GATESHEAD
COLLEGE
EDUCATION
WITH
EMPLOYMENT
EDGE

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS – Main Minutes

Wednesday 25th October – 4pm to 6pm

Governors	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
Michael Wood-Williams	Chair / Independent	MWW	X	
David Alexander	Principal / CEO	DA	X	
Martin Hedley	Vice Chair / Independent	MH	X	
Aneela Ali	Vice Chair / Independent	AA	X	
David Brind	Independent	DB	X^	
Lisa Crichton-Jones	Independent	LCJ	X	
Carol Davenport	Independent	CD	X	
Martin Gannon	Independent	MG		X
Darren Curry	Independent	DCu	X	
Alan Potter	Independent	AP	X	
Claire-Jane Rewcastle	Independent	CJR	X*	
Mike Welsh	Independent	MW	X	
Richard Wensley	Staff Governor (Teaching)	RW	X	
Sharon Kinleyside	Staff Governor (Support)	SK	X	
Will Berridge	Student Governor (16-18) *Appointed at this meeting*	WB	X	
Morgan Penaluna	Student Governor (19+) *Appointed at this meeting*	MP	X	
Clerk				
Nicola Taylor	Director of Governance & Compliance	NT	X	
Attendees				
Chris Toon	Deputy Principal: Curriculum and Quality	CT	X	
Jeremy Cook	Deputy Principal: Finance and Resources	JC	X	
Ivan Jepson	Director of Business Development and Innovation	IJ	X	
Nadine Hudspeth	Director of Brand and Learner Experience	NH	X	
Vicki Casey	Director of People & OD	VC	X	
Deni Chambers	Director of Curriculum & Skills	DCh	X	
Shirley Collier	External Governance Reviewer (AoC)	SC	X	

*Attended via Teams / ^Attended for part of the meeting.

3324   **1. Chair's welcome, apologies, conflicts of interest**

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees. The Chair made specific welcome to SC who was in attendance as an observer as part of the ongoing External Governance Review. Introductions took place.

Apologies had been received from MG. **The Board <u>agreed</u> that the meeting was quorate.**

There were no conflicts of interests noted. Members were reminded to declare any conflicts which arose during the meeting.

    A) Appointment of Student Governors

    NT presented the report and noted that both WB and MP were elected by their peers following a student election.

    The Board <u>approved</u> the appointment of MP as the Student Governor (19+) for the length of their studies (31 July 2024).

    The Board <u>approved</u> the appointment of WB as the Student Governor 16-18 for the length of their studies (31 July 2024).

The Student Governors were appointed.

3325   **2. Minutes of Last meetings**

    A) The Board **<u>reviewed</u>** the main minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2023 and **<u>agreed</u>** that they were a true and accurate record of the meeting.

    B) The Board **<u>reviewed</u>** the confidential minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2023 and **<u>agreed</u>** that they were a true and accurate record of the meeting.

The minutes were approved.

3326   **3. Matters arising and Action Log**

The action log was presented, noting that three actions remained ongoing and would be completed in due course. The Chair reiterated that each Board member was encouraged to attend at least one Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee across the academic year (which was captured as an ongoing action).

The report was noted.

3327   **4. Chair's Report**

The Chair provided a verbal update, noting that the Board Self-Assessment for 2022/2023 was underway and the one to one conversations with governors had been completed. A summary of discussions had been created which highlighted key themes. Suggested actions to address the highlighted themes would initially be presented to the Governance Committee for consideration, ahead of being presented to the Board in December 2023.

The update was noted.

3328 **5. Principal's Report**

A) **Main Report**

DA presented the report and highlighted the following:

- At the Board Strategy Day, there would be presentations on North East Devolution by both Dr Henry Kippin (Chief Executive, North of Tyne Combined Authority, and Interim Chief Executive, North East Mayoral Combined Authority) and Councillor Martin Gannon (Leader, Gateshead Council and Gateshead College Board Member).

