

NCG – Corporation Meeting

Main Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 8th March 2022 – 3pm to 5.40pm

Face to face meeting at Rye Hill House

Details			Attendance		
Full Name	Position	Initials	Attended	Apologies	No Attendance
Peter Lauener	Chair of Corporation	PL	X		
Chris Roberts	Vice Chair of Corporation	CR	X^		
Mark Squires	Independent Governor	MS	X*^		
Caroline MacDonald	Independent Governor	CMacD		X	
Jeannette Strachan	Independent Governor	JS	X		
Andrew Cunningham	Independent Governor	AC	X		
Rob Holt	Independent Governor	RH	X		
Chris McCourt	Independent Governor	CMc	X		
VACANCY	Independent Governor				
Shirley Atkinson	Independent Governor	SA	X		
John Widdowson	Independent Governor	JW	X		
Liz Bromley	CEO – Ex-Officio Governor	LB	X		
Jennifer Mitchelson	Staff Governor	JM	X		
VACANCY	Student Governor				
Clerk					
David Balme	Executive Director & Secretary to the Board	DB	X*^		
Visitors/ Presenters					
Lisa Sproats	Chief Finance Officer	LSp	X		
Steve Wallis	Executive Director of Quality	SW	X		
Chris Payne	Deputy Chief Executive Officer	CP	X		
Scott Mulholland	Chief Information, Data & Estates Officer	SM		X	
Tony Lewin	Executive Principal South	TL	X*^		
Grant Glendinning	Executive Principal North	GG	X		
Nicola Taylor	Assistant Director of Governance (minutes)	NT	X*		
Claire MacLean	Director of Bidding and Business Development	CMacL	X*^		
Cat Lewis	Principal of Kidderminster College	CL	X*^		
Jon Ridley	Deputy Principal (HE)	JR	X^		
Joe McGraw	Director of People and Development	JMc	X*^		
Matthew Ward	Group Energy and Environmental Officer	MW	X*^		

*Attended via Microsoft Teams / ^Attended for part of the meeting

1. Chair Opening Remarks / Board Matters / Declaration of Interests / Apologies for Absence

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

Apologies had been received from CR (first part of the meeting) and CMacD (for the full meeting).

It was noted that DB, TL and MS, who were attending virtually, were having issues initially connecting to the meeting.

The Board agreed that the meeting was quorate.

The Board were asked if they had any interests to declare in relation to the planned agenda items, however there were no additional interests to report.

The Board noted the updates.

1.1. Update from the Chair of Relevant Matters – Verbal

The Chair noted the following additional attendees:

- Claire MacLean (Director of Bidding and Business Development) to be in attendance for Item 2.1 and 3.1.1.
- Cat Lewis (Principal of Kidderminster College) to be in virtual attendance for item 3.2.
- Jon Ridley (Deputy Principal (HE)) to be in attendance for items 4.2 - 4.3.
- Joe McGraw (Director of People and Development) to be in virtual attendance for items 4.4 - 4.5.
- Matthew Ward (Group Energy and Environmental Officer) to be in virtual attendance for item 4.6.

1.2. Governor Training / External Activity

The Board were asked if they had any relevant activity to report. The Chair made specific reference to the recent sessions; Corporation Board learner enrolment session and the NCG Governor Digital Technology within Teaching & Learning, both held on 1st March 2022. NT confirmed that attendance had been logged.

The Board noted the updates.

2. Thematic Discussion and Feedback Session

CMacL, TL, DB and MS joined the meeting virtually.

This item is covered under a confidential minute.

CMacL left the meeting.

3. Strategic Items

3.1. CEG Report

LB presented the report and highlighted the following:

- NCG were being invited to events and activities as a representative for FE which demonstrated an increasing element of national influence and reach.
- Following Ofsted, NCG were placing a big emphasis on colleague engagement.
- NCG were awaiting the outcome of the IDAP application and were hopeful of success.
- A statement had been issued to staff regarding the crisis in Ukraine, which included information around accessing support as well as methods to help & support learners.
 - The Board **queried** if NCG would be able to offer provision to those international students and student refugees leaving Ukraine. LB noted links with the Our Community is Your Community (OCIYC) project would enable NCG to support learners.
 - **JW declared an interest** noting that he was working with an organisation who had an office in Kyiv and were looking for NCG's support following a letter from the Ministry of Education & Science of Ukraine.

The Board agreed to support the requests within the letter.

