East Coast College Finance and General Purposes Meeting

17th March 9.15am Teams

Present:	Committee Chair and Health and Safety Link Governor - Ian Lomax (IL) Paul Padda (PP Principal and CEO) Dawn Carman-Jones (DJ) Bill Farrow (BF) David Blake (DB Corporation Chair) and Peter Blackburn PB Associate Governor)
In attendance:	Urmila Rasan (Deputy Chief Executive) Lucy Wharry (Head of Finance) and Wendy Stanger (Director of Governance)

F/26/03/1	**Apologies and membership**	
No apologies as all in attendance. The Chair advised that it had been agreed with the Deputy Chief Executive that a Deputy Chief Executive report would no longer be included, as the relevant updates were covered within other agenda items.		
F/26/03/2	**Declarations of Interest**	
There were no declarations of interest.		
F/26/03/3	**To approve the Minutes of the last meeting 11 11 2025 and 9 12 25 and any other matters raised previously not otherwise included in the Agenda**	
The minutes of the meeting of 20 11 2025 and 9 12 25 were approved as a true record		
F/26/03/4	**To review the post meeting action log**	
The Deputy Chief Executive advised, in relation to the action on trip paperwork, that if a trip were to take place without the required documentation, an investigation would be undertaken and appropriate action taken.		
F/26/03/5	**Department for Education College Finances Dashboard**	
The Deputy Chief Executive presented the dashboard and advised that it is produced twice a year by the DfE, based on the College's returns. The dashboard is confidential to the College and is not published. Public benchmarking data, based on Colleges' Annual Accounts, is available for analysis. The College had recently held its Annual Strategic Conversation with the DfE, during which no areas of concern were raised. The College was regarded as low risk and demonstrating positive financial performance. Governors asked about how the College could be benchmarked against comparable institutions. The Director of Governance advised that the Financial benchmarking tool for colleges could be used and the Deputy Chief Executive advised that data could be extracted and benchmarked against similar institutions. The Board Chair commented that the Annual Strategic Conversation had been very positive, with the DfE expressing confidence in the College and its progress.		

F/26/03/6	Management Accounts	
The Deputy Chief Executive presented the January 2026 management accounts, which also included a mid-year forecast. Governors requested an update on the maritime provision and asked about the likelihood of the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) Agency issuing CAS visas so that the provision could commence in May 2026. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that UKVI had just approved the visas, but not for the period required due to the length of the room-hire agreement. This issue was now being reviewed and revisited by the lawyers to resolve it. As the CAS visas have already been approved, amending them is expected to be a quicker process, and both the College and the University were preparing to commence delivery. The income from Maritime is expected to be lower next year due to the lack of progression from the current cohort, and this will need to be reviewed as part of the provisions planning and budgeting. Governors challenged whether the maritime provision would be viable and whether it should continue to be supported, given that the market for this provision was not drawn from the local community and the financial loss that was currently being absorbed. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that when the maritime provision operated at full capacity, it generated a positive financial contribution to the College. It was noted that, even if the provision were to close, there would be retained costs such as licences for specialist equipment. The Principal commented that the College's roots were in maritime. The current provision attracted an occasional UK-based learner, and this could increase with the development of Sizewell C, which would be creating its own port for deliveries. There was also some commercial work with local employers. The maritime learners had a positive impact on the College's learning environment and on the wider community. Governors challenged the lower recruitment in apprenticeships and sought clarification on the reasons for this. The Principal advised that 16–18 apprenticeship numbers had decreased nationally, and that recent government decisions, including the increase in National Insurance, had contributed to this decline. In addition, the bureaucratic nature of the provision and the associated costs had also had an impact. The College had also previously experienced a poor reputation in some areas, which has taken time to rebuild and improve, and this had been further impacted by its geographical position, with, for instance, Norwich being easier for learners to access. Apprenticeships were to be reviewed in detail at the March Board Away Day. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the current budget process was considering the viability of the apprenticeship provision, and the numbers planned were being challenged, particularly where they had not been achieved this year. Consideration may need to be given to shrink to grow. This was a similar position at other colleges. Governors commented that some of the College's competitors had strengthened their offer, that independent training providers were able to operate with greater flexibility or specialise, and that some companies were now delivering their own apprenticeships. Governors agreed that the governance summary report needed to include additional detail, including key financial information, so that the current position was clearly identified for Governors. **Governors agreed the following action:** • **Governance covering report for the management accounts to include greater detail, highlighting key financials along with the current assessment of key metrics and the overall financial position.**		UR

