

Minutes of a meeting of the Corporation held on Thursday, 17th November 2022 at 5.30pm in Room FO26 and by teams.

Present: Michael Priestley (Chair); Elijah Bennett; Elaine Clinton; Peter Ellwood; Aaron Groggins; Nigel Holliday; Phil Jardine; Chris Nattress; Denise Rollo; Lee Todd; Beth Wordsworth

By teams: Sarah Allison; Paul Hardon

Apologies: Rachel Bass; Alison Hampson; Robert Milburn

Also Present: Karen Wilson (Deputy Principal); Daniel Braithwaite (Assistant Principal); Jane Murray (Clerk); Karen Brown (Consultant – Min Nos 77/22 -79/22)

77/22 Minutes

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 6th October 2022 in open session be approved and signed as a correct record.

78/22 Declarations of Interest

None received noting that withdrawals were scheduled under the Remuneration Item.

79/22 Self-Assessment Headlines – 2021-22

The notes of the three earlier self-assessment sessions were received by the Board, together with the full self-assessment for 2021-22.

The Principal provided an Executive Summary. He reminded the Board that at the Pilot inspection, it had certainly been the impression that provision was at least good in most areas of the new EIF, but that High Needs and Additional Learning Support needed some improvement, which was addressed immediately with rapid improvement plans and clarification of ownership. He reminded the Board that Ofsted were now considering ‘types’ of provision.

He also considered that 2021-22 had still suffered under the Post Covid era, which had had an impact on individual students in addition to some of the employer base, including SMEs, where apprentices, for example, had struggled to complete or had been made redundant. Add to this the complex rule book for apprenticeships, and it had been a challenging year.

Maths also continued to be challenging and retention in some areas of the curriculum had been a concern, in addition to earlier comments in respect of

high needs. However, this should be seen against the very positive comments about meeting the needs of employers which Ofsted had recognised.

Turning to Karen Brown, External Consultant, who had been commissioned to assist the self-assessment process and who concurred with the Principal's overview, she noted that the self-assessment process had started earlier this year in July. The process was run in such a way that managers grew in confidence in dealing with the EIF and its requirements and would be able to talk about it confidently. This bottom-up approach informed the core SAR.

Sessions focused on achievement, skills and behaviour and support of the local skills and economy. Evidence was triangulated to ascertain what was in place and how much was embedded. She felt that as a result of her appointment managers were better able to understand what was going on in their provision through deep dives and thorough checking of learners' progress. The quality cycle has changed to be more impactful with a replication of Ofsted's deep dive approach.

The results of the process fed into a 100-day plan which was very focused with clear lines of accountability. The next $\frac{1}{4}$ will be the critical phase. She felt that the College had had the legacy of Covid and so there is no further excuse for 'hotspots' and there was a need to evidence quantifiable improvements through the CIPs. She felt that the SARs are much more owned by staff and will stand the college in good stead for Ofsted. The process culminated in a reset week, where staff were engaged in training, with a common theme throughout of Knowledge, skills and behaviours.

It was acknowledged by the Deputy Principal that Karen's help with the process had provided a more systemic look at quality processes. This had really helped to address the inconsistency in college provision. Matters have moved at pace, but it was felt that people were beginning to come together and click.

The Principal added that the pace of change had been phenomenal in many ways. It had been a challenge to secure a common understanding and secure ownership of the self-assessment. He was asked whether everyone was on board and he felt they were, but that the challenge wasn't without a bit of challenge and complexity, and that close attention was needed from the senior leadership team to ensure that everyone was joined up.

It was asked how you understand the progress that is being made. Karen felt that it was about making sure that objectives were shorter and more specific and that management was insistent, that there were compliance type measures configured to management lines and more discipline about progress and checking that there was real progress before moving on.

The Chair noted the focus for improvement on retention, achievement and high needs and maths, but also that there were also some very good areas of provision in the SAR. He thought Karen's input had been reassuring. He asked about the KPIs, which hadn't captured throughout the year the extent of

the areas for improvement found in the self-assessment and achievement rates. It was acknowledged that there needed to be a review to give an earlier warning system and greater visibility, that the KPIs were sharper.

