

NCG – Corporation Meeting

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 4th February 2020 – 2.30pm to 7pm

Details			Attendance		
Full Name	Position	Initials	Attended	Apologies	No Attendance
Peter Lauener	Chair of Corporation	PL	X [^]		
Mark Squires	Governor	MS	X		
Caroline MacDonald	Governor	CM	X		
Chris Roberts	Governor	CR	X		
John Cuthbert	Governor	JC	X		
Liz Bromley	CEO – Ex-Officio Governor	LB	X		
Cameron Hartley	Student Governor	CH	X		
Vacancy	Staff Governor				
Visitors/ Presenters					
Chris Payne	Deputy CEO	CP	X		
David Balme	Executive Director Governance, Assurance & Risk	DB	X		
Mike Wilmot	Chief Finance Officer	MW	X		
Steve Wallis	Executive Director of Quality	SW	X		
Tony Lewin	Principal – Newcastle College	TL	X		
Nicola Taylor	Assistant Director of Governance (minutes)	NT	X [*]		
Gerard Garvey	Principal at NSFC	GGa	X [*]		
Pete Watson	NSFC Chair	PW	X [*]		
Grant Glendinning	Principal at Carlisle College	GGI	X [*]		
Leigh Scott	Director of Property and Estates	LS	X [*]		

[^] Attended by Video Conference

^{*}Attended for part of the meeting.

1. NSFC Presentation – Intent, Implementation and Impact of the NSFC Curriculum

GGa and PW joined the meeting.

The Chair confirmed he had asked GGa and PW to attend to provide a presentation on the Intent, Implementation and Impact of the Newcastle Sixth Form College (NSFC) Curriculum, and noted that a working lunch with the NSFC Board had taken place directly prior to the start of the meeting. This was an

informal lunch and was part of the programme of Corporation Board visits to different college locations.

GGa opened the presentation, highlighting key features such as: cultural changes, a strategic approach to staffing, rigorous performance management, impact of the Strategic College Improvement Fund (SCIF) bid and partnership and the Local College Board. PW added his perspective as Chair, commenting on the importance of an organisational structure with a clear focus on improving performance and the growth strategy for the college.

GGa presented the four statements, embedded into the College, linked to the Ofsted Framework:

- ***We are Aspirational*** – this links to the college having high expectations, an above average progression to HE, students being encouraged to apply to Russell Group universities and a strong TLA standard.
- ***We are Academic*** – this links to the college having an academic curriculum offer at Level 2 and Level 3, a focus on academic progression routes, and the approach to TLA being centred around developing academic skills.
- ***We are Inclusive*** – this links to the college having a strong respect ethos at the core of college life, inclusive entry criteria, high scores of the staff survey relating to their inclusivity and the work the TARGET Team (previously Learning Support) carry out.
- ***We are Value Added*** – this links to the college being in the top 24% for Value Added for all schools and colleges, the large and hugely varied enrichment programme, the focus on growth mind-set, links with universities and employers and a strong focus on personal development.

GG presented the 18/19 outcomes to the Board, showing the distance travelled over the past few years and a comparison to the Sixth Form College Association (SFCA) average. The key highlights included excellent progress in a number of areas, such as Graphics, Economics, English Language, Psychology, Religious Studies and Sociology. Progress within Politics and Physics was in the top 10%.

Compared to all colleges, with a Value Added score of 0.18, NSFC ranks just outside the top 10%. Compared to specialist colleges, NSFC rank 12 out of 128, within the top 10%.

GG presented the strengths of NSFC as follows:

- Clear focus on continuous improvement.
- Rigorous student assessment and tracking.
- Students making excellent progress.
- Increase in high A Level grades.
- Strong progression to HE.

Areas for improvement include:

- Attendance – this is not yet at the SFCA average.

- Development of middle leaders – the College want to extend and maximise the impact of the Strategic College Improvement Fund partnership (SCIF).
- Addressing under performance – work is underway to tackle remaining areas where there was underperformance such as Drama, English Literature and Geology / Geography.
- Progress for the most able learners – stretch and challenge.

The College are looking to:

- Continuously improve TLA.
- Continuously improve the standards of students' work.
- Close the remaining progress and attainment gaps (for example, the attainment gap between gender).
- Expand the college – there are around 1200 learners at present and the college wish to expand this to
- Grow the number of Higher Level Apprenticeships.
- Deliver an “outstanding” Sixth Form college experience.

The Board thanked GGa and PW for the presentation, noting that it was very encouraging to see the progress made.

