

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation held at 5.30pm on Thursday,
3rd October 2019 in the Boardroom of the College

Present: Michael Priestley (Chair); Norma Boyes; Tanya Weston; Beth Gaskell
(from Minute No: 59/19); Alison Hampson; Nigel Holliday; Robert
Milburn; Chris Nattress (Principal); Denise Rollo; Stuart Williams.

Apologies: Amie Calvin; Elaine Clinton; Phil Jardine; Mark Stanger;
Dr Robin Talbot

Leave of absence: Loren Redmond

Also present: Karen Wilson (Deputy Principal); Daniel Braithwaite (Assistant
Principal); Jane Murray (Clerk); Mark Birschel (Quality Manager) (from
Min No: 66/19)

56/19 Minutes

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held in open session on 4th July
2019 be agreed and signed as a correct record.

57/19 Declaration of Minutes

None Received

58/19 Governor Appointment

Resolved – that Elizabeth (Beth) Gaskell be appointed as a Governor from
3 October 2019-2 October 2020 in the first instance, renewable for a further
3 years by mutual agreement.

Beth Gaskell joined the meeting and was welcomed by the Chair.

59/19 Confidential Session and Minutes

Resolved –

- 1) To move into confidential session;
- 2) That the minutes of the meeting held in confidential session on on 4th
July 2019 be approved and signed as a correct record.

60/19 Strategic Update – confidential

The Principal gave an update of key areas for reflection and monitoring at the start of the year and updated the board on partnership and business development opportunities, in addition to sector developments.

61/19 Key Performance Indicators – confidential

(As the data was not finalised, this session had been confidential but the minute is not confidential).

The KPIs for 2018-19 were still live until all data was closed down, but considered a fair reflection of performance.

Asked about inaccurate profiling in English and maths, it was felt that there was better expertise in profiling in English and that maths could be affected by the fact that there were three different papers.

Outturn had been impacted by retention as previously discussed. It served to highlight the importance of those first six weeks with students and the need to monitor behaviour and attendance. The correlation between poor attendance and retention was evident, with attendance having varied across the offer.

It was asked why engineering was low on work experience and acknowledged that planning needed to ensure that the full 100% had access to work experience. This would be an increasing challenge with the introduction of T Levels.

It was asked how accurate some of the progress data was, whether there was confidence in the accuracy. It was felt that assessment was surprisingly accurate based on historical progress monitoring of assessment and outturn, but that exam-based learner assessment introduced a variable, with the potential for students to perform differently on the day.

The strong performance for NCfN degree apprenticeships was noted.

Moving to the KPIs and draft targets for 2019-20, Governors noted the challenging targets set in line with expectations of an upper quartile college which continued to be the aspiration, including challenging targets for English and maths.

Noting the direct correlation between funding and recruitment (and retention), while the work underway on supporting students to make sure they were on the right path and had a very positive learning experience, those who left after the six-week rule, would have an impact on funding.

Resolved – that the KPIs and targets be approved for 2019-20.

62/19 Finance Update – Confidential

The Deputy Principal updated the Board on financial matters and 3rd party partnerships.

63/19 Open Session

Resolved – that the meeting be re-opened.

64/19 Curriculum Update

The Board was given a strong assurance by the Assistant Principal, that a significant amount of work was going into retention. The final outturn figures would be tabled to the Board with the Self-assessment report in November.

Recruitment activity had started with a more interactive approach to schools engagement, and, in response to questioning, acknowledged that while improved, not all schools were fully engaged in the process.

English and maths performance had seen English outperform maths again and the work around the Centre of Maths Excellence was anticipated to have an impact on what needs to change to help learners in maths.

It was asked whether the policy of putting all study programme learners on to a GCSE course continued to be the best way forward, given that non-condition of funding learners had not performed as well as their funded counterparts. It was acknowledged that a more personalised approach was being taken with some learners on the now revised functional skills courses where the approach was better placed for the course they were taking and probable progression routes.

Higher Education performance had been strong and work was continuing in partnership with the University of Cumbria to establish clear pathways to chartered status in a range of engineering and nuclear disciplines. Higher Education and degree apprenticeships were starting with admission numbers looking very positive.

