

NCG – Corporation Meeting

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 3rd March 2020 – 3pm – 6.45pm

Details			Attendance		
Full Name	Position	Initials	Attended	Apologies	No Attendance
Peter Lauener	Chair of Corporation	PL	X		
Mark Squires	Independent Governor	MS	X		
Caroline MacDonald	Independent Governor	CM	X		
Chris Roberts	Independent Governor	CR	X		
John Cuthbert	Independent Governor	JC	X		
Jeannette Strachan	Independent Governor	JS	X		
Liz Bromley	CEO – Ex-Officio Governor	LB	X		
Cameron Hartley	Student Governor	CH		X	
Jennifer Mitchelson	Staff Governor		X*		
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		
Joe McGraw	Interim Director of HR	JMc	X*		
Andy Dobson	Principal of Kidderminster College	AD	X*		

*Attended for part of the meeting.

1. Meeting Administration

1.1. Opening of Meeting and Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. It was noted that JMc and AD had been invited to attend the meeting.

The Board noted that an interview with JS had taken place prior to the Board meeting on 4th February 2020 and agreed to approve the appointment of JS.

The Board noted that a Staff Election on 12th February 2020 had taken place whereby JM was elected, and the Board agreed to approve the appointment of JM.

1.2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from CH, and from CP for part of the meeting. The apologies were accepted.

1.3. Declarations of Interest

The Chair asked if there were any interests to be declared:

- PL declared that he had been a Director of The Intraining Group and Trustee of Rathbone Training, however PL had resigned from these positions to ensure he could focus on his primary NCG Chair role. The resignation was with effect from 3rd March 2020.
- TL declared that he had taken on the role of Director of the Intraining Group and Trustee of Rathbone Training with effect from 3rd March 2020.

Action: Register of Interests to be updated.

- CP remains a Director of The Intraining Group and Trustee of Rathbone Training.

1.4. Review of Minutes from the Previous Meeting – 3rd December 2020 and 4th February 2020

The Board reviewed the minutes from the previous meetings and agreed that they were a true and accurate record of the meetings. The Chair signed hard copies for filing purposes.

1.5. Register of Board Actions

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

The Board noted the updates.

1.6. Matters Arising

1.6.1. Plans for External Launch of Strategy

LB provided an update of the launch of the NCG Strategy, noting that the internal launch was very positive with great engagement from staff. Due to the current finances, it was noted that the external launch of the strategy would be kept low key.

The Board noted the update.

1.6.2. HR Plan and Structure – Verbal Update

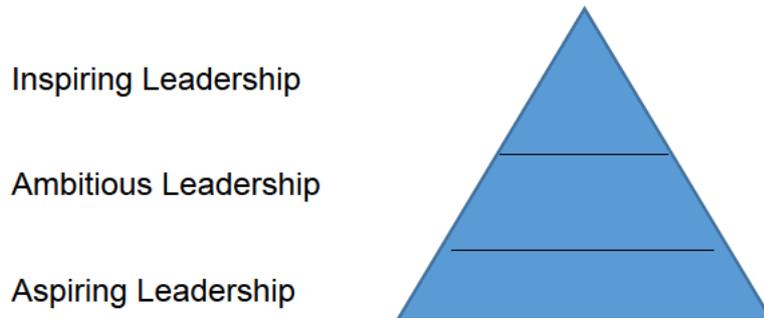
LB provided an update of the HR plan and structure, noting that a job description had been created for the Director of People and Talent; this position would be advertised over the next couple of weeks, with interviews taking place before Easter. LB would sit on the interview panel, alongside two principals and an external consultant.

The Board asked if this new position, and future plans for HR, would result in less external consultancy and HR support and LB confirmed that it would.

The Board noted the update.