The Board asked about the ALPS score which placed NSFC lower than other benchmarks quoted. GGa confirmed that this reflected the comparatively lower points score on entry from what was a widening participation cohort. Staff are clearly focused on ensuring students make the maximum progress, and this is reflected within the high Value Added score.

The Board asked, in relation to the growth strategy, how far afield students currently travel from. GGa confirmed that some students travel from as far as Berwick, however the growth strategy will be focussed around local learners. The difficulty at present is that the college struggle accessing local schools who have their own sixth form provision. The Board noted this and asked if there was an alternative way to reach the students in schools. GGa confirmed that the marketing team had recently carried out social media campaigns and were now analysing the results achieved last year. PW also noted that the onboarding process of learners had been reviewed to ensure a smooth process was in place with clear communication. This is to improve the process of transitioning to a college from a school.

The Board asked about the progression of learners to university, and GGa confirmed that the curriculum is academically focussed and therefore university is the natural next step. The college maintain good relationships with universities.

The Board asked whether PW had any points to highlight on behalf of the NSFC College Board. PW confirmed that the Board were concerned with the staffing budget for CPD as the current amount available was inadequate. MW confirmed that more budget would be available once college student numbers increase. SW confirmed that investing more in teachers is a key focus of the quality strategy.

The Board reiterated their thanks to GGa and PW for their presentation.

GG and PW left the meeting.

2. Meeting Administration

2.1. Opening of Meeting and Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. The Chair had joined the meeting via video-conference. The Chair noted that the Director of Property (LS) would be joining the meeting for item 2.5.1 and the Principal of Carlisle College (GGI) would be joining the meeting for item 3.4.

2.2. Apologies for Absence

All Board Members were in attendance.

2.3. Declarations of Interest

The Chair asked if there were any interests to be declared, and CR confirmed that he is the Vice Chair of the (Northern Education Trust) NET Board who are in the process of taking responsibility for Walbottle School. CR noted that NET now had 2 schools within close proximity to the Rye Hill House campus.

2.4. Review of Minutes from the Previous Meeting – 3rd December 2020

The minutes were noted by the Board, with formal approval being deferred to the March 2020 Corporation Meeting.

2.5. Register of Board Actions

The Board reviewed the register of actions and noted that relevant actions were going to be covered within the meeting agenda or closed as per the document.

The Board noted the updates.

2.5.1. Action Update – Property Development at Lewisham and Newcastle

LS joined the meeting.

LS presented the property update for both Lewisham and Newcastle. CP confirmed that a productive day had taken place in Deptford, supported by an external consultant, where they had considered the ethos, future plans and structure of the college. CP noted that a lot of actions came from the meeting, and a project board has been established.

The Board wanted confirmation that the Local College Boards were involved and remained informed about developments, LS confirmed that this was the case.

The Governors asked about the property which was occupied by a Casino on the Rye Hill Campus. LS confirmed that a full title review had been commissioned (including the review of all covenants), and part of this includes the lease of the Casino which expires in . LS noted that there is a need to finalise the Newcastle Estates Strategy prior to this date, to align the plans to the campus.

LS confirmed that a further offer had been received for the West Moorland site, however the Board agreed that they would not wish to

properly consider any offers at this stage, until a clear strategy for the campus has been agreed.

The Chair commented that he strongly supported the engagement of LocatED in the development of the NCG property strategy. LocatED was a government-backed and owned company and he had worked with them previously. They should be helpful in offering assurance to the Board during the development process. The Board supported the involvement of LocatED in this process.

The Chair asked for the strategy to come back to the May 2020 meeting.

Action: NT to add the Property Strategy for Lewisham and Newcastle to May 2020 agenda.

The Board noted the update.

LS left the meeting.

2.6. Matters Arising

2.6.1. Chair of Lewisham College Board

DB confirmed that recruitment to the Lewisham College Board was going well, however the Board were still looking for a Chair at this stage. DB asked if any members of the Corporation Board would be willing to cover this post for the remainder of the academic year (3 meetings) whilst the Board establish themselves. The Chair asked for Board Members to contact DB if they would be willing and able to assist.

Action: Board Members to consider the cover of Chair of Lewisham College Board for the remainder of the academic year (3 meetings) and contact DB.

2.7. Governor Activity

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

JC, MS and PL noted that they had participated in the Data and Systems Walkthrough Session (Tuesday 4th February). This session was a request of the Audit Committee.

