

GOVERNORS/MEMBERS PRESENT: James Creamer [Chair], Svetlana Bajic-Raymond, Marian Curran [Principal], Michelle Hazelwood, Roger Bridgeman, [5]

APOLOGY: Peter Turner [1]

ATTENDING: Shane Blackshaw [Executive Finance Director], Leanne Sowersby [Governance Professional], Amanda Wright [Head of Human Resources], Vicki Haigh [Head of Teaching, Learning & Assessment]

Absent Without Apology: None [0]

CIRCULATION: All Governors, College website

QUORUM REQUIRED: 3/6 (Voting Committee members)

Circulation: All Governors, Clerk to Governors, Principalship, & [College Website after signature].

Committee Briefing – none this meeting

ITEM	ISSUES RAISED IN DISCUSSION	ACTION
1. Welcome	1.1 Welcome: JC welcomed everyone and opened the meeting with prayer. Apologies were accepted.	
2. Declarations of Interest	2.1 Declarations of Interest: Governors confirmed there had been no change.	
3. Previous Minutes	4.1 Minutes 5 March 2025: - The Minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record	
4. Actions Review & Matters Arising	4.1 Actions Report: See Actions Report for updates. Terms of Reference approved 4.2 Matters Arising: None	
5. Staff Matters	<p>5.1 – 5.3 Staff Retention Report / Staff Demographics Report / Staff Engagement and Wellbeing Report : AW will share the above reports once these are completed.</p> <p>5.4 Industrial Relations: <i>VH joined the meeting.</i> Discussion around the recent industrial action. MC advised that communication usually goes through herself and SBR initially, and gave some background to the issues. Each year there is usually a list of requests from the unions, some of which we can fulfil, and some we cannot. The original ballot was around safety and workload. The journey that the college has been on since April has been significant. We have put a number of things in place and have been very transparent about what we are doing, but this message is not always getting back to staff colleagues. We are doing everything possible that we can do, that we are able to. There are some requests that would be detrimental to the college, including areas such as recruitment and funding.</p> <p>Union requests have included around 20 items. AW considers that the college responses have been reasonable and well considered. Some of the requests for change are now connected to pilots for change, which will not be assessed in terms of success for a period of time. AW talked through some examples. For example, if staff do fewer new student interviews, there is a significant cost to having fewer students onboarded – 20 fewer students would mean a loss of £125k income, which would need to be found through salary savings. Employing additional staff will have on-costs of around £25k. There also a request for additional time for Course Leasers, which has a cost of around £52k.</p> <p>A counter proposal was requested by today, which was not feasible.</p> <p>AW talked through the strike days, and the dates that have been chosen. These will impact the student taster days and potential student recruitment. We may move the taster days to avoid this issue, as the unions were unwilling to move the days.</p> <p>We are now doing parallel communications to staff, alongside the unions, to ensure that staff are aware of the actions the college is taking.</p>	AW

Q – Has there been agreement over any of the asks? VH advised that there has been significant change and willingness to listen, while remembering national issues around pay etc. Attendance on strike days is very poor, as students do not want to attend when not all of their lessons will run. Staff morale is dropping and there is tension in the staff body. There is anxiety among support staff around the potential for the need for cuts. There is also the risk to the significant funding and relationships with the Local Authorities that comes with the higher needs students from the difficulties around the taster days.

Having previously been understanding about piloting the changes re student interviews, the union have now requested an immediate reduction.

Q – What is the number who are on strike, is it all 64 staff? No, despite the union paying, the numbers are reducing. The ballot is a poll and is not anonymous, so people are unwilling to be named as voting against.

On 3 June 42 of the 64 were out, 9 June 48 were out, 10 June 37 were out.

Q – Would the taster days be able to carry on with the staff out? We have risk assessed by course. Some courses will be covered, while some courses would not be covered and there would not be enough people on site. We are not allowed to cover activities, or to change activities on the day to cover the action. We have a plan for the EHCP and Children in Care in particular, which VH detailed.

The polls go only to teaching staff who are part of the NEU. There was also a ballot to support staff, but this did not meet the threshold for support staff to strike.

There is concern around the impact on support staff.

Q – Is there anything that governors can do? SBR has been corresponding with the unions, and there will be a piece around bringing staff back together.

