

NCG – Corporation Meeting

Main Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 12th October – 3pm to 5.45pm

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	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	DB	X*		
Visitors/ Presenters					
Mike Wilmot	Chief Finance Officer	MW	X*		
Steve Wallis	Executive Director of Quality	SW	X*		
Scott Mulholland	Chief Information and Data Officer	SMu	X*		
Grant Glendinning	Executive Principal North	GGI	X*		
Nicola Taylor	Assistant Director of Governance (minutes)	NT	X*		
Brett O'Reilly	Group Head of Curriculum for Construction Innovation Technologies	BoR	X*^		
Denise Williamson	Principal of West Lancashire College	DW	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 RH.

The apologies were accepted, and **the Board agreed that the meeting was quorate.**

The Chair noted that:

- DW would be attending for item 2.4
- BoR would be attending for item 3.1

The Board were asked if they had any interests to declare in relation to the planned agenda items. JW noted his interest for Item 2.1 in relation to the Mixed Economy Group as the former Chair.

The Board noted the updates.

1.1. Update from the Chair of Relevant Matters – Verbal

The Chair provided the following updates:

- There was a continued preparation for an Ofsted Inspection.
- The November meeting was being held at Carlisle College as agreed at the last meeting.

The Board noted the updates.

1.2. Governor Training / External Activity

The Board were asked if they had any relevant activity to report.

- PL had participated in further Ofsted preparation sessions with SW.
- JS had completed the EtF Governor Safeguarding 2021 Training, and the following modules as part of the Governor Development Programme:
 - C1a Understanding your role and role of board
 - C6a Understanding curriculum design

The Board noted the updates.

2. Strategic Items

2.1. Chief Executive Group (CEG) Report

LB presented the CEG report, and highlighted the following:

- The FE Commissioner Team were due to visit NCG in November as part of the diagnostic assessment follow up visit.
- Preparations for Ofsted continued.

- All information for the IDAP application had been submitted, with only additional supplementary evidence requested.

The Board queried the following:

- Number of Bids – The Board **noted** the new processes and funding opportunities available and asked about the risks around the Collab opportunity. LB confirmed that CP is the Collab representative, and that NCG made the decision to pull back from opportunities which needed a high level of investment, however, were working on opportunities which would assist the sector and Group where these fit in line with CP's remit.
- Higher Education Short Course Trial competition bid – The Board **requested** more information on this in due course.

JW declared an interest as the former Chair of the Mixed Economy Group.

Action: LB to provide further information when available.

- National Skills Fund consultation – LB confirmed that CP had responded, having taken input from colleagues from across the group to the consultation.
- Increase energy costs – MW confirmed that energy procurement is done in 6-month tranches, with a 6-month tranche being procured on 1st October. MW suggested that the 2nd tranche would be incredibly expensive and that the Finance teams were working on the forecast for this. MW suggested this could create an additional cost of approximately £0.5m-£1m, which could then increase further in the following year. MW also noted that the cost of energy required to produce raw materials (for example, cement and steel) was likely to result in increased costs going forwards. The Group were expecting cost pressures in the coming period, and MW confirmed he would continue to include relevant updates within his Finance report.

The Board **noted** the potential highly significant increase in costs.

- Enrolment Report – SM confirmed this data was in comparison to the same point within the previous year, and the total was in comparison to the full year. SM confirmed that the final position in some areas would not be known for some time.

The Board noted the report.

2.2. Finance Report

MW presented the Finance Report and highlighted the following:

- The P2 Management Accounts had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The accounts showed a reasonable position. The Group were ahead in terms of processing enrolments (against the previous year) which was making comparisons difficult, however P3 and P4 would provide clarity.

- There had been an underspend of costs which was pleasing, and due to the expected cost pressures, budget holders would be asked to consider costs for Q1.

The Board **noted** that the information in relation to capital expenditure was encouraging and were pleased to see that NCG were successful in reaching the 2nd round of the FE Capital Transformation Fund (FECTF).

The Board noted the report.

