

NCG – Corporation Meeting

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 9th March 2021 – 3pm to 6pm

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	
Minerva Peace Eweka	Student Governor	MPE	X*		
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*		
Alex Turner	Chair of Newcastle College Board	AT	X*^		
Leigh Scott	Director of Estates	LS	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 JM. The apologies were accepted, and the Board agreed that the meeting was quorate.

It was noted that JW was running late to the meeting, and that AT (Chair of Newcastle College Board) and LS (Director of Estates) would be in attendance for item 2.3.2.

The Board were asked if they had any interests to declare in relation to the planned agenda items.

- RH declared interest in 2.3.3 regarding the Contract Recommendation. The Board agreed that RH would be asked to step out of the meeting for this discussion.
- CR declared his interest in Greenwich Leisure Limited, the Board noted this declaration.

The Board noted the updates.

1.1. Update from the Chair of Relevant Matters – Verbal

1.1.1. ESFA Audit Update – Verbal - Confidential

Item covered under a confidential minute.

JW joined the meeting during this item.

1.1.2. Governors Conference – Verbal

PL provided his thanks to DB and NT for the organisation of the Virtual Governors Conference which took place on 2nd and 4th March, and thanked all colleagues for their contribution and attendance. PL requested a follow up paper on the Governance Review at the May 2021 meeting.

Action: NT to add to agenda / DB to provide report to May 2021 meeting.

The Board noted the update.

1.2. Governor Training / External Activity

The Board were asked if they had any relevant activity to report, however there was nothing to note, other than their attendance at the governors conference.

PL, CR, MS, CMa, SA, AC, RB, CMc (day 1 only), MO, JW (day 1 only), JM and LB attended the conference.

2. Strategic Items

2.1. Chief Executive Group - Report

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

- All Colleges have reopened to students. The mass pilot testing at NSFC in 2020 had helped ensure a smooth implementation of the new testing arrangements across the Group.
 - There is a proposal for those staff originally in Rye Hill House to continue to work from home until the guidance changes / end of lockdown.
- Staff development had continued. The Executive Team had undertaken EDI training, and the ambition programme of the Leadership Hub has been rolled out.
 - The Executive Team presented their innovative ideas to a special meeting of the Executive Board, following the completion of the NCEE Entrepreneurial Leadership Programme. The Board requested the ideas be presented at the next Corporation meeting for information.

Action: NT to add to agenda / LB to provide paper at May 2021 meeting.

- Governors are supporting JR (Executive Director of HE) with the application for Indefinite Degree Award Powers.

In relation to staff turnover figures included within the CEO report, the Board queried the increase in numbers in January. LB suggested that this would be due to seasonal activity and end of contracts.

The Board asked if the new financial benchmarks highlighted in the FEC letter were a cause for concern,. MW confirmed that this was an unexpected change, and as the current ratio has now moved to 1.4, in order to comply NCG would need to increase their assets by £2.5m. MW confirmed that the financial health scores calculation would change, but the information was not yet published.

The Board noted the report.

2.1.1.

2.2. Quality and Performance

2.2.1. Update on 'lost learning' and current position of vocational courses

SW presented the paper, which provided a summary of the challenges and impact of the lockdowns on learners across NCG. The report covered engagement and attendance, teaching practice, safeguarding and wellbeing, learner voice, supply of equipment, adjusted assessment, impact to learners and responses / actions / recommendations taken to address areas for improvement.

The Board thanked SW for the excellent report, and asked for this to be shared with the DfE.

Action: SW to amend where necessary and share with the DfE.

The Board were pleased to see consistent approaches and activity being applied across the Group.

The Board noted the update.

2.2.2. November GCSE Resits

SW presented the data of the November GCSE resits, showing that progress had been made. SW confirmed that the resits were carried out under exam conditions, and this data would be built on using teacher assessments.

The Board noted the update.

2.3. Finance Report

MW presented the Finance Report and highlighted the following points:

- Trading is in line with forecast.
- Cash and Covenant risks are ok in terms of headroom.
- NCG is not eligible for additional in-year 16-19 funding based on the criteria. However there is around £3m growth expected for the next academic year, which is £1m higher than expected. Further information is awaited from the ESFA and devolved authority thresholds to make an estimate of adult income.

