

BUSINESS COMMITTEE

CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 JANUARY 2025, AT 4:00PM, HELD AT CITY COLLEGE NORWICH, THETFORD BOARDROOM

Present:

Noel Bartram	NB	Chair
Andrew Barnes	AB	Governor
Freddie Simpson	FS	Student Governor, SU President (<i>until 6:47pm</i>)
Hazel Thomas	HT	Student Governor
Jerry White	JW	Principal
Joe McNeill	JMc	Governor
Nikki Gray	NG	Governor
Shirley Barker	SB	Staff Governor

Attendees:

Hilary Bright	HB	Director of HR (<i>from 4:58pm to 5:26pm</i>)
Jen Eves	JE	Chief Operating Officer
Jodie Mitchell	JM	Director of Governance and Legal
Martin Colbourne	MC	Deputy CEO
Nick Kershaw	NK	Acting IT Director (<i>until 4:57pm</i>)
Nick Sainton-Clark	NSC	Health and Safety Manager (<i>until 4:18pm</i>)
Seb Gasse	SG	Vice Principal
Claire Harber	CH	Governance and Legal Officer

1. Area Updates

1.1 Health and Safety Update

The Health and Safety Update (Fire Safety and Insurance) paper was circulated prior to the meeting.

As requested by Governors, NSC presented a commentary on action points resulting from issues raised by Ecclesiastical during the recent insurance tender process. The following points were noted:

- Fire brigade response times – it is not felt that this is of huge concern and the College's approach is standard. The team are reflecting on whether there could be a slight improvement made at Easton.
- Fire detection – most rooms and corridors have detectors, but they are missing from some rooms. This is being rectified as part of current works.
- Fire stopping – actions had been identified already by the College in relation to fire stopping.
- Fire suppression – a visit was carried out in the Wroxham Building kitchen last week and initial findings indicate that the installation of a fire suppression system would be recommended. The estimated cost of this is £5-6k.
- Fire doors – further quotes are awaited. Fire door replacement will be carried out where needed, as well as the installation of smoke seals. Costs are significant and work will be phased, prioritising occupied areas.

It was agreed that the fire suppression work should be carried out in the Wroxham Building kitchen.

ACTION 1: Check with Aviva when they will carry out their next survey of the site (JM).

NSC left the meeting at 4:18pm.

1.2 IT Update

The IT Update was circulated prior to the meeting. The following points were highlighted:

- The College now has the Cyber Essentials accreditation. There are no plans at this stage for the Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation due to the impact on learning.
- A Digital Strategy is being developed, providing a framework to inform the College's approach going forward. It covers a broad range of themes, from student experience to artificial intelligence (AI) to security, and will assist in decision-making on priorities during the year.
- It was confirmed that AI tools are being vetted to check for GDPR issues, but it was noted that AI is built into most systems now.
- The AI Framework element of the Digital Strategy will include privacy considerations.

In response to a question whether the College is consulting other colleges regarding AI, it was confirmed that the College is linking in with JISC. The Committee were informed that AI is the theme of the upcoming staff development day.

It was highlighted to the Committee that some students are using AI to complete assignments, and it was noted that it is difficult for staff to identify when work has been created by AI.

Governors expressed that they would like to understand where AI fits in strategically and it was agreed that AI would be added to the agenda of one of the Strategy Days this academic year.

ACTION 3: Put AI on the agenda for one of the forthcoming Strategy Days (JW).

Governors stressed that they would like to see the output from 4Cast.

The rest of the conversation was confidential and is included in the confidential minutes.

NK left the meeting at 4:57pm.

HB joined the meeting at 4:58pm.

1.3 Workforce Development and Annual HR Report

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

- Sickness rates have increased (the GoodShape target is 4%). Mental health is currently the predominant reason for sickness absence.
- The Sickness Policy is currently being considered and a draft should be ready for the next meeting.
- There continues to be a lack of benchmarking data. The AoC are looking to implement a shared document to enable colleges to share data.
- There has been an increase in staff accessing staff benefit schemes.
- The staff turnover rate is high at 18%.
- 'Unhappy leaver' themes suggest workload pressures are often a reason for leaving.
- The College is participating in an AoC survey regarding workload.
- The Investors in Diversity accreditation assessment will be completed next month.

ACTION 6: Sickness Policy to come to the May Business Committee (HB/JM).

The Committee asked how many staff are accessing the Wellbeing section of College Rewards. The Committee were informed that the College does not have direct access to this data, but it can be requested from College Rewards.

ACTION 7: Request data on the number of staff accessing the Wellbeing area of College Rewards (HB).

Discussion ensued surrounding mental health and how the College can assist in improving the mental health of its workforce. A number of actions and ideas were discussed including resilience training and training managers. It was noted that wellbeing is linked to staff satisfaction and the People Strategy. The Committee were informed that there will be a new Occupational Health provider from 1st February, and it is expected that they will be more proactive in this area.

The Committee requested budget data be added to Annual Report.

ACTION 8: Update the budget fields on the Annual Report ready for the February Board meeting (HB/MC).

SG left the meeting at 5:18pm and rejoined the meeting at 5:20pm.

HB left the meeting at 5:26pm.

The meeting took a break at 5:26pm and reconvened at 5:33pm.

2. Apologies for Absence

No apologies were received.

3. Declarations of Conflicts

No declarations were made.

4. Unconfirmed Minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2024

The unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2024 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 26 November 2024

The unconfirmed confidential minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2024 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 3 Action 13: JW / SG to review adding a Workforce Planning update to future Business Committees or at the next Strategy Day and carry out further work on the Staff Survey Action Plan. *This has been embedded into the People Strategy.* ACTION CLOSED.

