

## NCG – Corporation Meeting

Main Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> September – 3pm to 5.35pm

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	HL			
<b>Clerk</b>					
David Balme	Executive Director and Secretary to the Board	DB	X		
<b>Visitors/ Presenters</b>					
Chris Payne	Deputy CEO	CP	X		
Mike Wilmot	Chief Finance Officer	MW	X <sup>^</sup>		
Steve Wallis	Executive Director of Quality	SW	X		
Scott Mulholland	Chief Information and Data Officer	SMu	X		
Grant Glendinning	Executive Principal North	GGI	X		
Tony Lewin	Executive Principal South	TL	X		
Nicola Taylor	Assistant Director of Governance (minutes)	NT	X		
Jon Ridley	Deputy Principal (HE)	JR	X <sup>^</sup>		

\*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 CMc.

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

The Chair noted that:

- JR 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, however there was nothing to note.

**The Board noted the updates.**

### 1.1. Update from the Chair of Relevant Matters – Verbal

The Chair provided the following updates:

- The Governors' Dinner was to follow the meeting at the Chef's Academy where the meal would be prepared by students of Newcastle College. It was noted that RH was unable to attend. PL and LB would provide pre-dinner speeches.
- The following visits had been planned:
  - FE Commissioner follow up visit – Autumn Term.
  - ESFA Strategic Discussion – Spring Term.
- The application for IDAP continued.
- MW had tendered his notice and would be leaving NCG pre-Christmas. PL noted that MW would be hugely missed and joined the Board in thanking him for his contributions and improvements made to Finance during his time at NCG.

**The Board noted the updates.**

### 1.2. Governor Training / External Activity

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

*AC noted via BoardPacks that he had completed the Curriculum Design and Planning module of the Governance Development Programme.*

**The Board noted the update.**

### 1.3. Appointment of Link Roles

DB presented the paper setting out the suggested Governor Link Roles.

**The Board discussed the potential roles, and noted the following:**

- Questions on BoardPacks suggested there was overlap between the Finance, Data and Risk link role, and the Audit Committee. The Chair

of Audit Committee suggested that this role would still add value, however, and could assist the Audit Committee by having a greater understanding of systems and compliance with funding audits, as this was something the Audit Committee spent a lot of time on during meetings.

- Board members had previous experience of link roles failing to deliver the expected added benefits and noted the need for clear guidance regarding the remit of the role, to prevent any misunderstanding around governance and management, along with clear levels of reporting to the Corporation Board.

**The Board agreed that they would further consider the suggested link roles and make a final decision at the October meeting.**

**Action: DB to provide further guidance on reporting back to the Corporation Board.**

**Action: NT to add to October agenda.**

## **2. Strategic Items**

### **2.1. Finance Report**

MW presented the Finance Report and highlighted the following:

- The first draft of the year-end accounts had been completed and noted that there could be some slight variances depending on the outcomes of the RSM audit.
- The accounts showed an improved position of £1m compared to the Q3 forecast. MW explained that this was mainly due to cost savings and an improved HE position.
- The underlying trend was similar, if not better, than the previous year.
- Financial Health grading of 'Good' was achieved.
- Cash and covenants headroom remained comfortable.

*Remainder of this item covered under a confidential minute.*

**The Board noted the report.**

#### **2.1.1. Approval of Financial Regulations**

MW presented the Financial Regulations for approval and highlighted that they had been amended to include a high-level introduction for staff to understand key areas, clearer controls around procurement and ordering, and detail around IR35. Other minor changes, including job titles, had also been made.

**The Board agreed that the high-level introduction was very useful and approved the revised Financial Regulations.**

### **2.1.2. Approval of Terms of Lease – CONFIDENTIAL ITEM**

*Covered under a confidential minute.*

**Approved**

## **2.2. Review of Internal Governance Documents**

DB presented the report setting out the review of internal governance documents and highlighted that recommendations had been taken from the External Governance Review, along with ensuring consistency of information between documents. DB highlighted the following points to consider:

- Appointment of NCG Student Governor.
- Quoracy of Meetings.

**The Board discussed and agreed the following:**

- The documents should be amended to allow for up to two Student Governors (rather than three) from any of the colleges, and for the appointment to this position to be made by peers, rather than automatic appointment.
- Student Governors could attend meetings virtually to prevent any barriers regarding location. Appointing 2 Student Governors could provide a level of peer-to-peer support.
- When meetings occur and there becomes a lack of quorum, meetings may continue, however no decisions can be made. Where it is known in advance that a meeting is not going to be quorate, the meeting will be rearranged.