- The College had received correspondence from Kirsty Evans, Director of Regions and Providers, Skills Group at the Department for Education, regarding the recent round of annual strategic conversations with colleges, which included a summary of all main areas of discussion. The DfE correspondence recognised there was a need to provide increased support for a growing number of learners with complex mental health and wellbeing support needs, however the level of funding for this remained at a level which does not reflect demand. The College were continuing to raise the need for increased levels of funding to support mental health and wellbeing with the AoC.

- High level summary results from the June 2023 Staff Survey were provided. 67% of staff completed the survey, a significant increase on the 54% completion rate achieved in 2022. The overall survey average of 7.4 was considered positive, with this being only a very slight movement of -0.1 on the 2022 figure. It was noted that Hive (survey partner) allowed benchmarking with regional organisations outside of the FE sector which was helpful. A more detailed consideration of the survey outcomes would take place at the People Committee meeting in December 2023.

- The 2023-24 College budget, approved by the Board on 5 July 2023, contained an assumption relating to the amount available to fund a pay offer to staff, based on levels on income confirmed at that time. Additional funding had been provided to the College with a letter from the Secretary of State empathising that this should be used to support recruitment and retention of staff. This funding was made through the 16-18 allocation, and therefore did not cover all of the College's provision. This was having a differing impact on colleges across the sector. This funding was confirmed for 2023/2024 and 2024/2025 only. AoC correspondence had suggested a 6.5% pay award across the sector, however this was a significant ask of the College and this was being reflected in terms of both consolidated and non-consolidated elements. A Trade Union meeting was due to take place where the College would discuss a potential offer.

  It was noted that this had been discussed at the Finance & General Purposes Committee with the note of caution around the potential impact of consolidated payments when the funding was only guaranteed for 2 years.

- *Covered under a confidential minutes*

- The College had celebrated a number of successes since the last report, including Freshers' Week and a Pride March. The College were also being gifted Sky's Jill Scott statue given she is an alumni of the College.

The Board **recognised** these success stories.

The report was noted.

B) **High Level Summary Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the Board**

DA presented the report and highlighted that the document provided the final output with effect from July 2023. Targets for 2023/2024 had been included.

Three areas were RAG rated as amber; two relating to matters which were being closely monitored at the Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee (learner attendance and retention) and one relating to a matter which was being closely monitored by the Governance Committee (skills coverage at Committee level). It was advised that although the attendance and retention KPIs had not been achieved the college continued to be above national averages.

DA confirmed that further detail relating to Board KPIs, and progress would be provided at the Autumn Board Strategy Day, however that Board KPIs would continue to be reviewed during 2023/2024, in line with ongoing work being undertaken to further develop the planning and performance reporting framework across the College.

The Board **queried** the stretching targets relating to learner attendance and retention – it was agreed that these targets were challenging and continued to be so going into 2023/2024, however the College were continuing their work in these areas, and this was closely monitored at the Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee who provided challenge and support. It was noted that different attendance measures were used across the FE sector and therefore caution was noted relating to comparisons, however attendance was a sector wide concern. It was hoped that the investment within mental health and wellbeing would help improve attendance and retention going forward.

The report was noted.

3329   **6. Quality Strategy**

Recommended by the Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee in October 2023.

CT presented the report and highlighted that many colleges in the sector had a combined Curriculum & Quality Strategy. However, this approach can mean that such an approach would not cover curriculum in detail, and therefore the College had created two separate strategies which linked closely together.

CT confirmed that the Strategy covered the current quality processes in place, but would look to build upon these further going forward.

The Board approved the Quality Strategy.

The strategy was approved.

One of the Student Governors **suggested** the following:

- Ongoing bus strikes and the possibility of implementing an alternative bus on a general route to assist students in attending during the period of industrial action by Go North East.

  - It was confirmed that the College were monitoring attendance closely following the Go North East bus strikes, and that the Team Valley campus had been the most impacted due to its location. A meeting was due to take place on the potential continuation of bus strikes and it was confirmed that DCh would include WB within future conversations around alternative solutions.

    Action: DCh to consider alternative bus arrangements as part of bus strike planning.

    The Board noted the potential impact on EDI measures relating to accessibility of being able to attend the College during the bus strikes.

3330   **7. Curriculum Strategy**

Recommended by the Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee in October 2023.