2.2.1. Approval of Updated Subcontracting Levels for 21/22

MW presented the updated Subcontracting Levels for 21/22 for approval, noting that there had been a slight increase from the report presented in July due to the ESFA's decision to include Employment, Enrichment and Pastoral activity (EEP) within subcontracting numbers and controls. MW noted that the overall figures for 21/22 (with EEP excluded) showed a decrease from the previous year and continued the trend of reduced year on year subcontracted levels.

The Board approved the updated Subcontracting Levels for 21/22.

2.2.2. Approval of Land Exchange

Covered under a confidential minute.

2.3. Quality and Performance

SW presented the Quality and Performance report, and highlighted the following:

- The latest figures showed an overall achievement rate of 86.2% (16-18 at 84.5% / 19+ at 87.8%). SW noted this was a decrease on the previous year, however reiterated the difference in the awarding of grades (CAGs vs TAGs), and that the guidance around the need for functional skills assessments being carried out was made available late in the year.

Despite this, SW confirmed that this rate remained above the National Average (using a comparison to 19/20 national data).

- Apprenticeship data continued to be processed, however there were challenges. The current figures showed an achievement rate of 50.2%, compared to a National Average of 64%. SW noted that despite this, there were some success stories and high grades, but this did remain a key area for improvement. SW reiterated that the Apprenticeship provision of NCG was small, however remained a focus.

SW noted that NCG were working on the move to Apprenticeship Standards rather than Frameworks, and the mix currently sat at approx. 60% - 40%. It was further noted that the proportion of apprenticeships on Frameworks would reduce over the coming years.

- SW confirmed that increased rigour within the apprenticeship enrolment process and logging of Off the Job Training (OTJ) had been

implemented, including the work of DB and the Internal Audit Team. SW confirmed the importance of having evidence of 20% OTJ training for every apprentice.

- 2021/22 academic year retention was high at the time of the meeting, and SW noted that this was expected due to the start of the new academic year.
- Attendance was reasonable, however only 79% for English and Maths.
- There was an increase in Safeguarding caseloads, with an increase in referrals to external agencies. SW specifically noted some worrying concerns at Lewisham College in relation to the sub-culture of some learners.

The Board queried the following:

- Suggested decrease in national rates – SW confirmed he believed that there would be a decrease in achievement rates nationally.
- Group narrative on Apprenticeships – SW confirmed that he was producing a position statement focussed on Apprenticeships to provide a clear summary, noting the conscientious actions the Group have taken but also noting that the level of improvement hadn't been evident in the time since changes had been made SW suggested that the self-assessment grading for Apprenticeships would be 'requires improvement', however the intent and implementation showed a clear path to improve. GG noted that there was evidence of an active management of the apprenticeship portfolio with the reduction of the number of occupational areas offered and the work of the Apprenticeship Council
- Impact of grading of Apprenticeships on the overall grade of NCG – SW confirmed that the Apprenticeship provision of NCG was small in comparison to the rest of the provision at less than 5%, however noted it remained a key area of continued focus.

The Board noted the key improvements made and the implementation of actions to improve this area and asked for SW to include these within the position statement to evidence the distance travelled.

Action: SW to update and circulate.

SW presented the suggested Lines of Enquiry (LoE). The Board **suggested** that Local College Boards would be in a better position to respond to the suggested LoE around how learners have settled into college following a disrupted education, as they would have a better understanding of Student Voice at a local level. The Board **noted** that there was a need to articulate the approach to empower Local College Boards at a local level, with a focus on student experience, quality and outcomes. SW noted that information regarding learners was also provided at Corporation level through the Quality Reports.

The Board requested the following additional LoEs:

- Engineering and Construction, following the decrease in retention and achievement.

- Inconsistencies across the Colleges, to ensure the Corporation are aware.

Action: SW to amend LoE 2 to be more specific and include the addition of the suggested LoEs.

SW noted that the LoE would be approved as part of the NCG SAR, at the December meeting.

The Board noted the report.

2.4. West Lancashire College Proposal – CONFIDENTIAL ITEM

DW joined the meeting

This item is covered under a confidential minute.

