

**Minutes of the 145th Meeting of the Board of the Corporation  
held on Monday, 13th May 2019 at 6.00 pm at City Campus, Conference Room**

**Present:** G Blyth  
J Cramman  
T Crompton (Vice-Chair)  
R Lawson (Chair)  
C Magog  
S Marshall  
S Patterson  
K Ramanathas  
R Saelzer  
E Thinnesen

**In attendance:** N Harrett  
D Howells  
M Hughes  
V Morton  
I Nixon  
J Quinn

**Clerk:** C Stretesky

**Bd/19/77 Apologies, Consent for Absence & Declaration of Interests**

Apologies for absence were received from P McEldon, Clr. L Farthing, J Barnett, D Measor and M Patton and it was noted that J Phillips is on secondment.

Standing declarations of interest were noted.

**Bd/19/78 Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Any Matters Arising**

The Chair assumed all had read the minutes and asked if there were any necessary changes. The Chair noted that the minutes revealed commercially sensitive material and would be revised to remove commercially sensitive information prior to publication.

The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

Matters Arising

Bd/19/72 Students' Union Constitution: The VP Student and Customer Experience noted that the constitution is being drafted and will be brought to the Board at its next meeting.

Bd/19/72 Students' Union President Recruitment Update: The Head of Corporate Governance and Policy stated that students have self-nominated and are creating their manifestos and campaign materials. The election will be within the next few weeks. There was a question from the committee around

viewing the manifestos and campaign materials. The VP Student and Customer Experience noted that they will be online.

### **Bd/19/79 Executive Report**

The Chief Executive presented her detailed report highlighting a number of key points around Northumberland College (NC). It was noted that the Senior Leadership Team and Northumberland College (NC) Principal have had a chance to tour campuses and have seen signs of aspiration on the walls and the materials displayed. It was noted that there are a lot of good people at NC who want to make a difference and do the right thing for their students. The Chief Executive identified pockets of good practice such as the success at the NE Necta Chef Competition.

The Chief Executive noted areas needing significant work to improve, as evidenced by external reports including:

**(redacted)**

The Chief Executive explained that she wanted to provide a base line of the state of the land and emphasised that all statements in the report can be backed by external reports. The Board recommended that the Education Partnership North East Board be updated on progress. The Board discussed the governance structure in place after the merger and which boards and committees will see various reports on progress.

The Board acknowledged the poor condition of the estate, the low numbers of students on some courses and the learning environment not being up to standard. The Board further acknowledged the importance of having an evidence base to measure against. The Board questioned whether the right amount of resources are in place to make necessary improvements. The Chief Executive responded that there were so long as the resources are used wisely.

AGREED: The Board will receive monthly reports, in the form of a post-merger bulletin, providing an update on work at Northumberland College.

### **Bd/19/80 Funding and Strategic Planning (recurrent allocations)**

The Vice Principal Finance and Resources noted that this report went to Resources and Capital Projects Committee meeting last month. Key points raised were around 16-18 allocations and Adult budgets including the ESFA's approach.

The Board questioned the timelines and when it will be known if the actions to mitigate the reduction in learners has worked. The Vice Principal Finance and Resources stated that that will be reported, along with the budget, at the June meeting of the Resources & Capital Projects Committee.

AGREED: To note the report

### **Bd/19/81 Quality Improvement Plan mid-year report (SC) and Quality Improvement Plan mid-year report (NC)**

The Principal of Northumberland College presented the detailed report as it relates to NC identifying that the Ofsted Inspection characterized the Overall Effectiveness as 'Requires Improvement'. The Principal noted that Adult and 14-16 provision was classed as 'Good' with all other areas as Requires Improvement. The Principal anticipates a monitoring visit from Ofsted next academic year. The Post Inspection Action Plan was created focusing on the eight areas identified in the report.

The Board questioned who created the plan to which the Principal stated this was created by a staff member at NC and what is attached to the report is the fourth version. The Principal noted that most area teams are making progress though some are not, for example student attendance. The Principal stated that apprenticeships need more detail in the plan around key benchmarking.

The Interim Principal of Sunderland College presented the detailed report, passed out during the meeting, relating to Sunderland College. The Interim Principal explained there are 12 detailed area improvement plans that are working documents and amended throughout the year. The Interim Principal noted that overall there are 59 actions: 1 rated red (parental engagements), 16 green and the remaining amber.

There was a challenge from the Board on whether anyone has looked at both plans to see if there are any similar actions. The Principal of Northumberland College responded that that exercise has not been done, but those areas are known, for example Maths and English. It was explained to the Board that staff from each college will sit on the self-assessment board for the other college which should bring continuity and learning of best practices.

