

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation held on Wednesday, 27th September 2023 at 1730h in the Boardroom of the College with participation by teams.

Present: Michael Priestley (Chair); Claire Dunn; Peter Ellwood; Phil Jardine;
Chris Nattress; Denise Rollo; Kirsten Williamson

By teams: Alison Hampson; Robert Milburn; Lee Todd

Apologies: Paul Hardon; Nigel Holliday; Elaine Clinton

Also present: Karen Wilson (Deputy Principal); Eliza Treme-Swales and Gary Martin (Directors of Curriculum and Skills – Until Minute No 69/23) Irene Farragher, Learner Support Manager, Progress and Welfare (and designated safeguarding Lead)(Min No 65-23); Jane Murray (Clerk)

63/23 Minutes

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 29th June 2023 in open session be approved and signed as a correct record.

64/23 Declarations of Interest

None received (to note withdrawals during discussion of performance reviews).

65/23 Boardroom Briefing – Safeguarding

In an annual update to the Board, the Designated Safeguarding Lead reminded the Board of their statutory duties for Safeguarding and Prevent and discussed updates to guidance.

She reminded the Board of the increased focus of sexual harassment (noting that this could not be classed as ‘banter’ and required to be challenged) and an increased focus this year on online abuse, in particular looking for appropriate filtering and monitoring systems to be in place (and which had already been in place at Lakes College).

It was asked what evidence there was to challenge inappropriate behaviour and noted that the college could evidence interventions through electronic systems, and in response to further questioning, could illustrate how actions had been closed off in a timely matter.

She felt that the filtering system that Lakes College used was robust. This was effective in respect of Lakes College devices and, in response to questioning, a learner’s own device when using Lakes College wifi (and would pick up

browsers which were still open from use at home) on entry onto the Lakes network. It was also asked and reassurance given that no-one could circumvent the filters.

The monitoring system would pick up on key words which might cause concern, but it was noted that on some occasions, such as public services, there would be occasions when learners would be asked to search for certain scenarios as part of their course work, which might, on other occasions, have been cause for concern. In such instances, tutors would alert the DSL in advance.

The DSL also reminded the Board of the procedure in respect of receiving a disclosure; noting the importance of listening and not leading and the duty of care to pass on the disclosure. She also noted the annual training which was carried out with all internal stakeholders.

The DSL continued to remind the Board of the Prevent Duty, the obligation to prevent learners from being drawn into extremism. She noted that such incidences had been relatively few and would be referred to Channel. She confirmed in response to questioning that in our geographical area, concerns would generally arise around far right extremism.

In reviewing 2022-23, she finished with some key points from activity in 2022-23, noting that there had been no requirement to make a referral to Channel for prevent concerns, that 168 learners had received counselling support; that 100% of looked after children had successfully achieved; and that 32 learners in total had been monitored as part of the Safeguarding and Prevent register, around mental health, substance abuse, domestic abuse, neglect, suicidal ideation and police activity.

The appointment of Irene Farragher as Designated Safeguarding Lead had been made by written resolution, carried by 11 votes in favour and effective from 15th September 2023, following the resignation of Assistant Principal Daniel Braithwaite. She would be supported by Lisa Gracey as Deputy until any other resolution would be tabled to the Board.

Assurance was sought and received that there was no complacency in respect of safeguarding and prevent concerns.

As per the appointments made at the end of the previous term, it was noted that the Link Governor for Safeguarding was Michael Priestley.

The Safeguarding Policy was presented for approval, with only minor amendments.

Resolved –

- 1) that the Safeguarding and Prevent refresher briefing be noted, including the updated Keeping Children Safe in Education;

- 2) that the policy be approved, subject to amendments to the contact details;
- 3) that the outcome of the written resolution appointing a new designated safeguarding lead (Irene Farragher) be noted.