DC presented the report and highlighted that the Curriculum Strategy built on the College's ethos of "Employment Edge" relating to readiness for work, the adaptability of the curriculum and links with the Duty to Review and Accountability Statement.

DC reiterated that both the Quality Strategy and Curriculum Strategy aligned with the strategic objectives of the overall College Strategy.

The Board discussed the following:

- The linkage between the strategies, and the importance of this across all College strategies.

- The positive inclusion of what the College were not going to do which provided greater clarity and focus.

The Board approved the Curriculum Strategy.

The strategy was approved.

3331 **8. Digital Strategy**

Recommended by the Finance & General Purposes Committee in September 2023.

CT presented the report and highlighted that the strategy had been supported by external consultants which included work around a journey map of stakeholders. The three overarching considerations in delivering and implementing the strategy were; culture, collaboration and user experience. CT noted that the strategy had been driven by students and that the Finance & General Purposes Committee, along with DCu had provided helpful feedback during the creation of the strategy.

CT confirmed that a Digital Steering Group would be created, including governor representation, who would feed into the Finance & General Purposes Committee on the progress and implementation of the strategy. This Steering Group would now be implemented.

Action: CT to set up the Digital Steering Group.

The Chair highlighted that Digital had been a key theme as part of the Board Self-Assessment conversations.

The Chair of the F&GP Committee (MH) noted that there was a tendency to consider Digital as a part of IT, but the Board had agreed that Digital impacted everything within the College which would include the consideration of business processes and challenge alternative ways of working.

The Board discussed the following:

- The notion of having Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a separate strand within the strategy – it was suggested that the strategy covered changing technology rather that specific elements, due to the pace of change, however it was confirmed that the College had a Staff Group who were looking at the utilisation of AI.

- The associated cost, including the environmental cost, of emerging technologies and ensuring a linkage with the Sustainability Strategy.

- The associated cyber risks relating to new technology.

The Board approved the Digital Strategy.

The strategy was approved.

3332 **9. Duty to Review**

Recommended by the Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee in October 2023.

CT presented the report and highlighted that:

- The report had been created based on the findings of the strategic evaluation of demand and supply research, alongside the Ofsted feedback, Community Conversations outcomes, the Accountability Statement and the LSIPs report.

- A mapping exercise of the curriculum offer had been undertaken against those areas highlighted as part of the North East and North of Tyne LSIP reports, with the significant majority of provision already aligning. All HE provision aligned to the priority areas. This had been picked up as part of the curriculum and business planning process, and curriculum areas were continuing to use Local Market Intelligence within their planning.

- The outcomes linked to those in the Accountability Statement.

The Chair of the Curriculum & Quality Standards (MW) noted that this document had been considered by the Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee through its evolution. The Committee were cognisant that not all curriculum would align to the LSIP areas however would still benefit the region and the College would continue to offer this good quality provision.

DB left the meeting.

It was agreed that the college should look to provide a copy of the Duty to Review document to the ESFA and FEC as early as possible.

The Board approved the Duty to Review.

Action: CT to arrange publication on the College website and issue a copy to the ESFA and FE Commissioner.

The report was approved.

3333   **10. Safeguarding Report Summary 2022/23 and Revised Safeguarding and Prevent Policies**

Recommended by the Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee in October 2023.

NH presented the report and highlighted that an overarching summary of the annual Safeguarding Report for 2022/2023, which had been considered at the recent Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee meeting. This provided the Board with assurance of compliance with legal duties and the promotion of a positive Safeguarding culture at the College. Policies had been updated in line with the Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023 (KCSIE) guidance and were presented for approval.

It was advised that a new Mental Health & Wellbeing Team had been appointed within the college over the summer period. One of the Staff Governors noted that it was good to be able to signpost learners to this team for mental health and wellbeing support.

The Board discussed and queried the following:

- The increase of referrals - it was noted that this was similar trend across the College and School sector.

DB re-joined the meeting.

- Opportunities for collaboration within the region relating to health and equalities in terms of a wider response to mental health. It was confirmed that the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) sits on relevant Association of Colleges (AoC) groups and the College would now have the capacity to explore this with the new team in place. The College were also looking to create stronger relationships with Gateshead Council.

