

**Approved Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Corporation held on Tuesday 4 July 2023
at 6:00pm in the Conference Room Washington Campus**

Present:

- Louise Bradford, Vice Chair
- Ian Brown
- Pamela Dawson
- Louise Doyle (from item 71)
- Julia Fox
- Ellis Hill, SU President (withdrew for item 68, part of item 71, and for item 75)
- Jeff Hope (via Teams)
- Sue Houston
- Chris Jones
- Alison Shaw, Vice Chair (via Teams)
- James Stuart, Chair
- Ellen Thinnesen, Chief Executive (via Teams) (left after item 71)
- David Towns (via Teams)

In Attendance:

- David Howells, Chief Financial Officer
- Gary Potts, Principal, Northumberland College
- Toni Rhodes, Principal, Sunderland College
- Judith Quinn, Vice Principal, Curriculum Enhancement, and Innovation
- Lee Lister, Vice Principal, Northumberland College and SEND
- Iain Nixon, Vice Principal, Partnerships and Commercial
- Naomi Robson, Vice Principal, Resources
- Zoe Wortley, GatenbySanderson – External Reviewer (via Teams) (left after item 69)
- Mark Powell, GatenbySanderson – External Reviewer (via Teams) (left after item 69)
- Christine Stretesky, Head of Corporate Governance and Policy
- Donna Swan, Governance Officer

Bd/22-23/66 Apologies and consent for absence and declarations of interest

There were apologies for absence, for which consent was granted, from Governors Farthing, O’Leary, Pollard, Ramanathas, and Redpath. Governor Smith did not attend.

The Board received the Attendance Report subject to the record with regards to Governor Shaw being amended to reflect her attendance at 4 out of the 5 meetings to date.

There were no declarations of interest.

Bd/22-23/67 Minutes of previous meeting held on 9 May 2023 and Matters Arising

The Board agreed the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting held on 9 May 2023.

The remaining part of this item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

The following matters arising were noted:

- Bd/22-23/50 – the terms of reference for the new Education, Skills and Training Reform Group are included at Bd/22-23/80 of the agenda pack.
- Bd/22-23/56b – the Compliments, Complaints and Suggestions Policy has been amended as directed and has now been published.

Bd/22-23/68 Confidential minutes of special meeting held on 20 June 2023 and Matters Arising

This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

Bd/22-23/69 External Board Effectiveness Review

This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

With the permission of the Chair, the following item was taken out of order:

Bd/22-23/71 Accountability Statement 2023/24

This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

Bd/22-23/70 Transition Programme

This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

Bd/22-23/72 Curriculum Offer for 2023/24

This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

Bd/22-23/73 Finance Report

This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

Bd 22-23/74 Risk Register Annual Review

This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

Bd/22-23/75 Ashington Campus

This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

Bd/22-23/76 Students' Union Report

The Chair noted that, under the Education Act 1994 Part II, the Board of Corporation has a number of requirements with regard to any students' union in place including monitoring the expenditures of the SU. This report satisfies this requirement.

The Students' Union President (President) delivered his final presentation of 2022/23, detailing the achievements of the year as follows:

- Working with the Environmental, Green and Sustainability Group to promote the local green agenda,

- Improving College spaces – creation of new garden space at City campus,
- Participation in Beach Cleans at Roker, Newbiggin and Seaton Carew beaches,
- Roadshows in support of national campaigns including period poverty and public safety,
- Student Engagement – Careers Event and activities within Common Rooms.

Finally, the President presented the Students' Union expenditure account and reflected upon his own personal development and career progression and thanked the Board for their support.

The Board commended the President for his enthusiastic leadership of the Students' Union and in particular praised the Beach Cleans which had delivered a clear visual response to the negative stereotypes sometimes levelled at young people. The President agreed that the Beach Cleans had attracted good coverage in the media and members of the public had also responded positively to the events. The Board suggested that for future events students be provided with branded high vis gear to showcase the work being done in the community by our students.

AGREED: to accept the report of the SU including its expenditures for the year.

