

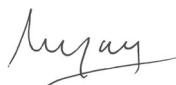


Minutes of the Corporation Board meeting held on Thursday 9th February 2023 at 5.10pm

GOVERNORS PRESENT: Sean Lyons, Chair
 Kate Truscott
 Andrew Cropley, Principal/CEO
 Charles Heaton
 Andrew Spencer
 Neil McDonald
 Spencer Moore
 Alison Barker
 Jane Peacock
 David Ainsworth
 Ben Owen
 Keith Spiers
 Elizabeth Whitehead
 John Winfield

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	<u>WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u> Apologies for absence were received from Paul Wheeler, David Gillies, Angela Newton-Soanes, Robert Docherty, Sheik Rayhan, and Kia Shaw.		
2	<u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u> 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.		
3	<u>MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15TH DECEMBER 2022</u>		

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

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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 15th December 2022.

There were no matters arising.

4 ACTION PROGRESS REPORT

The board were happy to note the content of the update provided.

5 CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The chairman thanked everyone for attending the meeting and raised a number of aspects, including:

- The plan is again to take the reports provided 'as read', with members of the executive having been requested to just highlight what governors need to know.
- There has recently been the potential for committee meetings being unable to proceed because they were inquorate. Where possible, governors were asked to kindly provide an early indication if they are unable to attend so that alternative arrangements can be considered. The chair confirmed that he is very grateful for all of the voluntary time provided and acknowledged that there are occasions where governors are unable to attend but indicated that advance warning of this will help operational planning.
- The forthcoming strategy day is planned for March 2023 and will be discussed later at agenda item 13.
- Governors were reminded to implement the training recently provided in relation to constructive questioning.

6 BALANCED SCORECARD AND ANNUAL KPIS 2022/23

The CEO introduced this report and advised that, following a review conducted with one governor, the executive have acted on the suggestion that better links could be made with the strategic objectives. The format of the scorecard has been updated, with it now including reference to the strategic objectives and providing a view on where the college currently is in terms of progress against these. Key matters highlighted were:

- There are six items that are red RAG-rated.
- Three of these relate to finances.
- The first relates to an overspend on staff costs, which is mainly due to agency staff requirements.
- The second is a reduction in apprenticeship income, particularly in relation to engineering and construction. This is

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directly linked to staffing challenges, with the college not having the staff capacity to deliver to the pipeline that exists. The CEO provided assurance that the college has been taking a number of actions to try to address this, including speaking to staff and unions about roles and how to maximise flexibility within the structure.

- EBITDA is currently behind forecast.
- The board were advised that there is a positive that will offset some of the financial concerns, in that the college has secured in-year growth funding. The figure is £500k; however, the college is taking a prudent approach as there is only confidence regarding circa £300k of this.

One governor made the observation that, when referring to engineering and construction challenges, the word used within the section headed 'mitigation' is 'if'. He asked what the risks are in relation to this and the likelihood of the risk materialising. The CEO expressed the view that both the risks and the likelihood are high. The senior team have recently spoken to the trade unions and the PALS regarding the plans for the staff structure, and they are reasonably optimistic that there will be a positive staff response to this. The risks will continue if the college cannot change the delivery structure, although the board were given assurance that efforts to recruit staff are being redoubled as this will be needed in any event. The college has identified more proactive recruitment attempts, and an example given was approaching individuals in building merchants, plumbing merchants, etc. with the college offering a very flexible package to those currently working in industry. In addition, the college has now identified and appointed a member of the HR team to have a sole focus on recruitment.

One governor asked whether the in-year growth is entirely related to 2022/23 16-18 numbers, and the CEO confirmed that it is. The increase in funded numbers is 192; however, the ESFA will not fund the first 100 and, therefore, in-year growth is on the basis of 92. The college believes that it may have lost circa 30 of these 92, which is why a prudent approach is being taken to the funding increase communicated.

- Attendance in English and maths is behind target – the college has set itself a very high target and is relentless in trying to make lessons engaging and rewarding. The board were advised that attendance at the recent JCQ-regulated mock exams was good. Attendance was 81%, which is higher than classroom attendance. Attendance for English has slightly increased, and it is believed that the incentives offered are now taking hold.

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In terms of the initiatives, governors asked whether it is still too early to see an impact. The CEO advised that it is still really too early to tell but that attendance has gone up by small percentages. A high number of learners have received a voucher for attendance levels of 95%+. There are four areas of specific concern:

- Construction – with some attendance levels below 70%
- Hair and beauty
- UPS
- Sport

The board were advised that, in construction, the college is making the Level 1 provision even more hands-on, which is building upon changes already made.