**Action: NT to revise documents as per the above agreed amendments.**

**Action: DB to link into SM's Student Project for appointment of 2 Student Governors.**

**The Board agreed that they would approve the documents, subject to the above amendments, at the October 2021 meeting.**

### **2.2.1. Instrument and Articles**

*Covered under 2.1*

### **2.2.2. Standing Orders**

*Covered under 2.1*

### **2.2.3. Scheme of Delegation**

*Covered under 2.1*

#### **2.2.4. Corporation Terms of Reference 21/22**

The Board approved the Corporation Terms of Reference for 21/22.

#### **2.2.5. Corporation Work Plan 21/22**

The Board approved the Corporation Work Plan for 21/22.

### **2.3. Approval of Approach to Meetings**

DB presented the paper setting out the suggested approach to meetings for the 21/22 academic year.

**The Board agreed the following in relation to the approach to meetings for the 21/22 academic year:**

- Committee meetings to take place virtually (unless there is a business need to meet in person).
- Corporation Meetings:
  - 5 meetings to take place face to face (3 at Rye Hill House, and 2 on College Sites (Carlisle in November / Kidderminster in May))
  - 4 to take place virtually.

**Action: NT to update meeting invites accordingly.**

### **2.4. Chief Executive Group (CEG) Report**

LB presented the CEG report, and highlighted the following:

- Colleges had opened for students and were looking forward to welcoming new enrolments.
- Covid remained present and guidance was for staff and students to wear 'masks on the move', with onsite testing available for students.
- There were hybrid working models across NCG which were working well. Student facing staff had returned to College, however those within Professional Services were mainly still working from home unless there was a business need to do otherwise.
- Staff continued to prepare for an Ofsted inspection. Planning and organisation was positive and SW had been doing a great deal of work in this area.
- The IDAP application was progressing, and under the leadership of JR (Deputy Principal – HE).

**The Board queried the following:**

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- Learner Numbers – LB suggested that enrolment was going well, and SMu noted that students were responding positively to the online enrolment process. SMu confirmed further data would be available at the October meeting.

**Action: SMu to submit enrolment numbers to the October meeting.**

**The Board noted the report.**

LB noted an additional item, not covered within her report relating to ‘Colleges Week’ which was due to take place in October 2021. CEG were working on a project aligned to the crisis in Afghanistan. This would include ensuring refugees were welcomed, supported and befriended. LB noted that it was envisaged to work collaboratively with other colleges on this project.

**The Board endorsed this project.**

## **2.5. Quality and Performance**

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

- TAGs were all submitted successfully, with less than a 1/3 of the appeals received this academic year (c160 compared to c600 in the previous year after the awarding of CAGs).
- English GCSE results show 42% A\*-C grades, slightly below the National Average of 44%. Maths GCSE results show 34% A\*-C grades, below the National Average of 40%.
  - SW noted that although below the National Average, significant progress had been made across NCG. English high pass national achievement rates had increased from 25% to 42% since the last examined period, and Maths high pass national achievement rates had increased from 16% to 34%. NCG were in line with the previous national achievement for examined results, and only slightly below national achievement for TAGs, showing that NCG had contained grade inflation.
- A Level Results were positive, with many courses having excellent ALPS scores.
- The Lines of Enquiry for 20/21 had been closed, and a position statement was provided within the report.

**The Board queried the following:**

- Variation of results between Colleges within NCG – SW confirmed that all NCG Colleges followed the same process and policy, however the level of teaching and progress / attainment of each student differed (with there being a great disparity in the grade profiles of learners across the Group). SW confirmed that various levels of checks had taken place to provide assurance of grades, and this also included

awarding body sampling (on which there were no issues). Internal deep dives into teaching had evidenced improvement and provided evidence for gradings.

**The Board noted the encouraging outcomes.**

SW confirmed he was confident that the evidence and indicators were in place to provide an overall grading of 'Good', however reiterated that Apprenticeships remained an area of focus.

**The Board noted the report.**

**2.5.1. Self-Assessment Report Position Paper**

*Covered within the main Quality and Performance Report*

**2.5.2. Exclusions Overview 20/11 – Verbal**

*Detail included within action report.*

SW noted that exclusion data hadn't previously been collated centrally, and that this would be implemented going forward. SW confirmed that the procedure for dealing with poor behaviour was covered under the Positive Student Behaviour Policy.

**The Board noted the update.**

**2.5.3. Safeguarding Annual Report 20/21**

SW presented the Safeguarding Annual Report for 20/21, confirming that the individual College Safeguarding Annual Reports had been included as an appendix for information only. SW noted that JS had prior sight of the report, and that JS continued to attend Safeguarding Council meetings and follow up conversations with SW to understand the key risks.

**The Board noted the following:**

- Appreciation of Safeguarding Council within the college reports.
- High levels of training compliance.
- Variation in levels of referrals – SW noted that this would be taken to the next Safeguarding Council, however there was a confidence in the referrals taking place, and in some cases, records were updated in relation to ongoing issues, rather than additional referrals being made. SW confirmed that the implementation of 'My Concern' would allow live tracking of referrals across the year.