- In relation to the pay award, an agreement had been reached for an interim payment of 1% (backdated to August 2021 (based on August 2021 salary)). This would be paid on 31st March 2022.
 - The interim award would mean that colleagues received the benefit prior to increase in NI contributions that would become effective from April 2022.
 - The interim increase in salary would not apply to members of the Group Executive or any colleague earning above £75k, and the options for the savings from this bracket of colleagues were being explored.

CR joined the meeting.

The Board noted the report.

In addition to the report, LB sought endorsement for the following T-Level Capital Bids, in response to the capital funding call made available for T-Level provision commencing 2023/2024:

- Carlisle College: Construction Academy - Building Better Futures
New Construction Facility (expanded from existing workshop) at Carlisle Campus to increase capacity to deliver T-Levels, grow learner numbers and improve standard of facilities.

- Kidderminster College – Future Digital
Remodelling and reconfiguration of parts of Kidderminster College’s first floor to improve digital facilities and increase quality & capacity of classrooms and to allow blended learning delivery.

The Board endorsed the two T-level capital bids for Carlisle and Kidderminster College.

3.1.1. NCG Bidding Process and Development

CMacL joined the meeting.

CMacL presented the report and highlighted that the NCG Bidding Process had been developed alongside a supporting flowchart to increase the success of external funding. CMacL noted that there had previously been instances of a non-joined up approach, with individual colleges within NCG bidding for funding rather than operating as a group. The process also legislated for greater governance and oversight, with learning from previous feedback, and an improved approach to the management of match funding requirements.

CMacL also noted the importance of ensuring projects were strategically aligned with set priorities.

The Board noted the report and endorsed the implementation of the process.

CMacL left the meeting.

3.2. Kidderminster Recovery Plan (Change for Growth)

CL joined the meeting.

This item is covered under a confidential minute.

The Board approved the Kidderminster Recovery Plan (Change for Growth).

CL left the meeting.

3.3. Finance Report

LSp presented the Finance Report and highlighted the following:

- There was a continuing trend from the previous report which reflected a shortfall in adult delivery, however this was offset by cost savings.
- Early Q2 indications were that the previous forecast would be met, and efforts were being made to improve the position.

LSp highlighted for the Board the new summary of risks & opportunities and action summary and noted that this would be updated on a meeting-by-meeting basis. **The Board welcomed and endorsed the provision of this information.**

LSp noted that a summary of the work to address the pay : income ratio across NCG would be brought to the next meeting.

Action: LSp to provide an update of the work undertaken to address the pay: income ratio to the May 2022 meeting.

The Board noted the report.

3.4. Quality and Performance Report

SW presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The Ofsted report had been circulated to staff and governors and was due to be externally available within the coming days.
- Updates to the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF) suggested that all providers would be visited between 2022 and 2025. SW noted that work was underway to strengthen skills alignment, and this included external engagement with the community and local employers.
- A review of Newcastle College's Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provision had taken place in February by a consultant, working on behalf of Group QA / Newcastle SLT. SW noted that the provision was in scope for an Ofsted inspection, however, this would be an independent inspection carried out under the ITE inspection framework, rather than the Education Inspection Framework. SW noted that further work was required around mentorship, which was a large part of the framework. SW confirmed that this was being led by Jon Ridley (Deputy Principal (HE)) and also related to provision at Carlisle and Southwark.
- Arrangements were being made for learners following Ofqual confirming arrangements for summer examinations. SW noted some adaptations and adjustments were being made in terms of the exams (for example, clearer and succinct content), and confirmed that learners were being prepared accordingly.
- Updates in relation to the Lines of Enquiries (LoE) had been provided. The report showed that the RAG rating remained consistent, with improvements in Apprenticeships and English & Maths.
 - SW noted his concern around the spending of the Catch-Up Tuition Funding, noting that some funding had been rolled over (approx. £500k) from the previous year. SW confirmed that the funding was to provide learners with additional lessons, however this had not been possible due to staffing challenges. SW noted that GG and TL were leading on college responses, however suggested that further work should have been done to ensure the fund was spent to the benefit of learners at an earlier point in the year.
 - LS noted that the finance teams had estimated the same funding for the 22/23 academic year and had planned a cost basis / spend plan to this effect.

- SW confirmed that work continued in relation to Apprenticeships. SW confirmed that the action plan was being progressed, with the focus of working with high quality employers and fixing issues around progress reviews.

The Board queried the following:

- Consequences of not spending the Catch-Up Fund – LS confirmed that the money would be clawed back, however would be a lost opportunity rather than lost income.

The Board **requested** an update on the spending of the Catch-Up Fund at the May 2022 meeting.