1.6.3. Leadership Hub

LB provided an update on the Leadership Hub, noting that development is required at all levels to improve the current position within NCG. It had been agreed that the development is to come from within the Colleges, and AD had been asked to lead on this as part of his principal's portfolio work. The model of the Leadership Hub is to be a pyramid:



Aspiring leadership is about nurturing talent, ambitious leadership is about middle leaders with ambitions to develop their strategic capability, and inspiring leadership is about inspiring both aspiring and ambitious leaders.

It was agreed that there are external programmes around inspiring leadership, the majority of which cater to those working at a higher level.

AD presented his paper to the Board, providing an oversight of the plans in place. The Board agreed that this project would link well with induction and the strategic ambitions of the organisation.

AD confirmed that this would be a diverse and inclusive process, but it would also include competitive entry.

The Board agreed that they liked the idea of this being a competitive process and embedding action learning sets. From their own experience, the Board noted that this method had allowed them to build useful and effective networks.

The Board asked if this opportunity would be opened up across the sector, and it was noted that although this could be in the pipeline, the main focus would be for this to be launched and embedded effectively across NCG in the first instance.

JMc noted that he regarded it as important that this project was integrated with the HR strategy, and expected it to be powerful, motivational and purposeful.

The Board were pleased to see a focus on succession planning, noting that previous leaders had been appointed from external organisations due to lack of succession planning in the past.

The Board noted their concern around those members of staff who potentially have poor relationships with their line managers, and therefore may feel that they wouldn't be supported. AD confirmed he

would take this into consideration and confirmed that work would need to be done around cultures, behaviours and expectations, and this would hopefully address any issues. The Board also agreed that the process for selecting applicants onto the programme would need to be transparent, so that unsuccessful applicants could understand why they weren't successful and therefore reduce the risk of demotivation.

In summary, the Board agreed that they were strongly supportive of this project and felt that it was a fundamental step to drive forward and improve the leadership of the NCG. The Board agreed that they would like to see an updated version of the paper and next steps at the May 2020 meeting.

Action: NT to add to the May 2020 agenda.

1.6.4. Staff Induction – Verbal Update

LB provided a verbal update around staff induction, noting that she would like to implement an induction which would consist of 1, 3 or 5 day preparation programme, depending on role. In addition, it would include completion of mandatory training, compliance checks etc. The induction process would include the NCG strategy, details of the role, details of teams, information and background of NCG, details of the appraisal process, relevant policies, introduction to the FE sector etc.

The Board noted the update.

DB noted that the Governor Induction is currently in a first draft stage, and he is going to be carrying out a Governor Induction session with Lewisham and Southwark members later in March. DB confirmed that the Governor Induction document would come to Corporation for review.

Action: DB to present the Governor Induction once finalised.

1.6.5. Applications Summary

DB presented the applications summary per college.

The Board asked about the numbers at Carlisle College, and JMc confirmed that they are currently coming out of a downward trend in terms of the demographic.

The Board asked about the numbers in HE, and TL confirmed that there is a focus on internal progression within HE, and although the numbers are down from external applicants, they are up from internal applicants.

The Board noted the update.

1.7. Governor Activity

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

PL, CR, JC, MS, CM, JS, JM and CH attended the Ofsted Preparation session, hosted by SW (Executive Director of Quality) and SB (Vice Principal at Newcastle College) directly before the Board meeting. The Board agreed that they found this session very informative and beneficial.

PL, JC, CM and JS confirmed that they had completed the Safeguarding in FE ETF Training Module. JM and LB confirmed they had completed the NCG Mandatory Training Safeguarding module, and JM confirmed she had completed the Safer Recruitment module.

SW confirmed he could host an additional session on Safeguarding if any of the Board would be interested, and the Board then discussed having a Corporation Board member leading on Safeguarding.

Action: Board members to confirm to NT if they would like any additional Safeguarding Training.

Action: Board members to consider becoming a Safeguarding Link Governor.

In addition to this, the Chair asked if any of the Board members would be interested in becoming the link governor for the work being carried out within the Principal Portfolios.