One governor observed that, when reporting on English progress against target grades, it was disappointing to see that ‘poor behaviour by a minority’ is referenced, and they asked whether this is being addressed. It was confirmed that it is and that there is a really intense focus, particularly at Station Park. The vice principal explained that the college has introduced the harder analytical thinking required in English early in the year, which is having an impact, and it is now all about honing these skills.

In relation to English and maths, the student governor advised that she has shared details of a charity called ‘Get Further’, which offers English and maths tutoring. It was agreed that the suitability of this would be investigated.

VP C&Q

Feb 2023

The vice principal expressed the view that the Functional Skills team is strong and also commented that a recent deep dive on English, which included 56 observations by seven observers, came to the finding that provision was a very strong ‘good’ and that there was a strong team in place. In relation to maths, the college is still self-assessing as ‘requires improvement’, but the resit results were positive. The board were advised that other colleges are in a very similar position; however, it was acknowledged that this is not a reason to be complacent.

One governor, who had participated in the UPS ‘meet the team’ session earlier in the day, expressed some surprise to hear that there are attendance issues as this was not raised as a concern. The vice principal confirmed that it is really focused in on the Level 1 merged groups. These students typically do not know what they want to do when they join the college, and it is a matter of honing their behaviours. Keith Spiers indicated that he and his staff have worked with some of these students, particularly in terms of their attitudes (i.e. a need to move away from thinking that they will join the armed forces if there is no other alternative). Students need to understand that they have to work hard to secure a place and that having GCSE Maths and English at grade 4 or above is a non-negotiable entry

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requirement. The vice principal indicated that, at Levels 2 and 3, attendance is not a concern. One governor commented that, in the talking heads video, it is clear to see that some students struggle to contextualise why they need English and maths.

The CEO then went on to update on the subjective measures, and key matters highlighted were:

- A meeting is now planned with the seven principals and the local authority leaders on 27th February 2023.
- The working group is still very much in its gestation.
- In relation to the LSIP, there is a meeting tomorrow to flesh out the priorities following consultation. The vice principal indicated that the concern for the Federation of Small Businesses is the lack of employer engagement so far and that they really need to ensure a greater swell of contribution.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

7 CORPORATE PARENTING

The vice principal presented this item, and all acknowledged that it was a follow-up on the more detailed question and answer session with Terry Galloway, the Nottinghamshire care leaver champion, who attended a governor session on 30th January. This was to discuss the merits of the college publicly declaring its intention to become a corporate parent. In the discussion, governors agreed that they would be more comfortable to support the principles of corporate parenting publicly, and they also agreed that they would be comfortable recognising care experience as a protected characteristic.

AGREED:

- a) to note the content of the report
- b) that the college sign up to the principles of corporate parenting and recognise care experience as a protected characteristic.

8 QUALITY AND STANDARDS

A number of specific items were individually considered.

- 1) Standards Committee chair's report – key matters highlighted were:
 - This was a very detailed and interesting meeting which took place on 19th January 2023.
 - Governors had an opportunity to look at a lot of data.
 - There was a focus on A-Level provision and, specifically, progress scores. There are a few areas of concern which will continue to be monitored.

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- Staffing challenges were discussed, as were the delayed apprenticeship starts which are linked to staffing
 - Progression in to HE was considered, with a lot of data analysed.
 - A lot of evidence regarding positive destinations was provided.
 - Increasing student numbers are a focus.
 - Recommendations within the summary note were outlined and the detailed minutes of the meeting were referred to.
- 2) 2022/23 position statement – quality of teaching, learning and assessment – key matters highlighted were:
- A change is proposed in the overall grade, with an improvement to 2 from 3.
 - This has been particularly impacted by an improved quality of education grade.
 - The college can confidently now recommend a self-assessment grade of 2, given robust activity and reviews in the autumn term. A Levels have particularly improved.
 - At the end of January 2023, the college was required to upload the 2021/22 SAR and the current update in line with the Standard Committee’s in-principle approval.

In relation to A Levels, one member of the board asked whether the college is now more confident in relation to this area of provision, given that it is a large group (i.e. 600 learners) and has a high profile. The vice principal indicated that the college now has an academic lead who is working closely with the newer teachers and that Bev Whitefoot is supporting Jane Fishwick. There is now a more stable staffing base in place. It was explained that getting good teachers to meet the high level of demand has been challenging. There have been some stresses and strains, and an example given was challenges in relation to the A Level Economics; however, there is confidence that a vibrant and inquisitive culture is now in place. Students are supported by six achievement coaches. There is also evidence of higher aspirations in relation to progression to university: previously, 30% did not intend to apply, whereas this is now down to 10%.

