



Minutes of the Corporation Board meeting held on Thursday 16th December 2021 at 5pm

GOVERNORS PRESENT: Sean Lyons, Chair
 Andrew Cropley, Principal & CEO
 Neil McDonald
 Charles Heaton
 Rebecca Joyce
 Spencer Moore
 Ben Owen
 Sardip Sandhu
 Andrew Spencer
 Steve Sutton
 Kate Truscott
 Tony Westwater
 Bev Whitefoot
 Josh Charles

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Maxine Bagshaw, Director of Governance
 Louise Knott, Vice Principal: Communications, Engagement & Student Experience
 Jon Fearon, Finance Director
 Matt Vaughan, Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality
 Gavin Peake, Director: IT, Estates & Learning Resources
 Sian Geeson, Head of HR

ACTION by whom	DATE by when

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The chair reminded everyone present to declare any interests that they may have on matters to be discussed. No specific declarations were made, and standing declarations were noted.

2 WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from David Gillies, Angela Newton-Soanes and Keith Spiers.

Sian Geeson, the head of HR, was welcomed to her first meeting.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21ST OCTOBER 2021

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

Date: 10/02/2022

The minutes were reviewed and it was agreed that they were an accurate record of discussions.

AGREED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21st October 2021.

There were no matters arising.

4 ACTION PROGRESS REPORT

The board were happy to note the content of the update provided and the progress being made.

5 SCENE SETTING

The chair reflected upon the CEO's report and, specifically, how much activity is now outward-facing. He referenced the development session which had taken place earlier in the week and the agreed position that there is now more for governors to do to specifically support in this area. The aim of the college is to work with other local providers to bring the new collaborative opportunities to life.

6 BALANCED SCORECARD

The CEO introduced this item and drew governors' attention to the detailed reports circulated in advance of the meeting. Key matters that he highlighted were:

- The college is optimistic that apprenticeship provision earnings will improve and, whilst it will be a challenge to get to target, staff are not shying away from this. The potential of a further lockdown does present a challenge and concern.
- Attendance for maths and English is improving but remains a challenge. The college is confident that students are getting a good experience in the classroom.
- In relation to target grades, the position is always lower now than at the end of the year. There are some systematic challenges that the college is currently reviewing, and what is important is to be realistic.
- In relation to endpoint assessments, there is a really varied landscape. Whilst there are challenges, staff acknowledged that it is really healthy to have the targets in place. 27% of apprentices obtain a promotion or enhanced roles within three months, which is a real positive. Following a question from governors, it was agreed that the vice principal: curriculum and quality would share the 'enhanced role' narrative (i.e. what it means, exactly, and what the evidence is to support this).

A challenge from one governor was that, when considering the targets, it is very difficult to assess whether the college should be at this particular point in the year or whether or not it is 'behind the curve'.

VP C&Q

Feb. 2022

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

Date: 10/02/2022

They expressed the view that targets should be stretching but not impossible. The CEO expressed the view that the targets set in relation to maths and English are very, very challenging but do give the required focus. In relation to apprenticeship provision, the senior team do not want to ease off in terms of the targets, as this has been a critical area for improvement for a little while. A challenge from the board was to see useful comparators that are not too broad.

In relation to apprenticeship income, one governor asked whether the delays seen are due to staff shortages and what, generally, the college is doing to improve the position. The CEO advised that the delays were specific to construction and that, whilst the position is getting better, it will always be a struggle in terms of staffing. He provided assurance that the college is constantly looking at new recruitment routes and that there is increasing confidence regarding the staff complement. The college is taking competitive action, including terms and conditions, level of experience required, etc. He provided assurance that really proactive approaches are being taken, and one example was the teacher training package being offered: 'taking teacher training further'.

An observation made by one governor was that there is potentially a tension between attendance at English and maths and getting apprentices into those classes and at endpoint assessments, and they asked whether the college is being clear enough regarding expectations and requirements at start-up. The CEO confirmed confidence that this is much improved and that the college has been on a huge journey. That said, there is still some legacy data impacting. As an overall position, the college is comfortable now that there is appropriately robust dialogue taking place regarding apprenticeship provision and, specifically, the quality of provision. He advised that the college has recalibrated the Functional Skills team and that a new team is in place which is really strong. The college is also revising the trades curriculum model to see if it can fit in better with employers and give more flex.