Bus 4 Action 6: JW and Tom Smith to produce and share with Governors pre-recorded webinar on 4cast progress before the next Business Committee meeting on 7 May 2024. *It was agreed that more information would be presented at the next Business Committee meeting.* ACTION ONGOING (Due: December 2024).

Bus 5 Action 4: ACTION COMPLETE

Bus 5 Action 5: ACTION COMPLETE

Bus 5 Action 6: ACTION COMPLETE

Bus 1 Action 1: Explore alternative ways of reporting Inclusive Learning Health and Safety incidents and report back to Business Committee (NS). **ACTION ONGOING** (Due: March 2025).

Bus 1 Action 2: ACTION COMPLETE

Bus 1 Action 4: Identify where problem areas remain in relation to fire marshalling and report back to the next Business Committee (NS). **ACTION ONGOING** (Due: March 2025).

Bus 1 Action 6: ACTION COMPLETE

Bus 2 Action 1: ACTION COMPLETE

Bus 2 Action 2: This discussion was confidential and is included in the confidential minutes.

Bus 2 Action 3: ACTION COMPLETE

Bus 2 Action 4: ACTION COMPLETE

7. **CONFIDENTIAL – Finance Updates**

The discussion was confidential and is recorded within the confidential minutes.

7.1 **CONFIDENTIAL – Management Accounts and Debtors Report**

The discussion was confidential and is recorded within the confidential minutes.

7.2 **Annual Review of the Treasury Policy**

The Draft Treasury Policy was circulated prior to the meeting and taken as read.

The Committee were informed that the main change is a move to a 2-year renewal, rather than a 1-year renewal. The Committee agreed to a 2-year renewal but stressed that if something significant arises that needs to be addressed in the policy, a review should be presented to the Committee earlier.

The Committee asked that paragraph 11 be tightened as it is currently too broad. With this amendment made, the Business Committee **approved** the Treasury Policy.

7.3 **CONFIDENTIAL – Financial Recovery Plan**

The discussion was confidential and is recorded within the confidential minutes.

8. **Strategic Target Monitoring**

The Strategic Target Monitoring update for January 2025 was circulated prior to the meeting.

The Committee expressed confidence that there is a robust process in place and targets are being tracked. It was noted that there are no 'reds'.

8.1 **Climate Action Plan**

The Climate Action Plan was circulated prior to the meeting. The following points were highlighted:

- There are four key areas to the Action Plan:
 - (i) Commitment – minimising impact of buildings etc.
 - (ii) Community – creating a culture among staff and students of care for the environment (JE is in contact with the Students' Union).
 - (iii) Role – embed sustainability into the curriculum.
 - (iv) Leadership and working together.

- There is a need for carbon literacy training. Some staff have been trained already and will work to share ideas.

HT left the meeting at 6:25pm.

The Committee were informed that there is currently no budget for investment in sustainability and it is unclear at this stage what would need to be modelled in. It was noted that although the College has the desire to have the programme, this will come at a cost. A comment was made that there are public sector de-carbonising funds which could be accessed to assist in making changes to buildings, for example. It was noted that a site assessment was undertaken recently so the College is aware of its carbon footprint and that the recent Construction Skills Centre was a sustainable build.

HT rejoined the meeting at 6:32pm.

ACTION 10: NG to introduce JE to contact on LinkedIn (NG).

8.2 People Strategy Update

The People Strategy Update was circulated prior to the meeting. The following points were highlighted:

- This is a 3-year strategy sitting alongside the Strategic Plan to 2028.
- It is about trusting, empowering and supporting one another.
- The threads of inclusion, engagement and sustainability should run through all the College does.
- The Strategy is based on four pillars:
 - (i) Recruitment and retention.
 - (ii) Belonging (inclusion and wellbeing).
 - (iii) Leadership and Management.
 - (iv) Skills and performance (learning).
- The College is looking to reduce its probation period to six months.
- There will be a new approach to appraisals from the autumn, with three 'check-ins' each year.

FS left the meeting at 6:47pm.

- The Strategy sets out a new process for workforce planning.
- The Staff Forum will be reinvented.
- There is a roll-out plan sitting behind the Strategy and the next step is deciding when to launch it.

There was a question from the Committee whether line manager training on procedures is mandatory. There was a brief discussion, and several comments were made by members that manager training should be mandatory, and that this would assist with sickness management in general.

ACTION 11: Look at making manager training mandatory (JE/JW).

9. Insurance Renewal

The discussion was confidential and is recorded within the confidential minutes.

10. GDPR Compliance Report

The GDPR Compliance Report was circulated prior to the meeting and taken as read. The Committee noted that rates appear to be decreasing. It was agreed that the Committee will wait to see where the figures go before discussing any further.

11. CONFIDENTIAL – Union Colleagues Meeting Minutes

The discussion was confidential and is recorded within the confidential minutes.

12. Risk Register Review

The Risk Register Review was circulated prior to the meeting and taken as read.

The Committee expressed their contentment that risk tracking is moving in the right direction and look forward to further updates.

13. Other Urgent Business

The Committee were informed that the College is looking at options for minibuses and that costs could be more than £100k for 5-year rental. It was noted that more information will be available by the March 2025 meeting.

14. CONFIDENTIAL – Meeting Review and Summary

The discussion was confidential and is recorded within the confidential minutes.

15. Date of Next Meeting

The next Business Committee Meeting is scheduled to take place on 18 March 2025 at 4:00pm.

All formal business having been concluded; the meeting closed at 7:21pm.

Signed Date
(Chair)