The Safeguarding Link Governor (MWW) noted his assurance of the strength and importance of Safeguarding at the College. It was confirmed that mental health was

highlighted as a priority at the College Community Conversations in April 2023 and the College had already delivered a response to this. The pace of action was recognised.

It was confirmed that there was an open invitation for governors to attend the Safeguarding Steering Group for additional assurance should they wish to do so.

A governor questioned if it was effective governance for the Chair to remain in the role of Safeguarding Link Governor and the Director of Governance & Compliance noted that this was not a governance concern as MWW had confirmed he still had capacity to carry out this role, as well as wanting to continue and therefore this was still appropriate in a skills sense and good for the Chair to maintain a close focus on Safeguarding.

The Board approved the following revised policies:

- **Safeguarding Adults at Risk**

- **Safeguarding and Child Protection**

- **Prevent**

Action: NH to process policy approvals.

The report was noted and policies approved.

3334 **11. Curriculum & Quality**

A) 2022/23 Performance Report

CT presented the report and highlighted the following:

- *Covered under a confidential minute*

- Apprenticeship achievement rates had improved, and a lot of work had been undertaken to achieve this. The College were 16% points above the National Average for 2021/2022, although it was expected that the National Average would increase for 2022/2023. The College were 2% above the government's 67% target rate for 2025.

- Equality measures were being closely monitored with the College working closely with a nearby college in terms of sharing data. There were some behavioural concerns that were being kept under review.

- Progress scores relating to Maths and English had been added following the report provided to the Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee, and although GCSE achievements rates had reduced since the previous year, it was felt the College remained above the national average.

The Board discussed and queried the following:

- The proposed interventions and were advised that these linked to working on personal skills, confidence and future ambitions.

- Continued focus on improvements with attendance, with the Board being cognisant of the high number of learners who came from high depravation areas. It was hoped that the additional support relating to mental health and welfare that was now in place within the college would have a positive impact,. The College were comfortable with the stretching target they had set in relation to attendance.

The report was noted.

B) 2023/24 Enrolment Update

CT presented the report and highlighted the following:

- *Covered under a confidential minute*

The report was noted.

3335   **12. Finance Update**

JC presented the report and highlighted the following:

- The management accounts of July 2023 show an operating surplus for the year, a positive cash position, financial health of 'outstanding' (under the ESFA definition) and all bank loan covenants being met. Investment had been made during the year to support the learner experience and make campus improvements.

- There had been a number of movements since the Board approved the budget for 2023/2024, this included the additional income for 16-18 provision and the Wave 4 Digital Bootcamp bid being unsuccessful (which had been assumed in the budget). It was confirmed that there would be further funding opportunities to explore along with the opportunity for additional adult provision.

- The College had been successful in its application to the Higher Technical Education Skills Injection Fund 2, with thanks to Tom Bradley (Assistant Principal) who had led on the application.

- The College were waiting to receive the outcome of the LSIF funding application.

- Approval would be sought for any capital projects relating to funding received.

- Revised Financial Regulations were presented for approval linking to revisions regarding severance and ex-gratia payments, linked to the Managing Public Money handbook and approval levels.

The Board queried the following:

- Any horizon scanning linking to unsuccessful funding outcomes – it was suggested that there could be further changes and considerations linked to North East devolution from 2024/25 and how funding is allocated.

- Any further information relating to the ONS decision to reclassify colleges into central government – it was confirmed that no further guidance had been issued.

The Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee (MH) noted the consistency of financial reporting that had been provided across the academic year and the Committee's recognition of the good work undertaken in this area.

The Board approved the revised Financial Regulations.

Action: JC to process document approval.

The report was noted and Financial Regulations approved.

3336   **13. Corporation Matters**

NT presented the report and covered the following:

Committee Terms of Reference

The Board approved the Board level Terms of Reference at the July 2023 meeting, and Committee Terms of Reference had now been considered by each committee ahead of seeking Board approval.

The Board approved the Terms of Reference for:

- **Audit Committee**
- **People Committee**
- **Governance Committee**
- **Remuneration Committee**
- **Finance & General Purposes Committee**
- **Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee**

Action: NT to process document approvals.