One member of the board specifically considered apprenticeship provision earnings and questioned whether the £500k is the Q1 target and/or whether it is impacted by out of funding learners, legacy issues, etc. The CEO advised that the college hit the Q1 target but it was slightly later than planned and that there was less rollover than originally envisaged as a result of withdrawals. The finance director indicated that, in preparing the November management accounts, which are currently in progress, the gap is slowing. It was explained that there has been some impact as a result of breaks in learning, i.e. in the care sector where employers cannot accommodate 20% off-the-job training and, therefore, apprentices have had to have breaks. The college is currently reviewing the use of AEB in the care sector, as this would be more flexible. As an overview, the board were advised that the care sector generally is facing huge challenges. The board thanked the CEO and the team for the update, and their challenge was that this needs to be carefully monitored.

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

Date: 10/02/2022

The CEO made the observation that an additional challenge in relation to social care is that there is no real career path within the sector and, as a consequence, there is a high level of churn and movement by staff. Given the issues flagged at the meeting today, it was agreed that the quality and standards deep dive topic for the next meeting would be health and social care.

VP C&Q

Feb. 2022

AGREED to note the content of the update provided.

7 **ANNUAL KPIS 2020/21**

The CEO introduced this item and drew governors' attention to the detailed information provided. He acknowledged that the college has set demanding targets. He indicated that the impact of the longer courses is dragging down some of the data because of the impact of the pandemic. He expressed the view that the overall headline data was 'okay' and that there is an expectation that benchmarks will decline. The focus now is 2021/22 and the future.

AGREED: to note the content of the detail provided.

8 **QUALITY AND STANDARDS**

1) Standards Committee chair's report

The committee chair drew governors' attention to the summary note of the meeting and also the detailed minutes dated 11th November 2021. Key matters highlighted were:

- There is an opportunity to consider the Self-Assessment Report for 2020/21 in detail, as it is scheduled as a separate agenda item.
- A full copy of the QIAP is included within the pack so that governors can ask any questions that they may have. The committee has real confidence regarding the work being done.
- The HE Self-Evaluation Document was considered in detail, and the committee is happy to recommend for board approval.
- The committee really welcomed the introduction of the equality and diversity report.
- There was a really robust conversation regarding the risk of an overall grade 3 at inspection, and there is growing confidence regarding improvements being made.
- The student voice report was well received.
- Complaints are an opportunity for the college to learn lessons and improve.

In general discussion, the board discussed the QIAP and it was noted that, at the most recent Nottingham College inspection, inspectors had felt that the QIP lacked focus and did not prioritise enough. Their QIP had 100 actions whereas WNC's has 48. Governors asked/urged the

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

Date: 10/02/2022

senior team to make sure that there are lessons learned from this. It was agreed that the CEO would try to obtain a copy of the Nottingham College QIP so that comparisons could be made and the WNC position reflected upon. The vice principal declared confidence that the WNC QIP is very focused in that it is linear, has clear rationale and is well thought through. He acknowledged that the proof of this will be the impact seen and that there is confidence in relation to this. All acknowledged that what the inspectors see when they visit will be critical.

CEO

Jan 2022

A challenge from one member of the board was that the position in relation to OneFile appears to be a 'glaring red', and they asked whether improvements are being made. In addition to this, they asked whether there is more that the college can do to learn from outstanding colleges, particularly in relation to the 'watch-outs'. Staff acknowledged that OneFile remains a stubborn area but provided assurance that there are improvements and that there is increasing confidence that this is an area being tackled. All agreed that there were always lessons to be learned from other providers.

2) Deep dive – teaching and learning

The vice principal presented his detailed reports, and key matters highlighted were:

- Areas improved upon last year include animal care, sports, public services, and hair & beauty.
- Previously, there were 16 areas judged to require improvement; this week, this is down to eight (out of a total of 24).
- Motor vehicle is improving as there has been a return to onsite teaching.
- Public services is a great exemplar of the journey possible.
- The college has taken the decision to pause deep dives, but areas have been invited to come forward voluntarily when they think they are ready to improve and requests have already come through from public services and English.
- There is now a real atmosphere of self-improvement embedded within the college.

3) Safeguarding and Prevent

The vice principal drew governors' attention to her detailed report and it was 'taken as read'. Key aspects highlighted were:

- Page 5 – the college received another serious allegation of sexual assault; however, both have been closed now and students are back in college following risk assessments.
- Attendance for the most vulnerable students is really a focus, and the college is committed to tackling and improving this.
- In relation to Prevent, there is one case that remains open; however, this student is being well supported and the situation appears to be working well.

