

**The Corporation of New College Durham**

**Minutes of the Search Committee meeting  
held on 14 March 2023**

**Present:**

Christine Warren (Chair)  
Andy Broadbent

Linda Wight  
Caroline Winter

**Apologies:**

None

**Action**

**23/12 Chair's introduction**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded members to declare interests in any item of business to be considered at the meeting. Christine Warren declared an interest in Paper B.

**23/13 Apologies for absence none**

**23/14 Minutes of previous meeting (Paper A)**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January were **agreed** as accurate and signed by the Chair.

**23/15 Matters arising not appearing elsewhere on the agenda**

23/05 – attendance had been discussed with individual members.

23/05 - A range of exemplars on hybrid meeting etiquette had been collated for review.

23/06 – opportunities for new committee chairs to observe additional meetings had been noted for implementation.

**23/16 Review of Members' terms of office, Governor reappointments and succession planning (Paper B)**

The Committee reviewed members' terms of office and commented in particular on terms expiring before the end of the academic year.

Members noted that Megan Poole's term as Students' Union President was due to expire on 30 June 2023 and that the Students' Union (SU) was in the process of consulting on moving from an election to an application/interview process to appoint to the President role due to increasingly poor turnout in elections. It was noted that this had been discussed at the FE and HE Student Forum meetings and received positively, but there was also a requirement under the SU constitution for a ballot to approve any proposed changes. It was noted that a ballot was currently ongoing and would close later in the week. The Head of Governance outlined the proposed appointment process, which included involvement of a student panel. Members noted that any change would require Corporation approval in addition to an

amendment to the Instrument and Articles of Government, which dealt with student governor membership of the Corporation.

**Members agreed to make an in-principle recommendation to Corporation to support the proposed change, subject to confirmation that the final documentation reflected the principles discussed.**

**Reappointment of Corporation members** In line with the reappointment procedure, two governors had put themselves forward for reappointment. In making its recommendations for reappointment, the Committee considers a number of factors including: overall skills mix of the board; individual attendance at meetings and other College events; individual contribution at meetings; board diversity; committee membership; length of service; succession planning; and consideration of other suitable candidates.

The Committee noted that Christine Warren's term of office is due to expire on 31 March 2023, by which time she will have served eight years as a Corporation member. Christine is willing to extend her term of office.


Members noted that Standing Order 9 provides: *'The usual term of service for a governor will not exceed 8 years. However, where continuous service beyond this period is of particular value to the Corporation (eg. to ensure continuity, to ensure the Board has members with necessary skills) then such re-appointment may be made.'*

Members commented that the Corporation was about to appoint to the roles of Chair designate and two Co Vice Chair designates with a view to undertaking induction and shadowing activity with the current Chair and Vice Chair in advance of a formal appointment being made to each role later this year. Members emphasised the importance of continuity in providing support to these roles during the period of transition in the context of succession planning and ensuring the stability and resilience of the Corporation.

[REDACTED]

**After careful consideration, members agreed to recommend Christine Warren's reappointment as a member for a further year expiring on 31 March 2024.**

The Committee noted that Joyce Drummond-Hill's term of office is due to expire on 30 June 2023, by which time she will have served 7 years as a Corporation member. Joyce is willing to serve a further term.



**After careful consideration, members agreed to recommend the reappointment of Joyce Drummond-Hill as a Corporation member for a further 13 months expiring on 31 July 2024 to coincide with the end of the academic year.**

**Extension of terms of office** Members noted that following the review of expiry dates at the January Search Committee meeting, the Head of Governance & Corporation Secretary contacted each of the independent governors serving their first three-year term to seek agreement to extending their respective terms to four years.

**Members agreed to recommend that Corporation extend the appointments of the following governors by one year to a four-year term:**

- a) **Emily Baxter to 1 November 2026**
- b) **Ian Green to 15 March 2026**
- c) **Stephen King to 31 July 2025**
- d) **Allen Eccles to 14 September 2025**
- e) **Ben Fisher to 31 July 2025**
- f) **Chris Patterson to 15 September 2026**

**Board succession planning** Members noted that the deadline for nominations for the role of Chair designate would close the following day and that Corporation would be asked to consider appointments to this role and the two Co Vice Chair roles on 23 March 2023. The Head of Governance and Corporation Secretary advised that all appointments would be decided by Corporation through normal voting procedures in accordance with Standing Orders. Members were briefed on the process for appointment in the case of one or more nominees for each post, including the potential requirement for a secret ballot.

**Committee Composition** Members reviewed the current committee composition and **recommended that Chris Patterson should chair the Academy Sponsorship Committee in place of Linda Wight with effect from 1 April 2023.** It was agreed that a full review of committee membership and chairing would take place after the Chair designate and Co Vice Chair designate appointments had been made.

