

NCG – Corporation Meeting

Main Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 8th February 2022 – 1pm to 3.30pm

Virtual meeting

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*		
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	
Matthew Ward	Group Energy and Environmental Officer	MW	X*^		
Leigh Scott	Director of Estates	LSc	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 JW (start of the meeting) and JM (end of 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 made specific note to the Ofsted inspection which took place between the 17th and 21st January 2022. As Corporation members were aware, the oral feedback after the inspection had been constructive and positive and the draft report had been received and was as expected. Some minor comments had been made and the final report which would be published in due course was awaited.

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 Governor Training Session on 11th January focussing on Governance. NT confirmed that attendance had been logged.

The Board noted the updates.

1.3. Confirmation of Reappointment of Chair

It was **noted** that the Board had **electronically approved the re-appointment of PL as the Chair of the Corporation Board for a further term of 4 years (with effect from 1st March 2022).** The electronic approval was made on 26th January 2022.

Action: NT to process reappointment.

The Board ratified the approval.

2. Thematic Discussion and Feedback Session

2.1. Chief Executive Group (CEG) Report

LB presented the CEG report and highlighted that this had been a very busy period with a huge focus on the recent Ofsted inspection. LB noted the phenomenal effort of staff and that the use of Teams had been incredibly helpful to allow employees right across the Group to connect and meet instantly during the inspection.

LB confirmed to the Board that NCG would now be focussing on the following 4 key areas:

- Apprenticeships.
- Brilliant at the Basics (BATB).
- Finance.
- Unused assets across the Group (with the intention of reinvesting into Education wherever possible since this was the core mission and purpose of NCG).

LB noted that the report had been drafted in a shorter format and asked for comments on the new approach from the Board. The Board **agreed** that they preferred a shorter report that was focused on key details with the opportunity to ask further questions / provide challenge.

The Board queried the following:

- Ofsted Report – SW provided the Board with an overview of the verbal feedback provided, confirmed that the report had been signed off by NCG and was now awaiting publication. SW reminded the Board that any information remained confidential until the report was published.

The Board noted their thanks to the Executive Team and staff across the Group for their hard work and effort, and congratulated the team on the confirmed Grading of Good (NB – confidential until publication).

- Outcome of the IDAP application – LB confirmed that the QAA visit took place in January and feedback was expected by the 10th March 2022.
- National challenges with Apprenticeships – LB noted her confidence in the improvements within Apprenticeships across NCG. SW noted that the work undertaken by GG around compliance and paperwork had created a number of improvements and the next steps were around the quality and consistency of the learner experience. SW highlighted the progress made in relation to:
 - Ensuring NCG have the right delivery model (now in place).
 - Creating appropriate entry requirements for Apprenticeships (now in place).
 - Ensuring NCG are working with the right employers in terms of working with larger organisations as well as smaller SMEs (next phase).
 - Reviewing and raising the skillset of skills trainers (next phase).

SW noted that the predicted achievement rates for apprenticeships looked positive, but reminded the Board that these predicted rates might change over the year.

JW joined the meeting.

- PL and LB noted that post Ofsted was a good time to hold a Board Strategy Day and arrangements would be made in due course. It

would be good for this to have a particular focus on developing level 4-6 provision linked to the Government's plan for the Lifelong Learning Entitlement.

- London college vacancies – new Principals would be needed at London colleges (Lewisham and Southwark). LB noted the strong interim appointment of Gerard Garvey, and suggested the appointment would allow further development of the SLT. For Southwark, the intention was to advertise shortly and it was hoped that a substantive appointment could be made to provide continuity with the date of leaving of the current Principal. The Board **noted** however the current challenges of recruitment within London.
- ESFA funding rate increase – LB noted that the report included information around the 8% funding rate increase for 2022/2033 and reminded the Board of other increases around inflation, utilities costs and the expectation of a pay review.

Action: PL / LB / Governance Team to plan a Board strategy day to cover lifelong learning within the Summer Term.

The Board noted the report.

2.1.1. Effective Curriculum Planning

TL presented the report and highlighted that the piece of work included a 3-stage approach of:

- Setting expectations.
- Monitoring contribution levels.
- Control and management of resources.