The Board asked about the refresh of debt suggested within the report and asked if this should be done sooner than suggested, MW confirmed that this would be reviewed in light of the budget however conversations with the bank were ongoing.

The Board asked about finances in line with the NCG estates strategy, suggesting that capital investment would be needed, along with the need for match funding and equipment.

The Board noted the update.

2.3.1. Approval of Bank Mandate

MW presented the bank mandate for approval, confirming that a replacement mandate was required to improve efficiency when dealing with the bank. Separate existing mandates are in place relating to legacy bank accounts in Kidderminster and Carlisle colleges pre-merger with NCG. These documents have therefore been amended several times, causing delays when dealing with the bank (such as during the financial audit).

The Board approved the mandate.

Action: MW, LB, CP and PL to sign the mandate.

2.3.2. Approval of NCG and Newcastle Estates Strategies

AT and LS joined the meeting.

MW and LS presented the NCG and Newcastle Estates Strategies, and confirmed that as part of the White Paper, guidance was released on 21 January 2021 for a further Department for Education (DfE) capital funding bid round to address FE estate condition - Further Education Capital Transformation Fund (FECTF). It was noted that this follows on from the funding provided late 2020 for the same purpose, through which NCG was awarded £4.6m. The estates strategies were presented for approval to enable a compliant bid by the deadline of 22nd March 2021. LS provided the Board with a run through of the ideas and projects included within the strategy.

LS confirmed that NCG would need to input £6.5m of match funding, however additional grants would be considered. LS noted that this related to the first round of bidding, and therefore was not seeking formal commitment from the Board at this stage. If successful, further detailed plans would be provided for the 2nd stage.

The Board discussed the proposed plans, and MW confirmed that estates plans for Lewisham weren't able to be covered within this fund due to the timescales.

AT confirmed that the Newcastle College Board had been presented with the Newcastle and NCG Strategies and could see the linkage between the strategies and bid. AT confirmed that the Board had sought assurance that the strategy would remain a live document and be adaptive.

The Board felt they didn't have a good understanding of the building values across the Group and asked for this information to be provided at the next stage of the process.

Action: MW / LS to provide information of building values at next stage of process.

The Board approved the Estates Strategies for NCG and Newcastle.

AT and LS left the meeting.

2.3.3. Contract Recommendation: ESFA Programme 2020/2021 Project – Design and Build

RH left the meeting.

MW presented the report detailing the contract recommendation to Robertson Construction Group for the ESFA Programme 2020/2021 project.

The Board approved the contract award to Robertson Construction Group.

RH joined the meeting.

2.5. Update on Reporting Styles – Power BI Presentation

SM provided the Board with a presentation on reporting styles and the development schedule to the implementation of different reporting methods and dashboards.

The Board asked if they would be given access to the recruitment dashboard, and SM confirmed they would be given access to a governor specific reporting snapshot and that appropriate training would be provided.

Action: SM to provide recruitment dashboard training to governors once launched.

3. Deep Dives

3.2. Understanding the Local Curriculum

SS joined the meeting.

CP and SS provided the Board with a presentation which set out how the curriculum offer is driven at each College, and NCG as a whole. CP and SS talked in detail about the following:

- Understanding the demand – Explaining how NCG look at local sectors, competitors, regional policies and priorities, as well as individual and community demand.
- Understanding the supply – Explaining how NCG look at curriculum in England (breaking this down into 16-18, Adult programmes, Higher Education and Apprenticeships), and understanding the vernacular.
- Bringing it all together – Explaining the work of the Curriculum Strategy Group (CSG) and their approval process for curriculum offers (ensuring there is demand and factors to be successful).

CP confirmed that College specific versions of the presentation were being taken to each of the College Boards to show how they can hold Colleges to account in terms of their curriculum being fit for purpose.

The Board asked how long it would take to develop and implement a course, CP suggested that for a full-time course, this could take under 12 months, part time courses can be developed quickly, and Higher Education Foundation Degrees can be developed within a year.

The Board discussed the opportunities for the Colleges in terms of employer engagement to understand their needs, and the opportunities the Synergy Hub could bring.