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

Date: 10/02/2022

- The pupil premium post-16 pilot is really working well and is giving great opportunities and experiences for a number of learners.
- The college has done less well regarding the one-to-one offer in relation to maths and English. This is because students do not see it as a 'reward' but more of a 'punishment'. Assurance was provided that staff are working hard in relation to this.
- The update on the Prevent risk assessment was noted. Online is the single biggest risk regarding referrals. Extreme right wing is a concern in this area.
- A new Prevent issue which is emerging as a risk is in relation to individuals who have a vulnerability but are not linked to any particular ideology. She indicated that, as a college, it is important to teach/inform students when they are 'been taken down a path', and the issue appears to be the level of moderation available to them. Staff need to continue to educate and ensure vigilance.

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the chair's summary report
- b) Note the detailed minutes of the Standards Committee meeting held on 11th November 2021
- c) Note the content of the QIAP
- d) Note the content of the teaching and learning report
- e) Note the content of the safeguarding/Prevent update
- f) Approve the HE SED for 2020/21 as presented.

9 **SAR 2020/21**

The vice principal introduced this item and he expressed a view that this is the most critical point in the year in terms of teaching and learning. The self-assessment report is a reflection on the 2020/21 academic year, and he expressed a view that last year saw some considerable movement following the return to on-site activity. That said, 2020/21 was an unprecedented year.

Key matters highlighted were:

- The document clearly identifies strengths and weaknesses.
- Whilst there has been good movement, it is not quite the trajectory that the college would have wanted because of COVID limitations.
- Overall judgement is 'requires improvement'.
- Detailed breakdown of the component parts to the SAR were explained, as was the SAR process, which was described as very robust, including a number of opportunities for validation.
- The college has made progress since the end of the last academic year.
- The proposed grade for leadership and management is 'good'; this is based upon:

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

Date: 10/02/2022

- Decisive leadership
- Financial performance improvements
- Robust drive in relation to teaching and learning
- The college has not used COVID as an excuse
- The college is particularly tough on itself
- Two thirds of provision are now robustly assessing as 'good' this term.

One member of the board commented that he had been able to join a validation meeting and that he had found the approach taken to be very balanced and focused and that there was real intent to improve.

In general discussion, a number of points were highlighted and discussed:

- Page 8 and the blue highlights.
- A challenge from the board was that there appears to be some gaps. An example given was the reference to 'the vast majority' when talking about apprentices, and they asked whether it is possible to be more specific; e.g., the percentage figure. They asked whether it is possible that this will also change. In terms of the 'gaps', staff explained that destinations data is still outstanding, hence the missing information, but assurance was given that staff are working hard to try and collate this.
- One member of the board asked whether it was normal to move from RI to good in 12 months in a number of areas, and they asked whether it is just language used. The challenge was to see benchmark data so that assurance regarding trajectory can be obtained.

The CEO indicated that, were it not for the various changes in delivery over the year, the college would have been confidently a grade 2. However, it is important not to use COVID as a reason. He confirmed that the college has seen some really good improvements and that comprehensive CPD is really paying off. The senior team are particularly seeing a change in relation to hearts and minds and the culture.

The vice principal indicated that he would be bringing a two-page SAR update to the Standards Committee meeting in January regarding the 2021/22 position and that this should give greater evidence to support the continuing improvement journey.

A challenge from one member of the board was in relation to staff capacity to take on the 'new stuff' during the pandemic. The vice principal expressed the view that staff are now more focused on the EIF, as they have the capacity, and there is a real enthusiasm for this.

One member of the Standards Committee made the observation that, whilst the college may be hard on itself, it is consistently hard, which encourages a really honest approach and sets an example. The college could use other approaches, for example breaks in learning, to improve

Vice
Principal

Jan. 2022

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

Date: 10/02/2022

the data position, but it has not done this. As a consequence there is lots to be proud about.

The board considered the grading trajectory, which was described as:

- 2019/20 – a 50/50 split between RI and good
- 2020/21 – a confident positive improvement and, whilst the overall position is still felt to be RI, the college is definitely moving to a secure good.

In general discussion, the board acknowledged that, whilst they may focus on the 'nuts and bolts', it was really clear to see that the college is solidifying its position. On this basis, they were happy to approve the content and grade judgements within the SAR 2020/21 as presented.

