

The Corporation of New College Durham

**Minutes of the meeting of the Corporation
held on 26 January 2023**

Present:

Christine Warren (Chair)	Stephen King
Andy Broadbent	Allen Eccles
Joy Brindle	Ian Green
Joyce Drummond-Hill	Chris Patterson
(remote)	Emily Baxter
Linda Wight	Megan Poole
Ben Fisher (remote)	

Apologies:

Nicola Watchman-Smith
Davey Benson
Mark Gomersall
Andy Stephenson

In attendance:

Karl Fairley (Deputy Chief Executive)
Alison Maynard (Deputy Principal)
Paul Bradley (Chief Finance Officer)
Adele Dowson (Vice Principal)
Colleen Peters (Vice Principal)
Peter Morrison (Vice Principal)
Caroline Winter (Head of Governance and Corporation Secretary)

Action**23/01 Chair's introduction**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting including those joining remotely.

23/02 Apologies for absence were received from Nicola Watchman-Smith, Davey Benson, Mark Gomersall and Andy Stephenson.

23/03 Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2022 were agreed as accurate and signed by the Chair.

23/04 Matters arising

There were no follow up actions from the previous meeting which largely considered matters that had received prior consideration at Committees.

23/05 Principal's Report (Paper B)

The Principal briefed members about matters of strategic interest including the following: the Future Skills Coalition day of action in Parliament to highlight the need for additional investment in FE and skills; the new AoC National Chairs' Council (formerly Governors' Council), progress on North East devolution; 16-18 Funding and HE Fees.

Members discussed the devolution developments and considered how the College might feed into the consultation exercise. Members highlighted developments in Greater Manchester (GM) in relation to college collaboration around an integrated technical skills system and the potential opportunities for future learning from the GM experience. It was noted that the College was in a strong position to work with a new Mayoral Combined Authority in light of its track record in delivering across the region, its plans for strategic growth and its role in the Institute of Technology. Members asked about structural risks and noted the potential risks around scalability and the challenge currently facing employers in their ability to invest in training and upskilling.

From a College perspective, members were updated on marketing activity and development of the Journey to Outstanding vision document following publication of the Ofsted report, ongoing collaboration activity with key training partners and progress on the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), the very positive feedback on the indefinite FDAP application, the UK Visa and Immigration compliance audit, the annual Strategic Conversation with FE Commissioner and DfE representatives and senior appointments and leavers. Members discussed how the LSIP would link to the accountability agreement and expressed concern at the timetable for approval of each document, but were pleased to hear that advice was being sought from the College on employer and stakeholder engagement in developing the LSIP following the Strong skills judgement from Ofsted.

Members noted the report.

23/06 Receipt of Committee minutes and verbal reports from chairs (Paper C)

Academy Sponsorship Committee – the minutes of the meeting of 13 December 2022 were received. The Chair advised that a further update was available following the delegation of authority to the Committee to determine the current application for Trust growth in relation to Wellfield School. Karl Fairley advised that the application had been considered by the Regional Schools Commissioner and Headteachers Board and subject to receiving confirmation of the position from Durham County Council (DCC) in relation to the legacy debt, the application could be progressed. An Academy Order had been issued on 24 January 2023 to commence the conversion process and due diligence activity would be taken forward.

Members noted the increased interest from primary schools in joining the MAT and whilst their expectations were being managed, this would be an issue for the Committee's future consideration. Members asked whether the Trust had always planned to expand and how these schools' interest would be maintained while focus was on progressing the Wellfield proposal. Karl explained that the MAT growth plan was based around having three secondary

schools and a cluster of primaries. There was an option to enter into a partnership agreement with potential partner schools as an opportunity to test how an arrangement might work and would give the school access to School Improvement resources and corporate services. Whilst expansion had always been the aspiration in line with a philosophy of community schools, the Trust had not been in a position to take this forward under the previous structure. The Committee had considered the College's ongoing sponsorship role in the context of future growth. Growth needed to progress in a planned way and only schools that fit with the long-term plan would be proposed. Members asked about the timeline for next steps and sought assurance on the due diligence process. It was anticipated that the outcome would be considered by the Academy Sponsorship Committee, the Academies Trust Board and the Wellfield Local Governing Body at the end of March/early April when final approval would be sought.

Audit Committee – the minutes of the meeting of 16 January 2023 were received. The Chair reported that the agenda had been largely routine business. A good report was received on the on internal audit review of cyber security which provided substantial assurance. The Committee received a helpful update on ESF external audits and outcomes and an interesting presentation on non-financial fraud/academic malpractice following its previous focus on financial fraud.

Search Committee – the minutes of the meeting of 18 January 2023 were received. The Chair updated on the Committee's review of governor attendance which would be followed up with individual members, and a discussion on hybrid meetings and how to ensure their effectiveness while re-emphasising the expectation of and benefits from in-person attendance. Significant progress had been made on the Governance Development Plan which had been updated and saved on the governors' portal. Members noted that a Committee Chair role description was being developed and that the skills audit template was being refreshed and would be circulated to all governors for completion when finalised. Meetings with Committee Chairs were being arranged in the coming weeks to seek views on a range of issues including terms of reference and committee skills needs.

The Chair advised members that the terms of office for the Corporation Chair and Vice Chair would expire before the end of the academic year, which presented a significant risk to the organisation. Nominations would be sought to fill these roles in the coming weeks with a preference for appointing from the existing membership with initial support offered from the current Chair and Vice Chair. It was important to emphasise that if internal appointments could not be made then external recruitment would need to be progressed. The Committee had agreed that future governor appointments would be for a four year term as standard and newly appointed governors on three year terms would be approached to seek agreement to extend this by one year. In

addition, the College would be advertising for new governors to fill the current vacancies.