Q – What are the proportions between safety and workload? Do people feel unsafe? This is a perception that people have that people can access the site who should not be there. There is security in place now, and we are trying to get the gates etc. With the workload portion, concerns for one person, are not the same concerns for others. It was noted that many of the concerns are around workplace, rather than workload. A key ask has been around the ability to work from home and to have the flexibility to do this. There are obvious issues where teachers may not be able to do this, but we have put in place the option to make an application to do this where it is feasible and not a detriment to students and colleagues. There has also been movement on the sickness absence. AW has shared the most recent communication to staff to be shared with governors.

Q – What is the issue around August – staff should be aware that they are expected work in August when they start with the college?

There are sometimes childcare issues. It should be noted that we finish earlier than schools in July. We could change this, but there would be an impact to recruitment etc.

MC advised that next steps will involve communication to the NEU. We need to remember that the other unions need to be involved in consultation around policy changes. All staff need to be considered in the impact of any changes. There will then be a need to meet the unions and try to resolve the issue as soon as possible.

VH left the meeting

6. College Estate

6.1 Student Recruitment/Retention: Currently, acceptances is 2339, which is about 200 more from May. This could mean another improvement in recruitment, and in-year growth. We do need to ensure these acceptances are converted to enrolled students. Retention shows a good, improved picture. There is now a role to ensure Access to Level 3 students are supported and stay with us for three years. The trend overall is improved.

Funded retention has been quite low in previous years and is now much improved.

Attendance is impacted by the strike days and has dropped from this time last year.

Q – Will there be an increase in staffing to correspond with the higher number of students? Yes, we have recruited where needed for the busier courses, as well as in the pastoral area, such as the Access to Level 3 role.

6.2 Premises Report: SBk gave an update. The CIF bid on the security gate was unsuccessful. We had a positive meeting with WECA around the transport scheme. They will support with the re-wilding of the grass area next to the MUGA.

Q – Is there any update in lettings? There is a small increase in income predicted for 2025-26. We have estimate there will be increased take-up, but we are not increasing prices as we are at the top end of the scale currently. Prices will go up from September 2026.

Q – Are the security staff still in place? Yes. Even with installation of a gate, we may need a human presence but could probably reduce this to one person.

6.3 Health and Safety/Accidents Annual Report: SBk noted a correction – total accident callouts should be 11. The number of accidents is now a low percentage of first aid callouts. SBk updated on RIDDOR incidents. There has been a legal claim related to a slip on ice, which will go through the insurers.

There was also an accident in Term 5, which SBk discussed. There is no employer liability in this case.

Q – Is there a trend on this from previous years / lessons to learn? With such low numbers, it is hard to see any trends, there are no clear patterns to any of the incidents. The numbers are very similar in the 2023-2024 academic year.

There was a fire inspection in May, which picked up a couple of issues – some overloaded extension leads which has now been addressed. They also noted the presence of toasters in staff workspaces. SBk noted a fire alarm activation caused by a toaster and explained that some staff chose to leave the site during the activation. Communication has been sent out to advise staff must not leave site during an alarm activation. We will also look at the use of toasters.

Q – Does a fire alarm trigger an automatic fire brigade response? No, we can assess and make that call.

Q – Are toasters PAT tested? Yes, the issue is that they are not kept clean and people walk away, so they create smoke. Discussion around the best ways to approach this.

6.4 College Estate Development Plans: SBk updated. We have commissioned a property consultant to produce an asset management plan and an estate strategy for major capital works and development. This will form the basis of some future CIF bids, and they will offer advice on which bids are likely to be successful.

