as a true record of the meeting and will be signed by the Chair at the next available opportunity.

## 5.2 CONFIDENTIAL - Unconfirmed Confidential Minutes of the Meeting Held on 27 January 2026 (Set 2)

The unconfirmed confidential minutes (set 2) of the meeting held on 27 January 2026 were agreed as a true record of the meeting and will be signed by the Chair at the next available opportunity.

## 6. Matters Arising

Bus 1 Action 5: Present a fully costed business case for growth into HE to next Business Committee (to be considered in light of overall agreed sustainable transformation plan) (SG).

*A paper was presented to address Bus 1 Action 5. The following points were made:*

- *Extensive work has been carried out to split income streams to provide clarity on course contributions and risk areas.*
- *Additional HE costs are predominantly staff related.*
- *The aviation provision has high associated costs, and it is unlikely to be breaking even.*
- *The College recruited less students funded by the Student Loans Company but more apprentices than budgeted. Course planning work is underway to identify reasons for this and rectify for next year.*
- *There has been investment in marketing for HE and applications have since increased. The College is considering whether to invest more in marketing for HE as part of the Transformation Plan.*
- *There is focussed work ongoing to maximise internal progression.*

*Governors asked how the college is monitoring competition within HE and were informed that an assessment of the competition was carried out when preparing the Curriculum Strategy, and therefore the College is confident there is a good understanding of local competition.*

*The Committee noted the HE Update. ACTION COMPLETE.*

Bus 2 Action 3: Prepare summary for Board on the situation on the Norwich Building roof and lessons learned (MC). *A short summary will be presented at the March 2026 Board meeting. ACTION ONGOING (Due: December 2025)*

Bus 3 Action 1: Ask IT about enterprise-wide systems (JE). *An update was included within item 1.1 (IT Update). ACTION COMPLETE*

Bus 3 Action 2: JW and PP meet to discuss College's approach to risk (JW/PP). *It was agreed that this action has been superseded and therefore can be closed. ACTION CLOSED.*

Bus 3 Action 3: ACTION COMPLETE

Bus 3 Action 4: ACTION COMPLETE

Bus 3 Action 5: Consider whether cyber insurance cover should be increased considering comments within the renewal report (MC). *See item 6.1. ACTION COMPLETE.*

Bus 3 Action 6: Identify a lead and possible partner(s) for lobbying to improve public transport links and cycle paths (JW). *The Principal is engaging with the AoC and other colleges on this matter. It was noted that paths have been improved at Easton. Governors asked about the obligations of developers, and it was agreed this would be followed up. ACTION COMPLETE.*

**ACTION 8: Explore obligations of developers in relation to infrastructure surrounding the Easton site (JW/MC).**

### **6.1 Insurance Update (Bus 3 Action 5)**

A proposal to increase the College's cyber insurance cover from £1m to £2m at a cost of £5,152 was presented in response to Bus 3 Action 5.

Supporting documents included a cyber risk assessment and the Committee expressed concern over the enormity of the financial risk of a cyber incident quoted within the assessment and asked that a further increase in cover be considered at the next Audit and Risk Committee meeting.

#### **ACTION 9: Add Cyber Insurance to June A&R Agenda (JM/CH)**

The Committee approved the increase in cyber insurance cover to £2m at a cost of £5,152.

### **7. Risk Register Review**

The Risk Register Review was circulated prior to the meeting. The following points were highlighted:

- The risk register is now held in spreadsheet format, and there are currently 11 identified strategic risks and c.70 operational risks sitting behind those.
- The Senior Management Team (SMT) are holding termly risk meetings.
- Further work needs to be undertaken to ascertain the College's approach to risk appetite and risk tolerance.
- Currently the highest scored risks are industrial disputes and staff sickness.

The Committee asked that the risks be ordered by risk score, with higher scores at the top, and stressed that all actions being taken to mitigate risks need to be included. It was noted that there is more to understand on how risks fluctuate and the weight each risk carries outside their score. A comment was made where serious risks have been identified, they should be included on the agenda separately rather than be considered under the Risk Register Review item.

#### **ACTION 10: Order risks by score (with the highest first) for next Risk Update to the Business Committee (JW).**

Governors asked whether the geo-political situation and potential cost-implications will be reflected in the risk register. One example that was given is the rising cost of oil. Governors asked whether the College uses heating oil and it was confirmed that it is used at Easton.

#### **ACTION 11: Ensure geo-political situation and potential resulting financial risk is included on the risk register (JW).**

*The meeting took a break at 5:27pm and reconvened at 5:32pm.*

### **8. Strategic Target Monitoring**

The Strategic Targets Update was circulated prior to the meeting. It was noted that some of the targets are covered elsewhere in this meeting.

It was highlighted that employer engagement and business development (partnerships) does not get reported consistently anywhere in depth and the Committee were asked whether they would like reporting to come to the Business Committee. It was agreed for this to be added to the Schedule of Business for the Business Committee from the autumn, although it was noted that partnerships requires development through the transformation programme.

**ACTION 12: Add termly reporting for Employer Engagement and Business Development to the Schedule of Business for 2026/27 (JM/CH).**

The Committee asked where the FE Commissioner letter recently circulated will be discussed. It was agreed that, along with an overview from SMT, it would be added to the papers for Board next week.

