

**Approved Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Corporation  
held on Tuesday 14 May 2024 at 6:00pm  
at City Hall, Sunderland and via Teams Conferencing**

**Present:** Louise Bradford, Vice Chair -South  
Ian Brown  
Pamela Dawson  
Louise Doyle (via Teams) (left during item 91)  
Julia Fox  
Sue Houston  
Chris Jones  
Susan Pollard  
Alison Shaw, Vice Chair –North (via Teams) (left during item 91)  
James Stuart, Chair

**In Attendance:** David Allred, Senior Development Manager, Sunderland City Council (for item 80)  
David Howells, Chief Financial Officer  
Toni Rhodes, Deputy Chief Executive  
Judith Quinn, Vice Principal Curriculum, Enhancement, and Innovation  
Lee Lister, Campus Principal Northumberland College (Kirkley) (via Teams)  
Vikkie Morton, Vice Principal Student Services and Community  
Iain Nixon, Vice Principal Partnerships and Commercial  
Naomi Robson, Vice Principal Resources  
Simon Muschamp, Faculty Director, Construction (for item 80)  
Michael Dodds, Curriculum Manager, Construction and Building Services  
Sunderland College (for item 80)  
Christine Stretesky, Head of Corporate Governance and Policy  
Donna Swan, Governance Officer

**Bd/23-24/79 Apologies and consent for absence and declarations of interest**

There were apologies for absence from Governors Hope, Laing, O’Leary, Sterling and Thinnesen. It was noted Student Governor Laing was taking time to prepare for exams and CE Thinnesen was in London, due to be at a meeting at No 10 Downing Street the following morning.

The Attendance Report was received and noted. There were no declarations of interest at this stage. However, Governors Doyle and Shaw identified potential conflicts of interest and withdrew from the meeting prior to item 91 - Any Other Business.

**Bd/23-24/80 Housing Innovation and Construction Skills Academy (HICSA)**

The Chair welcomed Mr Allred and invited him to deliver his presentation.

Mr Allred presented an overview of the development planned for the City including projects at the Vaux site, Sheepfolds site and the Riverside Park. He continued with a detailed update on the HICSA development – noting the governor visit to the site prior to the meeting -highlighting the following:

- its place within the overall scheme and progress on site, and
- Risk management arrangements and the risks being managed by Sunderland City Council and its consultants including interface with planning and network rail.

Mr Allred advised that the build is currently 2.6 weeks behind schedule, but plans are in place to mitigate the risk around this and was confident that this time would be made up.

The Board asked about the significant risks currently being managed. Mr Allred confirmed his view that rising cost of materials made managing development budgets very difficult and was probably the greatest risk to any development being brought forward at this time. He advised his team were working closely with Brims to mitigate risk around this. He continued that another major risk, the fabrication and erection of the frame for the HICSA addition, will soon be resolved and the building will soon be wind and watertight. To date the build has been fortunate with the weather and there have been no major delays. (Action: HCG to organise)

The Board asked for information about the connections between the various developments and the HICSA site, in particular the isolation of the build. Mr Allred stated that HICSA would not be isolated for long with the new Wear Footbridge and New Way of Life providing a clear link through the city centre from the College's City Campus to HICSA. There will be new residential development to the south and a variety of businesses are being attracted to the area. The St Peter's Metro Station will serve the new developments.

The Vice Principal, Student Services and Community (VPSS) shared the intention that the students will be involved in the move to HICSA to ensure the environment is student friendly. Conversations are starting with the businesses in the Sheepfolds area about opportunities for work experience/employment and schools' engagement work will be undertaken. An example was given sharing Brims has accepted T Level student placements.

The Board considered that good transport links were important to the success of HICSA and recommended that an assessment of the means of travel to the area be undertaken which Mr Allred undertook to discuss with traffic colleagues to ensure that the approach to transport planning is joined up. Finally, Mr Allred offered to provide further updates to the Board as significant milestones are achieved.

The Chair thanked Mr Allred for his presentation and Mr Allred left the meeting. The Chair introduced Simon Muschamp Faculty Director, Construction (FD) and Michael Dodds Curriculum Manager, Construction and Building Services Sunderland (CM) to the Board.

The Deputy Chief Executive (DCE) explained that, to date, the College has been working with the Development Team at Sunderland City Council to implement the high-level project plan, however, the next stage is to work on an operational plan to manage the move of Construction Services from City Campus to HICSA, and the consequential service moves arising from this. The operational plan will be a detailed plan and will be in place for May 2025 when the building will be handed over to the

College. The plan will then be shared with the Curriculum Area, IT and so on in June and there will then be time to ensure the building is properly kitted out for opening to students in September 2025. It was noted the building will come with a basic fit out, but there may be gaps that will need to be addressed.

The Board asked how the students will be involved in this process. The DCE advised students will be consulted during May and June and there will be a month when they will be able to visit the building. The Board supported this approach, commenting this would be a great opportunity to do a good job working in partnership with the students.

The Board then asked how confident the Executive team were that the opportunity presented by having such a lovely building will result in real innovation in construction skills. The DCE responded by referring to the work already underway to garner ideas from employers in the construction industry.

The Board counselled against allowing the design of the learning spaces to be compromised in the final stages of the build through any desire on the part of the project manager to complete on time; the College's ambition is to be the number one college of choice for construction. There was universal agreement that that should not be allowed to happen.

AGREED: to note the information.

#### **Bd/23-24/81 Minutes of previous meeting held on 19 March 2024 and Matters Arising**

The Board agreed the minutes presented as an accurate record of the meeting held on 19 March 2024.

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

#### **Bd/23-24/82 Accountability Agreement (and Meeting Local Needs Statement) Approval**

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

#### **Bd/23-24/83 Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Annual Report**

The VPSS presented the EDI Annual Report for 2022/23 highlighting the following:

- The EDI Annual Report tracks the work of the College in meeting its public sector duties,
- The College's approach to EDI and the impact of this work, including examples of events and activities throughout the year,
- The data supporting the College's performance on achievement gaps for students and pay information for staff,
- The proposed Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) priorities for 2023-2027 to support the achievement of the DEIB Framework as follows:
  - Diversifying the Workforce,
  - Principles of pedagogy – meeting diverse student need,
  - Addressing socio-economic deprivation,
  - Fostering a culture of belonging, and

- Report/Support: bullying and harassment.

The Board were delighted with the report stating that it was reflective of the population that the College serves, with a style that provided balance between data and case studies really bringing what they know about the College to life. Governor Doyle, Lead Governor for SEND provision, commented that it was great to see that there was congruence between the reports coming to the Board and the reality on the ground. She related that she has now completed her visits to all three campuses with SEND students and been told by the students themselves how much they appreciate the experience they are receiving and how different that experience is to that they have received in other educational environments.

The Chair asked how the Board can monitor progress toward the aims and objectives between Annual Reports and the VPSS confirmed the other sources of information coming to the Board that relate to this work together with the work of committees in tracking and monitoring progress and suggested a mid-year update. The Board suggested a deeper understanding of the impact of what is being done on students would be helpful.

AGREED: to approve 1.) the proposed EDI objectives for the period 2023/27 and 2.) the EDI Annual Report for 2022/23 and authorise its publication on the College's website.

#### **Bd/23-24/84 Committee Recommendations and Acknowledgements**

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

The Board APPROVED the following policy on the recommendation of the Curriculum Quality and Student Experience Committee:

- Item 84a – Student Positive Behaviour Policy.

#### **Bd/23-24/85 Management Accounts (March)**

The CFO presented the Management Accounts which provide the Group Operating Position, Balance Sheet, and Cash Flow for the eight months to 31 March 2024.

The key highlights include:

- The Group is still on track to achieve a surplus of £6m and had been expected to have cash of £3m but for the unfunded growth in 16-18 learners,
- The final number of 16-18 learners recruited this year is 4700, and this will be the number that will be funded next year,
- The ESFA have increased the allocation in-year to fund 4,541 learners,
- Pay costs rose to support the unfunded growth and opportunities for savings have not been able to be realised,
- Adult income is being monitored closely with plans in place to get to target,
- Apprenticeship income is performing strongly,
- The forecast for Advanced Learner Loans income has been revised and delivery plans developed to reach the revised forecast,
- HE income forecast has also been revised but overall, the impact is not material, and

- The liquidity plan being pursued is starting to have an impact.

The Board asked for a more detailed update on the recruitment issue and efficiency savings. The CFO responded the College had not been able to make planned savings of £1.5m because of the growth. Fortunately, the College had a strong operating position to start with, so the net impact has been minimal.

The Board asked when it might see a revised forecast. The CFO stated this would be done soon and the issues stem from the assumptions around the Local Government Pension Scheme.

The Board asked about Subcontracting and the risk of clawback and received assurance that all extra cost have been budgeted and planned for. The Board asked what percentage of the College's Adult Skills delivery is subcontracted; the CFO advised that 22%, worth around £1.3m. The plan is that this will reduce to 20%.

AGREED: to note the Management Accounts for the period ending 31 March 2024.

#### **Bd/23-24/86 Student Engagement**

The VPSS presented the Higher Education and Further Education Student Engagement Frameworks which set out the College's approach to working with students to shape the student experience using the ethos of "Students as Partners". These had been previously discussed by the Board at the April Strategy Afternoon and feedback from Governors has been incorporated into the Frameworks.

The VPSS highlighted that the Frameworks introduce "Meet College Leaders" meetings to ensure that College leaders are engaging with student/course representatives at campus level. Outputs from these meetings will be addressed via action plans. Governors will also be involved in these meetings and in monitoring the action plans.

The Board complimented the VPSS on the Frameworks describing them as impressive and comprehensive. The Board asked how, as the College Group continues to grow, it could be assured that every student knows how to make their voices heard and feels confident that their views make a difference. The VPSS responded that the new platform Student Life will enable students to communicate with staff directly.

There was then a discussion as to the future work that needed to be done for the HE and FE Frameworks to evolve into a single Framework.

In response to a question, the Head of Corporate Governance and Policy (HCG) explained the new process for appointing the HE and FE Student Governors to the Board and to the Curriculum Quality and Student Experience Committee which has now received the support of the Student Collectives, namely that, in place of an election, Student Governors will be appointed following an interview process. The Board commented upon the importance of ensuring that smaller cohorts of students, such as Apprentices, have the opportunity of being represented in student life.

AGREED: to approve 1.) the HE Student Engagement Plan and 2.) the FE Student Engagement Plan.

#### **Bd/23-24/87 Chair's Report**

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

**Bd/23-24/88 Committee Chairs' Reports**

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

**Bd/23-24/89 Draft Minutes of the following Committees**

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

**Bd/23-24/90 Papers from Committees**

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

**Bd/23-24/91 Any Other Business**

The DCE provided the following information for information:

- the College has been informed by the Office for Students (OfS) that a B3 condition attached to its registration in 2019 has been lifted, as the College is now performing with respect to full time completion rates above the threshold. The HCG advised that the Board has the right to make representations in response to the decision, so long as the representations are received by 11 June 2024. However, in the circumstances, the Board may choose to accept the decision without making any representations. The Board was pleased that the condition has now been lifted as this represents another positive milestone in its HE journey.  
ACTION: the HCG to circulate the letter to the Board.  
  
AGREED: to accept the decision without making representations.
- The College has received College of Sanctuary status and is the only college in the North East to have achieved this.

*Governor Fox alerted the Chair to a matter of confidential business she wished to raise a question about. In response to the question, Governors Doyle and Shaw registered potential conflicts of interest and withdrew from the meeting.*

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

There was no further business.

**Bd/23-24/92 Date, time, and venue of the next meeting**

The Board noted the arrangements for the next meeting as follows:

- Tuesday 2 July 2024 at 6:00pm in the Main Hall at Kirkley Hall Campus.

**Bd/23-24/93 Meeting Wrap-up**

The Chair asked members to reflect on the meeting and provide any feedback to him and/or the HCG.

The meeting closed at 8:05pm.

**These minutes were approved by the Board of the Corporation at its meeting on 02 July 2024 pursuant to minute Bd/23-24/95.**