**Recruitment and Marketing** Members reviewed the updated recruitment booklet and proposed one change to emphasise the governance advisory role of the Search Committee. Members were presented with various advertising and marketing options and noted this would be progressed as soon as possible. Members considered the option of filming a video of existing governors to complement the marketing materials but felt this would not add

value to the approach. Members also discussed targeted marketing where there were suitable opportunities. It was agreed to leave the recruitment period open and schedule interviews when a suitable number of applications had been received.

### **23/17 Strategic Review Meeting (Verbal update)**

The Principal provided a verbal update on the emerging programme for the Strategic Review session in April.

It was noted that the four proposed topics were the biggest issues that would influence the direction of the College going forwards: FE Reform, HE Strategic Partnerships, Business Development and Growth and a session on what the developments in each area would mean for the College's Corporate Services.

Members noted that dedicated discussion time would be allocated outside of the Strategic Review session on the Accountability Agreement and review of strategic performance measures.

The Committee discussed potential options for pairing Committee Chairs with the SLT lead for each topic and the Principal outlined the proposed format for each discussion. It was noted that papers and strategic questions for governors' consideration would be circulated a week in advance of the session to support governors in their preparation and contributions on the day.

Members asked that the Principal provide an update to members on the proposed programme and format at the March Corporation meeting.

**AB**

### **23/18 Governance Development Plan 2022/23 – Progress Update (Paper D)**

Members reviewed Paper D, the updated Governance Development Plan (GDP) and noted progress against a range of actions.

#### **Feedback from meetings with Committee Chairs**

Members reviewed the summary of feedback from the Corporation Chair's meetings with individual committee chairs. The Chair commented on the value of the meetings and advised that the detailed feedback would inform further progress in relation to relevant areas of the GDP and the Corporation's governance arrangements. Members considered the feedback on the potential for merging the FEQCS and HEQCS committees. It was not proposed to make any changes at the current time but members felt it would be useful to monitor attendance levels at each committee.

**Corp  
Sec**

**Committee Chair Role Description** Members reviewed the draft role description noting the changes made to reflect the feedback

from Committee Chairs and agreed to **recommend its approval to Corporation.**

**Chair appraisal and Governor self-evaluation** It was noted that the external governance review proposed the introduction of a formal process for appraisal of the Chair and of individual governors to enhance governance effectiveness. These recommendations were incorporated into the approved GDP however it was noted that discussions with Corporation members had indicated a preference for a more informal approach. The Committee reviewed questionnaire templates used historically by the Corporation alongside some additional examples from within and outside of the sector. Members discussed a range of issues for consideration in developing the approach including: the need for questions that would generate richer feedback than the existing documents, the key areas to cover in seeking feedback, the potential to seek input from the Executive Leadership Team and the potential to use completed questionnaires as the basis for an individual discussion between the governor and the Corporation Chair/Vice Chair.

It was agreed to look at the possibility of developing a single questionnaire covering individual self-assessment alongside feedback on the Chair's performance and overall Board effectiveness for review and discussion at the next meeting. An update would be reported to Corporation in May outlining key principles of the approach for discussion and comment and seeking delegation to the Committee to finalise the documents in line with members' feedback.

**Vice  
Chair  
/ Corp  
Sec**

**Committee effectiveness reviews** Members noted that it had been proposed to reintroduce Committee Effectiveness Reviews this year. Members reviewed the existing template and reflecting both the feedback from Committee Chairs and the points raised in the previous discussion agreed that the questionnaire would be refreshed to include questions that would provide more detailed feedback.

**Vice  
Chair  
/ Corp  
Sec**

**23/19 Approach to review of Governance Effectiveness / Self-assessment (Paper E)**

Members reviewed the questions that had been used for a number of years in the Annual Governance Survey (AGS). The potential overlap and duplication with the broader questionnaire proposed in the previous discussion was noted and the Committee agreed to consider whether there was a need for a separate AGS when the new draft document was available at the next meeting.

**Corp  
Sec**

**23/20 Training Update (Verbal update)**

The Corporation Secretary advised that the level of uptake of member training opportunities was similar at this stage in the year to previous years. Discussion with Committee Chairs had provided

some specific areas for consideration but no significant gaps in training.

It was agreed to include questions on member training in the questionnaires already discussed, to identify individual or group training needs and also to gain some insight to help improve attendance levels as internal briefing sessions.

**Corp  
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The Head of Governance updated that she was looking at the potential for a training plan that governors could sign up to and would update on this at a future meeting. Members also noted that a potential training provider for a session on providing constructive challenge and a refresher on the governor role had also been identified as something to consider early in the next academic year when new governors had been appointed to the current vacancies.

**23/21 Governance Updates (Verbal update)**

Members noted the following updates:

- The Association of Colleges were currently consulting on the revised Code of Good Governance for English Colleges
- The FE Governance Guide had been updated to reflect the recommendation for Colleges to nominate a SEND Link Governor

**23/22 Schedule of Business (Paper F)**

Members noted the updated Schedule of Business.

**23/23 Any other business**

None

**23/24 Date of next meeting: 12 June 2023**

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