

NCG – Corporation Meeting

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 8th September 2020 – 3pm to 5.50pm

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*		
John Cuthbert	Independent Governor	JC	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				
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*		
Scott Mulholland	Chief Information and Data Officer	SM	X*		
Grant Glendinning	Interim Executive Principal of the North	GG	X*		
Nicola Taylor	Assistant Director of Governance (minutes)	NT	X*		

*Attended via Microsoft Teams / ^Attended for part of the meeting

1. Introduction of Governor Training Plan 20/21

DB presented the Governor Training Plan (included within the Work Plan) for the academic year and confirmed that a consistent approach to training was going to be taken across Corporation and the College Boards.

The Board discussed the Training Plan, and it was suggested to include a session on the impact and lessons learned following COVID19 within the first term. This would be interesting in itself and Ofsted may also be looking at what institutions have done to deal with COVID19 and this preparation would therefore be valuable. It was also agreed to receive an update on the impact of COVID19 on estate utilisation and planning.

Action: NT to set up COVID19 session to be delivered November / December 2020.

The Board approved the plan and noted they may wish to add additional sessions as and when they see fit.

In addition, it was suggested to create an Ofsted working group containing 6 Governors who would become lead governors in relation to NCG Ofsted readiness. It was noted that Ofsted would visit between now and December 2020 for an informal non-reported visit due to NCG currently being RI.

The Board noted the update and the following governors confirmed they would be part of the Ofsted group:

- JW, JS, RH, PL and MO.

Action: NT to set up additional session for Ofsted working group.

Post meeting note – Following the meeting it was also agreed that CMa and JM would join the Ofsted group.

2. Initial Governance

2.1. Opening of Meeting and Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. The Chair made specific welcome to JW; whose appointment was approved at the July 2020 meeting. The Chair noted that the Corporation Board now had a full composition with all vacancies being filled.

2.2. Apologies for Absence

It was noted that all Governors were due to be in attendance however CMc had informed the Chair that he had been delayed.

The Board noted that the meeting was quorate.

2.3. Declarations of Interest

The Board were asked if they had any interests to declare in relation to the planned agenda items, and there were no new declarations to report.

2.4. Review of Minutes from the Previous Meeting

2.4.1. Review of Minutes from the Previous Meeting – 21st July 2020

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

2.4.2. Review of Minutes from the Previous Meeting – 21st July 2020 – CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

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

CMc joined the meeting.

2.5. Matters Arising

N/A

2.6. Register of Board Actions

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

The Board noted the updates.

2.7. Governor Activity

The Board were asked if they had any relevant activity to report, and the following were noted:

- AC, RH, SA, MO, CMc and JW had all completed their Safeguarding in FE and Financial Management Training (ETF).
- CM attended a webinar on the reopening of a safe and secure campus after COVID19, offered by Times Higher.

Governors asked about the level of approval required for campus closures and LB confirmed that she was monitoring the situation carefully and would implement a process for electronic approval if and when required.

2.8. Corporation Board Terms of Reference 20/21

The Board reviewed and approved the suggested Terms of Reference for 20/21.

2.9. Corporation Board Work Plan 20/21

The Board reviewed and approved the suggested Work Plan for 20/21.

PL and CR left the meeting.

2.10. Appointment of Chair and Vice Chair 20/21

The Board discussed the appointment of Chair and Vice Chair for 20/21, and there were no additional expressions of interest for either role.

The Board approved the re-appointment of:

- PL as Chair of Corporation Board
- CR as Vice Chair of Corporation Board

PL and CR joined the meeting.

3. Substantive Items

3.1. Chief Executive Group - Report

LB presented the CEO report and noted that she had made improvements to the report to reduce the level of operational detail, and instead made the report more concise, focusing on strategic level information.

LB also made Governors aware that NCG had recently contributed (a donation of £67k per year for 3 years) to the Newcastle United Foundation. LB explained that whilst this seemed like an unusual action the donation had been made following the completion of a cost benefit analysis which had demonstrated that NCG's involvement was cost neutral and therefore the correct course of action to take from a commercial, strategic, civic and reputational point of view.

