

**Approved Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Corporation held on  
Tuesday 3 October 2023 at 6:00pm in the Conference Room Washington Campus**

**Present:** Louise Bradford, Vice Chair-South (via Teams)  
Ian Brown  
Pamela Dawson (via Teams)  
Louise Doyle  
Julia Fox  
Jeff Hope (via Teams)  
Sue Houston  
Susan Pollard, Staff Governor  
Alison Shaw, Vice Chair-North (left for part of item 11)  
James Stuart, Chair (via Teams) (left for part of item 11)  
Ellen Thinnesen, Chief Executive

**In Attendance:** David Howells, Chief Financial Officer (left after item 24)  
Gary Potts, Principal, Northumberland College (left after item 24)  
Toni Rhodes, Principal, Sunderland College (left after item 24)  
Lee Lister, Vice Principal, Northumberland College and SEND (left after item 24)  
Vikkie Morton, Vice Principal, Student Services and Community Engagement (left after item 24)  
Iain Nixon, Vice Principal, Partnerships and Commercial (left after item 24)  
Judith Quinn, Vice Principal, Curriculum Enhancement, and Innovation (left after item 24)  
Naomi Robson, Vice Principal, Resources (left after item 24)  
Christine Stretesky, Head of Corporate Governance and Policy  
Donna Swan, Governance Officer

*The Vice Chair -North chaired the meeting as, although the Chair of the Corporation was present, he was not physically in the room.*

**Bd/23-24/07 Apologies and consent for absence and declarations of interest**

There were apologies for absence, for which consent was granted, from Governor Jones and Governor O'Leary.

The Board received the Attendance Report. There were no declarations of interest.

**Bd/23-24/08 Minutes of previous meeting held on 4 July 2023 and Matters Arising**

The Board agreed the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting held on 4 July 2023.

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

The Board received the Action Log; no questions were raised.

**Bd/23-24/09 Confidential minutes of special meeting held on 25 July 2023 and Matters Arising**

*This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.*

**Bd/23-24/10 Minutes of special meeting held on 6 September 2023 and Matters Arising**

The Board agreed the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting held on 6 September 2023.

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

**Bd/23-24/11 Reappointment of the Chair of the Corporation and the Vice Chair-North**

The Head of Corporate Governance and Policy (HCGP) introduced the motions under consideration, namely the proposed reappointments of the Chair of the Corporation and the Vice Chair-North on the terms set out more fully within the report.

Reappointment of the Chair of the Corporation

*The Chair of the Corporation left the meeting to allow a vote to be taken.*

The motion being put, the Board voted unanimously in favour of the Chair of the Corporation being reappointed for a period not exceeding 31 July 2025.

*Upon being invited to re-join the meeting, the Chair of the Corporation was apprised of the result.*

Reappointment of the Vice Chair -North

*The Vice-Chair-North resigned the chair of the meeting to the Vice Chair-South and left the meeting to allow the vote to be taken.*

The motion being put, the Board voted unanimously in favour of the Vice Chair -North being reappointed for the period ending on 29 December 2025.

*The Vice Chair-North then re-joined the meeting, was apprised of the result, and was invited to resume chairmanship of the meeting.*

ACTION: the HCGHP to confirm the reappointments formally in writing.

AGREED: the motions were carried unanimously.

**Bd/23-24/12 Chair of the Corporation's Report**

The Chair of the Corporation reported as follows:

- He has been involved in a series of conversations with Governors and thanked everyone for their participation. One of the themes that came out in conversation was the need for Governors to be supported by relevant and effective training, and he requested feedback on the training offer that had recently been circulated.
- He drew Governors' attention to the Governance Quality Improvement Plan 2023/24 (item 21) which has been updated with recommendations from the External Review.
- He referred to the strategic partnership the College has entered into with the Education Training Collective group of colleges and training providers, and the exciting opportunities that will flow from this.

- He noted to the newly published Code of Good Governance developed by the Association of Colleges and recommended that Governors familiarise themselves with this document as they will need to decide, in due course, whether to adopt its principles for the College.

