

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation held on Thursday, 18<sup>th</sup> November 2021 at 5.30pm in room FO84 (with participation by teams)

Present: Michael Priestley (Chair); Norma Boyes (until Min No 86/21); Elaine Clinton (from Min No 83/21); Peter Ellwood; Paul Hardon; Phil Jardine; Robert Milburn; Chris Nattress; Denise Rollo; Stuart Williams  
Teams: Alison Hampson; Nigel Holliday; Amie Calvin (from Min No 83/21)

Apologies: Tanya Weston; Beth Wordsworth

Student designate Observers: Aaron Groggins; Elijah Bennett

Also present: Karen Wilson (Deputy Principal); Daniel Braithwaite (Assistant Principal); Mark Birschel, (Quality Manager, Min Nos 81-86/21); Jane Murray (Clerk)

### **81/21 Welcome and Student Governor Appointments**

The Chair welcomed Paul Hardon to his first meeting of the Board. He continued to welcome student designates Aaron Groggins and Elijah Bennett also. As there had been insufficient time to carry out a proper induction, they were attending this meeting as observers and would be formally appointed from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021.

#### **Resolved –**

- 1) That Arraon Groggins be appointed as a student governor from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021 to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022 or until he left college, whichever was the sooner, subject to references.
- 2) That Elijah Bennett be appointed as a student governor from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021 to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2022 or until he left college, whichever was the sooner, subject to references.

It is noted for the record that Elijah Bennett is under 18 years of age and may not participate in financial decision-making.

### **82/21 Minutes**

**Resolved –** that the minutes of the meeting held in open session of 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

### **83/21 Declarations of Interest**

Denise Rollo and Robert Milburn in their re-appointments and would withdraw.

### **84/21 Key Performance Indicators**

The Deputy Principal noted that 16-19 recruitment was down, which was disappointing and would lead to a reduction in contract next year of £150,000. She could not guarantee that it would not be a big higher as the cut-off point had not yet been reached. 19+ numbers were also down, but some remedial work would be carried out.

However, apprenticeships were strong and it was expected that the £3m threshold would be broken this year, continuing the strong performance in apprenticeships against the sector trend. HE learners were also strong at this time of the year.

In respect of work placements, it was noted that the health care sector was not fully recovered, but activity was looking strong. Industrial placements for T-Levels would be challenging and work was progressing on engagement.

HE attendance was surprisingly a little bit down and would be closely monitored, but maths and English attendance, while below target, was better than it was.

It was asked whether any reason had been identified for the drop in recruitment and while there was no hard evidence, it was thought that being unable to visit the site would have had an impact, as some parents and learners needed to see the College to consider it a possibility and an online event wasn't quite the same. It was also felt that stronger GCSE grades meant that more students had stayed on to 6<sup>th</sup> form. It was thought that a number would have gone straight into work and there were similar trends across the country.

It was asked whether there were any big rises or significant drops and confirmed that there was no big disturbance in the market, no huge influx in any one area. Digital profile was beginning to grow with T-Levels.

It was also noted that progression was better, with more internal progressors to the second year of their course, which was felt was really good news, but of course this would mean that there would not be the same number of progressors next year given the lower intake.

*Amie Calvin joined the meeting.*

It was asked if demographics were up, but it was felt that this was only marginal and didn't really affect the shifts in learner numbers.

It was asked about staff utilisation numbers with lower student numbers and it was acknowledged that this was an issue as the same staff requirement was there for a class irrespective of size and associated cost.

*Elaine Clinton joined the meeting*

Noting that the HE numbers were not far off target, it was asked whether these learners were from the workplace or whether they were individual learners. It was the case that most would be degree apprentices.

*Nigel Holliday joined the meeting.*

It was asked about the timeliness of apprenticeships and noted that the lockdown did affect progress and it was more difficult to identify trends as apprentices start at different points in the year.

## **85/21 Self-assessment and CIPs**

Following scrutiny by some governors of individual areas of operation, headlines from the process were presented to the Board. Headlines would be subject to a peer review with the four colleges in Cumbria and the SAR would be shared with Ofsted in January.

In respect of key strengths, it was noted that a return to good financial health was another piece of evidence to demonstrate strong leadership.

It was asked whether our marketing strengths and employer engagement with NCfN and the Civils Centre should not be added to the strengths. Allied to this, it was felt that the colleges ability to horizon scan and fill key skills areas in the area were also a key strength.

It additionally felt that the high volume of apprentices that we had would implicitly suggest that we were getting something right and should be a strength.

It was also questioned whether T-Level recruitment could also be added, in comparison to other colleges and this would be a point of reflection.

High rates of achievements, in the top 25% for a significant number of them, would suggest good performance and the clarity and unity behind the drive for beyond good was seen as a key strength.