Action: Board members to consider becoming the Principal Portfolio Link Governor.

2. Substantive Items

2.1. Chief Executive Group - Report

LB presented the Chief Executive Group report, specifically noting the following points:

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- NCG has also been in conversations with FIKA, who build and support mental health and wellbeing through technology. LB has had an initial meeting and there is the possibility of NCG having access to the app, portal, training with tutors for £ , using NCG as a model for FIKA to engage with the FE sector. There is the opportunity for further development linked to Staff Wellbeing.

Action: LB to share presentation with NT for circulation.

- LB also provided an additional oral update on Common Purpose hosting a programme for 18-23 year olds, looking into developing the legacy they want to create. Programmes are being run across the country with the first one taking place in Newcastle. The first day of this 3-day programme is taking place at NCG, and NCG have put forward staff and students to participate. The Executive Team are engaging with this.

- [REDACTED]

The Board suggested that John Litchfield (Previous Chair of Lewisham and Southwark College Board) would be a useful contact with regards to the [REDACTED]

Action: PL, LB and JL to discuss.

[REDACTED]

Action: MS / CR to share relevant contact details with LB.

The Board asked for an update on UKVI, looking for assurance that issues with attendance had been resolved. It was confirmed that this is being monitored manually, however the Board asked for further assurance to be brought to the next meeting.

Action: DB to provide further update at May 2020 Corporation meeting.

The Board noted that when considering projects in future, they would like the information to include clear financial viability. LB noted this and confirmed that she wanted to gain initial feelings in the first instance before progressing next steps.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

MW

confirmed that no financial modelling had been done yet.

AD confirmed that this stage was only to make an expression of interest, and then detailed work would begin on finances.

The Board approved the transfer of a small volume of subcontracted provision from Rathbone Training to Carlisle College, subject to due diligence by the college, as per the report.

The Board noted the report.

2.2. Chief Finance Officer – Finance Report

MW presented the Chief Finance Officer Report and directed the Board to the Executive Summary, which contained an overview of the key points.

- Management Accounts – nothing unexpected [REDACTED]. These accounts are to be issued to the Bank and need to comply with GAP. There are ongoing risks around the Training Providers, and around WLC. The quality of forecasting at the London colleges needs some further work and improvement.
- Bank Covenants – This remains very tight for Q3 and is being monitored on a daily basis.
- Integrated Financial Model for Colleges (IFMC) – The final version of the IFMC has been submitted.
- [REDACTED]
- Pensions – There are reduced deficit payments for London next year. The Tyne and Wear pension fund remained flat, however written confirmation has been received noting their concerns around the college sector. They have asked for NCG to confirm that they are financially viable, and to provide the most recent statutory accounts and commentary which sat alongside the submitted IFMC. MW noted he would be unable to confirm if this would lead to any variations.
- Auditors – There is an option to extend the contract with EY as the external auditors and MW is awaiting a quote for this. MW noted that there is a push for audit arrangements to be more regulated and audit organisations have started to increase their prices due to this. Some organisations have seen audit contracts double in price. MW suggested going out to tender to ensure value for money.

Action: NT to add to agenda.

The Board noted the position with the auditors and agreed that they would be happy to go through a tender process to appoint new auditors from the next financial year.

Action: MW to follow up with the Board outside of the meeting.

The Board noted the report.

JM left the meeting.