Action: SW to include an update of the spending of the Catch-up Fund within the May 2022 Quality report.

The Board noted the report.

3.5. Relationships Report

DB presented the report and noted that the information set out the key interactions of each of the Chief Executive's senior team. DB confirmed that further iterations of the report would include narrative around how the stakeholder links were being used to progress the NCG strategy and key priorities.

The Board noted the report.

4. Items for Approval / Noting

4.1. Corporation Matters

DB presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The Corporation Board were due to hold the May 2022 meeting at Kidderminster, as one of the Corporation Board 'on the road' sessions. The provisional timeline included lunch and discussions with the Kidderminster College Board, an update from the Principal & Chair, and a tour of the College. The Corporation Board meeting would take place at a slightly later start time of 4pm and would be followed by a Corporation Board dinner. The Governance Team were to be in touch regarding travel and accommodation requirements.
- Plans were in place to host an in person NCG Governors Conference on 15th and 16th June 2022 at West Lancashire College. All governors had been invited and the team were in the process of collating responses.

DB highlighted the following approval requests:

- **Re-appointment of Jennifer Mitchelson to the NCG Corporation Board, as the Staff Governor, for a term of 2 years, following a staff election.**

- **Appointment of Conor Allen to the NCG Corporation Board, as a Student Governor, for a term of 1 year, following a student election.**
- **Appointment of Diana Wiedemann to the NCG Corporation Board, as a Student Governor, for a term of 1 year, following a student election.**
- **Appointment of Georgia Russell to the Southwark College Board, as the Support Staff Governor, for a term of 2 years, following a staff election.**
- **Appointment of Stephen Ireland to the Newcastle College Board, as the Staff Governor, for a term of 2 years.**

Action: Governance Team to process appointment approvals.

The Board approved the above appointments and noted the report.

4.1.1. Approval of the statement of non-adoption of the HE senior staff remuneration code

NT presented the model statement of the non-adoption of the HE senior staff remuneration code, reminding the Corporation Board that NCG had previously adopted the AoC SPH remuneration code.

Action: PL to sign statement.

The Board approved the statement.

4.2. HE Annual Report 20/21

JR joined the meeting.

JR presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The HE Team were pleased with the outcomes following the challenging year.
- Students were satisfied with the provision, and JR noted the proactive and adaptive approach of staff to suit student needs.
- Lessons learned / areas for improvement had already been considered and were being progressed.
- The report had been endorsed by HE Governance Committee in February 2022.

The Chair asked the HE Governance Committee for comments. It was **noted** that some outstanding data errors needed amending prior to publication, however the HE Governance Committee were pleased with the report and work being done.

The Chair **suggested** that the Board would have a Corporation Board Away Day early / mid July to consider plans for the future and that this would specifically include how to take forward the lifelong learning agenda.

The Board **noted their formal appreciation** of the work of JR and his team over the past year.

The Board approved the NCG HE Annual Report for 20/21.

4.3. HE Fees Policy 22/23

JR presented the HE Fees Policy for 22/23 and highlighted the following:

- The policy had undergone minimal changes.
- The HE Fees Policy had been endorsed by HE Governance Committee in February 2022.
- The HE Fees Policy for 23/24 would be brought for approval at the July 2022 Corporation Board meeting to ensure earlier approval of the fees to fall in line with production of promotional material.

The Board approved the HE Fees for 22/23.

Action: Governance Team to process policy approval.

JR left the meeting.

4.4. Recruitment and Staffing Changes

JMc joined the meeting virtually.

JMc presented the report and highlighted the following:

- Recruitment and retention challenges were common across the sector, however JMc noted that there was an opportunity for NCG to resolve some of the challenges with the work being done to mitigate. This included NCG taking a more streamlined approach to recruitment and delivery of the NCG pay review project.
- The NCG Pay Policy had recently been approved by Executive Board, which included the use of market rate supplements.
- JMc remained in close contact with his peers across the AoC network, and noted that in the North, the NCG pay award was higher than some of the local competitors.
- There was a more proactive approach, along with further development activity around a 'grow your own' approach.
- A restructure of the People and Development Team was taking place, with opportunities to focus on talent and ensure effective working relationships.
- Further work was underway to support new starters, specifically new teaching staff, to ensure time to learn and develop. Work was also underway to attract students / ex-students into the sector by creating clear career paths.
- The work of the Leadership Hub continued, and this was a good example of NCG investing in staff and promoting CPD.

- Work with external partners continued, for example, the AoC networks and the Collab Group.

