

Minutes of the meeting of the Northampton College Corporation held at 1700 hrs 05 October 2021.

Present	Pat Brennan Barrett (Principal)	Sharon Bunker	Conor Carr	Tracey Griffiths
	Philip Hilton	Lucja Kowalik	Patrick Leavey	Mark Robbins
	Geraldine Schofield (Chair)	Helen Scott	David Smith	Rod Wood
In Attendance	Ralph Devereux (Clerk)	Gary Brough (VP(Res))	Jan Hutt (VP (HRSS))	Patrick Leavey (DP)
	Mark Owen (AP (SS))	Phil O'Hara (VP(CSP))	Steve Rankine (DP (FCA))	Julie Teckman (Dir HE)

01/21 WELCOME

- a. Confirmation. No notice had been received of any Member becoming ineligible to hold office, the meeting was quorate and there had been no agenda related interests declared.
- b. Chair's Opening. The Chair welcomed all to the first meeting of the year and thanked them for attending. She welcomed the newly elected Student Members Lucja and Conor, together with Rod Wood, external Governor and Ralph Devereux the Clerk; Lorna Pape had resigned during the summer break for personal reasons. The electronic meeting would not be recorded.

The information was received and noted.

02/21 OPENING

- a. The Minutes of the last meeting held on 22 June 2021 were considered;
 - (i) re 5.1 reference to "One curriculum area" was amended to "The College;" and
 - (ii) re 9.2. the Quality, Teaching, Learning & Assessment (QTLA) Committee Terms of Reference (ToR) would be considered at the next Committee meeting.

The Minutes were then confirmed for electronic signature. **(Action 1)**

- b. Outstanding Actions. There were no actions outstanding from the last meeting.

The information was received and noted.

Actions had been identified. (See Register at 12/21 below)

03/21 KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE IN EDUCATION (KCSIE)(Out of Agenda order)

The annual safeguarding report (2020/21) comprised a detailed narrative supported by graphical and tabulated data and useful links to relevant legislation and guidance supported by specialist annexes; it was interactively presented and considered in depth. There had been 225 overall referrals throughout the year, these were individually shown by referral type and compared with the previous year, common issues were listed; apprenticeship monitoring had resulted in one serious allegation which had been managed to a conclusion by the Designated Officer (DO). There had been 19 external referrals. Other considerations within the report included:

- process for students identified at "increased risk of harm," dealt with collaboratively with specialist agencies and graphically represented;
- vulnerable student groups were individually graphically displayed by type and compared with the previous year, there had been some significant increases and these were highlighted and the specific arrangements, including individual arrangements by type of

care, established during the Covid lockdowns were explained and discussed. Staff training, including "Prevent" ensured positive outcomes and c80% of staff were up-to-date, some in progress and some on long term absence. Records and Disclosure checks were current and investigations throughout the year had been tabulated. The outcome of the Ofsted nationwide "sexual harassment" review was considered and the note that tutorials on the issue had been developed was welcomed. Online safety, Extremism and Radicalisation and the serious Mental Health/Self Harm issue were all considered in the report and were welcomed. The report concluded with listing of identified developmental action for the present year.

Questions.

- (i) *Has the rise in number of vulnerable cases had been matched by resources?*
Resources had been increased where necessary and there were no apparent shortfalls or needs.
- (ii) *Has there been an increase in sexual abuse reports in line with recent rise in public awareness which partly prompted the nationwide Ofsted review considered earlier?*
There had not been a noticeable increase as such but the Ofsted report had identified peer on peer abuse, including sexual coercion; such cases would remain live for an extended period with increased pressure on all involved and should they increase there would be consequent additional pressure.
- (iii) *As deprivation levels increase are we receiving more local challenges?*
Child protection plans were increasing in number, mirroring the increasing local levels of deprivation.

The information was received and noted.

