

GOVERNORS/MEMBERS PRESENT: James Creamer [Chair], Svetlana Bajic-Raymond, Marian Curran [Principal], Michelle Hazelwood, Roger Bridgeman, Peter Turner, Iain Turri, Kevin Hunt [8]

APOLOGY: Leanne Sowersby [Governance Professional] [1]

ATTENDING: Shane Blackshaw [Executive Finance Director], Leanne Sowersby, Amanda Wright [Head of Human Resources]

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.	
2. Declarations of Interest	2.1 Declarations of Interest: Governors confirmed there had been no change.	
3. Minutes Previous Meeting	4.1 Minutes 18 June 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 4.2 Matters Arising: None	
5. Committee Business	5.1 Committee Terms of Reference: Terms of Reference were approved	
7. College Estate	<p>7.1 Premises Report: SBk talked through the key points. Noted that investment in the premises over the past two years has been limited due to the focus on the new sports facility, as well as waiting for the asset management plan from the consultant. We now have the asset management plan and are also using the consultant to put together two Condition Improvement Fund (CIF) bids. The projects they have identified are refurbishment/replacement of roof for part of building A, which is the oldest building (not including the drama studio performance space), as well as the roof on building B, which is the main building. We have had numerous roof leaks in both buildings. The second project is to replace building G, which is the temporary buildings, to address demographic growth projections over the next few years.</p> <p>We did bid for funds for the security gates and have been unsuccessful on two occasions. We have now reassessed the CapEx programme to free up some resource to self-fund the security gate, and we are hoping that work will be done over February half term / Easter holidays. Noted that, despite the security personnel, there are still some issues.</p> <p>SBk talked through the asset management plan. Noted that the consultant will have identified and included everything, the costs are estimates and do not include VAT. The numbers indicate a cost of over £4.3m over a five-year period, with a projected £1.8m in the first year, because there is something of a backlog where we have not been able to keep on top of some of these things. Some of these issues are now a higher priority than they might have been earlier. There is a need to make progress with these things to avoid health and safety or compliance issues, so we will need to either free up resources from elsewhere and/or seek additional funding through things like CIF bids or other grants.</p> <p>In the first instance, SBk and the Estate Manager will go through the plan, to identify the priorities, such as ensuring the buildings are weatherproof, alongside what can be done withing the available resources.</p> <p>Q – Will the WECA project provide actual money, or a contribution? It does provide real money, but not in cash terms. They will fund projects associated with their own scheme, and this comprises two elements; the first one is the rewilding of the field. Although the overall project is stalled, phase one is out to consultation at the moment. Although the rewilding project at St Brendan’s is</p>	

technically part of phase 2, with the cycle path on the A4, it is such a fundamental element of their sustainability credentials, that it is possible that element could be fast-tracked, with the cycle lane being completed later as phase 2.

Q – Is it still possible that the WECA project could contribute to the security gates? No, once this was compared to their criteria for what could be supported, that was ruled out.

SBk talked through the lettings report. We have lost some sports bookings, which means we are currently projected to fall short of the budgeted income, though we may pick up some ad-hoc or additional bookings, so are hopeful of making up at least some of the shortfall. There was also a recommendation from a recent internal audit around a commercial activity strategy, which will focus on what else we can do. The pavilion café continues to be a success on the days it is open, which generated around £20k last year, which shows under café revenue rather than lettings.

Q – What happened to the client who wanted to use the sports hall? They did not give details when they cancelled.

SBk also talked through the sustainability section of the report. The sustainability officer has now retired, and we are looking at options to ensure that this work is continued, so that we are able to demonstrate our green credentials as well as equipping our students with skills and knowledge around sustainability.

Q – Do we have any contact with alumni who could potentially support the college? We do have alumni contacts and can look at this; it is a strategic priority for marketing.

There was a further discussion around the asset management plan, funding and potential CIF bids. The consultants will work on a no win no fee basis for preparing the bids. It is likely we will have to contribute towards the cost, but this will be a fraction of the total cost. Things like making buildings weatherproof, health and safety, compliance, asbestos and boilers/heating systems have generally been given the greatest priority in these bids.

7.2 Health and Safety/Accidents Annual Report 2024/2025: SBk noted the increase in the total number of accident call outs. This is due largely to previous under-reporting, where call outs were going via the college nurse rather than first aid, and the data was not previously being captured. There have been no RIDDOR reports this academic year.

The recent bomb alert incident was not mentioned in the report, as it was prepared in advance. MC talked through the incident, the plans that had been made for such an incident and the follow-up through the business contingency meeting. MH noted that it was dealt with very professionally and discreetly.