2.3. Executive Director of Quality – Quality and Performance Report

SW presented the Quality and Performance Report and highlighted the following points:

- Teaching, Learning and Assessment continues to be evaluated against the Great Place to Teach 12 indicators; work at college and Group level continues to signpost stronger practice and areas for further development. Since the last report additional curriculum reviews (FCRs) have taken place in NCL. There are examples of innovative work by developing pedagogical knowledge at Kidderminster (use of peer teaching triangles) and use of How2 resources at West Lancashire College.
- The general quality of teaching and learning is evaluated to be secure against the 12 indicators, however all colleges are working to improve relevant areas of weaker practice; the new SLT at Lewisham continue to have impact, despite a number of colleagues who are engaged in UCU action. The SLT continue to build trust with colleagues and their work is having a positive impact on learner experiences.
- Group Quality continue to provide interim support to SLT at Southwark College, until the new post holder starts after half term. Teaching and learning standards at Southwark remain weaker in general, as represented in the information on slide 10 of the report.
- Support and challenge deep dives have been agreed in partnership with college SLT at Carlisle, Kidderminster, Lewisham and West Lancashire after half term. This is likely to be the final opportunity to independently evaluate the quality should Ofsted return in the 2019/20 academic year.
- FE attendance remains around 86% (ESFA rules applied, in / out measure), challenges remain within English and Maths in most colleges (particularly NCL, KC, LS and SC).
- Retention has dipped slightly from 96.2% to 95.7% - challenges remain at Carlisle, whilst the rate at NSFC reflects a 2-year course duration (most GFE courses are 1 year). Retention rates at Lewisham, Southwark, Newcastle, West Lancashire and Kidderminster are currently above the 96% average. A year-end retention rate of above 94% would be positive.
- Learner progress (against target) has now been collated for the second time this year. It indicates that 37% of learners are below target at review milestone 2, a slight increase since the December milestone report. All colleges returned high completion rates. This is an internal measure only and should be used with caution as this data will be benchmarked throughout 19/20. The system report (as raised by JC) to compare in-year forecasted grades and final results has since been commissioned. The information is already available at the learner level on the dashboard).
- Due to the deviation from R12 apprenticeship predictions last year, 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'. The data has since been compiled and is available on slide 16. SLT at Lewisham are re-checking data predictions.

SW confirmed that as part of an action from the last Corporation meeting, he had added in a column on the traffic light reporting to explain why a certain grading had been given. The Board noted that improvements could be seen.

There are concerns around attendance for English and Maths in Kidderminster. The sessions have been split and learners are seeming to choose one or the other. Parents Evenings are taking place to tackle this, and the timetable is being revisited to try and prevent low attendance. SW confirmed however that TLA remains secure.

The Board recognised the challenge and noted that they were pleased to see that plans were in place to address it.

SW noted his concerns around some of the teaching at Southwark College. The new Vice Principal (MH) is an Ofsted Inspector, and he and the Principal (AC) are working hard to improve matters. The Corporation Board asked if the College Board would be aware of these issues and asked if there is any more which could be done. SW confirmed that JS continues to work with the College, and her contract has recently been extended. JS is carrying out deep dives continually in real time to closely monitor and track progress. The Board asked if the College Board Minutes would reflect this area of concern.

Action: DB to look into this and write to Chair of the Southwark Board to ensure this is focussed on.

SW confirmed that an Ofsted Preparation session had taken place with the West Lancashire College Board and this had been well received.

The Board noted the report.

3. Items for Approval / Discussion

3.1. Corporation Matters

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

- Jennifer Mitchelson – Staff Governor – Corporation Board (as per the start of the meeting)
- Jeannette Strachan – Independent Governor – Corporation Board (as per the start of the meeting)
- Craig Finney – Independent Governor – Kidderminster Board
- Selena Bolingbroke – Interim Chair and Independent Governor – Lewisham Board

DB confirmed that AD and the Chair of the Kidderminster Board wanted to recommend another Independent Governor for their Board, and the pen portrait of this candidate was to be circulated after the meeting.

Action: NT to obtain and circulate pen portrait.

The Board noted the report.

3.2. College Board Annual Report

DB presented the College Board Annual Report Summary, noting that this remains in draft at present as not all of the Colleges have gone through the final approval part of the process. The completed version will come back to Corporation once finalised.

