

NCG – Corporation Meeting

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 9th February – 3pm to 5.45pm

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	CMA	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*^		
Matthew Otubu	Independent Governor	MO	X*		
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 and Secretary to the Board		X*		
Visitors/ Presenters					
Chris Payne	Deputy CEO	CP	X*		
Mike Wilmot	Chief Finance Officer	MW	X*		
Steve Wallis	Executive Director of Quality	SW		X	
Scott Mulholland	Chief Information and Data Officer	SM	X*^		
Grant Glendinning	Interim Executive Principal of the North	GG	X*		
Tony Lewin	Group Executive	TL	X*		
Nicola Taylor	Assistant Director of Governance (minutes)	NT	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 SW, and CMc and SM were due to be late to the meeting. The apologies were accepted, and 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. RH confirmed that Robertsons were carrying out some work in relation to the ESFA funded works around decarbonisation and energy consumption within the Colleges, although he was not directly involved.

The Board noted the update.

1.1. Update from the Chair of Relevant Matters – Verbal

PL confirmed that the White Paper had now been published, and an overview was included in the meeting papers, in addition LB's video to all staff had been circulated to the Board. The conference session on 2nd March is to be focussed on the White Paper and implications to NCG.

The Board noted the update.

1.1.1. College Strategic Plan Presentation

The Board were presented with the schedule for the College Strategic Plan presentations by the Principals and Local Chairs for the 23rd, 25th and 26th of February.

The Board noted the update.

1.2. Risk Focus – Covid Risk Assessments

DB presented the Covid Risk Assessment and confirmed this would be added to the NCG website. This was shared with the Board for information.

The Board noted the update.

1.2.1. Risk Management Training – Questions for the Board

DB presented the document which provided answers to the questions for the Board, included within the approved Risk Management Policy. This was to provide assurance to the Board that risk is being appropriately managed.

The Board noted the update.

1.3. Governor Training / External Activity

The Board were asked if they had any relevant activity to report, however there was nothing to report at this meeting.

2. Strategic Items

2.1. Chief Executive Group - Report

LB presented the CEO report, and provided the following updates:

- LB and CP continued to provide strategy update webinars across NCG to all staff.

- The FE White Paper had been published, and work was underway to review the implications and opportunities for NCG.
- Work continued to appropriately and effectively manage the effects of Covid.

CMc joined the meeting.

The Board asked about the change in the definition of 'Vulnerable Students' in terms of Covid, and noted their surprise at the small number of students attending the College sites. LB confirmed that this was potentially due to the work around supplying students with the necessary equipment to support their learning from home, therefore not needing to attend the college. LB also confirmed that the DfE were providing NCG with just under 1200 additional devices to further support learners.

In relation to the Executive Team structure, the Board asked who carried out the performance review of the Principals. LB confirmed that there is a split, with the Principals for Kidderminster, Southwark and Lewisham reporting to CP whilst the Principals for Newcastle, Carlisle and West Lancashire report to GG. The Principal for NSFC reports to LB directly. The respective line managers complete the performance reviews, including input from the relevant Local Board Chair, and then all performance reviews are further reviewed by LB and the Appraisal and Remuneration Committee.

The Board asked about the impact and current position for Vocational Assessments. LB confirmed that NCG took the decision to cancel Vocational Assessments in January and the Group are working towards a policy to ensure there is an evidence base for grading (including statements of engagement, evidence of performance etc). The Board asked about the courses with a practical nature, noting that they must be significantly compromised. LB confirmed that where End Point Assessments were required, small groups of learners were being invited onsite, in line with guidance and socially distanced measures to allow them to do this. There is a concern around the engagement of lower-level courses, Level 1 and Level 2 in particular. Denise Williamson (Principal of West Lancashire College) is leading on a piece of work around the safe return of small groups of learners who are in danger of becoming NEET or not engaging. The Board requested an update on learners missing education at the next meeting.

Action: SW to provide an update on lost learning and current position of Vocational courses at the March 2021 meeting.

The rest of this item is covered under a confidential minute.

The Board noted the report.

2.2. Quality and Performance Report

CP presented the Quality and Performance Report in SW's absence, and highlighted the following:

- Attendance, as of 22nd January, was running at 89% using the simple actual / expected measure and 86.6% taking into authorised absence (which includes COVID-related isolation or illness). The headline rate has dipped by around 0.5% since Christmas with engagement running in this period at around 80% (however there is a lag with asynchronous marks

until teachers can evidence the learning). Learners who are at risk of disengaging are identified by specific reports with appropriate responses being taken.