CR, JC, MS, CH and CM noted that they had participated in the working lunch with the NSFC Board members (Tuesday 4th February). This was part of the Corporation Board members visiting a number of different college sites across the academic year.

PL confirmed he is involved in a small working group who are currently discussing future governance arrangements in FE.

3. Substantive Items

3.1. Chief Executive Group - Report

LB presented the Chief Executive Group Report, and highlighted the following key points:

- There is a continued drive to ensure NCG is inspection ready. This involves ensuring quality standards are high, and a consistent approach across all colleges.
- Close monitoring of the finances continue, with an exceptional focus around Q3 and Q4 where the bank covenants are particularly tight.
- The internal launch of the strategy has started; the sessions have been very positive and engaging. These sessions are planned in to take place before the end of March.
- External activity is ongoing, with meetings taking place with key stakeholders in all regions.

The Board asked about the plans for English and Maths to which LB confirmed that the Principal of Newcastle Sixth Form College (GGa) is leading on this and working closely with the Executive Director of Quality (SW). SW offered the opportunity to have an additional session for the Board on this topic. The Board welcomed this suggestion.

Action: SW and NT to arrange additional session on English and Maths.

The Board asked about the use of external consultants on HR issues and asked if the necessary resource and internal capacity was in place. LB confirmed that the HR restructure will be pivotal in reducing reliance on external consultants.

The Board asked about recent news coverage of Gateshead College, and LB confirmed that she had been in contact with the previous and current Chairs to offer support.

The Board asked for NCG's response to the College of the Future Consultation to be circulated to Governors.

Action: CP to send response to NT for circulating to governors.

3.1.1. Strategy Update

CP presented the Strategy Update and confirmed that the presentation had been included within the papers for information.

The Board asked for an update on plans for publishing the strategy externally. LB confirmed that the strategy was being launched internally with staff first with plans to launch the strategy externally after Easter. The Board requested that the plans for external publication are shared with them at the March 2020 meeting.

Action: NT to add External Launch of Strategy to March 2020 agenda.

The Board noted the report.

3.2. Executive Director of Quality – Quality and Performance Report

SW presented the Quality and Performance Report and noted the following key points:

- The approved Quality strategy is now in place and forms a 3 year blue print for continuous improvement with the 2020 actions integrated in the 19/20 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP).

- The approved NCG Self Assessment has now been submitted to Ofsted, the FE Commissioner and ESFA.
- TLA continues to be evaluated against the Great Place to Teach (GPTT) 12 indicators. TLA is broadly evaluated to be strongest in Carlisle, Kidderminster, Newcastle Sixth Form and West Lancashire. But there were positive developments in all colleges which would support quality improvement.
- Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) of Ofsted, Amanda Spielman, has published her annual report the commentary on pages 7 to 15, p26 and p93 – 109 is of most relevance to NCG.
- FE attendance remains around 86% (ESFA rules applied), challenges remain within English and maths in most colleges. Use of authorised absence (used in prescribed circumstances for learners who genuinely can't attend) is higher than expected this year and was being analysed.
- Retention (at 97%) is broadly in line with historic trend, some challenges remain at CC, whilst the rate at NSFC reflects a 2-year course duration (most GFE courses are 1 year).
- Learner progress (against target) is now standardised, collated and presented for the first time – it indicates that 34% of learners are below target at review milestone 1. This is an internal measure only and is included for benchmarking purposes and to indicate the level of intervention and support required to ensure all learners achieve their potential.
- Timely apprenticeship predictions are now being collected each month based on stringent guidance to curriculum teams - for example apprentices who have not passed English and / or maths cannot be predicted as 'green'.

SW demonstrated to governors how targets are calculated, set and monitored using a new, integrated dashboard. SW noted that the success of this work was due to a working group from across NCG. The Board asked whether or not the accuracy of progress monitoring would be monitored against actual outcomes, SW confirmed that this was the intention and a report had already been commissioned.

The Board questioned the sample size of teacher evaluations and SW clarified that the use of confidence intervals was now applied to ensure sample sizes were indicative – the confidence will naturally increase as senior manager coverage and ETLA progressed through the year and more teachers are observed. Confidence levels of 95% and tolerances around 5% are already reliable statistically, although the aim is to ensure all teachers participate in line with policy.

The Board requested access to the college specific strategic risks which informed the traffic light monitoring within the Quality report.

Action: SW to send to NT to circulate.

The Board noted that they felt the real time reporting was very powerful. SW noted that all colleges had worked together on this, showing real evidence of cross college collaboration.