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 content of the 2022/23 position statement – quality of teaching, learning and assessment
- d) to note the content of the QIAP
- e) to note the content of the priority learner report.

One member of the board asked for an update on plans for apprenticeship reporting going forward. It was confirmed that staff will report against the accountability measures and the accountability

VP Q&S/
Standards

Each

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framework, and that the Standards Committee will report to the board on these as part of the chair's update.

committee

meeting

3) Deep dive on retention – key matters highlighted were:

- At 93%, the position is a lot better than the prior year.
- However, this masks some attendance concerns. The expectation is that attendance will end the year at around 83% (it is now 84.7%).
- Whilst attendance percentages are not 'terrible', the college does know that it can do better.

AGREED: to note the content of the report provided.

4) Talking Heads: English and maths – governors watched the recorded video, and key matters highlighted were:

Question: what is teaching like at the college?

Responses were:

- Good, but there could be more verbal teaching and less paperwork
- Always helpful
- It's been alright; staff have taught me what I need to do
- Better than school
- Teachers go through what will be in exams
- Really good
- The homework club is great with good help provided whenever you are struggling
- The £30 voucher is a good incentive for attendance
- The maths group was initially large but was then split
- Can be repetitive and, sometimes, this does mean it is boring
- The teaching assistant helps me
- More engaging now because we are in smaller groups.

Question: what do you learn?

Responses were:

- Rounding and decimal points
- Creative writing
- Algebra
- Big maths
- Fractions
- Division and multiplication
- My experience is better than in school
- A helpful focus on what I need to improve
- Lots of new things
- Proportion and area
- Factors and expanding brackets
- I think I am getting better

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- Practicing for mocks
- Using skills introduced in secondary school.

Question: will you get better grades?

Responses were

- I'm unsure
- No, I'm not putting in the effort
- Yes, I feel well prepared
- Yes, because the teachers are helpful
- My confidence is growing
- I've made good progress at the most recent check in
- I understand things more now
- I am getting more help.

Question: is English and maths important?

Responses were:

- I don't see the point of fancy words
- I recognise the need for maths as I use it every day
- Maths is needed
- Not English, as I wouldn't use what I am learning in daily life
- We all need maths
- English makes me confident in terms of speaking
- Maths is part of everyday life
- You need English to speak to customers
- Both are important
- Maths is very important in health and social care
- Maths is important in bricklaying but not as much so for English
- You need them both for different jobs.

Question: could there be any improvements?

Responses were:

- More time from the tutors
- More whiteboard learning
- More PowerPoints
- No, the teachers are very helpful
- The odd student is mischievous which can be distracting
- Less repetition and more change
- Sometimes the words used are confusing
- More individual focus in lessons.

In considering the student feedback, governors commented that there are a number who do not seem to appreciate the application of English, and examples given were reading and writing skills. A question and challenge from the board was how the college makes the curriculum relevant. The CEO expressed the view that exam boards don't necessarily help with this, and he provided the example that, in

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the recent mocks, students were asked to work on a Dickens text. Governors questioned how the college can balance aspiration with real-life needs. The CEO commented that there are a huge number of construction students nationally who have to complete GCSE English resits; however, the paper doesn't help them to contextualise or engage. A challenge from the board was that it is clear from the video that the starting points for some students are very low and are not where schools should have got them to. The challenge was how to make English, in particular, more relevant.

One governor observed that it tends to be young white males who fail to achieve, and this seems to correlate with those who don't see the relevance of it within the recording. Another governor commented that a lack of English engagement seems to be a generational thing in this local area. A challenge from the board was to link into the need for students to be work ready and, where possible, use employers to explain daily workplace needs, e.g. using email, etc.

One governor asked whether the college needs to consider Functional Skills more than GCSEs. The vice principal advised that the intention at Level 1 is to do more Functional Skills next year but that part of this will be preparing students for GCSEs, which is the gold standard for achievement.

The vice principal provided an update on the resits in November and indicated that there were 48 learners in maths, with just under half of them improving their grade to a 4 or higher. There are over 1,000 students resitting English, with 288 of them described as 'cheeky monkeys'. Assurance was given that the college tries hard to ensure their buy-in. Governors suggested that it would be helpful to bring in external contributors to give a 'reality check' as much as possible. All agreed that there was work to do to improve the relevance of English and maths.