Bd/22-23/77 Student Voice – Governance

The PSC delivered a presentation on Student Engagement within the College, in which she described the key attributes and guiding principles of the College's approach. She then turned to the arrangements for engaging with Higher Education (HE) students which are governed by the requirements of The UK Quality Code for Higher Education with core practices being mandatory and common practices being recommended and explained that The Code's student engagement theme includes 7 guiding principles, one of which was "arrangements exist for effective representation of the collective student voice at all organisational levels including decision making bodies".

The developing approach as to how this will be achieved proposes student representation at each of the following: the University Board, the Board of the Corporation, HE Board of Studies, HE Campus Committee and Programme Meetings, together with the arrangements for internal and external validation. The Board commended the approach and suggested that any approach ensure students are co-designing their learning and experience with the College.

The PSC explained the arrangements for FE student engagement and validation under the headings: Student Leadership, Formal Student Feedback, Student Assurance and Enhancement, Future Ready Hubs and Student Recognition and Celebration.

Finally, she requested that the Board consider how student voice can be heard at Board level. The HCG confirmed that the Board agreed at its February meeting there would be two Student Governors: one for HE and one for FE on the Board of the Corporation. The Student Governors would also alternate their attendance at the Curriculum Quality and Student Experience Committee. The HCG confirmed that the process of recruiting Student Governors would be getting underway in readiness for the new academic year. The Board requested Student Governors receive support and guidance from an established Independent Governor to enable them to mature into the role.

The Board asked about the Student Associations in the FE model, and it was confirmed that each campus would have an association. The Board stressed the importance of students appropriating the models and being able to work across the layers noting this is a good way to incentivise and challenge students to engage. As one way to receive student voice at Board and Committee level, it was suggested that the Board could take a Student Story as an item at a Board meeting as a catalyst to a rich conversation about the student experience.

The Board were clear they would like to be able to meet with the students at more informal events, outside of a classroom environment, and it was suggested that management might work with the students to understand how students would like to interact with Governors.

ACTION: The HCG offered to obtain a calendar of events happening at the College that would provide a more organic means by which the students and Governors can interact.

AGREED: note the report

Bd/22-23/78 Chair Updates

The following updates were provided by the Committee Chairs:

Audit and Risk Committee

The HCG read out the following report provided by Governor O’Leary, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee:

“In addition to risk management, the Audit Committee has continued to review and challenge the output of the Internal Audit function which has raised no specific concerns about control in any aspect of the college. Following a procurement exercise in January which the Committee was involved with, a new Internal Auditor has been appointed and this contract will begin in the new academic year. The Committee was impressed with the new provider’s tender submission and presentation and looks forward to a new approach to internal audit in 2023/24. In addition, the 2022/23 audit plan from the external auditor was reviewed and approved for recommendation to the Board in the last meeting in June. Another procurement exercise for external audit is underway, with interviews taking place on 19 June 2023”.

Finance Resources and Projects Committee

Governor Fox highlighted the following items as significant from the previous special meeting:

- Savings Programme,
- Revised Budget, and
- 2-Year Financial Forecast.

Curriculum Quality and Student Experience Committee

Governor Jones highlighted the following items as significant from the previous meeting:

- Curriculum Offer 2023/24,
- Achievement Rates,
- Progression and Destinations Data,
- Intervention and Support, and
- Subcontracting Performance, Policy and Framework.

English and Maths Scrutiny Committee

Governor Bradford highlighted the following items as significant from the previous meeting:

- Intended Impacts Outcomes,
- Intended Outcomes – Support to Outstanding,
- Discussions with the Curriculum Directors and Faculty Managers for Construction at Ashington and City Campus with respect to their performance, and

- High attendance was seen at exams, but classroom attendance is still an issue.

AGREED: to note the reports.

Bd/22-23/79 Lead Governor Updates

The following updates were provided by the Lead Governors:

Governor Houston, Lead Governor for Economy and Place (Hartlepool), reported that:

- She had attended HSFC for the launch of Nuclear New Spaces with the National College for Nuclear.
- She had met with the Chair of the Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (TVLEP) and from this positive contact has secured a visit of the TVLEP Chair to HSFC in August 2023.

