

Minutes of the meeting of the Northampton College Corporation held at 1700 hrs on 8 March 2022.

<b>Present</b>	Pat Brennan Barrett (Principal)	Sharon Bunker	Becky Bradshaw	Conor Carr
	Rob Davey	Tracey Griffiths	Philip Hilton	Mark Robbins
	Geraldine Schofield (Chair)	Helen Scott (29/21 on)	David Smith	Rod Wood
<b>In Attendance</b>	Gary Brough (VP)(27-30/21 only)	Ralph Devereux (Clerk)	Steve Rankine (DP (FCA))	
	Julian Wood (DP(FCA) desig)	Helen Janska (AP(AVS)) (27-31/21 only)	Mark Poole (VP desig) (27-30/21 only)	
<b>Apologies</b>	Helen Scott (Late arrival)	Patrick Leavey (DP)(Attendee)		

## 27/21 OPENING

- a. No notice had been received of any Member becoming ineligible to hold office, the meeting was quorate and there were no agenda related interests declared.
- b. Chair's Opening. The Chair thanked all for attending and welcomed; Julian Wood and Mark Poole, respectively the DP(FCA) and VP designates to the meeting and explained that the agenda would be revised: **(Action 1)**
  - (i) Item 10 (HR Report) would be postponed since covid related matters had unavoidably delayed publication of the comprehensive paper until today mid-afternoon;
  - (ii) Item 11 (Cleaning Contract) would be considered as the first item, followed Item 5 (SEND/High Needs) .

**The information was received.**

**Actions had been identified. (See Register /21 below.)**

## 28/21 STANDING ITEMS

- a. The minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2021 (including Parts 2&3) and the special meeting held on 26 January 2022 were confirmed for electronic signature, Clerk to Action. **(Action 2)**
- b. Matters Arising. There were no matters arising.
- c. Outstanding Actions. Actions from the previous meeting had been completed or were in progress.

<b>Action 1</b>	14/21. Breakdown of non-pay costs to Chair.	<b>Complete</b>
<b>Action 2</b>	14/21. AFS & associated documentation approved.	
<b>Action 3</b>	16/21. Last minutes (0oi65.10.21) confirmed.	
<b>Action 4</b>	17/21a(i). R&G TOR approved.	
<b>Action 5</b>	18/21. Present ranking detail to the QTLA meeting.	
<b>Action 6</b>	19/21. SAR approved.	
<b>Action 7</b>	21/21. Transition from LIBOR to Base Rate approved.	

- d. Urgent Business. There were no requests for urgent business.

## 29/21 COMMITTEE MINUTES

Minutes of both QTLA and Governance Committee (GC) meetings were being processed; a verbal report was provided for each:

- a. QTLA. The Committee Chair fully explained the outcomes of the meeting (07.03.22), which were considered and noted. The minutes would be considered at the next Corporation meeting:
- b. GC. The Chair explained the outcomes of the meeting held earlier that day; the minutes would be considered at the next Corporation meeting. The meeting had been held as an advisory group and had made suggestions for Corporation to consider:
  - (i) the 29.11.21 meeting had recommended Becky Bradshaw for appointment for 4 years wef 29 November 2021 and that was unanimously approved **(Action 3)**;
  - (ii) the minutes had been amended as suggested at the last Corporation meeting; and
  - (iii) Helen Scott's term of office had expired on 5 February 2022, and she was unanimously re-appointed for a further 4 years wef today. **(Action 4)**

Both Members had been in post under Chair's action and that was noted and approved. **(Action 5)**

**The information was received.**

**Actions had been identified.** (See Register 41/21 below.)

### **30/21 CLEANING CONTRACT**

The current cleaning and security contract with Norse Group had been due for renewal on 1 January 2022 on an agreed 12 month extension to the original agreement, however in December 2021 Norse revoked and served 3 months' notice to cease provision. Despite the time pressures, due process to find an alternative provider, had been carefully followed (using procurement service "My Tenders" full documentation was attached). Four companies had been invited to tender leading to 2 invitations to "Solo" and "Bidvest Noonan" to present to the cleaning review panel; Bidvest Noonan had been recommended for appointment for an initial 2-year period with up to 2 x 12 month extensions. If approved, some contract adjustments would be necessary to accommodate Transfer of Undertakings (protection of employment) (TUPE) compliance which had emerged post interview; the quoted fee of £569, 509.58 was likely to increase to a maximum of £585k. The contract allowed for employees to be paid the living wage levels rather than the national minimum and that was unanimously welcomed. The recommendation, including the fee issue was approved. **(Action 6)**

**The information was received.**

**Actions had been identified.** (See Register 41/21 below.)

**Gary Brough and Mark Poole left the meeting.**

### **31/21 SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS & DISABILITIES (SEND)**

The report comprehensive, including a Learning Support element was considered and discussed. The detail had been gathered into 4 elements:

- a. Covid recovery and missed learning. In order to establish the level of missed learning a comprehensive diagnostic assessment programme had been completed for full time (FT) entry level and reading, spelling & numeracy for L1 & L2. The disturbing results were fully described in the paper, including for example reading and comprehension deficits, vocabulary and analytical disabilities. Essentially, they could not "read to learn" rather they were "learning to read". The results had been shared cross-college to facilitate differentiation and support, additionally, amongst wider measures, small group interventions in English and Maths(EAM) together with deliberated mentoring were being delivered.
- b. SEND Headcount. Detailed numbers for all categories of high needs cross-college student provision had been tabulated and was discussed. The curriculum areas with the highest proportion of high needs students were Catering, Construction and Media. The strong

performance and sound reputation for SEND provision was contributing to an increased number of applications for the next academic year.

- c. High need (HN) financials. Full details of all HN funding streams had been tabulated in the attached papers and showed a total of Element 2&3 for both “in” and “out” of County at c£2.342m.
- d. SEND Provision update. The College was included in the Association of Colleges and the Association of National Specialist Colleges (AoC & NATSPEC) initiative of collaboration to improve benefit for post 16 young people with SEND. The 3-way partnership included Moulton and CANTO Colleges. Education, health and care (EHC) plans, for children and young people aged up to 25 in need of more support than generally available were now available; 6 were listed in the attached documents.

Information around Foundation and Supported Learning and English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) information was noted.

Some sample questions:

<b>Q</b>	<i>An excellent comprehensive report TY, does this continue to be a strength it certainly sound as though it should be?</i>
<b>A</b>	Yes it is one of the College's “outstanding” areas and is very relevant to future plans.
	<i>Looking at the loss of reading ability mentioned are the students able to comprehend sufficiently to complete the syllabus and sit the GCSE?</i>
	Standard deviation results indicate our average reading age at 15; 14 is necessary to sit the GCSE. However some of our students are at 6/7 and they are provided with special measures including the Chromebooks “immersive reader” Help is also available with exam reading pens and headphone.
	<i>Is there special funding to help with the catch up?</i>
	Yes the emergency funding for this year has been extended into 2023 but beyond that there is no information.
	<i>Will the 2 year course be completed on time?</i>
	Well we hope but there are no funds to cover resits and it is extremely difficult to source additional funding. The leaning deficit is likely to extend over the next 4 years.

**The information was received.  
Helen Janska left the meeting.**

### **32/21 PRINCIPALS REPORT**

The Principal's Report included a verbal update on current issues together with a progressive colour coded table Blue, Red, Amber, Green (BRAG); blue coding was for specific Covid related elements.

- a. As considered in the previous report the “learning deficit” was emerging as more serious than had been apparent. The Principal was a member of a National Committee that had recently been considering the issue, and high levels of concern had been apparent together with urgent requests for additional funding. The feeling was that the issue could affect a whole generation, starting with those who did not have a supportive homelife. The lack of teaching had clearly forced regression and led some students to “forget” how to learn leading to embarrassment when in peer groups, which in turn could adversely affect mental health. Progress was possible in the reducing Covid environment but all should be prepared for a reduction in overall levels of examination entries and the proportion of high grade results. The possibility that the virus could return next winter remained real. The Principal would welcome being proved wrong but she was convinced that her briefing was real. However, real progress in raising achievement had been accomplished in the recent past and could be repeated.
- b. The Strategic Objective Report was then considered and discussed. The reasons for and the remedial measures applying to those with Blue Ratings were considered and explained in the narrative and were individually discussed. Para 1.3 relating to EAM provision would feature in the next strategic session when possible benefits from EdTech and digital innovations would be considered. As stressed in the previous report the general

assumption that students had lost 3-6 months progress continued to be flawed; learning deficit of c3+ years was becoming evident. The establishment of specialist provision, with well-qualified and experienced leadership was again welcomed. The remaining objectives were discussed and noted.

<i>How do we compare with the general FE sector?</i>
There are no comparators, but our special need and EAM provision is excellent, but we are dealing with some reading ages of 10 when 14 is the minimum requirement for GCSE.
<i>Should we adopt an alternative method of teaching EAM if reading ages are so low?</i>
We do contextualise but it is not a panacea although the now discontinued "stepping stone" programme was successful; all we have are the discredited Functional Skills programme. . Understanding of EAM is vital, we must await outcomes from this summer's exams. That will indicate the way forward.

**The information was received and noted.**

### **33/21 COVID.**

Recovery from the pandemic was being mirrored in College; the need for masks had been removed and testing will not be required for much longer. There were c100 students and 15 staff off with the virus, compared with the recent c130 & 37. The "lost learning" environment was gone and focus on recovery was underway. Nevertheless, a ban on attendance for those with Covid symptoms remained in place and contingency plans for a possible resurgence next winter were under consideration.

**The information was received and noted.**

### **34/21 LEARNER DATA MONITORING**

The Learner Data Monitoring information comprised 4 comprehensive data tables considering Retention and Attendance rates and RAG rated comparison tables. Attendance unsurprisingly was lower than previously and had been accompanied by higher anxiety levels and associated challenges. Comparison data was collected 5 times throughout the year and had been tabulated by school and by level. The information had been clearly explained in the notes accompanying the data.