The Board thanked CP and SS for the presentation.

SS left the meeting.

4. Items for Approval

4.1. Corporation Matters

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

The Board approved the following appointments:

- Emily Shord – Student Governor at NSFC – Term of office: 1 year.
- Helen Chong – Student Governor at NSFC – Term of office: 1 year.
- Simon Hyde – Independent Governor at Kidderminster – Term of office: 4 years.
- Eddy Morton – Independent Governor at Kidderminster – Term of office: 4 years.

Action: NT to process appointments.

The Board noted the remaining contents of the report.

4.2. Apprenticeship Hub Update

GG provided the Board with an update on the Apprenticeship Hub, suggesting this followed the previous discussion within item 3.1

GG noted that the recent audit had highlighted opportunities around devising systems and processes to drive improvements in terms of data to ensure control and compliance, which the Apprenticeship Hub were on track to do.

The Apprenticeship Hub aims to drive the improvement of quality of Apprenticeships, and grow the apprenticeship opportunities once established.

The Board asked about the launch of the Hub and confirmed that they would like to be involved.

Action: GG to share launch plans with the Board.

SA left the meeting.

4.3. HE Annual Report (19/20)

DB presented the HE Annual Report for 19/20, noting that the HE Governance Committee had recommended approval following their meeting in February 2021. CM confirmed that the Committee had discussed the report in detail, and were disappointed to see the satisfaction rates of students dropping within the NSS. CM noted that investment had been made in terms of resources and that work is underway to improve the internal progression of students.

The Board asked if the experience of HE Students were being considered within the Estates Strategies, and it was confirmed that this was the case.

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

4.4. HE Fees Policy – 2021/2022

DB presented the HE Fees policy for 2021/2022, noting that the HE Governance Committee had recommended approval following their meeting in February 2021. DB confirmed that withdrawal fees had been included, as well as minor updates to terminology.

The Board queried and challenged the variance between fees across the Colleges. It was confirmed that Newcastle College had undertaken market research and had chosen to opt for the maximum fees. The Board felt that there was a disparity, and that students could highlight the variance in fees across the Group. The Board asked for this to be considered further for the HE Fees 2022/2023.

The Board approved the HE Fees Policy for 21/22, however requested a revaluation of the fees across the Group for 22/23.

Action: LB to feedback to JR.

Action: NT to process policy approval.

4.5. FE Fees Policy – 2021/2022

MW presented the FE Fees Policy for 2021/2022, noting that the policy had changed to 'compliant', which meant the policy would be in effect for the whole Group, and refers to ESFA guidance.

The Board approved the FE Fees Policy for 2021/2022

Action: NT to process policy approval.

4.6. Gender Pay Gap Reporting 19-20

LB presented the Gender Pay Gap Report for 19-20.

The Board approved the Gender Pay Gap report for 19-20.

4.7. NCG College and Student Updates

CP presented the NCG College and Student Update report.

The Board noted the report.

4.8. Corporation Committee Minutes

The HE Governance Committee meeting minutes from November 2020 were shared with the Board via the Knowledge section of BoardPacks on 12th February 2021 for information.

The Board noted the Committee minutes.

4.9. College Board Minutes

The following College Board meeting minutes from November 2021 were shared with the Board via the Knowledge section of BoardPacks on 12th February 2021 for information.

- Carlisle College Board
- Newcastle College Board
- Newcastle Sixth Form College Board

- Kidderminster College Board
- West Lancashire College Board
- Southwark College Board
- Lewisham College Board

The Board noted the College Board minutes.

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

5.2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 9th February

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.

5.3. Matters Arising

N/A

5.4. 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 and agreed to remove the action in relation to contacting the previous Chair of the Lewisham and Southwark Board.

5.5. Info Flow

DB presented the following Information Flows:

- Carlisle College Board
- Newcastle College Board

The Board noted the updates, and requested for NT to respond to the Newcastle Information Flow.

Action: NT to respond to Newcastle Information Flow.

6. Any Other Business

Covered under a confidential minute.

7. Time and Date of Next Meeting – 3pm on 18th May 2021

Approved: 18th May 2021