



MINUTES OF THE STRATEGY AND POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING

Wednesday 11th June 2025 at 6.00pm
Meeting held via Microsoft Teams

Present:

John Thater (Vice Chair of the Committee and Chair of this meeting)

Dan Hards, Principal

Flora Burrowes

Claire Douglas

Emma O'Brien

Oliver Schuster

Lin Langford, Director of HR (Advising Officer)

Kate Parsons, Assistant Principal Student Services & Communication (Advising Officer)

Catherine Davies (Clerk)

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of business interest.

2. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Acting Chair welcomed Flora Burrowes to her first Committee Meeting in the role of Student Trustee.

Apologies were received and accepted from Tim Oliver and Sophie Cook.

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 5th MARCH 2025

The Minutes of the previous meeting of 5th March were approved as an accurate record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

5. POLICIES

5.1 Staff Probationary. The Director of HR introduced the Staff Probationary Policy and noted the change of language and the suggestion of a change of name to Staff Induction Policy. She outlined the intention of the policy to provide a development journey for a new staff member in their first 6 months of employment or for a current member of staff when they are promoted to a new role. The terms of the process have not changed from the original policy, but the roles and responsibilities have been made clearer and the expectations have been outlined.

A Trustee asked for more information regarding separating out the procedure of inducting a staff member versus a policy outlining the rights of staff members and the responsibilities of the employer. The Trustee agreed that a new member of staff should have a probationary period but questioned whether existing staff who are appointed in a new role should also have a probationary period. The Director of HR confirmed that new

starters have a 6-month probationary period in their employment contracts. The Committee considered the policy and questioned the procedure for dealing with an appeal against a decision to dismiss. The Principal noted that this issue would need to be cross referenced against the Red Book before a decision could be made regarding removal of the text.

The Director of HR agreed to take the points raised by the Committee away and consider re-writing the policy as a procedure instead. The Principal agreed with this pathway and offered to update at the next Board meeting.

Action: Principal to update the Board with a pathway forward for Staff Induction/Probationary and whether it will be a Policy or Procedure.

5.2 Ill Health Retirement. The Director of HR introduced the policy which enables an employee to retire due to ill health. A Trustee noted that the decision to grant ill health-retirement is with the pension scheme and not the employer and the Director of HR agreed. The Trustee also asked if the language regarding the employee's medical report could be revised to include the use of a third-party specialist to consider the medical report rather than the Principal/Deputy Principal and the HR Director agreed that using a third part specialist was the intention. Following a discussion the Director of HR agreed to consider whether this policy should be adopted as a policy or procedure and agreed to revise the wording regarding medical reports. The Principal agreed with this approach and will update the Board at the next meeting regarding whether the Ill Health Retirement policy should be revised as a procedure needing SLT approval only.

Action: The Principal will update the Board at the next meeting regarding whether the Ill Health Retirement policy should be revised as a procedure needing SLT approval only.

5.3. Flexible Working Policy. The Director of HR noted the Policy has been updated to reflect new working rights including the right to flexible working from the first day of employment and the right to request this twice in a 12 month period.

The Committee approved the Flexible Working Policy.

5.4 Searching, Confiscation and Restraint Policy. The Assistant Principal for Student Services and Communication introduced this policy and gave an overview of the changes which include more explicit guidance on conducting a search, recording when a search has taken place and electronic devices.

The Committee approved the Searching, Confiscation and Restraint Policy.

5.5 Capability Procedure. The Director of HR asked the Committee for approval to change the wording regarding Appeals and Grievances and the Committee agreed with this request which will allow appeals to be made to the Deputy Principal or Principal rather than the Chair of the Academy Trust, unless dismissal is being considered.

The Committee approved a change to the wording in Item 10.1 – Appeals and Grievances.

The Chair thanked the Director of HR for her input.

The Director of HR left the meeting.

6 CONSTITUTION

6.1 Student Trustees

The Clerk informed the Committee that Flora Burrowes and Thea Torosyan have been elected as the new Student Trustees.