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the update provided
- b) To approve the content and grade judgements presented in the SAR 2020/21.

10 AUDIT AND RISK

The committee chair introduced his summary report and also drew governors' attention to the detailed minutes of the meeting held on 24th November 2021. Key matters highlighted were:

- Haines Watts presented their final internal audit report, and it is clear that the college remains on the right trajectory in terms of compliance and improved processes.
- Audit Committee agreed their annual report for the year and explains why there is confidence regarding systems and processes.
- The committee considered the internal audit plan for 21/22. All work areas were agreed, save for corporate governance.
- The updated risk register is attached for information.
- The committee carried out a performance review of internal audit.

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the summary report
- b) To note the detailed minutes of the meeting
- c) To note the content of the committee's annual report to the board for 2020/21
- d) To note the content of the 2021/22 risk register.

11 JOINT MEETING OF AUDIT AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

The chair appointed for the joint meeting introduced this item and drew governors' attention to the summary notes and also the detailed minutes of the meeting dated 25th November 2021. He described it as a good meeting, with governors on both committees having an

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

Date: 10/02/2022

opportunity to reflect on the year. External auditors, Mazars, attended and explained the two areas requiring more analysis, which are in relation to bksb and the HE centre. They presented an extremely positive and clean audit, which was very reassuring. Governors were reminded that this particular meeting had been recorded so that all governors/the full board would have access to the information provided by external auditors. Governors' attention was also drawn to the detailed content of the Financial Statements Audit Management Letter.

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the summary report
- b) To note the content of the detailed minutes of the meeting
- c) To note the content of the 2020/21 Financial Statements Audit Management Letter as presented.

12 2020/21 FINANCIAL YEAREND

The finance director presented the yearend information, which was specifically discussed at the joint meeting. Key matters highlighted were:

- In terms of calculating the EBITDA, the college is disregarding profit from the bksb sale, which has been agreed with auditors
- The £2.5 million position is equal to 7.3%
- This represents a good set of accounts for the year
- The balance sheet has seen dramatic improvements
- The letter of representation, which requires board approval, includes a schedule of potential adjustments made in relation to bksb for accounting purposes. He confirmed that the auditors, the college and the committees are happy with the approach.
- The regularity self-assessment questionnaire has no surprises, as the college takes a very transparent approach
- Overall, a positive year
- Calculation is 'good' in terms of financial measures
- Positive balance sheet.

The board took the opportunity to express their thanks to the finance director and the Sale Steering Group for the work done in-year.

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the update provided
- b) To approve the content of the Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire
- c) To approve the Letter of Representation
- d) To approve the Members Report and Financial Statements 2020/21
- e) To approve the letter of support as presented for VBSS.

13 FINANCE AND ESTATES

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

Date: 10/02/2022

The committee chair introduced this item and drew governors' attention to the summary report and the detailed minutes of the meeting held on 25th November 2021. As previously discussed, 2020/21 was a good year and, as a consequence, the committee took the opportunity to discuss cash. The recommendation is to make an investment in line with the summary note, i.e.:

- the Corporation Board to resolve that West Nottinghamshire College will open a charity deposit account with Mansfield Building Society and deposit up to £500k.
- The finance director, Jon Fearon, is authorised to set up the account and be an authorised signatory. The following employees are also approved to be signatories:
 - K Hill, N Petch-Davison and C Williams

The committee also discussed, in detail, the college's journey to getting to a carbon neutral position. Whilst it is believed to be 'ahead of the game', there are some obstacles that will present a significant challenge.

The October 2021 management accounts were considered and, whilst slightly behind against forecast, it was explained that staff recruitment is impacting upon this. However, assurance was given that the college is starting to gain momentum.

The committee also discussed the position regarding reforecasting. The recommendation is that a formal reforecast should not be completed until conclusion of the February 2022 management accounts.

FD

March
2022

The committee also considered subcontracting arrangements, and there were proposals regarding variations to contracts with White Rose and Chameleon as included in the detailed report. There are also increased partner contracts proposed for FMBS, Stainsby and CSL.

The committee finally considered a detailed report on procurement, and the finance director put forward financial regulation change proposals. The committee was happy to support and recommend these for approval to the board.

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the summary report
- b) To note the content of the detailed minutes of the meeting
- c) To approve the recommendation to invest up to £500k with Mansfield Building Society
- d) To note the content of the October 2021 management accounts
- e) To approve the recommendation to increase contracts with FMBS, Stainsby and CSL
- f) To approve the recommendation to vary contracts with White Rose and Chameleon
- g) To approve the amendments proposed to the Financial Regulations.