The Board noted the report.

3.3. Chief Finance Officer

MW presented the Chief Finance Officer Report, and focussed on the Integrated Financial Model for Colleges.

3.3.1. Integrated Financial Model for Colleges

The template provided is normally to be completed in January of each year and submitted to the ESFA. As this is a new process, the ESFA are still making necessary adjustments following feedback. A new version of the document is expected on Thursday 6th February and a final return was required by the end of February. It could be that this new model affects the resulting health rating. MW confirmed he was seeking approval of the assumptions underpinning the model as the basis on which he would prepare the submission to the ESFA. The Board asked as to whether further approval would be needed of the final model, and MW suggested not as the only additional changes would be technical.

MW confirmed the key points as follows:

- Q3 and Q4 bank covenants forecasts were forecast to remain tight – as previously discussed by the Board.
- Total EBITDA forecast in 19/20 is to be £0.5m ahead of budget, this is due to movement in pension payments. Excluding the pension movement, EBITDA is £0.3m behind budget – mainly due to HE recruitment shortfalls.
- Sufficient cash headroom exists throughout the forecast period, which would mean that the £5m revolving credit facility (RCF) would not need to be used.
- Hitting this forecast should result in ESFA financial health of 'Good' going forward.
- The financial wind down of the training providers would be complete in 19-20, creating significant improvement in financial performance.

MW also provided an update of the Q1 forecast, the forecast variance to budget, the forecast variance to the prior year, the forecast operating margins, the forecast payroll / turnover % and the forecast non-pay / turnover %, including commentary for each college.

MW confirmed that the model has been populated using the Q1 forecast, and assumptions have been included for the next 2 years.

The Board asked as to whether the assumptions are consistent with the newly agreed NCG strategy? MW confirmed that the strategy covered a much broader set of indicators and he was taking a prudent approach on the financial indicators for this purpose.

The Chair asked if it would be possible to see the impact of more optimistic assumptions e.g. on growth and profit.

NT left the meeting.

After some discussion, the Board agreed that it was right for this return to be based on prudent financial assumptions. MW agreed he would present to the next meeting 2 further slides based on risks and opportunities which would provide cover upside and downside from the central prudent position.

Action: MW to develop slides on Risks and Opportunities to provide an idea of the range around the modelled figures that would be submitted to ESFA.

The Board asked what assumption for income inflation had been used for 21-22 and MW confirmed that 2% had been used for 16/18 funding (based on the guidance provided by the AoC).

The Board approved the assumptions presented, recognising that these are prudent assumptions for this return.

3.4. Apprenticeship Strategy Update

GGI joined the meeting. This item was covered following Item 1.

The Chair confirmed that GGI had been invited to the meeting to provide an update on the NCG Apprenticeship Strategy.

GGI outlined further work that had been the focus of the last month to ensure the apprenticeship strategy anchors into the Quality Strategy. The comments from the Board had been welcomed and noted, and detailed objectives and milestones were now in place, including indicative investment.

The Board asked what the current position of apprenticeships would be if there was an inspection now. GGI noted that the new inspection framework was no longer all about outcomes, as there is now a strong focus on learner experience and quality of teaching. The work that had started would continue to drive improvement in experience and outcomes. SW also highlighted the reduction in the number of different frameworks and standards that NCG offered and the impact of deep dives in improving quality.

The Board asked whether everything was being done to ensure the best possible improvement. GGI confirmed that this was the case. Work is underway to look at how colleges are monitoring progress and the systems to evidence this. There has been a real strengthening of the NCG's Apprenticeship Council which is now taking on the assurance function for new standards. The Apprenticeship Conference will focus on the current offer and ensuring value from the offering.

The Board noted the reduction in Apprenticeship starts, and asked if this was likely to continue. GGI noted that this was likely to continue due to changes in the market, for example, policy changes, needs of employers etc. The Board asked the impact of this. GGI suggested that the Higher Degree level training market is likely to open up, and the strategy includes this. SW agreed noted that NCG need to consider what type of provider they want to be, ensuring

focus is on the correct areas. LB confirmed that work needs to take place with employers to understand the market needs, but NCG are in a strong position where they have a number of different sites which could deliver what employers wanted.

The Board agreed that it was vital to look at what the right markets were for NCG to develop. There needs to be assurance that there is the capability to deliver a quality product which is also going to be financially sustainable. The Board agreed that this should be a focus of the next report. The Board asked for an update to come back to the May 2020 meeting.

