

**Approved minutes of the meeting of the Board of Corporation held on Tuesday 18 March 2025
at 6:00pm in the Conference Room Kirkley Hall Campus, and via Teams Conferencing**

- Present:**
- Louise Bradford, Vice Chair -South (via Teams)
 - Ian Brown
 - Katie Carnegie, HE Student Governor
 - Modaser Choudhary (left during item 40 returning during item 41)
 - Pamela Dawson
 - Louise Doyle
 - Julia Fox
 - Chris Jones
 - Abigail Wampamba Nassuna, FE Student Governor
 - Lyndsey O’Leary (via Teams)
 - Susan Pollard, Staff Governor
 - Ian Ritchey
 - Alison Shaw, Vice Chair –North
 - Darren Sterling (via teams)
 - James Stuart, Chair
 - Ellen Thinnesen, Chief Executive (via Teams)
- 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)
 - Emma Cottle, Vice Principal, Corporate Strategy and Engagement
 - Vikie 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, Corporate Services
 - Christine Stretesky, Head of Corporate Governance and Policy
 - Donna Swan, Governance Officer

The Chair’s opening remarks were deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

The Chair welcomed Governor Jones back from his extended overseas trip.

Bd/24-25/37 Apologies and consent for absence, attendance and declarations of interest

There were no apologies for absence. The Attendance Report was received and noted. There were no declarations of interest made.

Bd/24-25/38 Minutes of previous meeting held on 17 December 2024 and Matters Arising

The Board agreed the minutes and confidential minutes presented as an accurate record of the meeting held on 17 December 2024. *The CE highlighted some text within the minutes as being confidential and requested that this text be transferred to the confidential minutes to be maintained separately.*

The Action Log was reviewed and noted. There were no matters arising.

Bd/24-25/39 Minutes of special meeting held on 17 February 2025 and matters arising

This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

Bd/24-25/40 Strategic Plan Booklet

This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

Bd/24-25/41 Washington Campus - Plans

This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

Bd/24-25/42 Gender and Race Pay Gap Report

The Vice Principal, Corporate Services (VP-CS) introduced the Gender Pay Gap Report for 2024 and, for the first time, the Ethnicity Pay Gap Report for the same period. She highlighted the following from her report:

- The preparation and submission of the Gender Pay Gap Report to the Gender Pay Gap Service is an annual statutory requirement. The report will also be published on gov.uk and the College's website by 30 March 2025. The Ethnicity Pay Gap Data Report 2024 is not yet required to satisfy a statutory duty but is likely to be required from 2026 onwards.
- The Gender Pay Gap Report must provide data on six specific calculations with the methodology to be used being prescribed.

The VP-CS summarised the outcomes from the report as follows:

- The mean gender gap has decreased by 1%, from 7.9% last year to 6.9% this year. This equates to a variance in hourly rate of £1.21.
- The College still employs more females (63.6%) than males (36.3%) with 0.1% of staff identifying as non-binary.
- Clear evidence of female employees accounting for a disproportionately higher number of colleagues in lower and lower middle quartiles. As in previous years, more females also occupy senior roles than males.
- Applying the methodology, 7.3% of the College's workforce were not in scope due to receiving less than full pay in the snapshot window (maternity, sickness, new starters in month).
- In 2024, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) recorded the mean average pay gap as 13.8% for all employees and the median as 13.1%. In the tertiary education sector, the mean is 12.5% and the median is 17.2%. The College's mean (6.9%) and median (12.5%) are lower than these.

- Overall, the College is satisfied that the differences are not due to the underpayment of females in roles similar to male colleagues.

The Board referred to the 73% of female employees, the majority of whom work in the lower and lower middle quartiles and asked what is being done to address this. The VP-CS responded that it was a twofold effort, to encourage more men into roles traditionally taken by women and women into roles traditionally taken by men. The Board wondered whether there were any benchmarks or examples of best practice available from organisations/sectors that have set out to change an imbalance like this. The VP-CS advised she would be looking at what constitutes best practice in this area. It was noted that there were women in traditional male roles within the College (the example of female robotics lecturer at Ashington was mentioned) but there needed to be more to act as role models for female staff and students.