Irene Farragher left the meeting

66/23 English and Maths

The Principal set the scene in respect of English and maths performance, which included historic teacher assessed grades and a return by Ofqual to pre-pandemic grade boundaries which were significantly higher than had been anticipated and which had contributed to the apparent inaccuracy of the progress monitoring. There were a complex set of circumstances - including indicators of deprivation locally - which all had an impact on the results, which were nonetheless disappointing and had been subject to in-depth review.

He felt that there had been many strategies used over the years to try and address the maths and English challenge and pointed to those elements in the gift of the college which could be used moving forward. This had included revising the offer to include functional skills and portfolio-based assessment where appropriate to do so. He gave assurance to the Board that there would be another push this year to achieve the best possible outcome for learners.

The Director of Curriculum noted that she would be reporting to the Principal on a monthly basis. There was to be a further push on ensuring that there was a college-wide approach to English and maths. She noted that there had been some disruption to the teaching teams which had led to some instability and that advertisements were going out to recruit new staff to support the volume of learners. She also noted the professional development being carried out in support of objectives and that periodic checks would be carried out at a course level to check progress and the effectiveness of the whole college approach to English and maths.

It was asked about the scope to recruit the skilled staff needed and acknowledged that this was challenging, however, advertisements had already gone out and progress would be updated.

She pointed to the plans in place for monthly reviews of learner performance, how learners were attending; how they were engaging, together with their behaviour. This was much more regular than previously had been the case. They would have individualised learning plans based on diagnostic testing.

It was noted by the Board that it was concerning that some learners had dropped a grade and it was felt that this was also a national issue and that 80% of predicted grades had been wrong. However, the review had also highlighted that resources available to some teaching staff had not always been reflected in classroom teaching.

It was noted that at a parents' evening in respect of English and maths that parents had told governors that they would have liked to have known earlier about attendance issues. Assurance was given that parental engagement would happen much earlier and that the move to monthly monitoring would assist with this.

The Chair noted that he had requested that the Quality Working Group take a focused interest in English and maths and it was agreed that their meeting of 17th October 2023 would consider issues in greater depth including any further issues arising from the first progress review.

67/23 High Needs

The Director of Curriculum noted the progress which had been completed on High Needs following the Board's closer monitoring in the past year. She presented the SEND policy which was endorsed by the Board. The SEN Governor would continue her series of visits and discussions with staff.

It was asked about engagement with parents and carers and how often this was taking place and felt that engagement was much more frequent – at times daily – now that there was an additional Course Operational Leader for SEN. It was also felt that the engagement of some employers was a good step forward, with some employers in particular demonstrating a real commitment to supporting SEN learners.

It was noted that some Governors had taken the opportunity to visit some of the new SEN facilities before the Board meeting.

Resolved – that the SEND policy be approved.

68/23 Key Performance Indicators

In consideration of the outturn KPIs for 2022-23, the Deputy Principal reminded the Board of the strong 16-18 recruitment. Adult recruitment had recovered towards the end of the year as a result of some partnership working, but was still below target and anticipated that there would be some clawback. Advanced learner loans were proving unpopular with many taking up the level 3 entitlement as a way of progressing their development.

Apprenticeship in-year recruitment was above target and in learning slightly below target. Of concern were the progress measures which had been rebased in-year and would be reviewed for 2023-24. There was an issue with retention with some learners moving into full-time employment or moving sectors.

The Board noted the update on the KPIs and that while data was still being closed down, that there may still be additional amendments.

Looking at the broader strategic targets against the strategic plan (again noting that these numbers were draft), achievement rates were pleasing, the

common issue was that of retention with a renewed focus again this year making sure that the IAG was right at the start of the year and taking action where necessary with the construct of some of the programmes, although noting that retention had improved over the previous year. She noted the complex landscape in respect of adults, with changes to the offer giving more flexibility to working adults, a strong uptake of the level 3 entitlement and focused work with the DWP.