Governors asked if students had returned to College following COVID19 and LB confirmed that Colleges had re-opened as per external guidance, with staggered start and finish times, social distancing, "masks on the move" etc. LB confirmed that each Principal had been given a degree of autonomy to make decisions suitable to their colleges and student demographic however Group oversight was still being delivered through a weekly COVID19 meeting. In addition, it was confirmed that blended learning was still being delivered.

Governors asked about the financial implications of student recruitment, and LB confirmed that enrolment was being monitored carefully. It was noted that information regarding applications did not directly correlate to enrolment numbers and that there is still time for movement. MW confirmed that student numbers at R4 are used for funding.

Action: The Board requested a detailed enrolment update at the October 2020 meeting.

Governors asked about the recent cyber-attacks on local universities and what NCG were doing to ensure protection from cyber-attacks. SM confirmed that NCG had implemented multi factor authentication, new firewalls and have secured 'cyber essential plus' accreditation. Phishing simulations had been used to raise awareness amongst staff, and the IT business continuity plan is being revised to cover a prompt response to any potential attacks. Governors asked if insurance cover was in place for loss against cyber-attacks, and it was confirmed that cybercrime insurance was in place, however the policies are limiting in terms of what can be claimed for.

The Board noted the report and updates.

3.1.1.

Covered under confidential minute.

3.1.2.

Covered under confidential minute.

3.2. Executive Director of Quality – Quality and Performance Report

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

- The 3-year Quality Strategy is being updated and will be provided at the October 2020 meeting.
- College self-assessment is progressing well and in line with expectations to demonstrate an improvement in overall effectiveness.
- Apprenticeship outcomes remain an ongoing area for improvement.
- Achievement claims / updates are ongoing.
- Apprenticeship predictions have decreased significantly since the July report following additional assessment delays / planned breaks / withdrawals; all of which has lowered the rate by around 3% points since R10. Achievement outturn is now expected to be around 62% - the same as last year and still 3% points below a low national average.
- Work is ongoing to develop a microsite to host resources collated by the concurrent projects to develop online / blended / e-learning guidance for teachers / students and the resource / platform bank.
- The following Quality and Curriculum Policies have been updated:
 - Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy.
 - Positive Behaviour Policy.
 - Apprenticeship Policy.
 - Attendance Management Policy.

SW also noted the following via BoardPacks in advance of the meeting:

Ofsted have published guidance on the monitoring visit since I submitted my report - wording on their lines of enquiry has changed very slightly, see below: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/interim-phase-further-education-and-skills-providers>. During an interim visit, HMI will explore the following 3 themes: What actions are leaders taking to ensure that they provide an appropriate curriculum that meets the reasonable needs of learners and stakeholders and adapts to changed circumstances? What steps are leaders, managers and staff taking to ensure that the approaches used for building knowledge and skills are appropriate to meet the reasonable needs of learners? How are leaders ensuring that learners are safe and well informed about potential risks, including from online sources?

The Board noted the report.

3.3. Chief Finance Officer – Finance Report

MW presented the Finance Report and highlighted the following points:

- The Finance Team are carrying out work around forecasting accuracy. The forecasting in Q2 was done very cautiously due to the circumstances and unknown impact of COVID19.
- Apprenticeships income was better than expected in Q2 and Q3.

- At the end of July, there was a favourable cash variance, and this has been used to pay suppliers early to create some headroom in relation to the 20/21 bank covenants.
- In the October Corporation meeting, there will be a breakdown of the capital funding.

The Board noted the update.

4. Items for Approval / Discussion

4.1. Risk Register

DB confirmed that the risk register framework had been updated and would be considered by Audit Committee on 15th September 2020. This included additional risks regarding data.

Action: DB to circulate once reviewed by Audit Committee.

The Board noted the update.