While rates of achievements were mostly strong, there were some areas where there were low levels of engagement and achievement, particularly for Functional Skills maths with associated low performance, being addressed again this year with new initiatives. It was, however raised, that in an overall context of maths and English performance, that the significant improvements in GCSEs should be noted and the particularly last year in GCSE maths.

There was also an emerging trend that those on level 1 courses were doing less well than those on higher levels. There was a need to understand why there were those variances.

Owing to Covid-19, the timeliness of apprenticeships was low – a national issue. There was also a need to increase the breadth of the College upskilling work in light of the impact of Covid-19, for example in hospitality and catering and social care, areas where there were recruitment challenges.

It was asked how many courses were now in closer monitoring and this was thought to be six, fewer than the previous year. It was asked that as there were significantly fewer in closer monitoring that this might be a strength. It was also felt that the college needed to be more employer responsive in some areas in terms of a review of its provision to meet local need. Not every business would want to wait to an autumn intake following a traditional three terms, and there was a need to be more dynamic to navigate a different skills system.

It was also asked whether the variances in achievements for diverse groups under Equality and Diversity had been addressed and it was felt that it was moving in the right direction and that analysis would come to the December meeting.

One governor in particular felt that the college was a community college who must help and support all learners to the best of their and the College's ability.

There had been a dilemma in award of gradings for this year, as this was an undoubtedly strong performance, however, the impact of Covid was apparent in some places. The Board concurred that gradings that were the equivalent of last year seemed appropriate under the circumstances and that the time to make an adjustment to outstanding in any of the areas would be next year, when it was anticipated that there would be a more stable environment.

**Resolved** – that performance for annual self-assessment for ESFA be judged as good excepting leadership and management which should be outstanding.

Turning to higher education. It was felt that results were really strong with 95-100% pass rates and that demand and assessment reports were good. In some areas course leadership needs to improve and the College still needs to be more effective in getting feedback from learners. Staff will be getting their professional updating. It was noted that Ofsted would be inspecting Degree Apprentices. In respect of better organisation in some courses, it was asked whether this could account for a few of the poorer responses in the HE survey. It was felt that those issues were related to the ability to get software access during the pandemic (specifically CAD) and library resources, both of which had been remedied.

Turning to the outturn from Improvement themes from the previous year, it was noted that all had been achieved, with the exception of FS maths.

Assurance was given, in response to questioning, that there were no other areas of significant concern.

## **86/21 Stakeholder report**

The Quality Manager presented a comprehensive report on the complaints, compliments and stakeholder surveys.

It was noted that that with a significant amount of time in lockdown in 2020-21, that both complaints and compliments were low. With the new Lakes App it was hoped that it would make life easier to record both and the surveys in the coming year.

The Study Programme learners survey was very positive for this year, really strong in line with strong achievements overall. The only red category was for maths which could be attributed to the issue already identified and discussed under Self-assessment, with new approaches being used this year giving more detail on the starting point of each learner.

*Alison Hampson left the meeting*

Although still high, overall satisfaction went down last year for apprenticeships to 92%. There were some pockets rag-rated as amber to specific courses, however, it was also noted that the response rate was low and again hoped the app might improve participation.

*Alison Hampson re-joined the meeting.*

There were two surveys for Higher Education. The first showed the internal higher education survey which showed that satisfaction levels had dropped. A number of the red and amber markings were associated with FD Electrical Power and the Business HNC, the latter in closer monitoring for 2021-22. Issues were to be addressed in the HE CIP in 2021-22.

On the National Student Survey, an independent survey using selected final year degree students, there was an improvement in satisfaction levels, but still not quite at the benchmark of 75.4%. On this survey, areas above the benchmark included teaching on the course; learning opportunities; assessment and feedback and academic support. Organisation and management, learning community and student voice also all scored highly.

The issues previously discussed under self-assessment of resources and learner engagement were thought to be responsible for the areas below benchmark.

In spite of incentives, the survey had a low participation rate of 52% against a sector average of 69%, which the new app sought to improve.

The governor from the HE sector thought that the results were much improved. She noted that nationally HE students hadn't had a good year, with

many questioning whether their fees were worth it. Appreciating that we wanted everything above 90%, she felt that it was a strong performance, with lots of high grades.

There was a low response rate to the parents' survey. Previously, staff had approached parents at open evenings, thereby achieving a better response rate. Overall satisfaction rate was high at 93%, but had dropped back by 2%. Parents were overall satisfied with safety, the progress their children were making and the way in which the College responded to concerns. They were less satisfied with college organisation and receiving timely information and learner behaviour.

In respect of the employers' survey, it was noted that overall there was some good stuff in the survey, but also areas of disappointment which were being addressed at the micro level with individual employers and staff. It was noted that there needed to be more time spent with the employer to get their influence in any programme. It was noted though that only 87 employers had completed the survey.