The Board noted the report and agreed that it was interesting to read. The Board liked the idea of the Opportunities Register which Carlisle College have and asked if this was going to be rolled out across the colleges. DB confirmed he had met with GG (Principal of Carlisle College) on this, and was also in favour of rolling this out, however further work is required on the College risk registers at this stage, and this remains the priority in the first instance.

4. Risk

DB presented the papers on Risk, noting that these documents would be going to the Audit Committee in March 2020. The NCG strategic risks have been mapped to the College Board risk registers. DB confirmed that the Board needs to be comfortable with the levels of mitigation, and where it is coming from.

The Board noted the update and agreed that further work was required in terms of consolidating the risks across the colleges, so that it would be easier to identify the same risk at each college, and consider if risks are at a greater level at different locations and the use of sharper language around mitigation.

The Board referred this to the Audit Committee and asked for the Committee to look at this in more detail.

Action: DB to flag up at Audit Committee.

5. Policies / Annual Reports / Terms of Reference

5.1. Gender Pay Gap Reporting

JMc presented the Gender Pay Gap report for 18/19 and confirmed that there had been a positive impact this year; with the data showing a downward trend in the mean and median from the previous year. This impact is aligned to the actions taken, and further actions have been implemented going forward.

The Board approved the statement.

5.2. FE Fees Policy

MW presented the FE Fees Policy, noting there had been minimal changes from the previous version. The main change was the decrease of the employer contribution rate for apprenticeships from 10% to 5%.

The Board approved the policy.

6. Items for Note / Information

6.1. Committee and College Board Minutes

DB presented the College Board minutes for noting, and the Board suggested that the minutes are shared via the Knowledge section on BoardPacks as and when they come available, in order to enable them to review them promptly, flagging any queries or concerns during the Board meetings, and this will allow timely feedback. At the next Corporation Board meeting, there would be a list of minutes, previously available, plus any narrative on points previously raised during review.

Action: NT to amend process.

6.1.1. HE Governance Committee Minutes – 6th November 2019

The Board noted the minutes.

6.1.2. Newcastle College Board Minutes – 27th January 2020

The Board noted the minutes.

6.1.3. Kidderminster College Board Minutes – 5th December 2019

The Board noted the minutes.

6.1.4. West Lancashire College Board Minutes – 8th November 2019 and 11th December 2019

The Board noted the minutes.

6.1.5. Newcastle Sixth Form College Board Minutes – 12th September 2019 and 7th November 2019.

The Board noted the minutes.

6.2. NCG College and Student Updates

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

SW suggested that he often looks at the Twitter feeds of the Colleges to gain insight into the activities and ongoings at the College, in addition to reading the update report. SW confirmed that Board members do not need to have a Twitter account to do this and the twitter feeds are often directly linked to the college websites.

6.3. Information Flows Received from College Boards

6.3.1. Newcastle College –

The Board noted their congratulations to the College. The Board agreed that this showed real engagement from the College Board.

Action: NT to respond.

6.3.2. Kidderminster College –

The Board noted the update.

Action: NT to respond.

7. Deferred Items

The Board noted that the following items had been deferred to May 2020.

7.1. Governor Training – Health and Safety – Deferred to May 2020

7.2. HE Strategy – Deferred to May 2020

7.3. English and Maths Update – Deferred to May 2020

8. Any Other Business

8.1. Additional English and Maths Session – Availability Request

During the February 2020 Board Meeting, it was agreed to host an additional session for the Board.

Action: NT to circulate suggested date.

8.2. Training Providers Discussion - Confidential

JM, AD, SW left the meeting.

CP joined by teleconference.

This item has been covered under a confidential minute.

Action: DB to arrange additional meeting for Friday 6th March.

8.3. Corona Virus

DB confirmed that he had set up a working party of staff across NCG to discuss the practicalities and potential consequences and impact of the Corona Virus.

The Board noted this update.

9. Date and Time of Next Meeting – 5th May 2020

Signed:

Name:

Date: