

**Approved Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Corporation held on Tuesday 17 December 2024  
at 6:00pm in the Innovation Space, Bede Campus, and via Teams Conferencing**

**Present:** Louise Bradford, Vice Chair -South  
Ian Brown  
Katie Carnegie, HE Student Governor  
Pamela Dawson  
Louise Doyle  
Julia Fox  
Abigail Wampamba Nassuna, FE Student Governor (from item 17)  
Susan Pollard, Staff Governor  
Ian Ritchey  
Alison Shaw, Vice Chair –North  
Darren Sterling (*via Teams*)  
James Stuart, Chair  
Ellen Thinnesen, Chief Executive

**In Attendance:** David Howells, Chief Financial Officer  
Toni Rhodes, Deputy Chief Executive  
Sonya Anderson, Campus Principal Sunderland College (City)  
Mike Chapman, Campus Principal Sunderland College (Bede)  
Lee Lister, Campus Principal Northumberland College (Kirkley)  
Vikkie Morton, Vice Principal Student Life and Stronger Communities  
Iain Nixon, Vice Principal Partnerships and Business Solutions  
Judith Quinn, Campus Principal Northumberland College (Ashington)  
Naomi Robson, Vice Principal Resources  
Jo Cooper, Associate Principal, Teaching Learning and Quality  
Christine Stretesky, Head of Corporate Governance and Policy  
Donna Swan, Governance Officer

The Chair welcomed the HE Student Governor, Katie Carnegie, and Independent Governor, Ian Ritchey, to their first meetings as governors.

**Bd/24-25/16 Apologies and consent for absence and declarations of interest**

There were apologies for absence from Governors Jones and O’Leary. Governor Choudhary did not attend due to a traffic accident impeding his ability to travel to campus.

There were no declarations of interest made.

The Attendance Report was received and noted.

**Bd/24-25/17 Minutes of previous meeting held on 1 October 2024 and Matters Arising**

The Board agreed the minutes and confidential minutes presented as an accurate record of the meeting held on 1 October 2024. The confidential minutes will be maintained separately.

The Action Log was reviewed and those items requiring scheduling noted. There were no matters arising.

#### **Bd/24-25/18 Ofsted Inspection: October 2024**

The Chief Executive (CE) referred to the Ofsted Inspection report which confirmed the outcomes as follows:

Overall Effectiveness: Outstanding

- The quality of education: Outstanding
- Behaviours and attitudes: Outstanding
- Personal development: Outstanding
- Leadership and management: Outstanding
- Education programmes for young people: Outstanding
- Adult learning programmes: Outstanding
- Apprenticeships: Outstanding
- Provision for learners with high needs: Outstanding
- Contribution to meeting skills needs: Strong

She advised that the Board would be receiving the following new/updated documents in the wake of the Ofsted report:

- the Self-Assessment Review and Quality Improvement Plan, and
- the Strategic Risk Register.

She reflected on the work done this past year to create the new college values, mission, and strategy. The CE acknowledged the pride amongst staff in the outcome and emphasised the dangers of receiving such a strong endorsement of the College's quality and the need to continue to work hard on sustaining/improving upon what we do. Accordingly, she identified the following pieces of work underway:

- Quality Review – focused review to target those areas not yet outstanding by the College's own standards,
- Launch of new Strategic Plan and Values (February 2025),
- People - looking at retention of key staff, preserving culture and momentum, leadership and development, growth of expertise, and leadership structure at more junior level,
- Recruitment – protection of market share from competition,
- Refresh of Board Business programme, and
- Refreshed Strategic Risk Register (February/March 2025).

The Chair thanked the CE for her overview of the College's current position post Ofsted inspection. He extended a vote of thanks to all staff at the College for their hard work in securing the "Outstanding" outcome but noted that this was only a stop on the line not the completion of the journey.

AGREED: to note the report.

**Bd/24-25/19 EPNE Self-Assessment Review (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)**

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

**Bd/24-25/20 Audited Annual Report and Financial Statements**

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

**Bd/24-25/21 Staff Pay Award**

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

**Bd/24-25/22 Acknowledgements and Committee Recommendations**

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 acknowledged receipt of the following:

- Item 22a – Governance Committee Annual Report 2023/24,
- Item 22b – Curriculum Quality and Student Experience 2023/24, and
- Item 22c – Finance Resources and Projects Annual Report 2023/24.

The Board APPROVED the following on the recommendation of the Governance Committee:

- Item 22d - Scheme of Delegation, and
- the appointment of Ian Ritchey (Independent Governor – 4 years) and Katie Carnegie (HE Student Governor).

**Bd/24-25/23 Student Achievement**

The DCE presented the headlines with respect to Student Achievement previously received and discussed at the Curriculum Quality and Student Experience Committee. The headlines demonstrate the College's consistently high performance with overall achievement for all ages at 90%, well above the National Rate (NR) of 84.2%.

She highlighted the following:

- Apprenticeship achievement at 73.7%, significantly above the NR of 57.8% and well above predicted achievement. The hard journey to get to this position was acknowledged and the Apprenticeship Team, led by the Vice Principal, Partnerships and Business Solutions, was congratulated.
- Currently, T Level results are not counted towards the College's Qualification Achievement Rates, however, although T Level performance is above the sector pass rates and high grades, retention remains a key area of focus.

The Board discussed the national conversation on education and skills reform acknowledging two White Papers (Skills England and Get Britain Working) and how these may shape curriculum in the future. It was agreed, while all members should have an understanding of the potential new reforms, the CQSE should have a focus on this for the remainder of the year. The Chair commented on the College's role in developing "global citizens" with the skills to meet local, regional, national, and international needs. ACTION: The Campus Principal, Northumberland College (Kirkley) to work with the Executive Leadership Team and Campus Principals to produce a Global Skills Progress Report to provide assurance to the Board about this work.

The Board then discussed the part the College plays/can play in supporting Care Experienced Learners and other disadvantaged learners in accessing opportunities via apprenticeships and so on. The Vice Principal, Student Life and Stronger Communities described the work undertaken by the College to support care experienced students and those with caring responsibilities. She noted the College's accreditation with NECCO which sets quality and standards for supporting care experienced students and it being up for renewal this year. The VP PBS noted the work being done by the College alongside Together for Children. Leadership was tasked by the Board to produce an analysis of apprenticeship take up and achievement by deprivation and provide information on the College activities regarding this. (ACTION)

AGREED: to note the report.

#### **Bd/24-15/24 Chair Update**

The Chair of the Corporation reported that he has been heavily involved in the following:

- the Ofsted Inspection of the College in October 2024, and
- working with the Chief Executive on the new Strategic Plan. This will be brought to the Board for discussion on Friday 14 February 2025.

AGREED: to note the report.

#### **Bd/24-25/25 Committee Chair Updates**

The Committee Chairs made the following reports to the Board:

##### Governor Dawson as Vice Chair – Curriculum Quality and Student Experience Committee

Governor Dawson, reported the Committee's focus in 2024/25 will be:

- monitoring/supporting the College in securing the improvement required by the QIP,
- *this text was deemed to be confidential with a separate minute being maintained, and*
- absorbing the excellent work of the English and Maths Scrutiny Committee.

##### Governor Fox – Finance Resources and Projects Committee

Governor Fox, Chair of the Finance Resources and Projects Committee, reported that at the last meeting, the Committee discussed:

- monitoring/supporting the College in the fitting out and move to the Housing Innovation Construction Skills Academy (currently three weeks behind scheduled handover), and
- Health and Safety and the need to look at introducing a H&S Lead Governor
- Staff salary sacrifice scheme (car leasing), and
- A contract for new Payroll/HR software.

AGREED: to note the reports.

#### **Bd/24-25/26 Draft Minutes of the Committees**

The draft minutes of the following committee meetings were received by the Board:

- Audit and Risk (26 September 2024),
- Governance and Search (30 September 2024),
- Finance Resources and Projects (17 October 2024),
- Audit and Risk (Special meeting on 7 November 2024),

- Curriculum Quality and Student Experience (14 November 2024),
- Finance Resources and Projects (28 November 2024), and
- Joint Audit and Risk and Finance Resources and Projects Committees (5 December 2024).

#### **Bd/24-25/27 Papers from Committees**

The following papers were received by the Board from the relevant committees:

- Health and Safety Annual Report (Finance Resources and Projects on 17 October 2024),
- Residential Accommodation Report, Behaviour for Success, and Journey to FDAP (Curriculum Quality and Student Experience on 14 November 2024), and
- Internal Audit Reviews on Residential Activities, Educational Progression, Work Experience, Procurement and Follow up (Audit and Risk on 26 September and 7 November 2024).

#### **Bd/24-25/28 Any Other Business**

*Two items of confidential business were introduced with separate minutes being maintained.*

#### **Bd/24-25/29 Date, time, and venue of the next meeting**

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

- Tuesday 18 March 2025 at 6:00pm in the Innovation Space at Bede Campus.

#### **Bd/24-25/30 Meeting Wrap-up**

The Chair asked members to reflect on the meeting and provide any feedback to the HCGP.

The meeting closed at 7:35pm.

**These minutes were approved by the Board of the Corporation at its meeting on 18 March 2025 pursuant to minute Bd/24-25/38.**