

## Minutes of a Meeting of the Corporation held on Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> December 2021 at 09.30 am in the SEN Centre

Present: Michael Priestley (Chair); Elijah Bennett (from Min No 106/21) Norma Boyes (from Min No 108/21); Elaine Clinton; Peter Ellwood; Aaron Groggins; Alison Hampson; Paul Hardon; Nigel Holliday; Chris Nattress; Denise Rollo; Tanya Weston; Beth Wordsworth; Robert Milburn (by teams)

Apologies: Phil Jardine; Stuart Williams; Amie Calvin

Also present: Karen Wilson (Deputy Principal); Daniel Braithwaite (Assistant Principal); Jane Murray (by teams).

### **103/21 Minutes**

**Resolved** – that the Minutes of the meeting held in open session of 9 December 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

### **104/21 Declarations of Interest**

None received.

### **105/21 Self-Assessment and CIPs**

In respect of Governance input, detailed discussion and review had taken place at an earlier stage of development by individual groups of governors with staff directly; Governors had seen headlines at their November meeting of overall emerging trends and conclusions and were now being invited to consider the final SAR.

Judgements were as per agreement at the November meeting, with an overall assessment of 'Good'. Leadership and Management remained at outstanding and it was noted that this didn't just reflect the Senior Management and Governance, but reflected standards across the organisation.

There had been peer review with the four colleges in Cumbria and three of the four were self-assessing at the same levels as the previous year, with one moving up a grade.

It was asked about the timeliness of apprenticeship achievement, which seemed to be lower than the national average, however, it was felt that the benchmarks that were being referred to were pre-pandemic and the challenges of clearing the current backlog owing to the pandemic were noted in respect of work experience. It was additionally noted by an employer member that the End Point Assessment process was also backed up.

It was agreed that progress in achieving the timeliness of apprenticeships would be monitored through curriculum updates in the Board programme.

Asked about the Preparation for Learning and Life, these were very basic skills which included functional skills maths and English. This was graded as Requires Improvement and it was asked whether it was worth mentioning somewhere what steps were being made to improve.

Similarly, provision for high needs students was graded as good, however, in the EDI report which followed on the agenda, there was a variation in the performance of High Need Students and their peers. It was felt that this was attributable to functional skills maths and English and it was asked that, the small steps that were being achieved, should be reflected in evidence to support a good grading.

It was asked about destination data and acknowledged that, since the pandemic, there had been a struggle to get the volume of data on destination which would be required.

Overall, it was agreed that the SAR was a good representation and reflection of the past year of the College.

Turning to the CIP, while there had been significant improvements in GCSE English and maths over recent years, there was still work to do in improving engagement and attitudes to maths in particular and a need to reinforce its importance for the workplace.

It was also noted that there was work to do with some students on behavioural issues, which was to be expected after two years of pandemic without boundaries. A whole College approach to dealing with the issue was to be expected.

The need to review and refresh the adult offer was also identified. This would be challenging in respect of adults wishing to take out learner loans, but a refresh of the offer would help to meet the college's aspirations in respect of upskilling.

Turning to the Higher Education SAR, it was noted that the majority of provision was in the National College for Nuclear and that the higher apprenticeship provision would be inspected by Ofsted and that only the stand-alone qualifications would form part of the OfS framework. It was felt that there was a good and high-performing team with 105 successful end point assessments.

It was asked what provision could be made for expanding access to HE, through night-time upskilling, which could be helpful both to employers and employees with family commitments. It was felt that it was a complex picture and that it would depend on the demand as running an evening provision meant the same outlay as that for daytime provision (ie in terms of resourcing). There were other options to consider as well, for example, online

combined with monthly workshops. These would all be evaluated as part of the review of adult learning provision.

**Resolved** – that the Self-assessment report be approved subject to comments made.

*The meeting was adjourned for a short break and resumed at 1045h.  
Elijah Bennett joined the meeting.*

### **106/21 Progress against the Strategic plan**

The Deputy Principal presented an overview of progress against the Strategic Plan, focusing on the four main strands of learners achieve; our offers and services; our finances and our people.

It was felt that the strategy was proving effective in adding value to learners' progress and in directing them to the work place or other progression routes. It was felt that there had been an agile response to delivering learning during the pandemic. There had been a concerted effort in providing mental health and well-being support and as previously, discussed, in tackling some medium-term behaviour issues that had arisen.

Apprenticeships were growing (33%) and there was now a period of catch-up post furlough and to finish achievement.

It was felt that an adaptation of the strategy was required to meet the needs of adult learners, which would require reflection on the skills adults want and delivery. In order to progress this further, it was felt that some CPD for staff on the use of digital technology in teaching was required.

It was noted that the strategy was achieving vocational education, noting the growth in apprenticeships, NCfN success with Degree Apprenticeships and the Civils centre

The Structural Development Fund project, it was intended, would make it easier for employers to access the training they needed. Noting the geographical limitations of the area, it was still possible to work with partner colleges collaboratively using appropriate technology. By working together, it was hoped that employers would be able to see a range of opportunities that they might have previously struggled to access.

It was pointed that out by some that employers don't necessarily know what they want and accepted that there was some work to do in suggesting and engaging employers in discussions. Low carbon and digital had been identified as key areas of growth.

In terms of finances, the strategy in the coming year would be to consolidate outstanding financial health, ensuring sustainability through efficiencies and effectiveness. With inflation running at 5.2%, national insurance increases and pension challenges for the sector, different ways of doing things were

being explored, which included the subsidiary company and different ways of using it to deliver services to give flexibility.

Recruitment would continue to be challenging – Sellafield had started recruiting again – and the policy of ‘growing our own’ was likely to continue.

It was asked whether there was confidence that the development opportunities were being both secured and proving effective. It was noted that there was a demand for the nurse cadet programme to expand elsewhere in Cumbria with appropriate accommodation being secured. T-Levels were set to expand, including health and social care, and pipeline interest was being generated.

It was asked about the property strategy and it was noted that the Structural Development Fund project would deliver a business centre for the College. The main building did not lend itself to being mothballed and so other uses were being considered, where there was oversupply.

**Resolved** – that the approach to the strategic plan in the coming year be approved.

#### **107/21 Confidential Session and Minutes**

**Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting in confidential session held on 9 December 2021 be approved and signed as a correct record.

#### **108/21 Risk Register**

Following the strategic discussion and review of the SAR, it was felt by members that the risk register had good coverage and that the links to strategy and performance were evident.

**Resolved** – that the risk register be approved.

#### **109/21 Open Session**

That the session be re-opened.

#### **110//21 Equality and Diversity**

The Assistant Principal presented an analysis in respect of achievement gaps between learners with specific characteristics in contrast to those without. There were several improving trends, however, of key concern to the board was the significant decline in achievement gaps of high needs students. This was attributed to adult high needs students, noting that the 16-18 year high needs students had improved performance.

It was felt that the adult high need students were making progress, but not yet achieving at the level which was required. It was suggested that a richer picture of progress being made be added to the report. It was also requested

that this point be added to the CIP as an area for improvement, which could be monitored by the Board, and that it should also be referenced in the SAR.

Discussion continued on initiatives under discussion in respect of work experience and industry placements and it was noted by the Board that learners with high needs, and their families, were more anxious about work experience during a pandemic.

Moving to the Equality and Diversity Strategy, equality and diversity featured highly in the sector at the moment and this being case, the proposal being put forward was that the current strategy should be extended by a year to allow reflection. However, the strategy being put forward had been subject to rigorous review including from the Equality and Diversity link Governor.

It was asked under objectives at 5, whether learners themselves were being engaged in the promotion of equality and diversity and, in addition to equality and diversity being addressed through teaching and learning practice, it was felt that a refreshed student ambassadors would play a key role in leading a student voice.

#### **Resolved –**

- 1) That Equality and Diversity Annual Report be amended to reflect a richer picture of both progress and issues of high needs learners;
- 2) That the achievement gaps with high needs learners be added as an area for improvement in the CIP, to be monitored by the Board;
- 3) That the achievement gap issue with high needs be reflected in the SAR;
- 4) That the Equality and Diversity Strategy be approved.

**The meeting closed at 1150h**