	<p>SBk talked through the decision-making process around the current projects. Noted that we are, ‘playing catch-up’ with some of the works and have looked at this all in detail to identify the key priorities.</p> <p>The recommended Cap-Ex investment in 2025-26 is £522k, but taking out some of the IT requirements and leasing these, the costs become £336k in 2025-26.</p> <p>For 2026-27, the provisional cost is £1.3m, with an actual cost of around £750k when some items are leased.</p> <p>Q – Has the security gates been costed in this? No, it will likely fall into the 2026-27 cycle as it will be too late to complete the work this summer. However, we will need to re-spec the project, strip out all the things that are not essential and work out how we can fund doing some of that project in 2025-26.</p> <p>Q – Will the security staffing continue and is this budgeted? Yes, and yes.</p> <p>Governors approved the recommended projects.</p> <p>6.5 IT Strategy Update: SBk gave an update. The IT and MIS team have been analysing the use of IT resources and SBk talked through these. We have been promised some donated assets from Bristol University, which is being chased.</p> <p>In terms of the three priority areas: phase one, around the IT infrastructure; uninterrupted power supplies and the firewall, and this has been completed. We will be implementing two PC room conversions over the summer and replacement of some laptops in the next academic year. The disaster recovery infrastructure project that was planned for 2024/25 has now been moved back into 2025/26, along with the option appraisal needed to determine whether we do an in-house kind of solution or a cloud based solution. Costs can be high for cloud solutions, but they could provide better risk mitigation.</p> <p>There was also a full Wi-Fi upgrade planned for this summer, but due to the planning logistics of that, and the opportunity to integrate it into the next phase of network upgrades on our core and edge networks, we are now proposing to roll these three projects together, to give better value for money. The details of this will be discussed in the July IT strategy meeting.</p> <p>Phase three is reflected in the CapEx investment report and will be continuing to upgrade and replace some of the PCs and laptops used by students.</p> <p>Q – There was a major issue with Wi-Fi at the start of this academic year – is this the same issue? It is connected. Some of the issue was related to the devices being used, and this has been solved. There is still an issue with the draw on the network, primarily from student phones. The IT strategy groups needs to discuss this, as around 50% of the usage is from student phones. We need to ensure that teaching and learning is not affected. There is also a potential impact in restricting access to services that students access through our Wi-Fi.</p> <p>6.6 Cyber Briefing: SBk talked though the key points.</p> <p>Q – How much at risk is the college from cyber attacks? There are two vulnerabilities, one that someone/thing breaches our systems, and we are in a much better place to resist this, with the new firewall, and proactive monitoring. The other is around staff clicking on links in emails. We will reintroduce cyber security training for staff every year, which is a key area of managing this risk.</p> <p>The cyber governance code of practice recommends a governor lead on this area - to raise at the full board.</p>	<p>LS/SBk</p>
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<p>7. Policy & Strategy Review</p>	<p>7.1 Health and Safety Policy: There is no change to the policy aside from a proposal to change the review cycle to 2 years, rather than one. Health and Safety Policy approved, proposed MC, seconded SBR</p> <p>7.2 Social Value Policy: This is a new policy, arising from the procurement act 2024. It is designed to ensure that when contracts are let, there is an element of social value included in the contract and SBk gave some examples of this. There is still a need to work out how this is practically implemented. Any comments to be shared with SBk at least a week before the full board meeting. Discussion around the correct committee for the policy and agreed it is Resources. Policy to be shared with full board as part of the update from this committee.</p> <p>7.3 Bursary Policy: SBk talked through the key changes. There is more of a focus on individual need, a need to identify individual need rather than blanket allocations, an outline on the assessment of vulnerable bursary students who are subject to separate funding applications. There is also a new section outlining what will and will not be considered in calculating eligibility, as well as mentioning the bursary being affected if attendance drops below 85% and evidence being required for a change of address. A section relating to the purchase of IT equipment has been removed. Q – How do students become aware of this policy? It is usually part of the enrolment process, and an on-line presentation to parents and students where it is mentioned. Q – What percentage of student receive a bursary? 24-25% and this does not always correlate with free school meals students. Q – Is there a typical amount? This is difficult to say as the types of award are very different. Policy approved, proposed MC, seconded RB</p>	
<p>8. Risk Management</p>	<p>8.1 Review of Board of Governors' Risk Register Items: SBk talked through the new style risk dashboard. The full risk register sits behind this. Changes are in red. Items that have changed are working around 4.3, financial viability and whether to academise. The risk scores have not been updated. These will be reviewed by principalship in September and will inform the reports to the following committee cycle. Noted that strikes could be added to the risk around staff absence, and that this risk has likely increased. The aim of the dashboard is for governors to have an overview of all risks, and the actions that are being taken to manage risks. Feeling that the risks around breakdown in staff relationships and student mental health are higher than suggested. Q – Why is a small proportion of the actions around the highest risks completed? This dashboard has now allowed clarity around which actions have not been completed and focus to be put on these.</p> <p>8.2 Safeguarding/PREVENT – Committee Duty Review: This was covered under the discussion around the security gate, as well as in the discussion around industrial action</p>	

9. Report Items to Board of Governors	<p>9.1 Report Items to Board of Governors: Social value policy, update on the WECA projects.</p> <p>9.2 Committee Briefing Next Meeting: Impact of the spending review – SBk/MC</p>	
10. Any Other Business	10.1 None	
11. Next Meeting	TBC	
Minutes Agreed	<p>Minutes of Meeting agreed as true and accurate record</p> <p>Wednesday, 19 November 2025</p> <p>Signed: _____ Committee Chair</p>	