Q – How much of the day was disrupted? Students exited the building around 3.45pm, so it was near the end of the day. Colleagues were involved in dealing with it well into the evening, including managing press releases etc. There were also police interviews the following day for a number of hours.

Q – Would it have been considered successful, were it a trial? Yes, and as part of the business contingency planning, we will review and write up notes from it.

7.3 College Estate Development Plans: SBk talked through the key points. The plan has been reviewed in light of needing to fund the security gates and replacement of the air handling unit insulation on building B. The changes to the plan and costings, are shown in the report. The CIF bids will sit alongside this, although some of these will not take place until 2027, due to the timings of the announcements and lead-in times for contractors.

Q – What is the reduction on student benching? We have noticed an increase in students sitting in corridors on the floor, and would like to put in more study space, but do not feel we are quite ready to tackle this yet. It is still a priority.

7.4 Information Technology Strategy update: SBk talked through the key points. There are two parts; part a is a cyber briefing. SBk talked through the risks and the measures we are using to try to address these. These include compulsory cyber security training, simulation phishing emails etc. Ideally, we would also be asking students to do this training. There is a need to have a cyber-security strategy in place, which will partly be around infrastructure, partly around management and governance and partly around user awareness.

Q – What has the take-up of the cyber-security training been like? This was separate to the National College training and will need to be checked with DH.

SBk talked through the second part of the report, around IT infrastructure.

Q – How often do the strategy group meet? Roughly termly, six or seven times a year.

Q – Who does the group report to? Effectively this committee, although this is not formally documented. It would also potentially feed into the Finance committee. Although the report does not highlight any major issues, in that we are making good progress with what has been approved in the budget, ideally we would be making more rapid progress in order to mitigate risks. We are carrying a risk of failure to replace infrastructure as soon as we would like.

Q – Would it be useful to bring a proposal to one of the committees around what could be done, and the kind of funding required? Yes, ideally we would have the cyber-security strategy to drive that work forward and recommend what is needed. The timing of the budget means that much of our spend for the year is already planned, and the security gates are an absolute priority. There may be areas where we can free up some funding over the course of the year. We have the new firewall in place, that provides a greater level of protection. The main issue is the need for off-site disaster recovery infrastructure. The likelihood of both sets of servers being compromised is unknown, whereas the risk of now doing the security gates is quite immediate.

Q – Are the board fully aware of the decisions that need to be made, having an overview of the whole picture rather than committees making individual decisions? This is the idea behind the rationalisation of the risk register, to simplify the way the board looks at risks as a whole, and to make things more transparent. This should allow governors to cross reference new reports against the register to see where priority risks are being addressed.

Discussion around this, and whether governors fully understand the risks, and what they should be focused on. It is incumbent on governors to look at the risk scores, their knowledge of the college and to challenge the information they are being given. The biggest risk to consider will always be safeguarding / health and safety, and the focus is always on the students. Further discussion

	<p>around how governors respond to reports and consider financing projects. Noted that we use organisations like SFCA and AOC for advice, as well as communication with the local and regional area. We will also be working with other sixth form colleges around IT equipment etc.</p> <p>Discussion around training for students around cyber safety. This is currently done through the tutorial system. We will also need to consider AI in this context.</p> <p>Further discussion around the security gates and how these might work. This is largely operational and will also be part of addressing Martyn’s law.</p> <p>Q – Would it be useful for the risk register to have a top five items, to highlight the higher risk items that cut across all the committees? The dashboard shows the two highest residual risks; cyber security and financial viability. It gives a summary of the mitigating controls for each of those risks. It might be useful to include more of a status update on those actions, to allow governors to challenge staff on this. If a control is not going to make a difference to the risk level, it should not be included. There is a need to consider how much detail is included on the dashboard for it to remain useful, but areas where there is a sizeable financial investment proposed could be further highlighted.</p>	
<p>6. Staff Matters</p>	<p><i>6.1 Staff Retention Report 2025/2026 / 6.2 Staff Demographics Report 2025/2026 / 6.3 Staff Engagement and Wellbeing Report:</i></p> <p>AW talked through a presentation. Noted that the increasing average age of college staff is concerning, with the average age now at 47.76. It will be important to try to encourage some younger applicants. Also noted the recruitment in the HR department, which will support in providing more effective data to support managers and strategic planning.</p> <p>Staff retention is significantly improved, with turnover down by 50%. The previous figures skewed slightly high due to a clear out of casual staff that had not been active, and reasons for leaving now, are largely what we would expect.</p> <p>The picture in terms of absence is also improved, although there are still pockets of challenge in terms of recruitment, retention and management. As part of the strike concessions agreed with the unions, there will be a review of the sickness absence policy and protocols, with changes around the trigger points for management action and a greater level of management discretion in what is taken to the formal stages. AW talked through the areas with the highest sickness absence.</p> <p>AW also talked through the employee relations slide, as well as the wellbeing information. Noted the wellbeing days that have taken place / are planned, as well as having signed up to the AOC Mental Health Charter as an employer, which covers staff and students.</p> <p>AW talked through the employee relations and case work information.</p> <p>Q – Are cases and concerns the same thing? Yes. There are some issues, which may have taken less than half a day to resolve, that are unlikely to have been captured. AW also noted a more serious issue that is still being addressed. The overall number of</p>	