LB noted that she recently had conversations with peers across multiple sectors, and feedback was common around challenges with recruitment and retention. LB suggested a clearer focus on NCG being an educational organisation and investing in staff in terms of development and internal progression.

The Board **discussed** the possibility of working with sectors to recruit retired staff members / current staff members to lecturer posts. The Board **noted** the challenges which could be faced around complications with pensions, assessment & marking and classroom control.

The Board **queried** the challenges of NCG compared with those across the sector. JMc noted the fluidity of the position, but suggested NCG were struggling less than some other colleges.

The Board **suggested** the creation of a retention strategy as well as a recruitment strategy.

Action: LB and JMc to consider the creation of a retention strategy.

The Board noted the report.

4.5. Gender Pay Gap Reporting

JMc presented the report and highlighted that the data had only marginally changed from the previous year; the gap remained stable, and the median figure had reduced slightly. JMc noted that NCG continued to have more females employed in most grade profiles and suggested that the salary structure offered a level of protection.

The Board approved the Gender Pay Gap Report for 20-21.

Action: Governance Team to process report.

JMc left the meeting.

4.6. Heat Decarbonisation Plan

MW joined the meeting virtually.

MW presented the report and highlighted the following:

- Last year, NCG were awarded just under £80k from the Salix fund to move away from fossil fuel-based heating systems. MW noted that Salix would offer funding each year and NCG wanted to be prepared with plans in place to access funding if the opportunities arose.
- The full document was being created with Carbon Architecture and would not be ready in its totality until the end of the month, however the summary provided contained all key details.

Action: Governance Team to circulate full version of the NCG Heat Decarbonisation Plan once available.

The Board queried the following:

- Dependency on funding – MW noted that the plan did depend on funding opportunities at present. LSp confirmed that the priorities were being considered and work was underway to enable NCG to progress the Environmental Strategy.

The Board **noted nervousness** around the dependency on funding, and **suggested** modelling NCG-funded improvements.

The Board approved the Heat Decarbonisation Plan.

MW left the meeting.

5. Minutes of Previous Meetings / Information Flows / Matters Arising / Register of Actions

5.1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 8th February 2022

The Board **reviewed** the minutes of the previous meeting and **agreed** that they were a true and accurate reflection of the meeting.

The Board approved the minutes.

5.2. Register of Actions

DB presented the Register of Actions and supporting documents which were included to provide further information regarding the closure of actions.

The Board reviewed the register of actions and noted that relevant actions had been covered within the meeting or closed as per the document.

The Board **requested an update** on the issue regarding one governor's non-compliance of safeguarding training. DB confirmed that arrangements were being made within the college to offer a face-to-face session. The Chair noted that this would be followed up and further action would be taken if this was not complied with.

The Board noted the update.

5.3. Corporation Committee Minutes

The following Corporation Committee meeting minutes had been shared for information within the files section of the Corporation Board Teams Channel:

- Search Committee (December 2021 – Chair approved).
- Chairs' Forum (December 2021).
- Audit & Risk Committee (December 2021).

The Board noted the Committee minutes.

5.4. College Board Minutes

The following College Board meeting minutes had been shared for information within the files section of the Corporation Board Teams Channel:

- Carlisle College Board (November 2021 - Confidential & Main).
- Kidderminster College Board (November 2021 - Confidential & Main).
- Newcastle Sixth Form College Board (November 2021).
- Newcastle College Board (November 2021).
- Lewisham College Board (November 2021).
- Southwark College Board (December 2021 - Confidential & Main).

The Board noted the College Board minutes.

5.5. Information Flow

N/A

5.6. Matters Arising

N/A

6. Deferred Items

6.1. Update of NCG Business Continuity Plan

Deferred from September 2021.

The Chair **requested an update** of the NCG Business Continuity Plan and DB confirmed that an Assistant Director Risk & Protection had recently been appointed and was due to start in the next couple of months. DB noted the huge amount of experience of the applicant and noted that this appointment was made on a full-time basis to provide dedicated resource to support the Director of Assurance & Risk progress risk management and business continuity planning.

The Board noted the update.

7. Any Other Business

N/A

8. Time and Date of Next Meeting – 10th May 2022 at Kidderminster

The Chair confirmed that the meeting would be taking place face to face at Kidderminster College, with a slightly revised schedule to include an informal lunch with the Kidderminster College Board and a tour of the College. The Chair noted that the Governance Team would be in touch with regard to travel arrangements.

The Board noted the update.

Approved: 10th May 2022