69/23 Curriculum Annual Summary

In a snapshot of performance over the previous year, retention had not met target for EPYP, nevertheless it had improved over the previous year, up 2.2% and in particular, preparation for life and work retention had improved by 18.8%. Areas of concern were Health and Early Years, Hairdressing, Beauty Therapy and ICT and were being monitored in 2023-24.

It was also pleasing to note the high numbers of meaningful work placements that had been carried out and that levels of student satisfaction remained high.

There had been a strong performance for T-Levels with good pass rates for the 76% of the learners who had continued to complete the course. It was felt that there were really positive stories about T-Levels, but asked how retention issues would be managed moving forward it was confirmed that the offer had been refined for the new T-Levels and expectations made clear at enquiry. It was also noted that many who had left may have gone onto an apprenticeship or another positive destination.

In consideration of apprenticeships, it was felt that recruitment remained overall strong with the positive impact of the apprenticeship academy model and strong relationships with employers. A number of employers had moved their apprentices to Lakes College, including 'in-flight' apprentices. These strong working relationships, including up in Carlisle, brought a wealth of opportunity to learners.

There were, however, some challenges in end of year outturn, with some apprentices leaving their apprenticeship, notably in health and social care, leaving the sectors, or leaving for higher paid jobs in other sectors. In addition to this, there had also been some local firms which had ceased trading in the current economic climate. Analysis was already taking place and would form the basis for self-assessment and consideration of where offering a different model could help with retention.

The Board noted the overview and areas of monitoring in the coming year. Early self-assessment sessions were already in diaries.

Gary Martin and Eliza Treme-Swales left the meeting

70/23 Confidential Session

Resolved –

- 1) to move into confidential session
- 2) that the minutes of the meeting held in confidential session of 29 June 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

71/23 Strategic Update - Confidential

The Principal discussed a number of national and regional opportunities and developments.

72/23 Finance Update - Confidential

The Deputy Principal discussed various issues in respect of finance and financial outlook (including recruitment).

The Clerk presented the revised financial regulations for approval, which had first been considered by the Audit Committee.

Resolved – that the financial regulations for 2023-24 be approved.

73/23 Open Session

Resolved – to re-open the session

74/23 HR Annual Summary

The Deputy Principal drew attention to the overview of HR performance in 2022-23 and noted that sickness was higher than they wanted it to be. There had been some improvement to the gender pay gap and noted that there was increasing diversity in staffing. It was asked what the current position was on Covid and it remained the case that staff were asked to stay off (and work from home if possible) for five days. It was no longer the case that the College provided tests. The College had fared well, but not as strongly in the most recent staff climate survey. The outcome would be analysed and actions taken forward, particularly in respect of communication.

75/23 Health and Safety Annual Summary

The Board felt that they were familiar with Health and Safety performance with regular reporting throughout the year and noted that it was overall a good picture.

76/23 Governance

The Board approved the appointment of Val Pallister as a Governor effective from 1st November 2023, and noting the resignation of Sarah Allison, anticipated that a strong candidate from UoC was to meet the Chair and Principal shortly. Work continued to source a prospective candidate with legal skills.

The standing orders had been subject to annual review and presented for approval for 2023-24. Updates included public sector status and some minor amendments to the terms of reference for the remuneration committee.

The regularity audit had been prepared and, on the recommendation of the Audit Committee, was approved for signature by the Chair and the Principal.

Resolved –

- 1) That the resignation of Sarah Allison, effective from 20th September 2023 be received and noted;
- 2) That the appointment of Val Pallister, from 1st November to 31st October 2024 (renewable for a further three years by mutual agreement) be approved;
- 3) That, on the recommendation of the Audit Committee, that the regularity audit be approved for signature by the Chair and Principal.
- 4) That the Standing Orders for 2023-24 be approved.

Staff and staff governors left the meeting

77/23 Performance Reviews

Resolved –

- 1) To move into confidential session

The Board discussed the Principal's performance review

The Clerk left the meeting

The Board discussed the Clerk's performance review

The meeting closed at 2015h