AGREED: to note the report.

#### **Bd/23-24/13 CEO's Report**

*This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.*

#### **Bd/23-24/14 Finance Update**

The CFO presented the following:

- The Management Accounts for August 2023, and
- The Savings Programme: Building Liquidity.

The Board drew the CFO's attention to a discrepancy in the number of cash days within the Management Accounts (17 on page 50 and 19 on page 51 of the pack). The CFO advised that, whilst he did not have the figure to hand, it was more likely that the figure of "19" is the correct one. The aspiration is to get to 20 days as a minimum as this translates to "Good".

The Board noted that there was considerable assurance that progress was being made but was clear that improving liquidity was not an easy process.

AGREED: to note the Management Accounts and progress against the Savings Programme.

#### **Bd/23-24/15 Meeting Local Needs: Final LSIP and Next Steps**

*This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.*

*(The Board adjourned for a 10-minute comfort break at 7:30pm.)*

#### **Bd/23-24/16 Safeguarding and PREVENT Monitoring Annual Report 2022-23 and Action Plan**

The Vice Principal, Student Services and Community Engagement (VPSSCE) delivered the Safeguarding and PREVENT Monitoring Annual Report and Action Plan highlighting:

- In 2022/23, a total of 1322 safeguarding concerns were raised across the College group, an increase of 193 over the previous year.
- The category with the greatest increase in referrals was "relationships and friendships" with 216 concerns compared with 105 in the previous year. Concerns continue to be raised about the forming and breakdown of relationships post-pandemic with high numbers of concerns about communication within group chats on social media. This is also reflected in the increase in reporting of Child-on-Child abuse. The team has worked proactively throughout the year via targeted intervention, when necessary, and Induction and SSS plans for 2023/24 have been reviewed to ensure that the College's expectation with respect to the Student Code of Conduct is clear and policies are implemented to support students.
- As seen nationally, reports of mental health and wellbeing concerns continue to increase and there has been a 41% increase in reports of concerns relating to suicidal thoughts/attempts and self-harm. The College has sought to ensure via staff training and partnership working that the best possible support is in place to support students.
- Whilst there has been an increase in referrals relating to offensive weapons, these numbers are low. Though there has been an increase in extremism/radicalisation from 3 last year to 11 this year, only two have been referred to Channel both with no further action.

The Board commended the team for doing everything possible to support students with their mental health and wellbeing. Governors were interested in the kind of work being undertaken in conjunction with the student body. The VPSSCE advised that the team engaged with the Campus Collectives enabling them to take control of the agenda and co-create events. The Board asked what support was available to students to help them developing psychological resilience and mental strength to be able to deal with conflict and the breakdown of relationships. The VPSSCE described the work undertaken with students, as part of induction, to develop better communication skills to assist in managing relationships but acknowledged that more support needs to be available.

The Board was concerned that concerns about relationships and friendships could escalate to child-on-child abuse. The VPSSCE agreed that this can occur when the relationship breaks down completely despite intervention.

The Chair of the Corporation, in his capacity as Designated Governor for Safeguarding, commented on the Report as follows:

- The Board could take assurance that the College is not an outlier in terms of the numbers of concerns raised in each of the categories.
- The landscape chart on page 21 of the Report also provided a level of assurance, which shows a three-year trend of reduction in the number of red and amber cases, indicating the positive impact college's early intervention and contextualise safeguarding.
- Section 7 sets the safeguarding risks within the context of the local communities the College serves.
- The report highlights the context within which young people are susceptible to being radicalised and the work the College is doing around this.
- The Action Plan provides a high level of confidence that safeguarding and PREVENT continue to be well managed.

AGREED: note receipt of the Safeguarding Monitoring Annual Report 2022-23 and the PREVENT Risk Assessment and Action Plan.