*Norma Boyes left the meeting.*

While accepting that self-assessment was looking at a broader evidence base, nevertheless there was some concern that the survey looked less positive in places and asked how the Board could monitor progress. It was noted that the survey would return to the board in-year and that in the interim, progress could be measured through the CIP or the curriculum update.

#### **87/21 Confidential Session and Minutes**

##### **Resolved –**

- 1) to move into confidential session
- 2) that the minutes of the meeting held in confidential session on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

#### **88/21 Strategic Update – confidential**

*The majority of this minute is not redacted.*

The new Secretary of State for Education had addressed the AoC conference and it was noted that the BTEC consultation had been put on hold for a year. It was also note that he had announced that a pass in maths or English to pass a T-level was not longer required (in line with A-Levels).

Ofsted had received a £25m funding boost to inspect all colleges with a full inspection before the end of September 2025.

As set out in the original business plan, the NCfN were developing an eastern nub, which currently did not require any re-structure of the company. When

that was required, a stronger set of recommendations would return to Lakes Board as members of the company.

The Principal noted that he was continuing to work with employers in respect of the digital hub under the Workington Towns Deal. It was hoped to finalise a business case by January and commence in March. It was asked and confirmed that data would be collected for this project through a Workington postcode.

The SDF project had been approved and liaison continued to get the project letters through. Work was to be completed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

The College had presented an employer engagement workshop at the AoC conference, which had been well attended and received.

*The minute here was redacted in respect of third party information.*

The college was aiming to reach the second stage assessment for ISO14001 by Easter next year.

It was noted that there was a new FE Commissioner, letter attached, who had a more collaborative approach.

The IoT application led by Furness College had been unsuccessful.

The Board noted the extended national policy initiatives which had been appended to the report.

#### **89/21 Finance Update - confidential**

The Deputy Principal updated the Board on the College's financial outlook.

#### **90/21 Open Session**

**Resolved** - that the meeting be re-opened.

#### **91/21 Safeguarding Annual Report and Policy Update**

There had been a lower cohort of learners on the register last year, attributed in part to better communication and early intervention. Stakeholder feedback is very positive about our safeguarding activity, which is important to note in the multi-agency approach.

It was noted that there were high numbers, 99%, of those on the register who felt safe in college and that there were improving outcomes for learners. This was recognised by the Board with it being noted that looked after children was a really good score.

The seriousness with which the safety and well-being of learners was demonstrated through the whole college approach.

It was noted that an updated policy reflected the updated guidance. A particular theme at the moment was that of harassment and that 'banter', which might have been previously attributed by some to 'growing up', was not acceptable not tolerated. An increased focus on online safety reflected a greater move of students to online activity during the pandemic.

There had been no prevent disclosures in 2020-21.

In noting that there had been a 45% decrease in student accessing counselling services during the year, this was in part attributed to the proactive stance of well-being coaches, rather than that the service was in accessible.

In a boardroom briefing, Governors were reminded of their responsibilities in respect of Safeguarding and were encouraged to undertake their safeguarding essentials training through their college account – a link had been sent round.

#### **Resolved –**

- 1) That the annual summary be received and noted;
- 2) That the safeguarding policy be approved.

#### **92/21 Governance**

The Board received and noted the draft minutes of the Search and Governance Committee and the Search and Governance annual overview which was approved for publication on the website.

The proposal to have the Finance and Corporate Working Group monitor the College's IAG as part of their work monitoring the learner journey was approved by the Board, rather than appoint an individual careers' link governor.

The AoC had published a new Code of Good Governance for English Colleges and the Board agreed the recommendation of the Search and Governance Committee to adopt the code.

Staff Governor, Stuart Williams, had been willing to stay on, but had also said that he did not want to stay on for a full term. The Clerk had sought expressions of interest and felt that there would be sufficient interest to run an election. This being the case, an appointment from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022-11 February 2022 was requested to allow a election to be held in January 2022.

*Robert Milburn and Denise Rollo left the meeting*



The Search and Governance Committee had been consulted and were content to recommend the re-appointment of Robert Milburn and Denise Rollo to the Board, their skills and expertise being essential to Board business.

**Resolved –**

- 1) That the search and governance annual review be approved for publication;
- 2) That the Finance and Corporate Working Group terms of reference be amended to include consideration of IAG;
- 3) That the AoC Code of Good Governance for English Colleges be adopted by the Board;
- 4) That Stuart Williams be appointed from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022-11 February 2022
- 5) That Robert Milburn be re-appointed to the Board from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022-31<sup>st</sup> December 2025;
- 6) That Denise Rollo be re-appointed to the Board from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2022-31<sup>st</sup> December 2025.

The meeting closed at 2015h.