DW left the meeting

2.5. Relationships Report

LB presented the Relationships Report and the Board **noted and endorsed** the amount of external activity and engagement being carried out by the CEG.

The Board noted the report.

3. Thematic Discussion and Feedback Session

3.1. Construction

BoR joined the meeting

LB welcomed BoR to the meeting, noted the level of work he had carried out since starting with NCG, and his knowledge and expertise. LB suggested that BoR's role demonstrated what NCG could do with Group level 'Heads of' roles and suggested that this should be considered further with the appointment of strategically focussed, industry informed, well-connected leaders overseeing areas across the Group.

BoR provided a presentation and highlighted the following:

- BoR's background, including that he had been a lifelong learner having attended school, undertaken an apprenticeship, gained a degree and was currently studying for an MBA.
- The key responsibilities of the role, included the development of a 5-year strategic plan for Construction on a Group-wide scale and the delivery of 4 key strategic objectives.
 - BoR highlighted that the key theme for the plan was 'One NCG, Local Delivery and National Impact'. BoR suggested this was a similar theme across the work being undertaken by NCG.
- The need to work with those in industry to develop the curriculum offer and align closely with sector demand.

- The national shortage of skilled construction lecturers and the idea to create an NCG talent pool to create lecturers of the future.
- The continued focus on becoming 'Brilliant at the Basics', with the need to deliver engaging lessons, encourage high expectations and use innovative technology. This would help create a consistent high level of service across the Group. BoR highlighted that this was a key step before progressing further.
- The need to create clear pathways within the curriculum.
- That a Grade 2 Ofsted inspection would allow further opportunities for funding and investment.

The Board discussed and noted the following:

- The important work of ensuring positive progression into industry.
- Support for the idea of the NCG talent pool.
- Potential new areas of provision based on demand, and the importance of not losing sight of smaller provision.
- The need for NCG to be 'Brilliant at the Basics' and a potential concern around trying to do too much at once.
- The aim of NCG to be sector leading.

LB reiterated that she was encouraging ambition. The Board **queried** NCG's current position and BoR confirmed he was still understanding the quality of the provision at each campus and would then have a better idea in due course. BoR noted that he had written a position statement for Construction at Kidderminster, and he was confident that this provision was a Grade 2.

- The positive focus on championing EDI.

The Chair asked for BoR to follow up with RH.

Action: NT to share contact details.

The Board thanked BoR for the presentation and requested regular updates on progress.

The Board noted the update.

BoR left the meeting.

4. Items for Approval / Noting

4.1. Corporation Matters

DB presented the Corporation Matters Report and highlighted the recommendation to appoint the following:

- Appointment of Alan Hodgkiss – Independent Governor at NSFC for a term of 4 years.

- Appointment of Jack Garrett – Independent Governor at NSFC for a term of 4 years.
- Re-appointment of Paul Atkinson - Independent Governor at NSFC for a term of 4 years (with effect from current term end date of December).
- Appointment of Claire Wanless – Staff Governor at Kidderminster College for a term of 2 years.
- Appointment of Rachel Parsons – Student Governor at Kidderminster College for a term of 1 year.
- Appointment of Laura Holwick – Staff Governor at Newcastle Sixth Form College for a term of 2 years.

The Board approved the appointments as above and noted the remaining elements of the report including the Chair’s reminder for Governors to complete the recently circulated Skills Audit.

4.1.1. Approval of Governor Link Roles

DB presented the report on Governor Link Roles, as discussed at the September meeting, and confirmed that the Data Link role had been clarified.

The Board **discussed** the possibility of matching the Corporation Link Roles at College Board levels to create an additional forum for the specific areas.

Action: DB and PL to discuss at upcoming Chairs Forum.