Governors noted that the Learner Engagement Strategy had been updated, in line with Office for Students requirements and to ensure that learners played a full role in shaping the college.

The ongoing work on coaching and development for staff was becoming well regarded by external agencies. Lesson observations were already underway with training advisors (apprenticeships) and training themes emerging.

It was asked whether there was confidence that the College had the skills to support the Sellafeld tender work. It was felt that a partnership approach, where necessary, would ensure that it did.

It was asked whether staff development activity included mental health issues and assurance was given that initiatives such as mental health first-aiders and access to counselling formed part of the support network.

Resolved – that the Learner Engagement Strategy be approved.

65/19 Careers Strategy

The Careers' Strategy had been refreshed in line with sector expectations and independent advice and guidance requirements. The intent was that Governors would have an active input via a discussion board.

Resolved – that the careers' strategy be approved.

Mark Birschel joined the meeting

66/19 HR Annual Overview

The refreshed approach to personal development was noted, as was the pay claim for 2019-20, noting the negotiating position of the Union.

Noting the increasing gender pay gap, it was felt that the College had family friendly policies, which had an impact on the pay gap. Getting more males into support functions would help the balance.

While not a bad performance against national averages, sickness absence had increased this year. There had been some long-term sickness, which affected the performance, but processes and procedures were being followed in addressing any issues. Mental health first aiders were now in place. Asked about training and confidentiality, assurance was given that training had taken place and that the approach was one of support and signposting to counselling services if required.

Governors were pleased to note an overall strong performance in the staff climate survey. It was noted that, in response to feedback, some further consideration of internal communication was underway.

Resolved – that the Gender Pay Gap Report be approved for publication.

67/19 Health and Safety Annual Overview

Governors were pleased to note that there had been no Riddor reportable events in three years and were also pleased to see that the safety inspection reports were timely. They noted the training activity, which had taken place.

68/19 GDPR

In an annual summary of GDPR activity (to 31 July 2019), the Deputy Principal reported that while there had been seven data breaches reported, none of them were reportable to the Information Commissioners' Office.

It was pleasing to note that staff, who had undergone training, were quick to come and ask questions when they were in doubt. An internal audit this year had provided reasonable assurance to Governors, with recommendations already implemented.

69/17 Governance

The Board noted the outcome of the written resolutions over the summer in respect of sub-contracting, previously referred to under the Finance update at Min 62/19.

A Search and Governance Committee meeting had taken place immediately before the Board meeting, and Nigel Holliday was proposed for the remaining place on the Remuneration Committee, which was agreed.

Freedom of Information activity 2018-19 was acknowledged by the Board.

On the recommendation of the Search and Governance Committee:

- Changes to the Instrument and Articles of Government were tabled to allow for the interview of student governors (as well as elections), and this was agreed.
- Changes to the Standing Orders for 2018-19 were also approved, primarily changed to accommodate student governor interviews.

The final information in respect of the Regularity Audit, the amount of expenses paid directly to the Executive and Governors was received and noted as £1,183.45. The regularity audit questionnaire had been approved at the meeting held on 4th July 2019 (Minute 54/19 refers).

It was noted that, with the permission of the Chair in accordance with financial regulations, that the Principal had participated in a fully-funded trip to Switzerland to consider their technical and vocational education.

Resolved –

- 1) That changes to Instrument 2 (1e) be approved to allow for student governor interviews;
- 2) That changes to the Standing Orders 2018-19 be approved.
- 3) That Nigel Holliday be appointed to the Remuneration Committee.

70/17 Annual Surveys

The Quality Manager introduced a comprehensive overview of complaints, compliments and surveys for 2018-19. There were some very good positive surveys with evidence of sustained satisfaction over a number of years. More complaints had been received in-year, but also more compliments.

Of note this year was the drop in satisfaction for the HE survey, which had been consistently high for a number of years. The worry was that this was a small sample size. It was raised whether the lower satisfaction rate for course organisation was having an impact on the overall survey as if this was working well then this had a positive impact on other areas.

There was agreement too that there was a need to consider ways in which the sample size could be increased.

It was questioned whether in-house surveys duplicated some of the FE Choices data, but there was a need, it was felt, for a different and more granular set of questions to assist in continuous improvement.

The meeting closed at 1940h.