	<p>outstanding cases is low for the number of staff we have. There may be some work to do around supporting managers in tackling concerning conduct, from low level concerns to the more concerning conduct matters.</p> <p>Q – Are there any proposals for changes in the leadership structure? The structures remain under review, and this would go to Strategy in the first instance.</p> <p>6.4 Staff Pay Round 2025/2026: A paper has been shared and MC talked through the key points. A 4% rise was approved for support staff, through a MS form, and a 4% increase is proposed for teachers, ideally to be paid in December. This will need full board approval. LS to create a form for full board approval of the teachers’ pay award</p>	LS
<p>8. Principal’s Report</p>	<p>8.1 Student Recruitment/Retention/Attendance 2025/2026: MC talked through the key points. Population statistics for this group mean that we should see good recruitment, but we need to make sure we keep promoting ourselves.</p> <p>Current total applications are at 974, with acceptances at 201. Retention is holding steady, and attendance has also improved.</p>	
<p>9. Policy & Document Review</p>	<p>9.1 CCTV Policy: SBk talked through the key points. It was particularly noted that the CCTV is not used for performance management, it is for safeguarding students and staff, and security. Also highlighted annexes A and B, which define who will have access to the system and their respective roles. SBk talked through the processes for managing the CCTV and associated data.</p> <p>Q – The policy mentions that cameras are not being monitored, but there is provision for them to be watched live? This means that they are not being watched continuously, but in circumstances like the recent bomb scare, or an intruder, we can use them to monitor the site in real time.</p> <p>The policy is still out for consultation with the union, but approval now would mean it can be live as soon as that is complete.</p> <p>Policy approved, proposed MC, seconded SBR.</p> <p>9.2 Public Sector Equality Report: MC talked through the key points. This is information we must publish under the Equality Act 2000, as part of our legal duty to promote equality and prevent discrimination. Noted the diverse student and staff population, the majority female staff, as well as some of the gaps. There is also an action plan alongside the report. We may still want to add a section to this around increasing the diversity of the staff, such as the age demographic etc.</p> <p>Q – Who does the EDI committee report to? Primarily to the Ethos committee, but this report also includes staff so is relevant to this committee. This report will go on the website once the remaining staff figures have been updated.</p> <p>Discussion around disability support and adjustments made for those with disabilities. We are now starting to track this more accurately, and AW mentioned some of the areas in which adjustments have been made; we are becoming much more agile in responding to emerging disabilities or other conditions. It is about everyone being treated with dignity and respect, which is part of the underlying Catholic Ethos.</p> <p>Report Approved</p>	

<p>10. Risk Management</p>	<p>10.1 Review of Board of Governors' Risk Register Items: SBk talked through the key points. Changes are highlighted in red text. A column has been added to note the potential timing of a risk occurring, and feedback on the usefulness of this would be helpful. There are four additional risks, 4.9 around professional development failing to maintain and improve standards of classroom practice, being the one most relevant to this committee. Discussion around this; this has been added to consider issues around staff performance and how these are addressed, as well as the new Ofsted framework.</p> <p>Q – On risks 6.7 – 6.10 (loss of parts of the building due to fire, flood etc), should the residual risk be higher than noted here, given what we have serious potential roof issues on two buildings? The asset management plan came out after the most recent review, but yes, this risk should be reviewed in the light of that.</p> <p>10.2 Safeguarding/PREVENT – Committee Duty Review: Health and safety issues discussed, wellbeing and security gates.</p>	
<p>10. Report Items to Board of Governors</p>	<p>10.1 Report Items to Board of Governors: Policies, pay award.</p> <p>10.2 Committee Briefing Next Meeting: Potentially a CIF bid update, information on potential funding avenues for premises works.</p>	
<p>11. Any Other Business</p>	<p>11.1 None</p>	
<p>12. Next Meeting</p>	<p>Tuesday 3 March 2026 at 16:00 [Subject to confirmation]</p>	
<p>Minutes Agreed</p>	<p>Minutes of Meeting agreed as true and accurate record:</p> <p>Tuesday 3 March 2026</p> <p>Signed: _____ Committee Chair</p>	