The Board approved the following appointments:

Area	Link Governor	Executive Lead
Safeguarding and Prevent	Jeannette Strachan	Steve Wallis
Quality and Curriculum	John Widdowson	Chris Payne / Steve Wallis
Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging	Shirley Atkinson	Steve Wallis
Student and Staff Voice	Mathew Otubu, Jennifer Mitchelson and Student Governor (TBC)	Sarah McGrath – Student Voice Chris Payne – Staff Voice
Apprenticeships	Rob Holt	Grant Glendinning
Data	Chris McCourt	Scott Mulholland / David Balme

4.1.2. Approval of Internal Governance Documentation

DB presented the updated internal governance documentation and confirmed that the agreed updates from the September meeting had been reflected.

The Board **requested** a further change to be made throughout the documents:

“The Corporation may not delegate the consideration of the case for dismissal, and the power to determine an appeal in connection with the dismissal of the Chief Executive of NCG, the Clerk or the holder of a senior post, other than to a committee of at least 3 members of the Corporation or to the Chair or the Vice-Chair.”

To

“The Corporation may not delegate the consideration of the case for dismissal, and the power to determine an appeal in connection with the dismissal of the Chief Executive of NCG, the Clerk or the holder of a senior post, other than to a committee of at least 3 members of the Corporation including the Chair or the Vice-Chair.”

Action: NT to make amend.

The Board approved the following revised documents (subject to the above amendment):

- **Instrument and Articles.**
- **Standing Orders.**
- **Scheme of Delegation.**

4.2. Risk Management Annual Report 20/21

DB presented the Risk Management Annual Report for 20/21 and confirmed that this had been approved by the Audit and Risk Committee.

The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee noted that the Audit and Risk Committee had gone through the report in detail and were confident there was significant risk management in place. It was noted that the Committee had debated the focus on Cyber Crime and Business Continuity and are happy with the risk approach adopted.

The Board noted and endorsed the report.

4.3. GDPR / Information Governance Annual Report 20/21

DB presented the GDPR / Information Governance Annual Report 20/21 and highlighted that the key issue had been around staff forgetting to use the Bcc function on emails (specifically the case in Newcastle college where there had been 3 instances which affected many data subjects). The DPO team have followed up with guidance and training. DB noted that this remained an area of focus and that there were plans in place to drive this forward.

The Board **queried** NCG’s compliance with document retention – DB confirmed there was a policy in place which was in the process of being updated however noted this was definitely an area which required improvement.

The Board noted the report.

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

5.1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 7th September 2021

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.

5.1.1. Confidential Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 7th September 2021

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

The Board approved the confidential minutes.

5.2. Register of Actions

DB presented the 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.

5.3. Corporation Committee Minutes

The following Corporation Committee meeting minutes were shared with the Board via the Knowledge section of BoardPacks on 31st August 2021 for information:

- Search Committee – July 2021
- Audit Committee - July 2021

The Board noted the Committee minutes.

5.4. College Board Minutes

N/A

5.5. Information Flow

N/A

5.6. Matters Arising

N/A

6. Deferred Items

6.1. Environmental Strategy Update

Deferred to February 2022 to allow the information to flow through the newly formed Estates, H&S and Environmental Committee in the first instance.

6.2. Update of NCG Business Continuity Plan

Deferred from September 2021.

The Board **queried** the following:

- Expectation of update - DB noted that the Audit Team were struggling to recruit to one of their roles which would contribute to the delivery of this area, and this had therefore had a detrimental impact on the progress made. DB noted that this area would not be progressed in the short term.
- The current plan – DB noted that a policy was in place, and that some areas of the organisation have formal plans and some areas need further work.

The Board **noted** the importance of having a Business Continuity Plan in place and suggested that it may be more suitable to look for external support on this. The Board **asked** for this item to remain on future agendas and for DB to provide progress updates.

Action: Audit Committee to consider progress of Business Continuity Plan.

7. Any Other Business

It was **agreed** that if an Ofsted Inspection was due to take place when the next Board Meeting was taking place, that the meeting would revert to a virtual meeting rather than taking place at Carlisle.

The Board **asked** for the Quality Team to produce a one-page summary of each of the individual College SARs.

Action: SW to provide a one-page summary document for each College SAR.

The Board **noted** the update.

8. Time and Date of Next Meeting – 15th November 2021 at Carlisle College

Approved: 15th November 2021