TL confirmed that work was underway and that he is working closely with colleagues within different teams across NCG. There is also work ongoing regarding embedding the required additional teaching delivery (40 hours) without increasing the cost base.

The Board **queried** potential Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) implications following changes to the curriculum. LB noted that there would not be fundamental changes, and instead changes around consistency would occur which would lead to more effective delivery.

The Board noted the report.

2.1.2. Apprenticeships Works Group Update

TL presented the report and highlighted the work undertaken to review the following areas:

- Processes.
- Capacity.
- Competency of staff.
- Cost of delivery.

- Contribution of apprenticeships.
- Compliance.

TL noted that the work linked with the work of SW, and that the final report would be brought to the Corporation Board in May.

Action: NT to add Apprenticeships Working Group update to May 2022 agenda.

The Board noted the report.

2.1.3. Brilliant at the Basics – Project Updates

LB provided the Board with a verbal update on the projects undertaken as part of Brilliant at the Basics and highlighted that SW and SM had taken over the project sponsor role following the departure of MW. SM and SW were working on a project brief to share with the CEG and the Executive Team. LB confirmed that this would be shared with the Board.

Action: SM / SW to share BATB Project Brief with Corporation Board.

LB noted that this work went beyond Professional Services and would include curriculum areas and the Colleges across the Group. LB suggested the work would identify challenges and then workstreams would be created. SW noted that the work would be guided by the recent PwC audit review of major projects, and work would be undertaken closely with CEG and the Executive Team to ensure buy in.

The Board noted the report.

2.1.4. Entrepreneurial Leadership – Executive Project Updates

LB presented the report and highlighted the positive achievements made during the difficult challenges of Covid. LB noted that the work had encouraged new ways of thinking and innovations around income generation.

The Board **queried** bid preparation. LB noted that there was a team in place within NCG looking at the bidding process.

The Board noted the report.

2.1.5. MAS Records Update and Recovery Plan

TL presented the report and highlighted the following:

- A version of the report had been submitted to the recent Kidderminster College Board, providing the local Board with the progress to date.
- The scale of the challenge around the recovery of the EBITDA and staff:income ratio targets.

JW as the Chair of Kidderminster College confirmed that the local Board were engaged within the process and were assisting the College with opportunities. JW noted the importance of maintaining quality and the focus on growing student numbers.

The Board queried any similar risk profiles across the Group. LB suggested that there were no similar risks across the Group not already known or identified within her regular reporting.

The Board noted the report.

3. Strategic Items

3.1. Finance Report

LSp presented the Finance Report and highlighted the following:

- The Team were in the process of finalising the P6 accounts.
- Risks remained around Adult education delivery across most of the Colleges. This was currently showing a £1m shortfall and was a key risk. LSp noted that other income looked positive.
- Tuition Catch Up funding had been a focus over the past month, with the Executive Team considering the most effective ways to utilise this to the benefit of learners.
- There was an upside on costs; with pay costs being lower than planned which also linked with issues regarding the ability to recruit.
- The data was positive in terms of achieving the Q1 forecast, but the focus around AEB delivery and retaining cost savings remained.

The Board discussed the sector benchmark of the staffing:income ratio, and LSp suggested that although the benchmark may not be realistic for NCG, the current ratio was too high, with a need to find efficiency improvements. LSp noted that all colleges had been challenged around their individual benchmarks. LSp also confirmed that work had been undertaken in relation to staff groups (teaching, management, administration) to allow further internal benchmarking to take place, which would in turn allow informed decisions to be made.

The Board queried the following:

- Opportunities and Grant – LSp noted that work was underway to explore opportunities in relation to T Levels, however match funding was required and therefore a need to prioritise funds.
- Challenges around AEB – LSp suggested that challenges were around a lack of learners. This was suggested to be due to the disruption and consequences of Covid. LSp also highlighted that issues had been seen since the devolved contracts came into place. LSp confirmed that Lewisham were a big supplier of AEB and they had been significantly affected by Covid. LB noted that the teams were considering compliant ways to link Our Community Is Your Community (OCIYC) within AEB.