The CE referred to the opportunities afforded by the opening of the Housing Innovation and Construction Skills Academy and to what the Strategic Plan will mean for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion with respect to gender strategies, the engagement of difficult to reach people and communities, and challenging the status quo. The CE suggested the Curriculum, Quality and Student Experience Committee review women in construction and engineering and inclusion within those areas. (ACTION: Paper to CQSE)

Continuing the discussion on benchmarking, the Board suggested benchmarking against other organisations in the North East and not just nationally offering the ONS data could be used.

The Board, in thanking the team for delivering a pay gap report on ethnicity, agreed there was still work to do in terms of diversity and cited the data from the Ethnicity Pay Gap Report as follows:

- White employees – 77.2%
- Other ethnicities – 2.9% and
- Not specified – 19.9%.

The College had to work harder in this area to ensure the work force reflects our community and to have more staff declaring their ethnicity.

AGREED: to note the contents of 1) the Gender Pay Gap Report and 2) the Ethnicity Pay Gap Report and authorise the publication of the Gender Pay Gap Report no later than 30 March 2025.

Bd/24-25/43 DEIB Annual Report

The Vice Principal, Student Life and Stronger Communities (VP-SLSC) presented the annual Diversity Equity Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) Report for 2023/24 which showcases how the College meets its Public Sector Equality Duties. She highlighted:

- Sections 1 to 3 which provide an overview of the College's approach and the impact,
- Key successes and progress against objectives benchmarked against the United Nations Sustainability Goals in terms of achievement gaps for students and pay information for staff, and
- Section 4 outlines DEIB priorities for 2024-2027 as follows:
 - Diversifying the workforce,
 - Principles of Pedagogy – meeting diverse student need,
 - Addressing social-economic deprivation and fostering a culture of belonging.
 - Report/support – bullying and harassment.

The Board praised the Executive for the amount of work done to promote DEIB within the College as evidenced in the report. The Board asked whether there were any of the Key Performance Indicators where not as much progress has been made; the VP-SLSC responded she would like to have seen further progression on a report and supporting tool for bullying and harassment.

The Chair commended the report for its clear format and presentation noting that harmonisation of language will be needed later on. The Board suggested that more could be done to showcase this work and the VP-SLSC was asked to think about how this can be done.

AGREED: to approve the DEIB objectives for 2024-2027 and approve the DEIB Report for publication on the College's website.

Bd/24-25/44 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 RECEIVED the following Annual Reports:

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

The Board acknowledged acceptance of the following:

- Item 44/7 – Estates Framework.

Bd/24-25/45 Finance Update

This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

Bd/24-15/46 Global Skills

This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

Bd/24-25/47 Social Cohesion Framework – Bede Campus

This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

Bd/24-25/48 Chair Update

The Chair reported that the focus of his work recently had been around the following:

- Strategic Plan,
- Governance, and
- Self-assessment Review

AGREED: to note the report.

Bd/24-25/49 Committee Chair Updates

ACTION: The Chair requested that Committee Chairs provide to the HCGP a list, in the form of bullet points, of issues they would like to share with the Board for information. The HCGP will then circulate the list to Board members.

Governor Dawson, Vice Chair of the Curriculum Quality and Student Experience Committee, indicated that she had a confidential matter she wanted to raise, the minute being maintained separately.

Bd/24-25/50 Lead Governor Updates

ACTION: The Chair requested that Lead Governors provide to the HCGP a list, in the form of bullet points, of issues they would like to share with the Board for information. The HCGP will then circulate the list to Board members.

Bd/24-25/51 Draft Minutes of the Committees

This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

Bd/24-25/52 Papers from Committees

This item was deemed confidential with minutes maintained separately.

Bd/24-25/53 Any Other Business

There was no further business.

Bd/24-25/54 Date, time, and venue of the next meeting

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

- Tuesday 13 May 2025 at 6:00pm at Kirkley Hall Campus.

Bd/24-25/55 Meeting Wrap-up

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

The meeting closed at 8:20pm.

These minutes were approved by the Board of the Corporation at its meeting on 13 May 2025 pursuant to minute Bd/24-25/57.