**The information was received and noted.**

### **35/21 FINANCE REPORT**

Management Accounts. The management accounts up to 31 January 2022 (P6) were explained and discussed; the comprehensive document comprised a narrative informed by graphical and tabulated detail, which was explained and considered. Key Performance indicators (KPI) had been tabulated and were noted. The EBITDA figure was c£2,129k or 15% above budget leading to an operating surplus of c£942k (budget £612k). Overall income was forecast at c£29.18m which was £130k below budget; fewer 16-18 students were on roll this year and this would take effect in the next academic year (lagged funding), however increases in the applied formula were favourable and the total return would be largely unchanged. Pay costs were currently £350k below budget level, largely through disciplined use of agency staff, the end of year forecast was now c£19k which was 1.8% below budget. Year-end non-pay costs were below budget by c£60k at c£7,900k. The forecast performance ratio was 7.3% (target 8%) and the Staff Costs ratio was on target at 65%. The detail was generally discussed and the significance of the c100 shortfall in enrolments (c£400k in funding terms for next year) could be amortised by additional recruitment in January and March. Cash remained high at c£15.6m, the expected minimum in February was expected to be £14.8m.

<i>Apprenticeships are increasing – do we expect them to reach pre-pandemic levels?</i>
That return was £2.2m and currently we stand at £1.9m so we are well on the way.
<i>How is the School of Construction return progressing?</i>
It is difficult to recruit specialist staff at present and that is limiting the growth.
<i>The YTD figures appear more optimistic than the year end forecast, is there a reason?</i>
We are not able just to double these mid-year numbers, for example income is skewed by 16-18 profile and adult finding by achievement.

<i>How much cash was saved in fees by the students not sitting exams?</i>
None. We still had to pay the fees since the exam boards claimed their work had remained constant.

**The information was received and noted.**

**36/21 TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY**

The Treasury Management Policy had been updated, there were only 2 changes (highlighted in yellow):

- a. Schedule A: to increase the College Bank Limit from £8m to £10m; and
- b. Appendix 1: to add Close Brothers Group plc to the list. Fitch and Moody's ratings were included in the detail.

The Treasury Policy was approved. **(Action 7)**

**The information was received.**

**Actions had been identified.** (See Register 41/21 below.)

**37/21 ENROLMENT**

The enrolment information report was considered and the lower than expected enrolments had been impacted by the pandemic and inflated GCSE grades. As considered above, the lagged funding issue would be less drastic than they could have been, however the funding improvement required an extra 40 hours per study programme. Adult recruitment was also reduced, which was normal in a high employment environment but would lead to a 15% reduction in the adult budget at year-end; adult loans were forecast to be on budget. Apprentices had been considered earlier in the meeting and the slightly reduced HE numbers would mean a return of £150k below budget.

**The information was received and noted.**

**38/21 MEETINGS FORMAT**

The easing of Covid related restrictions prompted considerations of the future meeting formats, either face-to-face, electronic or hybrid - a mixture of both. The options were widely discussed, and it was apparent that there were a number of differences in preference, and these were largely driven by individual circumstances. The time-saving element of electronic meetings was largely acknowledged, for example, anecdotal a round journeys of 4 hours total to service a 2 hour meeting was clearly not cost-effective; the sociability of face-to-face sessions was also widely accepted. It was eventually agreed that: **(Action 8)**

- a. hybrid meetings were possible but should be minimised;
- b. strategic planning sessions would be face-to-face;
- c. planned meetings would remain on line excepting for the summer term when they could be live; and
- d. the annual programme and workplan would be adjusted to accommodate strategy sessions avoiding the autumn and winter.

**The information was received.**

**Actions had been identified.** (See Register 41/21 below.)

**39/21 PART TWO & THREE**

Part 2 and 3 meeting were to consider the minutes of the previous meetings; there were no comments or questions, so they were confirmed without the need to convene. **(Action 9)**

**The information was received.**

**Actions had been identified.** (See Register 41/21 below.)

**40/21 URGENT BUSINESS AND NEXT MEETING**

- a. Vale. The Chair recorded thanks to Steve Rankin who was about to leave the College after 8 successful years; she expressed what an excellent team player and professional he had been throughout his time and, on behalf of the Corporation she wished him every success and happiness for the future. Members spontaneously applauded Steve who responded with thanks.
- b. Next Meeting. The next meeting would be at 1700 on 10 May 2037.

#### 41/21 ACTION REGISTER

ACTION REGISTER		Resp	By
See referenced minute for full action.			
Action 1	27/21b. Agenda order revised.	Chair	wie
Action 2	28/21a. Last minutes confirmed for signature.	Clerk	
Action 3	29/21b, BB appointed for 4 years wef 28.11.21,		
Action 4	29/21b. HS re-appointed for 4 years wef 08.03.22.		
Action 5	29/21. Chairs action approved.		
Action 6	30/21. Bidvest Noonan contract approved,	Chair	
Action 7	36/21. Treasury Management Policy approved.	DP(FCA)	
Action 8	38/21. Meetings to be of varied format.	Chair	
Action 9	39/21. Parts 2 & 3 minutes confirmed. (see Action 2)	Clerk	






# CorpMinutes.Pt1. 8.3.22. RDGSPBB

Final Audit Report

2022-05-19

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