5) Student governor update

Key matters highlighted by the student governor were:

- The student numbers at the Chesterfield Road site are high, which does lead to some challenges.
- The college may need to look at some new student behaviours, it being the case that it is sometimes hard to be around some of them. It would be helpful if they had a focus on teamwork and respect and a better understanding of being in a building where others are studying.
- A suggestion was to cover professionalism in the tutorials.
- It would be helpful for all students to have a clear set of expectations and a code of conduct.
- Peer self-correction would be helpful.

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Governors asked whether there is a student charter in place. The CEO confirmed that there is a whole college charter. Governors indicated that they would like to see it developed by students themselves in conjunction with the college. The vice principal confirmed that staff do try very hard to encourage the setting of behaviours every year but acknowledged that it could be improved. A challenge from the board was to have a focus on this at Chesterfield Road.

6) Safeguarding and Prevent exceptions report – the board were happy to note the content of the comprehensive report. The vice principal provided an update on a number of aspects, including:

- Counter-terrorism picture – the online space currently dominates everything.
- It is anticipated that the next terror attack will be self-initiated rather than organised by a group.
- The police are very good at stopping organised activity.
- Extreme right-wing activity is now a much more prevalent risk.
- Online materials that are feeding into organised groups are now a big risk.

One governor noted in the meeting minutes that there was an intention to ask the police to categorise the Andrew Tate ideology as meeting the Prevent criteria, and they asked whether there had been any progress in relation to this. The vice principal indicated that there hasn't and that the police do not believe that he is 'inciting' activity; therefore, what he is doing is not enough to hit the Prevent criteria, although his ideology is problematic.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

19 WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

The committee chair introduced the summary report and described it as a really good meeting. The detailed minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2023 were considered. Key matters highlighted were:

- The committee talked about recruitment, and there were some good ideas for the future, particularly in terms of things that WNC can learn from ERIKS.
- Mandatory training has seen a positive increase.
- The committee also talked about the current economic climate and what may be possible to support staff, with the committee acknowledging that there are issues. One member of the board asked whether the college does anything in terms of hardship, e.g. an advance on salaries. The finance director

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indicated that the college does not get many requests but would always look at any request on an individual basis. The college has a partnership with a fuel bank, which students and staff can access for vouchers if they are in need.

One governor asked whether the board and/or the committee ever give thanks or praise to staff. The chair confirmed that it does but then queried whether enough is done. It was agreed that, occasionally, the chair would provide a video message to staff, which will go out with the CEO's Friday flyer. The finance director advised that the college has also provided small bonuses in the past as a thank you. The board agreed that it would be helpful to look at ways to give thanks. The Workforce Development Committee were asked to pick this up for discussion at their next meeting. The CEO confirmed that he provides monthly letters of appreciation. Another suggestion was to incorporate thanks into the monthly briefings that go to all teams.

WDC

May 2023

AGREED:

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

10 **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

The vice principal and head of HR presented three documents which have been considered by either the Standards Committee and/or the Workforce Development Committee. These are:

1) Statement of Intent

It was confirmed that this will now need a minor amendment given the earlier board approval for care experience to be treated as a protected characteristic.

AGREED: subject to the minor amendment identified, to approve the continuation of the Statement of Intent as presented.

2) Public Sector Equality Duty report

The vice principal confirmed that actual destinations data has been received and, therefore, can be included within the document. Subject to this addition, the board were happy to approve.

AGREED: to approve the Public Sector Equality Duty report as presented.

3) Gender Pay Gap report

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The board acknowledged that this was a factual document and, therefore, were happy to approve. It was agreed that the Workforce Development Committee would look at any actions that could be taken to try to reduce the gap. The head of HR confirmed that she has had informal discussions with the unions on this, and she described it as very much a work in progress. Staff have completed a lot of analysis, and the influencing factor in relation to the gap is predominantly the fact that the majority of lower paid staff are female as they tend to be term-time or sessional.

WDC

May 2023

AGREED: to approve the Gender Pay Gap report as presented.

