

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation held on 23rd November 2023 at 1730h in FO26 of the College.

Present: Michael Priestley (Chair); Elaine Clinton; Claire Dunn; Peter Ellwood
Phil Jardine; Sophie Kelly; Emily Rose Lane; Robert Milburn; Chris
Nattress (Principal); Val Pallister; Denise Rollo (until Minute No 84/23;
Professor Jill Stewart; Lee Todd; Kirsten Williamson

Apologies: Alison Hampson; Nigel Holliday

Leave of absence: Paul Hardon

Also present: Karen Wilson (Deputy Principal); Mark Birschel (Quality Manager until
85/23); Jane Murray (Clerk)

78/23 Appointments and Administration

The Chair noted that both he and the Principal had met with Professor Jill Stewart following consultation with the Search and Governance Committee. As demonstrated by her biography attached, hers was an impressive career, which included her directorship of the National College for Nuclear.

Emily-Rose Lane was a second-year T-Level student for Business. The Chair and Chair of Search and Governance had interviewed the further education candidates for student governor, where Emily-Rose had been successful. However, the Chair was quick to note that the standard was exceptionally high this year and it was hoped to keep in touch with the three remaining candidates who had also put in a strong performance.

Sophie Kelly had also met the Chair and the Chair of Search and Governance, with an impressive track record of working her way up through the apprenticeship route and currently studying for her foundation degree in Decommissioning and Waste Management.

Both student governors had impressed by their commitment and enthusiasm for the role. It is noted for the record that student governors can be re-appointed for a further year by mutual agreement should they return to college. After two years, however, there would be a requirement to advertise the positions again although the student governors would be welcome to re-apply.

Governor Paul Hardon had some family illness which was impeding his participation. He was a valued member of the Board, in particular with his apprenticeships insight. He had requested a leave of absence until 31 March 2023.

Resolved –

- 1) That Profession Jill Stewart be appointed to the Board from 23rd November 2023 for 1 year in the first instance, renewable by a further 3 years by mutual agreement (subject to a satisfactory DBS check).
- 2) That Emily-Rose Lane be appointed as the FE Student Governor from 23rd November 2023 to 31st July 2023, or her departure from College, whichever is the sooner.
- 3) That Sophie Kelly be appointed as the HE Student Governor from 23rd November 2023 to 31st July 2023, or her departure from College, whichever is the sooner.
- 4) That Paul Hardon be granted a leave of absence from until 31st March 2023.

79/23 Change to the Agenda (Additional Item) and Confidential Session

The Chair announced that he had agreed to an additional item at this stage of the agenda under confidential session.

Resolved -

- 1) To move into confidential session

The Principal updated the Board on the outcome of a recent tender exercise.

- 2) To re-open the meeting.

80/23 Declarations Of Interest

None received.

81/23 Self-Assessment and CIP

It was noted that some governors from the Quality Working Group had taken part in an apprenticeship SAR challenge meeting; in a FE SAR challenge meeting and in a HE SAR challenge meeting. The Board had monitored improvements to High Needs provision throughout 2022-23. The SAR sessions had been supported at an operational level by an external, independent consultant.

The Board was now asked to consider the overarching SAR and key strengths and areas for improvement, which the Board recognised from several governor sessions. He asked the Board to consider the overall markings of 2 across the board.

A governor noted that they attended a high needs learning walk and discussion earlier that day and that there had been huge improvements,

which were very evident. She did, however, ask whether there could be confidence, given 1 or 2 challenging areas, whether there could be confidence in a 2 across the range of provision.

The Principal felt that they too had reflected on this point and that the conclusion had been reached that it was about the magnitude and significance of issues and their impact on a complex offer for a diverse range of learners. It was felt that the proposal was a proportionate response, but welcomed the challenge.

On apprenticeships, it was felt that there was a lot of activity and action plans in place and plenty of evidence in support of a good grading. For maths, a deep dive was happening every four weeks – still challenging but there were some green shoots.

It was asked about finances being challenged and how that is best reflected in light of the recent tender going to a competitor and it was felt that there was sufficient employer engagement activity and business development opportunities to support the grading for Leadership and Management. There was a lot of evidence to this effect and it was noted that there had been some really positive employer engagement on construction recently to give even more comfort.

It was agreed following discussion that the SAR was a fair reflection of the performance overall.

The Continuous Improvement Plans were received and noted as being an early copy . It was felt that they were an early iteration and that the CIPs would be monitored throughout the year.

Resolved –

- 1) that the Self-assessment report be approved
- 2) that the CIPs be approved

82/23 KPIs

The headline figures at draft RO4 were looking like 1088 for 16-18 numbers (at worst 987). It was noted that the national issue with English and maths had likely had an impact, with 100 learners on English and maths. It was anticipated that at least £140,000 extra funding in-year would be achieved and greater lagged learning funding for next year as a result. It was also likely that class sizes would be more efficient.

Adult Education Budget was showing with low numbers and different approaches were being considered. It was suggested that the new Vice Principal might have some fresh thinking on the offer. There had been expansion into the unemployed arena with some good results.

Apprenticeship starts had been challenging as ever, with 309 starts to date and another 150-170 in the pipeline. It was anticipated that with January starts, that higher education would hit target. Advanced learner loans were slightly up.

Attendance was pretty standard for the time of year and, in spite of concerted efforts, attendance at maths and English was still below target (with a shout out to engineering on their attendance).

Progress monitoring now included both staff and learner observations and should assist judgement of where learners are. The board was reminded that the apprenticeship monitoring now included measures for knowledge skills and behaviour and was on an upward trend. HE progress was not yet available.

It was asked whether there was merit in considering progress of our disadvantaged learners and also those with high needs, to monitor the distance travelled.