LSp noted that work continued with building relationships to ensure NCG was seen as a local provider as well as a national provider.

The Board noted the report.

3.2. Quality and Performance Report

SW presented the report and noted that he had covered key points within previous discussions regarding Ofsted feedback.

The Board noted the report.

3.2.1. Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) Annual Report 20/21

SW presented the EDIB Annual Report for approval, and highlighted the following:

- A few formatting amends were needed prior to publication.
- The report had been reviewed by SA as the EDIB Link Governor. The EDIB Link Governor confirmed that there was a lot of work and activities being undertaken across NCG to progress the EDIB Strategy.

The Board **noted** their appreciation of the report and the 'helicopter' overview it provided.

The Board approved the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging (EDIB) Annual Report 20/21.

4. Items for Approval / Noting

4.1. Update on Environmental Strategy

MW and LSc joined the meeting

SM reminded the Board of the recent merger of Estates, IT and Data all within his remit, and highlighted the importance of sustainability as part of this.

MW provided a presentation to the Board and highlighted the following:

- The 8 themes underpinning the Sustainability Strategy, the targets for each and progress to date:
 - Energy (target of 50% reduction).
 - Travel (target of 50% reduction).
 - MW noted that headway had been made in relation to the reduction of carbon emissions and travel due to the position of Covid, however returning to a new normal would show an increase.
 - MW also noted the expectations from stakeholders around a Net Zero approach, and suggested this would be a key aspect for future bids and funding.

- Eco Campus (target of platinum award).
- Water (target of 10% reduction).
- Waste (target of zero waste to landfill).
- Curriculum (target of embedding sustainability within the curriculum).
- Food (target of 50% reduction).
- Biodiversity (target of 5% increase).
- Successes and challenges of the strategy following its approval in October 2020. Successes included the Salix bid of c£80k and challenges included the resource constraints.

JM left the meeting.

The Board queried the following:

- Links with the curriculum – TL noted that he had taken on the Executive Lead role on the project and was working with MW to raise the profile of the strategy. This involved meeting with college stakeholders, and drawing ideas and innovations from curriculum areas. TL noted the implementation of Sustainability Champions within the colleges who were working to engage students, and that work was underway to review the curriculum to ensure students are prepared for the environmental agenda, as well as looking at different methods of curriculum delivery.

The Board **noted** the excellent work within this area, and it was suggested that organisations within the industry may be looking to work collaboratively.

Action: RH to send details to LB / MW.

The Board requested a further update on the progress of the Strategy (nothing that more regular updates would be presented to the Estates Committee).

MW and LSc left the meeting.

The Board noted the update.

4.2. Approval of FE Fees Policy

LSp presented the revised FE Fees Policy for approval, noting that this had been endorsed by the Executive Team.

Action: NT to process policy approval.

The Board approved the FE Fees Policy.

4.3. Approval of Procurement Strategy

LSp presented the Procurement Strategy for approval, noting that this had been endorsed by the Audit and Risk Committee.

The Board approved the Procurement Strategy.

4.4. Corporation Matters

DB presented the report and highlighted the progress updates in relation to the actions following the external Governance Review. DB noted that there had been some staffing challenges within the Governance Team however interviews had taken place to appoint 2 x administrators.

DB highlighted the following approval requests:

- Appointment of Sadie Gormally to the Newcastle College Board, as an independent Governor, for a term of 4 years.
- Appointment of Jackie Moran to the West Lancashire College Board, as an independent Governor, for a term of 4 years.
- Appointment of Jack Garrett (Independent Governor at NSFC) to the Audit Committee as a co-opted member.
- Extension of appointment of John Widdowson (Corporation Governor) as the Chair of Kidderminster College until a replacement has been appointed.
 - DB confirmed that NCG had been in contact with Nurole to assist with the recruitment of a Deputy Chair (with the succession plan of becoming Chair).
- Appointment of Rob Holt (Corporation Governor) as the Chair of the Estates Committee.
- Extension of appointment of Jennifer Mitchelson as the Staff Governor of the Corporation Board to March 2022 (additional month) to allow the process for seeking expressions of interest / hosting an election.
- Appointment of Hannah D'aguilar to the Southwark College Board, as the Teaching Staff Governor, for a term of 2 years.
- Appointment of James Widmer to the NSF College Board, as the Parent Governor, up until the 31st July 2023.
- Appointment of Cheffon White-McLeod to the Southwark College Board, as the Student Governor, for a term of 1 year.
- Appointment of Vijay Bissessur to the Lewisham College Board, as the Student Governor, for a term of 1 year.
- Appointment of Matthew May to the Newcastle Sixth Form College Board, as the Student Governor, for a term of 1 year.
- Appointment of Ewan Nicolson to the Carlisle College Board, as the Student Governor, for a term of 1 year.
- Appointment of Husamettin Kocaturkmen to the Carlisle College Board, as the Staff Governor, for a term of 2 years.
- Appointment of Juan Bercial to the West Lancashire 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.

4.5. FE Commissioner Report

DB presented the FE Commissioner Report for information and highlighted that the FEC had requested a copy of the Kidderminster Recovery Plan when it was available. The Chair **confirmed** he had requested for this to be approved locally by the Kidderminster College Board, and for this to then be shared with the Corporation Board for final approval. TL confirmed that the plan would be shared with the Corporation Board for approval on 8th March 2022.

Action: NT to add approval of the Kidderminster Recovery Plan to the March 2022 agenda.

The Board **queried** future involvement of the FEC following the recent Ofsted inspection. The Chair noted he would write to the FEC to confirm the work had been completed in relation to the Kidderminster Recovery Plan and that they would be updated where necessary.

Action: PL to write to FE Commissioner following completion of the Kidderminster College recovery plan.

The Board welcomed the report, specifically the endorsement of the improvements made since the initial visit.

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

5.1. Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 14th December 2021

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

It was **confirmed** that MS attended the meeting after item 2.1.

Action: NT to correct MS attendance.

The Board approved the minutes subject to the above amendment.

5.2. Confidential Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 14th December 2021

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

Action: NT to correct MS attendance.

The Board approved the confidential minutes subject to the above amendment.

5.3. 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.

5.4. Corporation Committee Minutes

The following Corporation Committee meeting minutes were shared for information:

- Draft Audit Committee - Meeting 2 (Chair approved).
- Draft Chairs Forum – Meeting 2 (Chair approved).
- Draft Search Committee - Meeting 2 (Chair approved).
 - The Chair of Search Committee queried progress of the Governor who had not yet complied with their Safeguarding Training. DB confirmed that the Chair of the Corporation Board had written to them but nothing further was received. DB noted that an alternative option for completing the online training was to be offered and that PL was going to follow up.

Action: PL to speak to Governor regarding non-compliance of Safeguarding Training

Action: DB to arrange in college session for completion of training.

The Board noted the Committee minutes.

5.5. College Board Minutes

N/A

5.6. Information Flow

DB presented the Information Flow documents from Southwark and Newcastle College Boards.

The Chair noted both Information Flows highlighted issues with staffing / recruitment. DB confirmed that this was a common area of discussion across the College Boards. The Chair requested an update to be provided to the Corporation Board on the current position and plans for the future.

Action: NT to add to the agenda / JMc to attend.

The Board discussed the potential future changes regarding Level 2 and Level 3 provision and requested a future session on this when further information was available. CP noted that no further information had been published following the pre-Level 3 consultation.

Action: CP to advise once further information is available regarding Level 2 / Level 3 Provision, and the Board to discuss this further.

The Board noted the information and approved the suggested responses.

Action: NT to submit Information Flows to the Boards.

5.7. Matters Arising

N/A

6. Deferred Items

6.1. Update of NCG Business Continuity Plan

Deferred from September 2021.

6.2. Approval of HE Fees

Deferred from February 2022 to March 2022 due to HE Governance Committee being moved to later in February.

7. Any Other Business

N/A

8. Time and Date of Next Meeting – 8th March 2022

It was **agreed** that the next meeting would take place in Rye Hill House at Newcastle.

The Board noted the update.

Approved: 8th March 2022