The Board questioned staff on how staff will be communicated with in a much more condense level. The Interim Principal explained that each Self Assessment Report and each team have their own plan that they work from. The Principal for Northumberland College explained the process undertaken at NC and that there is wide staff engagement and work with the management team has been completed to look at what outstanding and good looks like. The Principal of Northumberland College explained that he hosts monthly staff briefings where staff can ask questions. There was a question from the Board on the tenure of the staff involved to which the Principal responded some were long term members of staff and with them the ability to make change that does not require additional funds is being highlighted.

There was a challenge by the Board on the one red rated item having to do with parental engagement at Sunderland College and what actions were being taken. The Interim Principal responded that parental evenings and reports are done, however, we want the parents to be more engaged in child progress. The Principal of Hartlepool explained the process of engaging with parents, particularly with those students who are red RAG rated and looking at how that can be changed so that parents are not hearing the same message on their child's progress year on year.

AGREED: To note the report

### **Bd/19/82 Audit Arrangements Post Merger**

The Vice Principal Finance and Resources presented the detailed report noting that it had previously been to Audit Committee. In summarising the report, the Vice Principal Finance and Resources noted the following:

- With regard to the control environment at Northumberland College a Rolling Issues Log was provided that included 64 issues, 46 were identified as cleared. It was explained that some of the outstanding issues and recently resolved issues have been outstanding for a long time. The Vice Principal Finance and Resources stated that as this is different to what SC is used to, it changes the organisation's risk. The Senior Leadership Team recommend the procurement of an internal auditor as work needs to be done on a regular basis.
- The Vice Principal explained that NC has contracted with Mazars and it is recommended that Mazars be asked to do a follow up piece which will allow members to assess the controls in place at NC and whether they are effective.

- With regard to an external audit, NC had previously contracted with RSM. As SC has a contract in place with KPMG, it is recommended the RSM contract be closed and KPMG take over external auditing for both colleges. It was noted this is a similar approach as was taken when SC and Hartlepool Sixth Form College merged.

The Board discussed the recommendations. Governor Blyth, as Audit Committee Chair, stated his support on the recommendation to have Mazars do additional work, noting that KPMG has not been reappointed by the Board though there is no reason not to do so. Due to internal KPMG policy, we will get a new managing partner.

AGREED:

1. to request that Mazars undertake a follow up review on the outstanding audit log at NC
2. to approve a tender process for an internal audit service for the 2019/20 financial year
3. to approve KPMG to undertake the audit of the NC closure accounts (at 21 March 2019) alongside the overall SC group accounts for 2018/19

### **Bd/19/83 Minutes of the Curriculum and Quality Meeting held on 8th April 2019**

The Board were happy to note the content of the minutes as presented.

### **Bd/19/84 Curriculum Offer 2019/20: Sunderland College and Northumberland College**

The Interim Principal for Sunderland College presented the detailed report relating to Sunderland College and highlighted that the process to determine curriculum for 2019/2020 started in November 2018. The curriculum is designed to meet market needs and is on schedule with the detailed plan in place. The Interim Principal stated that the curriculum is being finalised with the Vice Principal Finance and Resources providing budgetary support.

The Principal for Northumberland College presented the detailed report relating to Northumberland College. The Principal stated that curriculum at NC was very specialist even at the early stages including level 1. The Principal explained that there is a need to expand lower level offering and allow for specialization at higher levels. The Principal noted that there are very low numbers of students in some courses recognizing this is not sustainable. He identified a practice of over teaching, providing as an example, 700 hours of teaching for a level 2 provision and stated there was no link of the curriculum plan and the staffing plan. The Principal stated that SC practice on curriculum planning was shared with NC staff and a consultant was brought in to assist. The Principal felt confident they are heading in the right direction and noted that they are launching a staffing plan that provides for the ability to deliver the curriculum plan.

The Board asked whether there is a plan to have a coherent offer across the North East with the Principal of Northumberland College responding that that is a future plan. The Principal explained that for the next academic year, some issues had to be addressed and prioritised with a more radical approach for the next cycle using LMI information.

The Board expressed a concern that all of the work being done in the immediate may not show impact during the next inspection. Concern was also expressed that staff may feel deflated by this. The Principal of Northumberland stated that staff understand this is a journey and understand where we want to go. It was noted by the Board that there is a new inspection framework and with inspections, goal posts move, so we need to ensure staff understand this to manage their expectations.

AGREED: To note the report and the decision on curriculum offer for 2019/20.

### **Bd/19/85 OfS Registration Conditions**

The Interim Principal presented the report and noted that this reflects an update to a paper that went to the Curriculum and Quality Committee. The Interim Principal explained that as a college we must be registered with the Office for Students (OfS) as a condition to receiving Higher Education funding. The OfS placed specific conditions on our registration including actions around our policy on freedom of speech. The Interim Principal reported that the policy is being developed and will be reviewed by our attorneys. The Curriculum and Quality Committee will monitor implementation of the policy which will require a slight amendment to the Terms of Reference for the committee. The Interim Principal explained that the OfS also asked for an action plan by 30 June 2019 addressing retention of learners from year 1 to year 2.