### **Bd/23-24/17 Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy**

The VPSSCE presented the updated policy (amendments denoted by yellow text throughout) highlighting the following:

- Changes to the policy are in response to and in line with changes included within Keeping Children Safe in Education – September 2023.
- Governors must be aware of the following key personnel:
  - that the Strategic Designated Safeguarding Lead for the College is the VPSSCE,
  - the Deputy Strategic Designated Lead is the Director of Student Services, and
  - the Designated Governor for Safeguarding is the Chair of the Corporation, James Stuart.

AGREED: to approve the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy for 2023-24.

### **Bd/23-24/18 New Strategic Partnership: University of Hull**

*This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.*

### **Bd/23-24/19 Preliminary Enrolment Report**

*This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.*

## **Bd/23-24/20 Strategic Sustainability**

The CE delivered a presentation on Strategic Sustainability in which she briefly reminded Governors of the UN 17 Sustainability Goals and spoke to the soft approach the College was developing around these.

The timeline for the work was described as follows:

- Getting started (2022-23)
- Making progress (2022/23) – Mapping and analysis; visibility and profile
- Mainstream activity (2023/24) – Engagement and ownership; collaborations and partnerships
- Strategic integration (2024/25) – Monitoring and reporting.

The CE stated that the College would be mapping progress against the journey undertaken by Liverpool University and would be re-assessing by repetitive mapping throughout the exercise. To date the project has been led by the College's corporate leadership but in the future leadership will pass to the staff and students.

The CE then played the video that has been produced to provide an overview of the College's starting point and which will be used to launch the project as part of the Association of Colleges' Colleges' Week event.

The CE then invited the Board to anchor a sustainability goal that it will work on following on from the mapping exercise undertaken by the HCGP in collaboration with Governor Brown.

The Chair of the Corporation opened the discussion by discussing initiatives Governors could take in their own professional lives to be more sustainable. He then suggested that the goal of "No poverty" had to be a strong contender for the Board to focus on given the levels of poverty within the local communities the College serves. The Board agreed, noting the connection between the reduction of poverty, quality education, good health and wellbeing and reduced inequalities.

**ACTION:** the Governance Committee to discuss a Board-level Strategic Sustainability Goal to focus on and report to the Board at its March meeting.

**AGREED:** to note the presentation.

## **Bd/23-24/21 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 the Chair's authority to approve a contract for energy pursuant to Section 21 of Standing Orders (Item 21a).

The Board **APPROVED** the following on the recommendation of the named committee(s) after thorough scrutiny and comment:

### Governance Committee

- Item 21b – approve re-appointment of Susan Pollard as Staff Governor for a term of two years,
- Item 21c – approve Governance Committee's terms of reference, and

- Item 21d – approve the Governance Quality Improvement Plan 2023/24 on the terms set out within the report.

#### Audit and Risk Committee

- Item 21e – approve the Audit and Risk Committee’s terms of reference.

#### **Bd/23-24/22 Draft Minutes of the following Committees**

*This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.*

#### **Bd/23-24/23 Papers from Committees**

*This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.*

#### **Bd/23-24/24 Governance Sustainability Work**

AGREED: The Board noted the information contained in the report for use in reviewing the Governance Quality Improvement Plan 2023-24 and the work the College undertakes relating to the United Nations Sustainability Development Goals.

#### **Bd/23-24/25 Any Other Business**

*The CE advised that she had a confidential item of Any Other Business she would like to raise in the absence of members of the executive leadership team. Accordingly, those members of the executive leadership team in attendance left the meeting.*

*This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.*

There were no further items tabled under Any Other Business.

#### **Bd/23-24/26 Date, time, and venue of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Board of Corporation will take place as follows:

- Tuesday 19 December 2023 at 6.00pm in the Boardroom of City Campus Sunderland

#### **Bd/23-24/27 Meeting Wrap-up**

The Vice Chair, North asked governors to provide feedback at any time on how they feel meetings are working.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.35pm.

These minutes were approved by the Board of the Corporation at its meeting on 19 December 2023 pursuant to item Bd/23-24/36.