4.2. Corporation Matters

DB presented the Corporation Matters update

The Board approved the following appointments:

- Appointment of Hollie Lees as the Student Representative for the HE Governance Committee.
- Appointment of Kim Caplin as an Independent Governor of Southwark College Board.

Action: NT to process appointments.

4.2.1. Sub-Committee Membership Proposal

DB presented the sub-committee membership proposal (as reviewed at the July Corporation meeting), and the Board agreed that they were happy with the suggested committee membership.

Action: NT to update records and arrange invitations to upcoming meetings.

The Board noted the update.

4.3. Safeguarding Annual Report 19/20

SW presented the Safeguarding Annual Report for 19/20, which also included Prevent. SW confirmed that the full version of the report (also including the individual College reports) had been discussed and reviewed with JS (the safeguarding Link Governor). JS noted that she was looking forward to attending future Safeguarding Council meetings.

Governors asked about safeguarding issues with subcontracted provision and specifically how and when issues were brought to the attention of the Board. SW confirmed that concerns would be referred through the usual channels, however not many referrals are received which is thought to be related to the majority of the subcontracted provision being delivered to adult learners. Subcontractors also have their own framework which is reviewed by

NCG's contracts and procurement team. SW noted that he would include a Safeguarding update regarding subcontractors going forward.

SW confirmed that all agency workers, volunteers and site workers are DBS cleared.

The Board approved the report.

4.4. Black Further Education Leaders Group – Open Letter

The Board discussed the open letter from the Black Further Education Leaders Group and agreed that NCG should aim to be a leading force in relation to EDI. The Board agreed that work needs to be carried out, with an action plan in place to address the proposals.

Action: DB to co-ordinate actions to ensure action take in line with the 10 document commitments.

5. Policy Review

5.1. Safeguarding Policy 19/20

SW presented the draft Safeguarding Policy for 19/20, noting that the policy had been updated to reflect changes in Keeping Children Safe In Education (KCSIE) 2020 and to strengthen reference to e-safety.

iTrent will be used to facilitate the staff declaration where staff members are required to confirm that they have read and understood part A of KCSIE, and mandatory training modules have been undertaken. A recent recommendation from Audit Committee was to recheck staff every 3 years however there is debate within the sector as to whether this is a worthwhile use of resources. As a result, NCG have implemented an annual staff declaration process which is understood to be common practice within the sector.

The Board approved the Safeguarding Policy and supporting annexes for 19/20.

6. Items for Note / Information

6.1. GCSE and A Level Results Update - NSFC

It was noted that the GCSE and A Level Results Update (in relation to NSFC) had been circulated on 27th August 2020 and was included in the meeting pack for information. Summary outcomes across NCG were included within SW's Quality and Curriculum report.

The Board noted the update.

6.2. Deputy Chief Executive Officer Report

CP presented the DCEO report for information.

The Board noted the report.

6.3. Committee Minutes

The Board noted the following minutes:

- HE Governance Committee – 6th May 2020.

6.4. College Board Minutes

The Board noted the following minutes:

- Southwark College Board Minutes – 20th May 2020.
- Southwark College Board Minutes – 1st April 2020.

6.5. Information Flows

The Board reviewed the information flows received from:

- Newcastle College.
- Kidderminster College.

Action: NT to send responses.

6.6. FE Commissioner's Termly Letter

DB presented the FE Commissioner's letter from August 2020 and confirmed that this had been included for information.

The Board noted the update.

7. Deferred Items

7.1. Appointment of Governor Link Roles 20/21

Deferred – To consider in light of outcome of external Governance Review.

7.2. Principal Portfolio Update

Deferred – No updates due to start of new term.

7.3. Health, Safety & Wellbeing Policy

Deferred – Further revisions to be made.

7.4. Environmental Strategy

Deferred – Prior review by Executive Board in September.

8. Any Other Business

N/A

9. Date and Time of Next Meeting – 6th October 2020

Approved: 6th October 2020