The Committee had discussed initial ideas for the Strategic Review session including how to ensure the day was forward focused and with a greater role for governors. The Principal updated on potential topics discussed with the Senior Leadership Team including FE reform, options for future partnership development, business development and growth and what these strategic issues would mean for the College in terms of risk, workforce planning, capacity and the impact of sectors, demographics and proposed housing in the area. It was noted that much of this would feed into the accountability statement. Members commented that the topics were appropriate and that a focus on fewer topics was needed to enable a strategic discussion. The aim of ensuring active governor involvement was welcomed and governors were asked to make any suggestions on how this might work to the Corporation Secretary.

All

23/07 Skills and Employer Engagement update (Verbal update)

Colleen Peters provided a verbal update on skills and employer engagement following the position paper received at the previous meeting. Members noted that the paper would be revised annually and supplemented by regular verbal updates to Corporation.

A number of additional meetings with partners in the North of Tyne, Tees Valley and North East LEP areas had taken place as well as positive discussions with Durham County Council (DCC) in relation to the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF). DCC was the accountable body for the SPF and the College was represented on both the strategic partnership group and operational technical funding group providing an ability to influence the direction of travel of the emerging funding. Since Christmas there had been two meetings considering priorities for investment and the College would be developing expressions of interest for the Business Investment strand with a focus on research and development in construction and also business start-ups. A further meeting would consider the People and Skills strand priorities.

Tenders had been submitted to deliver the Multiply programme in County Durham and Tees Valley. It was noted there was a significant emphasis on this initiative nationally, which sought to develop numeracy skills and remove barriers for people around maths. All programmes would be delivered in small groups so that participants received dedicated support.

In terms of employer activity, Colleen updated on an event where the College hosted representatives from hotel chains trying to attract applicants into the hospitality sector and the College's involvement as one of two national pilot initiatives developing a hospitality routeway programme for refugees in the region. The

project was seeking to develop a collaborative approach to design opportunities working with a range of key sector employers.

Colleen also updated on work with the North East Autism Society to address their employees' skills needs including digital training for 150 staff and volunteers. The College had been notified of successful extensions to deliver Bootcamps next year in a broader range of areas and with new partners as well as exploring an expanded footprint into Tees Valley. Whilst this was not an easy landscape for delivery in terms of barriers faced by learners, it was very positive to be involved in addressing these skills needs. The Principal advised that in relation to the SPF and Multiply the four Durham colleges had come together to collaborate and bid as a single unit providing economies of scale and demonstrating an ability to deliver collaboratively. Members asked about capacity to deliver, and it was noted that additional capacity would be developed over the next few months, but assurance had been received from the LEP over longevity and growth of the current funding programmes. The Principal highlighted the immediate link to the LSIP and advised that the LEP would be looking at opportunities to deliver skills around these priority areas.

Members noted the update.

23/08 Update from Careers Education and Guidance Governor (Paper D)

Stephen King presented Paper D, the termly update on Careers Education and Guidance provision. Members noted the proposed changes to the statutory guidance 'Access to schools for Education and Training Providers', which required schools and providers to work together to provide certain information to pupils. Members were updated on a series of forthcoming events including a highways industry careers day, national careers week and safeguarding week.

Members reviewed progress against the Gatsby benchmarks and noted that five had been achieved and whilst the College was working towards the remaining three, they were more challenging having been initially aimed at schools. Members asked whether there were plans for national apprenticeships week and noted a significant programme of activity was planned.

The Chair thanked Stephen for his report which gave Corporation assurance that the College was meeting its requirements in relation to careers education and guidance.

23/09 Update from Safeguarding Governor (Paper E)

Members reviewed the update from the Safeguarding Governor following the Link Governor meeting. Members considered the overview of safeguarding and noted that a detailed discussion on the safeguarding matrix had focused on how safeguarding risks

were formulated. Members noted the update on the rollout of the MyConcern system and that data for the current academic year on safeguarding concerns was discussed. The Single Central Record was reviewed and the arrangements for DBS/CRB checks discussed. Assurance was provided in relation to student online safety and a discussion on arrangements for monitoring suicide risk among students led to a change in the process to ensure a process was also in place for staff.

The Chair advised that as the Safeguarding Governor was not in attendance any queries for could be raised with him via the Corporation Secretary.

Members noted the update.

23/10 Langley Moor Property (Paper F)

This minute has been confidentially recorded under Minute 23/10(a).

23/11 Capital Projects Update (Paper G)

Paul Bradley presented Paper G, which provided an update on the College's major capital projects. Members asked about the delay to THE Hub project and were advised that work was ongoing with the contractor to claw some of the time back in other areas of the programme. It was also noted that the contract had provision for a penalty in the event of delay.

Members noted the progress on THE Hub, the Sports Project, the fencing for the Northern Football Pitch and the purchase of the Langley Moor property.

23/12 Chair's use of delegated authority

None.

23/13 Written Resolutions passed since the last Corporation meeting

None.

23/14 Use of the College Seal

None, however Members noted the authorisation for use of the College Seal in relation to the property purchase detailed in Paper F.

23/15 Any other urgent business (communicated to the Head of Governance & Corporation Secretary in advance of the meeting)

None

23/16 Diary dates:

- Governors Tour of College – 23 March 2023 (before Corporation meeting)
- Governors' Annual dinner (25 May – after Corporation)
- Strategic Review – 26 April 2023 (In person - 12 – 5pm)

Signed.....**Date**.....