Governor Hope, Lead Governor for Economy and Place (Northumberland), reported that:

- He is meeting with the Deputy Leader of Northumberland County Council to explore what opportunities there are for closer working to support manufacturing within the county. It is also hoped that a more cohesive strategy around the delivery of the Skills and Training agenda may be possible.

Governor Bradford, Lead Governor for Economy and Place (Sunderland) reported that:

- She is meeting with the PSC to go through the City of Sunderland's events calendar to see how the College can engage.
- There was a need to reflect on recent developments in the City with more in the pipeline, including the new film studios and the ambitions for the Riverside.
- It was noted that there is a Business Festival being held in October 2023 with a potential opportunity to promote HICSA.

Governor Doyle, Lead Governor for SEND, reported that:

- She visited the SEND provision at Kirkley Hall to meet with the Vice Principal, Northumberland College and SEND. She was able to spend time in class with staff and students and gain assurance about the level of support SEND students receive.
- She explored progress against the QIP priority of improving destinations for SEND learners and the forthcoming engagement of Project Search to facilitate supported internships.
- There was a need for the Board to maintain focus on the SEND provision at Ashington and Bede as well.

Governor Stuart, Lead Governor for Safeguarding and Prevent, reported:

- He is being updated on significant incidents,
- The most common concerns being recorded are in the categories of mental health and wellbeing, poverty and finances, and drugs.
- In a wider context, there is a need to reflect upon the foundational factors that allow students to progress and achieve ambitions.

Bd/22-23/80 Board Acknowledgements and Committee Recommendations

The Head of Corporate Governance advised that there had been no requests for any of the following items to be withdrawn for further discussion by the Board.

The Board ACKNOWLEDGED the use of Chair's action to approve a contract for Microsoft Licences in an amount requiring Board approval, but where it was impractical to call a meeting of the Board due to time constraints (Item 80/a).

The Board APPROVED the following on the recommendation of the named committee(s):

Audit and Risk Committee and Finance Resources and Projects Committee

Item 80/b - Financial Regulations

Finance Resources and Projects Committee

Item 80/c - High Value Subcontracts 2023/24

Item 80/f – Health and Safety Policy

Finance Resources and Projects Committee and Curriculum Quality and Student Experience Committee

Item 80/d – Supply Chain Subcontracting and Payment Policy 2023/24

Item 80/e – Subcontract Management Framework

Governance Committee

Item 80/g – Calendar of Meetings

Item 80/h – Programme of Business

Item 80/i – Terms of Reference: Education, Skills, and Training Reform Group

Item 80/j – New Ashington Campus: Transition Oversight

Bd/22-23/81 Thank you and Goodbye

The Chair noted the retirement of the following Governors from the Board of the Corporation:

- Kumareswaradas Ramanathas,
- David Towns,
- Louise Farthing,
- Phil Smith,
- Richard Redpath, and
- Ellis Hill.

He put on record, on behalf of the Board, his thanks for their service as Governors as organisations like the College could not function properly unless volunteers were prepared to give up their time to bring their talents, professional expertise, and different perspectives to the table. Governor Towns briefly responded noting the massive changes that have been brought about since the merger with Northumberland College and wishing the College good wishes in its future endeavours.

Bd/22-23/82 Draft Minutes of the following Committees

This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

Bd/22-23/83 Papers from Committees

This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

Bd/22-23/84 Any Other Business

There were no items tabled under Any Other Business.

Bd/22-23/85 Date, time, and venue of the next meeting

The arrangements for the next meeting are to be confirmed. However, a special meeting of the Board will take place on Tuesday 25 July 2023 at 5:30pm via Teams Conferencing.

Bd/22-23/86 Meeting Wrap-up

The Chair asked governors to provide feedback at anytime on how they feel meetings are working.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9:30pm.

These minutes were approved by the Board of the Corporation at its meeting on 3 October 2023 pursuant to minute Bd/23-24/08.