It was asked about 16-18 numbers and confirmed that the increase in numbers was after the six-week rule. While great for popularity, does it give the college greater retention issues. It was acknowledged in particular that it gave rise to additional English and maths resits, which can impact on retention, but there were pros and cons.

It was asked whether the numbers put pressure on the infrastructure of the College, such as transport and catering. It was acknowledged that there needed to be more consideration given to staggering timetables to take out pressure points.

The bus issue involved cancelled buses and a board member on the local authority provided assurance that the experience of Lakes College (and other education providers) was being taken into consideration with the bus company.

Agreed – to receive and note the KPIs.

83/23 Quality Strategy

The Quality Strategy was introduced by the Quality Manager as way in which a number could be pulled together cohesively, with a common approach: Plan, Do, Check, Act.

There were three main aims to the strategy: that the learner journey maps were fully utilised ironing out inconsistencies; that the Teaching, Learning and Assessment is consistent across all types of provision; and that staff development opportunities are fully utilised.

He noted that there was a lot of working together, which was bringing tangible benefits with actions planned out into next year's programmes.

It was asked about how impact would be monitored and noted that progress was being monitored, with the new IP system in particular being used to check for TLA improvement (dovetailing with the TLA strategy).

Asked about the learner journey maps, it was confirmed that these were in place, however, that there were some inconsistencies in their use. There was a lot of value in the maps and an ISO approach was being adopted.

Asked about where there were inconsistencies, it was about embedding the process throughout the provision types including adults and apprenticeships.

It was asked about resources to deliver the plan for the whole college and whether there were priorities within the plan to ensure impact. It was felt that by being smarter about what we do, using better feedback to learners, that this helps them improve.

It was felt that the Quality Assurance Cycle has been tweaked to ensure it satisfies awarding body expectations. This includes a cycle of deep dives to ensure help ensure consistency of approach.

Resolved – that the Quality Strategy be approved.

84/23 Stakeholder Report

The Quality Manager provided an overview of the results. This had shown a very slight increase in complaints (although still comparatively low) and an increase in compliments but with still more to do to capture all the compliments. In respect of complaints, it was noted for the record that there were two for higher education with a little more detail provided for Governors.

Denise Rollo left the meeting

Satisfaction surveys showed that the significant majority of learners; parents, and employers would recommend the college with the highest being 97% (EPYP) and the lowest 80% (T-levels)

There was more to do to involve employers in the design of the curriculum – this was well embedded in apprenticeships and there was more to do to embed the approach in some areas of the curriculum for EPYP. The CIP would take that forward.

Asked about engagement of the HE survey, it was acknowledged that this was too low. There was a move to align progress reviews to survey responses on my Lakes App. The HE Student Governor undertook to talk colleagues.

Asked about the National Student Survey, governors had noted in the HR SAR that some of the responses were worrying. The New Board member, from HE, noted that the universities validating the HE programmes should be supporting the college – there was a whole process followed by universities round the surveys. She added that it was well known that the students who

were less likely to give positive feedback were more mature learners and part-time learners, so she felt that there was work to do to get the sponsoring universities to assist the College with their cycle of surveys.

As had been reported elsewhere, there was a need to ensure more proactive parental engagement and noted that the parents' evening would take place on 12th and 14th of December where encouragement to fill in the survey would be provided.

Overall, there were a lot of positive results, but it was recognised that there needed to be much more management of the surveys and to look at other ways of engaging learners in qualitative feedback.

The survey was received and noted.

85/23 Confidential Session and Minutes

Resolved -

- 1) To move into confidential session
- 2) That the minutes of the meetings held in confidential session of 27 September 2023 and 2nd November 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.
- 3) That the minute of the performance reviews of 27 September 2023 (independent governors only) be approved and signed as a correct record.

86/23 Strategic Update

The minute of this item is not redacted.

The Principal update the Board in respect of the AoC conference issues, including the continued tensions over delisting of qualifications and how that impact learners where a T-Level was too great a step.

It was noted that an application to the Local Skills Improvement Fund for £2.4m had been successful, to be shared with partners around the low carbon and visitor economy fields. It was also noted that several North West colleges had been inspected in recent weeks.

The National Skills Nuclear taskforce was moving at pace and it was anticipated that a bid for significant resources would emerge to meet the demand in MoD and Civil nuclear for skills over the next 10 years. There could be significant benefits for National College for Nuclear provision.

The Board congratulated the Principal and team on the Queen's Anniversary Prize award, recognising the significance of the achievement.

87/23 Finance Update – confidential

The Deputy Principal updated the Board on a number of issues. This included the pay award, which was equivalent to the resource received from Government for the purpose.

Resolved – that a pay of award of 4.25% be made to staff.

The minutes of the Finance and Corporate working group of 6th November 2023 were received and noted.

88/23 Open Session

Resolved – to re-open the session

89/23 Policies and Strategies

The Clerk noted that there had been no substantial change to the safeguarding policy approved in September, but a change of style to meet the needs of the Open University. She was giving sight to the Board given the importance of the policy. The careers strategy had been updated, considered by Finance and Corporate Working Group, and the action plan updated for 2023-24 as appended to the strategy.

Resolved –

- 1) That amendments to the Safeguarding Policy be approved
- 2) That the careers strategy be approved.

90/23 Governance

The Board approved the minute of the governance self-assessment held in September. They were updated in respect of the new code of good governance and agreed that this be adopted in principle from the beginning of academic year 2024-25, following review by the Search and Governance committee. The annual overview of governance was approved for publication. The minutes of the meeting of the Search and Governance Committee were received and noted.

The meeting closed at 2000h.