AGREED:

1. To note the College's outcome of the registration with the Office for Students
2. To note the development of the action plan to meet the specific condition
3. To note the requirement to submit freedom of speech evidence
4. To approve the amendment of a sub-committee's Term of Reference to monitor the Freedom of Speech Policy within the College(s)

#### **Bd/19/86 Student Council – Feedback from lunches**

The Chair stated that he and Governors Magog, Farthing and Barnett met with about ten students and talked around the general student picked themes of careers advices, food, health & safety and the differences between school and college. One issue raised at the lunch was the safety of students walking to college due to cars on the main road. The Principal for Hartlepool Sixth Form College stated that the local council has been contacted on the issues, they have responded positively and this will be relayed to the student council.

The Governors got a sense from the students that they are enthusiastic to be at the college and the meeting was well worth the time. The Chair encouraged all members to attend these meetings.

#### **Bd/19/87 Minutes of the RCP Meeting held on 30th April 2019**

The Chair noted that the minutes of the Resources and Capital Projects Committee revealed commercially sensitive material and would be revised to remove that information prior to publication.

The Board were happy to note the content of the minutes as presented.

#### **Bd/19/88 Budgetary Control Statements – 2018/19 Year to Date**

The Vice Principal Finance and Resources presented the detail report noting that the paper had been previously heard at the Resources and Capital Projects Committee on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April. The Vice Principal Finance and Resources highlighted that:

- we are operating on a deficit with the adverse movement due to a technical adjustment to the capital grant release on the Hartlepool assets
- the Earnings Before Interest, Tax, Depreciation and Amortisation indicator, is currently at about 8%
- the lower number of learners enrolled will not affect Education Funding Agency funding this year but will effect next year's funding
- we are on track to achieve the target for adult learning
- our cash position is tight, however the sale of St Peters is imminent and will improve this

AGREED: To note the report

#### **Bd/19/89 Estates and Financing Update**

The Vice Principal Finance and Resources presented the detailed report highlighting that since it was presented at the Resources and Capital Projects Committee the tendering exercise to procure a project manager has been completed with Malcolm Hollis the preferred bidder who should be onsite soon.

The Vice Principal Finance and Resources stated that the high risk items need to be addressed immediately and because TU know of these there is no need to do a business case justifying the work. The Board discussed the need to balance the investment with the need of the work in an attempt to avoid overcommitting or underspending. The Vice Principal Finance and Resources stated that the Board will be provided an update at each meeting.

The Vice Principal Finance and Resources noted that with regard to banking borrowings, covenants and capital projects, nothing has changed since the last time the Board was updated.

With regard to the TU conditions and monitoring, the Vice Principal Finance and Resources noted the tight timescale and the need to evidence what we are doing. The Chief Executive stated that the Merger Investment Group is overseeing the spend and project planning at a high level, with meetings held every other week. The Chief Executive announced the Education Skills and Funding Agency will be attending those meetings once a month and governors are welcome to attend at any time.

AGREED: To note the report

#### **Bd/19/90 Minutes of the Governance Committee Meeting held on 4th April 2019**

The Chair noted that these will be presented to the Board at the next meeting.

#### **Bd/19/91 Board(s) Membership**

The Head of Corporate Governance and Policy presented the detailed report highlighting the process for selection of appointment for members of the Northumberland College Local Governing Board recommending Dawn Chadwick, Louise Doyle, Kerry Patterson, Holly Thompson and Alison Shaw be appointed. Richard Dale was recommended to be appointed as a co-opted member of the Regional Finance, Resources & Capital Committee. The Vice-Chair noted the high caliber of people we are appointing to the Northumberland College Local Governing Body. The Head of Corporate Governance and Policy provided an update on recruitment that was ongoing or set to commence.

AGREED:

1. To accept the recommendations made regarding appointments to the new Northumberland College Local Board and the Regional Finance, Resources & Capital Committee
2. Note the update provided in relation to the post-merger governance structure and membership

#### **Bd/19/97 Any Other Business**

The Chair presented two items:

- The Chair and Vice-Chair attended a photoshoot for the Love our Colleges Campaign and reported it went very well noting that press release will be going out to support the campaign
- The Chair congratulated Iain Nixon on his appointment as Vice Principal Partnerships and Commercial (Group) and Vikkie Morton on her appointment as Vice Principal Student Services and Registry (Group).

### **Bd/19/92 Dates of Future Meetings**

The Chair announced the following dates:

Northumberland College Local Governing Board to be 1 July 2019 at 6:00 p.m. at the Committee Room, Ashington Campus

Sunderland College Local Governing Board to be 2 July 2019 at 6:00 p.m. at the Conference Room, City Campus

Education Partnership North East Governing Board, 1 October 2019 at 6:00 p.m. at the Committee Room, Ashington Campus

The remainder of the meeting was conducted as confidential with minutes being kept separately.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.