It was asked about the apprenticeships, whether those who had not completed in a 'timely' way were now completing and assurance received that their completion was being accelerated. The inflexibility and the complexity of the levy system for apprenticeships was now being recognised by the FE Commissioner, who had publicly acknowledged this issue. The standardised approach to monitoring, and knowledge, skills and behaviour, was at the heart of monitoring across the college, including apprenticeship provision, and should be beneficial.

It was noted that the CIPs would be subject to Board monitoring.

Resolved – that the Self-assessment report be approved, subject to a final version being presented to the Board on the 15th December 2022 with any amendments.

80/22 Key Performance Indicators

The Deputy Principal presented the first set of KPIs for the year. Although early indications were a recruitment tally of 928 for 16-19 learners, it was anticipated that the final number would be in the region of 880. This was 30 above target but not enough to secure in-year additional funding. It was noted there were approximately 130 T-Level students and felt that this had been a good move for the College, but it was not without challenges. She felt that what the figures were telling us is that the base for this client group of 16-19 study programme learners was relatively stable at target.

Apprenticeships continued to provide growth; starts had already hit target. New delivery models were being implemented and with the base in Carlisle – at the invitation of an employer – there was an opportunity to maximise apprenticeships growth. However, there was also a need to ensure the quality and technical specification was right.

It was asked about study programme learners, and in particular about review points for maths and English. The Assistant Principal acknowledged that the accuracy of progress measuring had not been fit for purpose. A revised scheme of learning was needed for that area of work. There were early warning signs that attendance was not good enough for English and maths. It was asked for a regular update on maths.

Industrial placements were looking strong for this time of year which was pleasing.

The Deputy Principal reminded the board that she would be working on a revised set of lead metrics for KPIs.

81/22 Confidential session

Resolved –

- 1) To move into confidential session
- 2) That the minutes of the meeting held in confidential session on 6th October 2022 be approved and signed as a correct record.

82/22 Pay Award – confidential

The Board discussed the annual pay award for staff.

Resolved – that the Association of College's pay award recommendation be implemented as follows:

- 1) That there be a 2.5% increase in pay;
- 2) That there be a non-consolidated payment of £500 for those on a salary of £25,000 and above;
- 3) That there be a non-consolidated payment of £750 for those on a salary below £25,000

83/22 Financial Update – confidential

The Deputy Principal updated the Board on the current financial position and outlook and on other projects.

84/22 Strategic Update

Fresh from the AoC conference, the Principal noted that the Chief Executive had some stark messages; increased costs on a steady state income with the inevitable consequence of an increased operating deficit. There had been nothing at all in the budget for FE.

It was thought that any reclassification would be seismic over time, with a lack of clarity over VAT and other such matters. The concern from the Executive was the constraint that the public sector may place on colleges who were trying to operate with agility.

It was asked about the proposed 3-year funding settlement in the Skills and Education Act 2022 and felt that it would be tied into some form of regional arrangement or some form where they could demonstrate that they could get the most for their money.

85/22 Open session

Resolved – that the meeting be reopened.

86/22 Governance

The Corporation being one of four members of the company, which had been dormant since 2016, the Board was requested to approve the dissolution of Cumbria Colleges Ltd.

The Board received and noted the latest FE Commissioner's newsletter.

The Board received the minutes of the last Search and Governance Committee and the overview of Governance which would be published on the website. The Chair was pleased to note Board attendance was well above target.

Nigel Holliday; Elaine Clinton; Aaron Groggins and Elijah Bennett left the meeting

On the recommendation of the Search and Governance Committee, who had considered the skills mix of the Board and attendance figures:

Resolved –

- 1) That Alison Hampson; Nigel Holliday and Elaine Clinton be re-appointed to the position of governor.
- 2) That Aaron Groggins and Elijah Bennett be re-appointed as student governors to 31 July 2023 or to the date of leaving college whichever was the sooner.

Staff and staff governors left the meeting (student governors had already left)

87/22 Confidential Session

88/22 Remuneration – confidential

The Board discussed the annual report of the Remuneration Committee and recommendations arising from their work in 2022.

The meeting closed at 1950h.