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

Date: 10/02/2022

14 **CAPITAL PROJECTS REPORT (STANDING ITEM)**

The director: IT, estates and learning resources introduced this item. Key points highlighted were:

- At Chesterfield Road, the college is trying to develop a site within a conservation area. This does come with challenges, particularly in relation to the frontage and the front of Ashfield Road.
- The college is taking specialist advice in relation to planning expectations, particularly in relation to the skyline and character of buildings.
- The college is working with planners to prepare the application, with the aim being to have as few conditions as possible.

One member of the board asked for an explanation of the space loss reported. The board were advised that the college had to create its project to fit in with the bid requirements. This is linked to overall college space and has to reflect and acknowledge that there are some areas within the wider estate which are 'over-spaced'. He provided assurance that the space being planned for is more usable than the current position and will give more flexibility. A suggestion made was that one of the 2022 board meetings should take place at Chesterfield Road so that governors could better appreciate the location and facilities.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

15 **EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY UPDATE**

The vice principal drew the board's attention to her detailed report, and it was confirmed that Spencer Moore and David Gillies are the link governors supporting on developments in this area. There has been an opportunity to meet twice and look at the 'big offer' and what it is possible to 'sell'. She described this as a 'balcony' moment to help employers look back/stand back and assess what they need and then how the college can support.

She confirmed that there had been discussion regarding the use of online technology in the delivery of the offer, and an initial view is that this is more about business development rather than skills. It is felt that there is an opportunity now to step back, bring in sector experts, and provide consultancy to help businesses grow.

She confirmed that key milestone dates have now been set and that development of the website is a key feature of this. The college did have a project plan in place, but this has to be paused until the next financial year because of constraints; however, new content is planned.

A challenge from one member of the board was that, in any outward-facing engagement, it is important to be clear what the college stands

Director
Governance

2022

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

Date: 10/02/2022

for and what its brand is.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

16 **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

The committee chair introduced this item and drew governors' attention to the summary note and detailed minutes of the meeting held on 29th November 2021. She advised that the committee had taken the opportunity to refocus agendas and the work plan and had also been able to welcome Bev Whitefoot as a member and Sian Geeson as a presenter. The committee were particularly pleased to see the equality, diversity and inclusion action plan, which will really help to focus actions and activity.

One aspect highlighted to consider further in the future is talent planning, both in terms of teaching and business support. This was described very much as a team effort.

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the summary report
- b) To note the content of the detailed minutes of the meeting.

17 **PRINCIPAL'S REPORT**

The principal drew governors' attention to his detailed report, which was taken as read. Updates were provided in a number of areas, including:

- Sian Geeson has been appointed and promoted as part of the Rising Stars programme, which is really positive.
- There has been another internal promotion today.
- This is really helping to encourage staff to engage with the business improvement projects.
- There are a lot more external opportunities this year, but these can only be developed with the support of the exec team.
- Really good links are in place with Loughborough College and David Cragg.
- The ADMC project is progressing well and the expectation is that by January 2022 this will be a full green book value project.

In terms of the information provided, one governor asked for slightly more information regarding the Newark and Sherwood levelling up project and what in particular this involves. The CEO explained that it is a £20 million investment and that, whilst it is in the early stages, there are opportunities in terms of leisure and tourism. Areas for the college to consider further in the future include 5G technologies and augmented technology.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

Date: 10/02/2022

18 **GOVERNANCE**

The director of governance presented her summary note and confirmed that the Senior Postholder and Governance Committee, which had met, has recommendations for:

- minor amendments to the standing orders, and
- that the board should adopt the updated Code of Governance.

Changes to the standing orders were described as mainly administrative in nature and were highlighted in red on the document provided. The director of governance outlined the consultation process for the updated Code of Good Governance; she explained that this was sector best practice.

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the report provided
- b) To approve minor updates made to the standing orders
- c) To adopt the updated Code of Good Governance as presented.

19 **AOB**

There were no items of additional business.

20 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

This was confirmed as Thursday 10th February 2021 at 5pm.

21 **CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**

It was agreed that confidential items would be recorded on a separate basis.

(Staff and students left the meeting at 6.50pm)

Meeting closed at 6.55pm.

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

Date: 10/02/2022