Action: NT to add Apprenticeship Strategy Update to May 2020 meeting.

The Board asked for further assurance that there were improvements in current apprenticeship performance month by month, for example, showing the number of different standards reducing, progress on plans etc.

Action: GGI and SW to consider how best to report month by month improvements.

GGI left the meeting.

4. Items for Approval / Discussion

4.1. Corporation Matters

DB presented the Corporation Matters update and the Board approved the following appointments:

- Lewisham College Board
 - Ahmad Wakili – Student Member
 - Phoebe Juggins – Independent Member
 - Olivia Gowie – Independent Member
 - Sami Zeglam – Independent Member
- Southwark College Board
 - Amir Javadi – Student Member
 - Sinead O’Sullivan – Independent Member
 - John Jeffcock – Independent Member
 - Damien Williams – Staff Member (Support)
 - Luisa Saunders – Staff Member (Academic)
- Carlisle College Board
 - Re-appointment of Darren Crossley – Independent Member
- West Lancashire College Board
 - Leonie Darby – Staff Member
- Newcastle Sixth Form
 - Denise Chapim – Student member

- Newcastle College
 - Jonathan Eaton – Independent Member
- HE Governance Committee
 - Nicky Rutherford – Student Representative

The Board noted the report.

5. Risk

DB provided an update with regard to Risk. Specifically it was noted that the college risks had now been mapped to the newly established strategic risks. Members asked for clarity around the purpose of the paper to which DB stated that at this meeting it was presented for info only however going forwards members would be required to consider if the drafted mitigation was sufficient to address the risk. The Board noted the update.

6. Policies / Annual Reports / Terms of Reference

6.1. Great Place to Work (GPTW) – Verbal Update

LB provided an update with regards to the GPTW survey, confirming that the decision had been taken not to carry this out for 19/20 due to the following reasons; the cost (£) and the amount of recent change which may cause distortion to the results.

LB and JM (Director of HR) are currently working on a Staff Induction which will be presented to the Board in March 2020.

Action: NT to add Staff Induction to March 2020 agenda.

LB confirmed that AD (Principal at Kidderminster College) is leading on the Leadership Hub and an update on this will be presented to the Board in March 2020.

Action: NT to add Leadership Hub to March 2020 agenda.

LB confirmed that an update on the HR Plan and Structure would also be provided to the Board in March 2020.

Action: NT to add HR Plan and Structure to March 2020 agenda.

LB provided an update with regard to cost savings, noting that £450k had been saved in the current financial year, and a proposed £600k will be saved in the following financial year.

The Board noted the update.

6.2. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report

SW presented the EDI annual report, and noted that a wider piece of work was required to clarify exactly how EDI should be reported. The report remains in the same template as the previous year, however this will change for the next stage of reporting.

The Board approved the report.

6.3. HE Fees Policy

DB presented the HE Fees Policy, noting that the fees were as per the approved Access and Participation Plan.

The Board approved the HE Fees policy.

6.4. Careers and Guidance Policy

SW presented the Careers and Guidance Policy, noting that this had now been through the consultation process.

The Board approved the Careers and Guidance Policy.

6.5. Information Flows Received from College Boards

6.5.1. Kidderminster – December

The Board reviewed the information flow document received from Kidderminster College Board.

Action: NT to respond.

6.5.2. Newcastle Sixth Form – November

The Board reviewed the information flow document received from Newcastle Sixth Form College Board, noting that the staffing development budget constraints had been touched on during Item 1 of this meeting.

Action: NT to respond.

7. Items for Note / Information

7.1. Access and Participation Plan Outcome

The Board noted the outcome of the Access and Participation Plan and agreed to the additional requirements.

7.2. College Board and Committee Minutes

7.2.1. Kidderminster College Board Minutes – 10th October 2019

The Board noted the minutes.

7.2.2. Carlisle College Board Minutes – 5th November 2019

The Board noted the minutes.

7.2.3. Newcastle College Board Minutes – 19th October and 11th November 2019.

The Board noted the minutes.

7.3. NCG College and Student Updates

The Board noted the report and the different activities the learners have been doing across the Group.

8. Any Other Business

8.1. Confidential Item – Project Apple Closure Report

CP, MW, SW, TL and CH left the meeting.

The Board discussed the Project Apple Closure Report and received an update on the current position.

9. Date and Time of Next Meeting – 3rd March 2020.

An Ofsted preparation session would be held prior to the Board meeting on Tuesday 3rd March, starting at 1.30pm.