**ACTION 13: Prepare a summary of key points from the FE Commissioner letter recently circulated (JW).**

**ACTION 14: Add FEC Letter to the Board papers under CEO Update (CH).**

**8.1 Proposed Accountability Agreement and Strategic Targets 2026/27**

The Committee were informed that the deadline for publication of the Accountability Agreement and Strategic Targets for next year has been put back to the end of July. A draft will therefore be presented at the next meeting.

**9. Workforce Development Report**

The Workforce Development Report was circulated prior to the meeting. The following points were highlighted:

- There has been a review of the HR team and investment in HR resource. Vacancies will be going live later this month.
- There has been focus on improving sickness management - a new policy has been implemented, and training for managers is taking place. Improved Power BI data is allowing targeted interventions.
- The probation process is being reviewed due to changes in legislation.
- There is a new 'button' on the intranet allowing people to report sexual harassment more easily.
- The College have been awarded the Silver level Investors in Diversity.
- Overall core training compliance rates are good at 96%.

Governors questioned why the appraisal compliance rate is so low at 65%. They were informed that appraisals are still mid-cycle and therefore the rate is expected to rise.

**9.1 Sickness Absence - Deep Dive & Absence Reduction Plan**

The Sickness Absence Report including a draft action plan was circulated prior to the meeting. The following points were highlighted:

- The 2024/25 sickness rate was 14 days per FTE. The rate is currently 9 days per FTE for 2025/26 and if this trend continues the full year rate is likely to be similar to last year.
- 'Gold Group' meetings have been embedded, at which managers in departments where there are high levels of sickness meet with the Chief Operating Officer and Director of People to develop a remedial action plan.
- Many drivers of sickness have been identified, including student behaviour, outside caring responsibilities, workforce structure and workload.
- It will be part of the College Principal roles to manage sickness absence and provide regular reports to the Group Leadership Team.

The Committee asked how often formal action is taken in relation to unwarranted sickness absences and were informed that escalation has not been consistent enough historically and that this will be improved.

The Committee noted the draft action plan and requested that these be woven into professional objectives of the College Principals.

**ACTION 15: Ensure objectives of the College Principals include sickness management targets reflecting the action plan (JW).**

A comment was made that staff should be made aware of the impact of high levels of sickness absence on others, such as quality, retention and workload pressures. It was agreed that this would be considered.

**ACTION 16: Consider messaging to staff highlighting the impact of high levels of staff sickness (JW).**

## 9.2 Gender Pay Gap Report

The Gender Pay Gap Report was circulated prior to the meeting. The Committee were informed that the College has a legislative obligation to publish an annual Gender Pay Gap Report. The following points were highlighted:

- There is a gender pay gap at the College which has decreased from last year.
- Formal sector benchmark data is not yet available, but some reports suggest the gap could be 25% in places and the College's gap is well below this figure.
- The gap is mainly due to the large number of female staff members in term time only roles which tend to be the lower-paid roles within the College.
- The College is looking to promote more agile working to make other roles more attractive.

The Committee determined to recommend the Gender Pay Gap Report to the Board for approval.

## 10. CONFIDENTIAL - Finance Updates

### 10.1 CONFIDENTIAL – Finance Report

The discussion was confidential and is recorded within the confidential minutes (set 1).

### 10.2 CONFIDENTIAL - Procurement Activity Update

The discussion was confidential and is recorded within the confidential minutes (set 1).

### 10.3 CONFIDENTIAL - Fees Policy

The discussion was confidential and is recorded within the confidential minutes (set 1).

## 11. Business Continuity Policy

The Business Continuity Policy along with supporting framework and plans were circulated prior to the meeting.

The Committee were informed that the next step is mock exercises to build confidence in dealing with emergencies and help refine emergency plans. The Committee expressed that this is a vital step, particularly in light of recent incident locally, worsening behaviours at the College and concerns around college safety globally.

The Committee determined to recommend the Business Continuity Policy to the Board for approval.

## 12. Artificial Intelligence Update

The Artificial Intelligence Update was included in the IT Update (item 1.1).

**13. CONFIDENTIAL - Union Colleagues Meeting Minutes**

The Committee noted the Working Together Group Minutes from the meetings on 11 December 2025 and 22 January 2026.

**14. CONFIDENTIAL - Health and Safety Group Minutes**

The Committee noted the Health and Safety Group Minutes from the meeting on 2 October 2025.

**15. Other Urgent Business**

No matters were raised under this item.

**16. Meeting Review and Summary**

The Committee commented that better data is being presented.

*CC, SB and LRa left the meeting at 6:45pm.*

**17. CONFIDENTIAL - Confidential Matters Arising**

The discussion was confidential and is recorded within the confidential minutes (set 2).

**18. CONFIDENTIAL - Industrial Relations**

The discussion was confidential and is recorded within the confidential minutes (set 2).

**19. Date of Next Meeting**

The next Business Committee Meeting is scheduled to take place on Tuesday 5 May 2026 at 4:00pm.

All formal business having been concluded; the meeting closed at 6.55pm.

Signed ..... Date .....  
(Chair)