- Retention is currently 96.7% (97.3% for FE and 77.3% for Apprenticeships) which has declined by around 1%p since Christmas. Reports continue to run to identify the attendance and withdrawals of groups that may be deemed 'at risk' based on SAR analysis. Attendance and engagement reports also track characteristics such as deprivation, looked after children, free meals, in addition to gender, ethnicity and disability / difficulty.
- The results of the first term survey have been collated. Whilst participation was only around 66% this was sufficient enough to provide a reasonable confidence interval. Results showed that satisfaction has improved by an impressive 5%p from 88% to 93%. The supportive efforts of staff should be duly recognised here, however managers are aware that it may also be reflective of tendency for learners to show a level of positivity since returning to face-to-face learning. Positive responses to assessment, wellbeing, T&L and progression are all higher however and NCG staff should be rightly proud of their achievements.
- The GCSE November resit results were provided ahead of the meeting but are being checked, and a further update will follow.

Action: SW to provide update when available.

The Board asked if it would be more helpful to provide the attendance figure post-lag, however assurance was provided that this was not the case.

The Board asked how they could be assured that learners were engaging within lessons. CP confirmed that ETLA (Evaluation of Teaching, Learning and Assessment) is continuing, with staff 'dropping into' online lessons. In addition staff have been asked to use their professional judgement around the use of different engagement methods, however it is recognised that the only real way of measuring engagement is through monitoring learner progress.

The Board noted the update.

SM joined the meeting.

2.3. Finance Report

MW presented the Finance Report and highlighted the following points:

- A reforecast was carried out prior to Christmas, however this has now changed due to returning to Lockdown and that this will have a further impact on income. Colleges are due to open on 8th March, however further guidance is awaited. MW confirmed that the longer the Colleges remain closed, the higher the risk to Adult income, and this is being monitored closely.
- Recent guidance has suggested that HE students can claim refunds if they are unhappy with their online provision. Further information isn't known at this stage, however this is a potential concern.
- Some costs will be saved due to the Lockdown, however as the college buildings need to remain open for vulnerable learners, the same level of cost savings will not be seen as during the previous full campus closures.

- An FE Transformation Fund has been announced, to improve the condition of college buildings. NCG will apply. All money needs to be spent by September 2024. MW suggested some potential ideas for the funding regarding improving buildings and increasing capacity for learners. 50% match funding is required, and further detail will follow.
- The Newcastle Estates Strategy will be brought for agreement by Corporation in March.

Action: NT to add Approval of Newcastle Estates Strategy to March 2021 agenda. AT (Chair of Newcastle College Board) to be invited to attend for this item.

The Board noted the update.

2.3. Corporation Matters

DB presented the Corporation Matters report and sought approval for a number of appointments.

The Board queried the appointment extensions for the governors at Kidderminster, and DB confirmed that this was to enable further time for recruitment, and to prevent a change of College Board Chair during the Principal Recruitment. DB confirmed that Cat Draper (Interim Principal of Kidderminster College) had some positive conversations with potentially interested parties, who are also key players within the local community, and appointments had been arranged for CD and DB to meet with the interested candidates.

The Board sought assurances that the Student Governor for Newcastle and Corporation was able to manage both roles, alongside being the Newcastle SU president and continuing her studies.

Action: DB to discuss with MEP.

The Board asked about a focus on Student Voice. DB confirmed that this was highlighted within the Governance Review and was something being further considered. CP noted that Sarah McGrath (Assistant Principal at Carlisle College) had been allocated the portfolio on Student Voice. DB confirmed that he was due to meet with SM to discuss further. The Board suggested that they would like SM to attend a further meeting to provide further detail around the project.

Action: NT to add to agenda at an appropriate point.

The Board approved the following appointments:

- Carlisle College – Brian Hough – Independent Governor – Reappointment – 4-year term.
- West Lancashire College – Mark Whitworth – Independent Governor – Reappointment – 4-year term.
- Newcastle College – Minerva Peace Eweka – Student Governor – 1-year term.
- Corporation Board - Minerva Peace Eweka – Student Governor – 1-year term.

- Southwark College Board – Holly Roberts-Harry – Independent Governor – 4-year term.
- Southwark College Board - Roy Senoga – Independent Governor – 4-year term.
- Southwark College Board – Smith Kusi – Independent Governor – 4-year term.
- Southwark College Board – Bill Worboyes – Student Governor – 1-year term.
- Kidderminster College Board – Matthew Terry – Chair – Extension to 31st July 2021 (4-month extension).
- Kidderminster College Board – Sandra Hickman – Independent Governor – Extension to 31st July 2021 (4-month extension).
- Kidderminster College Board – Don Beckett – Independent Governor – Extension to 31st July 2021 (4-month extension).
- Kidderminster College Board – Brian Seaby – Independent Governor – Extension to 31st July 2021 (4-month extension).