F/26/03/7	Great Yarmouth Rebuild - FF&E (Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment)	
The Deputy Chief Executive presented the report and advised that the tendering process needed to be brought forward as the build was ahead of schedule, with the steel frame due for completion in April 2026. The College had ring-fenced the finances for the tender, as previously approved. Governors commented that consideration should be given to whether the existing furniture and fixtures could be donated for community use. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that this would be explored; the amount available would depend on the outcome of the tender process. **The Committee resolved to recommend to:** • **the Corporation that tendering processes are undertaken for the furniture and fittings and audio-visual equipment for the new building in Great Yarmouth**.		
F/26/03/8	**Carbon Reduction Plan**	
The Deputy Chief Executive presented the report and advised that the Government's Public Procurement Note (PPN) 06/21, updated in line with the Procurement Act 2023, requires suppliers bidding for larger government contracts to produce a Carbon Reduction Plan. Larger colleges are also required to report on their plans within their Annual Accounts. The College was currently measuring the more straightforward elements of its carbon footprint, and the next steps would be more challenging both to implement and to measure. Governors commented that this was an area in which students should be involved, many suppliers would be able to provide their carbon data directly to the College, thereby reducing the workload, that the Great Yarmouth development would help the College's carbon footprint and queried whether a dedicated member of staff would be required to focus on this area. The Deputy Chief Executive commented that the work did not yet require a dedicated member of staff. Governors queried whether the Carbon Reduction Plan should sit with the Finance and General Purposes or the Estates Committee. The Director of Governance advised that the terms of reference of the Estates Committee included: • As part of the implementation of the Estates Strategy, promote environmental sustainability and energy efficiency **The Committee resolved to recommend to:** • **the Corporation that the Carbon Reduction Plan be approved and signed.**		
F/26/03/9	**Health and Safety**	
The Health and Safety report was discussed, and the Governor Link updated the committee. Governors discussed the ongoing issues with trip paperwork and how compliance could be improved to avoid unnecessary re-work. Options suggested included the use of an app, additional staff training, and simplifying the existing process. The Principal commented that the main challenge related to ensuring trip paperwork was completed correctly at the first attempt. Additional staffing had been put in place to support and		

monitor the process to reduce time lost through re-work. Serial non-compliance was being identified, with further support and training provided as needed, and issues escalated to managers where appropriate. The Deputy Chief Executive reiterated her earlier point that if a trip were to take place without the required paperwork, an investigation would be carried out and appropriate action taken and confirmed that an electronic trip form was in use.

F/26/03/10 Pass Through Agreement – Churchill Contract Services and SCC (Cleaning Contract)

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the agreement was required due to the change in provider following the recent tender.

The Committee resolved to recommend to:

- **the Corporation that the Pass Through Agreement is approved and signed as a Deed.**

F/26/03/11 Finance Risk Register

Governors queried the purpose and focus of the questions. The Director of Governance advised that they had been set by the Audit Committee, as these were the key areas on which the Committee sought assurance from the other committees. Extracts from the minutes of each committee were shared with the Audit Committee as part of its review of the Risk Register. The Audit Committee is responsible for providing the Board with assurance on the College's risk management.

1. Has the risk register been reviewed – Yes, March 2026.

2. Is the Committee content that the risks are relevant and are being updated – yes, and two risks have been removed and one added.

The Committee challenged why the risk of clawback of apprenticeship income had been made dormant. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the clawback risk had reduced to the same level as any other College income, following improvements made and evidenced through the most recent funding audits.

The Committee challenged why the risk relating to the College's heavy dependence on project funding had been made dormant. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that this was due to the relevant projects coming to an end and the risk having crystallised.

3. Is the Committee content that the risks are being mitigated – Yes.

4. Where a red risk is the Committee assured that appropriate action is being taken - There were a number of red risks regarding recruitment and income, and these had been discussed in other agenda items.

It was noted that the committee should consider all risks, not only those RAG-rated red, and it was questioned whether the current framing of the questions encouraged committees to focus solely on the red risks.

5. Where does the Committee have significant concerns – None noted.

F/26/03/12 Subcontracting Tender - Verbal Update

The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the Board would need to agree to proceed to tender for the subcontracting provision, and that a report would be brought to the March meeting. This would set out indicative maximum figures, as the budget process had not

yet been completed, and the tender would be issued based on the final budgeted figure. It was confirmed that no new provision was proposed to be subcontracted.		
F/26/03/13	**Agenda Planning**	
None		
F/26/03/14	**Review of the meeting**	
1. Confidential Items: personal details in the Pass Through Agreement. 2. Were Learners prominent in discussions? Yes, discussed in relation to the College's provision, trip paperwork, and the role in supporting the Carbon Reduction Plan. 3. Risk Management: any issues discussed which may require an additional Assessment – no additions. 4. Equality & Diversity: any issues discussed which may require an additional Impact Assessment – no additions. 5. Health & Safety: any issues discussed which may require an additional Impact Assessment – no additions. 6. Sustainability: any issues discussed which may require an additional Impact Assessment – Carbon Footprint plan to the Estates Committee, but include as mitigation in the Finance and General Purposes risk register 7. Media: any issues discussed to inform local media – no additions. 8. How did the meeting go – a good meeting.		