**The Board noted the report.**

**2.5.4. Approval of Safeguarding Policy**

SW presented the revised Safeguarding Policy for approval and highlighted that the document had been updated in line with changes to

Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE). SW noted that Annex A included an update on the changes made from the previous version of the policy.

**The Board approved the revised Safeguarding Policy.**

#### **2.5.5. Complaints and Compliments Annual Report 20/21**

SW presented the Complaints and Compliments Report for 20/21 and highlighted that the Group need to do further work to ensure compliments are logged.

**The Board noted the report.**

#### **2.5.6. Careers Annual Report 20/21**

SW presented the Careers Annual Report for 20/21, and noted the progress made, however confirmed that Covid had an impact on employer engagement and workplace visits. SW also provided an update on student destinations as an appendix to the report.

**The Board noted the report.**

#### **2.5.7. Approval of Careers Framework Policy**

SW presented the revised Careers Framework Policy for approval.

**The Board approved the revised Careers Framework policy.**

### **2.6. Lewisham Deptford Project Board Governance**

TL presented the report setting out the suggested revised governance for the Lewisham Deptford Project Board. TL noted that the Corporation Board had delegated authority to the Lewisham Deptford Project Board to oversee progress of the Lewisham Estates Strategy. The suggested changes were to change the Senior User to TL and to appoint a Project Manager (based in London) as the project moves into the next stage. LB reiterated the progress made since TL had become involved within the project, so endorsed this change.

**The Board approved the revised governance structure to the Lewisham Deptford Project Board.**

*MW left the meeting.*

## **3. Deep Dives**

### **3.1. NSS Results Analysis**

*JR joined the meeting.*

JR presented the NSS Results Analysis and highlighted the following:

- The HE Team have reached out to New College Durham and City of Sunderland College to discuss and learn from their experiences.
- Learning Resources remained an issue.
  - JR noted that steps have been taken to improve resources however as a result of Covid students had not been able to see and use the resources available to them as much as they would have in a normal year. Work is ongoing with students around expectations / perception, and to raise awareness of the resources available.

The Chair of the HE Governance Committee noted the following:

- The pattern for University results had declined, and the general message across HE was that students were unhappy with their experience during Covid. As a result, it was good to note the overall positivity in the NCG results.
- Learning resources had been a rolling issue for NCG with previous concerns being Wi-Fi, and HE students wanting / expecting a different experience to those in FE.

**The Board discussed and noted the following:**

- The improved position and the difficult year faced due to the impact of Covid.
- That the results should be factored into the IDAP application.
- The need to explain and manage expectations, and the difference of offering HE within an FE environment.
- The role of the Student Union within NCG. JR suggested that there had been activities around a Student Union, similar to that in a University setting such as societies and freshers activities, however students haven't previously wanted to engage.

**The Board noted the update.**

*JR left the meeting.*

### **3.2. West Lancashire College Proposal – CONFIDENTIAL ITEM**

*Covered under a confidential minute.*

**Approved**

## **4. Items for Approval / Noting**

### **4.1. Corporation Matters**

DB presented the Corporation Matters Report and highlighted the recommendation to appoint JW as the Chair of Kidderminster College for an interim period (with an initial term of 6 months) to allow time to recruit an external or for current Board Member development to take place to allow an internal appointment to be made.

DB noted that the Governance Team were looking at alternative software to share governor documentation, including the exploration of an internal solution.

**The Board approved the appointment of John Widdowson as the Interim Chair of Kidderminster College for an initial period of 6 months and noted the remaining elements of the report.**

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

### **5.1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 20<sup>th</sup> July 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 – 20<sup>th</sup> July 2021**

The Board **reviewed** the minutes of the previous meeting and **agreed** 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.

**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 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021 for information:

- HE Governance – February 2021

**The Board noted the Committee minutes.**

### **5.4. College Board Minutes**

The following College Board meeting minutes were shared with the Board via the Knowledge section of BoardPacks on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021 for information:

- Carlisle College Board – May 2021
- West Lancashire College Board – May 2021

**The Board noted the College Board minutes.**

### **5.5. Information Flow**

DB presented the following Information Flow:

- Newcastle College Board

**The Board noted the update.**

**Action: NT to respond**

### **5.6. Matters Arising**

Not applicable.

## **6. Deferred Items**

### **6.1. Update of NCG Business Continuity Plan**

*Deferred from September 2021*

## **7. Any Other Business**

*Not applicable*

## **8. Time and Date of Next Meeting – 3pm on 12<sup>th</sup> October (Virtual)**

**Approved: 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021**