Action: NT to process appointments.

The Board noted the following updated:

- Kidderminster College Board – Mark Garnier – Independent Governor - End of Term: Due to end on 6th March 2021.
- Lewisham College Board – Simbina Joseph – Student Governor – Resignation: With effect from 2nd February 2021.

The Board noted the remaining contents of the report.

3. Deep Dives

3.1. Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunities and Growth – FE White Paper

CP provided the Board with a presentation, focussing on the 5 key themes of the FE White Paper. CP confirmed that an action plan was being developed around the key themes, with a leader being assigned to each. The Board agreed that they would like to see the action plan.

Action: CP to provide at the March Corporation meeting.

The Board reiterated that there needed to remain a clear focus on the priorities of NCG and achieving the Strategic Plan, as they noted a lot of time could be taken up with joining different Boards / events, and although it was agreed this was important, the Board wanted to ensure there remained a clear focus on the priorities.

LB noted that the ‘Synergy Hub’ which was being developed by GG linked into the idea of the College Business Hubs, and therefore there was potential funding available to establish this.

The Board noted the update and that further information would follow at the upcoming conference.

3.2. Principal Recruitment – Job descriptions and future roles

LB confirmed to the Board that there were vacancies for the Principal roles at Kidderminster, Carlisle and Newcastle. The jobs are currently out for advert with a draft job description, to allow input from the relevant Local College Boards and Corporation. LB confirmed that the job description had been amended, as previously discussed, to focus on quality, business development and student experience, which also links timely to the revision of the remit of the Local Boards.

The Board queried the timescales of the recruitment. LB confirmed that virtual sessions would take place with student / stakeholder / staff groups, however face to face interviews were preferred and therefore the process was likely to last until at least Easter.

The Board approved the documentation, subject to the Appraisal and Remuneration Committee approval. The Board confirmed that the SPH document related to a specific pension scheme and this would need revised.

The Board approved the Selection Committee as:

- Chair of Corporation.
- Chief Executive Officer.
- Local College Board Chair.
- One other College Board Governor (where requested).

Post meeting note: Following the meeting of the Appraisal and Remuneration Committee, it was also agreed that the other 3 members of the Appraisal and Remuneration Committee (MS, CM and AC) would each attend the final interviews of one of the posts.

3.3. Cyber Security Update

SM provided the Board with a Cyber Security Update, and highlighted the following points:

- Work had taken place around improving the infrastructure, enhancing colleague behaviour & knowledge, and around readiness to respond to any potential attacks.
- A new feature has been added to email to highlight when an email is being received from an external source. This is to aid staff when identifying an external, and potentially harmful, email.
- 2 phishing simulations had taken place with staff, with more to follow. Some improvement was seen in the number of people falling foul to the second simulation.

The Board suggested that the number of staff falling for the phishing simulations was still high and asked if this was due to the complexity of the simulation or a naivety of staff. SM confirmed that it could be the case that staff are expecting web filters to prevent phishing emails, and there are aspects of naivety with staff. Training is being mandated for those who fail to recognise the phishing attempts, and this action itself is driving evidence of improvements.

The Board asked about the attacks made on NCG and SM confirmed that there had been 2 successful phishing attacks in the past 2 months.

The Board noted the update.

JM left the meeting due to connectivity issues.

4. Items for Approval / Noting

4.1. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report (19/20)

LB presented the EDI annual report, noting that this has been carried out following the Equality Work review, and alongside the EDI champions.

The report was presented for approval, and the Board were asked to participate in the EDI Consultation of the suggested EDI Strategy.

Action: NT to circulate consultation link post-meeting.

The Board asked what work was being done to capture the EDI information for staff already in post who have not provided this information previously. LB confirmed that this would come from a culture change, reiterating to staff that this data was being collected to create a more diverse and inclusive environment.

The Board noted that some Colleges had been able to achieve good response rates, and it could be worth SW exploring this further, and to link with benchmarking of data.

Action: SW to link with other Colleges and explore benchmarking of data.

The Board approved the EDI Annual Report for 19/20.

4.2. NCG College and Student Updates

CP presented the NCG College and Student Update report.

The Board noted the report.

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

5.1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 15th December 2020

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. Matters Arising

N/A

5.3. Register 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 noted the updates.

6. Any Other Business

N/A

7. Time and Date of Next Meeting – 3pm on 9th March 2021

8. Deferred Items

8.1. Regionalism / White Paper

Deferred to Governor Conference - March 2021

8.2. Corporation Committee Minutes

Not applicable - No minutes available for this meeting.

8.3. College Board Minutes

Not applicable - No minutes available for this meeting.

8.4. Information Flows

Not applicable - No information flows available for this meeting.

Approved: 9th March 2021