Board Workplan 2023/24

A workplan had been created for Board and committees for 2023/24.

The Board approved the Board Workplan 2023/24.

Governor Recruitment Update

Recruitment was ongoing following the resignation of Gareth Edmunds and Alan Potter (Independent Governors). Governor interviews were due to take place on 24 November 2023 with the hope of recruiting two governors with an audit / risk / compliance background to strengthen the Board and Audit Committee.

Recommendations would be made for Board appointment when required.

Proposed Date Changes

It was proposed that the 20 March 2023 Board Meeting and 1 May 2024 Spring Strategy Day followed the same format as the October Board meeting and Strategy Day and therefore the dates would be 24 April 2024 for the Board meeting and 25 April 2024 for the Spring Strategy Day. The Board **approved** this change to the 2023/24 schedule of meetings.

Action: NT to issue revised invites.

The report was noted and various items approved.

3337 **14. Committee Chairs Update**

The report was presented, and the following updates were provided:

The Chair of Curriculum & Quality Standards (MW) noted that the Committee had received annual reports relating to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Higher Education (HE) provision which provided the Committee with a good level of assurance.

The Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee (MH) noted that the Committee were closely monitoring the any progress updates relating to Gateshead Stadium and had received reports regarding the new Estates Strategy and Procurement, which highlighted the level of work within these areas.

The Chair of the Remuneration Committee (LCJ) confirmed that the Committee had met in October 2023 (after papers for this meeting had been issued) and noted the progress of the Senior Post Holder objectives and approved the objectives for 2023/2024.

The report and updates were noted.

3338 **15. Review of Strategic Risk Register**

JC presented the report and noted that:

- The Executive Team had undertaken a review of all risks of the register as at the end of the 2022/2023 academic year. Minor wording changes had been made, however the majority of risks remained substantially unchanged.

- Changes included the addition of two strategic risks covering the College's impact on the environment and the potential impact of the ONS reclassification of the College. These had previously been identified within the horizon scanning section of the report and it was felt they were now heightened sufficiently to be included on the register.

- As reported to governors towards the end of 2022/23, risks relating to Ofsted and DfE/FEC intervention had been removed from the register following the successful Ofsted inspection and the College's removal from Post Intervention Monitoring Support (PIMS) in March 2023.

- In relation to risk appetite, it was proposed following the above the tolerable level of risk appetite for the teaching and learning category is raised from 'open' to 'willing'.

- Horizon scanning was a key part of the risk register, and this may be informed further following the Board Strategy Day on 26 October 2023.

JC confirmed that the College had established an operational risk management group during 2022/23 which would meet on a termly basis to ensure risk management was embedded throughout the organisation. Initial meetings had covered risk areas such as curriculum reform, high needs funding, bootcamps, exams and awarding body compliance.

The Board **recognised** the rate of the development in the College's approach to risk and **noted their thanks** to all involved.

The Board **queried** whether the risk register was a useful tool internally, it was confirmed it was, as was regularly considered by the Executive Team to consider current and future risks, along with actions to mitigate risks.

Action: JC and CD to discuss the Risk heatmap outside of the Board meeting.

The report was noted.

3339 **16. Any Other Business**

Meeting Evaluation

The Chair asked the attendees' comments regarding the meeting, the following comments were noted:

- There had been a good level of discussion.

- There had been exceptional work in the creation of the three strategies provided for Board approval.

- There was a good level of support and challenge provided by the Board. Helpful comments had been provided.

- There was a good meeting pace.

- Verbal presentations of items remained succinct.

- Reports had improved in terms of highlighting key messages / themes. Report front sheets would be further improved by highlighting the conclusion of the overarching report.

- Reports remained lengthy and there was a lot of agenda items to cover.

- There had been a good level of assurance provided by Committee Chairs when items had been covered in more detail at a committee meeting.

- There was a positive level of contribution from governors.

- Terms / wider context had been provided to facilitate the induction of new governors.

Resignation of Alan Potter

The Board noted their gratitude and best wishes for Alan Potter who would be leaving the Board.

3340   17. Date of next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 13 December at 4pm.