6.2 Re-appointment of External Trustee

The Committee recommended the re-appointment of Natasha Meade to the Members of the Academy Trust.

7 STRATEGIC PLAN

The Principal introduced the Strategic Plan and gave some background information regarding the new format and noted the input from staff and managers in drawing up the current draft.

The Principal turned to Strategic Aim 2 and asked for feedback regarding the use of the word “celebrated”. The Committee discussed the aim to “foster a safe, inclusive environment where all stakeholders feel represented and celebrated” and the Principal agreed to remove the word “celebrated” from the sentence.

Regarding Strategic Aim 3 the Committee discussed the wording “to make ESFC the best college to work at for both teaching and support staff” and asked how “best” would be measured. The Committee agreed the Principal will ask the Board at the next meeting regarding use of “best” or “even better” or another option.

A Trustee asked whether specific reference to AI should be included in the plan and the Principal agreed to consider directly referencing AI within the Strategic Plan.

The Chair thanked the Principal and all the contributors for collaborating on the new format of the Strategic Plan 2025-28.

Action: Principal to ask for feedback regarding the use of “best” in Strategic Aim 3 at the next Board meeting.

Action: Principal to consider directly referencing AI to the Strategic Plan 2025-28.

8 SUSTAINING AND EXPANDING STUDENT NUMBERS 2025-28

The Principal introduced a report outlining the case for sustaining the current student roll (2092) and the potential for modest growth in 2027/28. The option of keeping the portacabins would allow space for this growth and this option will be considered by the Finance and Estates Committee at the November meeting and the Board in December. The Committee discussed several points related to the case for growth which included the birth rate peak, the long term suitability of portacabins, the number of students who are unable to get a place at the College each year and the option to substantially increase the student roll (and the impact this would have on shared spaces such as the library and café). The impact of class sizes was also discussed and the Staff Trustee noted the importance of a teacher building relationships with their students over 2 years.

The Committee recommended the report to the Finance and Estates Committee in November.

9 TRUSTEE SKILLS AUDIT REPORT

The Clerk introduced the Skills Audit Report and noted the high scores for Financial Oversight and Financial Management reflecting the recruitment of Trustees with a financial background. The lower scores for legal expertise and experience of student well-being and disciplinary hearings and appeals were also noted.

10 REVIEW OF TRUSTEES QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2024-25

The Clerk introduced the new format Trustee QIP and noted the self-evaluation indicators have been updated.

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

12 DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Wednesday 12TH November 2025 (tbc)

*The meeting closed at 7.09pm
Attendance was 75%*

Signed and Date

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS:

S&P3 -001	Principal to update the Board with a pathway forward for Staff Induction/Probationary and whether it will be a Policy or Procedure.
S&P3- 002	The Principal will update the Board at the next meeting regarding whether the Ill Health Retirement policy should be revised as a procedure needing SLT approval only.
S&P3- 003	Principal to ask for feedback regarding the use of “best” in Strategic Aim 3 at the next Board meeting.
S&P3- 004	Principal to consider directly referencing AI in the Strategic Plan 2025-28.

SUMMARY OF TRUSTEE CHALLENGE [C] / SUPPORT [S]

C/S	Minute	Topic
C	5	A Trustee asked for more information regarding separating out the procedure of inducting a staff member versus a policy outlining the rights of staff members and the responsibilities of the employer.

C	5	The Trustee also asked if the language regarding the employee's medical report could be revised to include the use of a third party specialist to consider the medical report rather than the Principal/Deputy Principal and the HR Director agreed that using a third part specialist was the intention
S	5	The Chair thanked the Director of HR for her input.
C	6	Regarding Strategic Aim 3 the Committee discussed the wording "to make ESFC the best college to work at for both teaching and support staff" and asked how "best" would be measured.
S	6	The Chair thanked the Principal and all the contributors for collaborating on the new format of the Strategic Plan 2025-28