11 FINANCE AND ESTATES

The committee chair drew governors' attention to his summary report and the detailed minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2023. Key matters highlighted were:

- Environmental initiatives continue, with lots of activity evident. The major one is the bus service. Bus companies are now very open to new arrangements, and the college is working towards having a very good proposition in place for September 2023.
- Green skills funding is progressing.
- The solar energy project is being pulled together and will deliver lots of benefits.
- The financial position in December 2022 is behind forecast; however, the in-year growth funding reported earlier will be a benefit. There is confidence that the college will be back on track by April 2023.
- Cash has reduced; however, this is in part to do with capital expenditure.
- March is always a tight month in terms of cash; however, the college has techniques that it can apply to manage this.
- In relation to subcontracting activity, there are a few amendments proposed, i.e. reductions to White Rose and Chameleon and increases for Qualitrain and Inspire & Achieve.
- The college is completing due diligence so as to be able to provide traineeships via subcontracted activity.
- The committee is recommending that the financial approval level for the director: IT, estates and learning resources increase from £25k to £50k, which would necessitate a minor amendment to the financial regulations.

AGREED:

- a) to note the content of the summary report
- b) to note the content of the detailed minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2023

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- c) to note the content of the December 2022 management accounts
- d) to approve the subcontracting variations proposed in line with the report provided
- e) to approve the increase in the financial approval limit for the director: IT, estates and learning resources to £50k.

The finance director raised an item of additional business and explained that, having resolved the rental issue with NTU, there was a need to formally approve the lease and affix the seal. He reminded that the terms of the lease had been agreed but that a formal resolution is required giving permission to affix the seal.

AGREED: to approve the amended lease and provide authority to the college to affix the seal.

12 **CAPITAL PROJECTS REPORT**

The director: IT, estates and learning resources provided a short verbal update, and key matters highlighted were:

- 1) Chesterfield Road
 - The college is now circa three weeks away from submitting planning permission.
 - The team has been working with planners, and it is believed that the college is now in a good position. The process has not been without its challenges, but the team have been able to 'get there in the end'.
 - The last remaining issue was in relation to the portico. The college has had to compromise a little, and this has been incorporated into the design as part of the main entrance to the building.
- 2) Station Park
 - The college has applied for some additional funding via T Levels.
 - This has meant that the design has had to be split as it could potentially fall within two pots of funding.
- 3) Civil engineering site
 - The key issue for this project is potential noise.
 - The college has commissioned on-site and neighbourhood noise surveys. These indicate that there may be some issues and, therefore, the team is having to look again at the current design.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

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13

PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The comprehensive written report provided was noted, and the principal/CEO provided an update on a number of aspects:

- Levelling up funding has been approved, which is a real positive for the area.
- The college is looking to identify a fine dining and a hair and beauty partner; however, attempts to secure these have not yet been very successful. The principal confirmed that he would welcome any governor network contacts.
- In relation to the Sherwood Hospital Partnership, it has been possible to make progress on six of the seven objectives. Staff have met with NCFE to look at future options in relation to T Levels.
- There was a recent NTU partnership meeting with a focus on progression.
- There have been a number of opportunities to engage with politicians, including:
 - Ed Miliband piece – this provided outstanding media coverage for the college
 - Alex Norris visit
 - Bridget Philipson visit
 - Excellent media coverage about the future tech facility by Nottingham TV.
- Governors were then provided with a visual diagram of the learner journey including progression, and it was explained that similar visuals are also being created regarding quality assurance processes and curriculum planning. Governor feedback was invited, particularly in terms of whether or not it is detailed enough. It was explained that these will be most relevant to Standards Committee members but are helpful for everyone.
- The governor strategy day planned for March will have a focus on skills and, in particular, the accountability agreement. The draft agenda is included within papers, and governor feedback was invited. The principal indicated that, in the future, the board will need to consider whether the accountability agreement in effect becomes the Strategic Plan.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

14

GOVERNANCE REPORT

The board were happy to note the content of the update provided and also to formally ratify the written resolution approved.

AGREED:

- a) to note the content of the report provided

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- b) to ratify the written resolution reappointing Sean Lyons as a governor and chair of the Corporation Board to 31st January 2024.

15 **AOB**

There were no items of additional business.

16 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next Corporation Board meeting is on 18th May 2022 at 5pm. Governors were reminded of the strategy day planned in March 2023 and the governor development session on 24th April 2023.

(Staff left the meeting at 7.10pm)

17 **CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 15TH DECEMBER 2022**

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

AGREED: to approve the confidential minutes of the board meeting held on 15th December 2022.

18 **VBSS BOARD MEETING MINUTES 14TH DECEMBER 2022**

The board were happy to note the content of the minutes provided.

Meeting closed at 7.11pm.

Signed : _____  _____ Chair

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