04/21 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

As some Members were at their first meeting, the format of the Principal's Report as a colour coded consideration of progress against strategic objectives and targets was briefly explained. The report, which included tracked changes, was in 3 specialist sections and was discussed. Covid related matters would be considered in the next agenda item. Development of English and Maths (EAM) the review of the delivery module had been implemented in 3 phases; the first, completed and reported last December, had been a thorough diagnostic process of new students, which had revealed many cases of disparity between awarded GCSE grades and actual capability. Reflecting to some extent the different processes at the wide range of feeder schools. This detail informed Phase 2, action to reduce the learning deficit and the final Phase a progress review and analysis. The outcome had been disturbing, actual reading ages would require 3-4 years to redress and members would be regularly updated on progress. The outcome had vindicated the decision to establish the School of Academic Support.

Questions:

- a. *re 2.3. (finances) The present red rating is showing an expected outcome of green, what is the basis for such an improvement?*
The progression from the present red assessment to green reflects the present, perhaps optimistic view on enrolments (Item 7) this may well be demoted as final enrolment numbers become clear.
- b. *re 2.4. (efficiency) The welcome comprehensive collection of data does not indicate where some, for example, staff utilisation related, is used and how it informs efficiency.*
Some specific data on such as staff utilisation was not generally reported although it forms an essential part of budget setting and is regularly monitored, the detail informed management process and was not presented to the Corporation but could be passed on request.

The information was received and noted.

05/21 UPDATES

- a. Covid. A verbal consideration of current Covid issues was presented. The return of all to campus, although welcomed had introduced challenges, the experience of the earlier return to sites in Scotland had been closely monitored and had informed the process. The testing process for example; after progression to student self-testing it became clear that was not working and firm action had been necessary to correct the process; Members were assured that the present evidenced process was safe and effective; face coverings were not required in class and communal areas but that decision was reviewed each week. There were more infection absences than last year, with 9 staff and 39 student absences compared with 1 and 33 respectively last year. The local area was a documented "Covid-hotspot" (23/377), although hospital admissions and fatalities were thankfully proportionately low, despite this vaccination compliance was poor. However regular meetings were held with union representatives to consider acceptable ways to persuade greater compliance and the Principal continued to pressure responsible agencies, including the DfE, on this issue.

Question. Is there active resistance to inoculation amongst teaching staff?

Yes some, extremely challenging; 21% of staff had not been "double-jabbed". whether for ideological reasons was unclear but there was no enforcement process.

- b. Wet Trade Centre (WTC). The report on progress with the WTC, which would be adjacent to the Advanced Construction Engineering (ACE) Building, would be in 2 elements.

(I) Stage 1. Tender Process. Fusion Project Management (FPM) had completed the process to procure the main contractor and their full report was considered. There had been 4 invitations to tender (listed in the document) and all had responded. The results, tabulated in the accompanying document, showed a wide range of quotations but based on differing parameters and subsequently normalised by FPM. Full tender analysis of Quality and Price had been completed and SDC had been the clear recommended favourite to complete the Pre-Construction services at the price of £37,903.52 plus VAT; after close consideration, the recommendation was accepted and SDC were unanimously appointed. **(Action 2.)**

(II) Project Report No 1. (Confidential) The Progress Report on the WTC was considered, including:

- Planning, which was granted on 1 September; and
- Funding, a bid had been submitted to the Post 16 Capacity Fund for c£126k (c£719 grant & c£137 matched funding), outcomes for the bidding process were expected later in the Autumn; if unsuccessful the project would be self-funded. The tender considered above was c£30k below the bid breakdown.

Key dates, durations and current status had been tabulated and the information, together with details of the Project Team and the next steps were noted. The report concluded with graphic Illustration of the facility and the full Risk Register. (RR)

(III) Stage 2. Tender Process, one of the "Next Steps" was appointment of the Principal Contractor and it was explained that the current unstable construction environment, labour and materials market combined to inhibit the fixing of a price for the work. Both costings and availability were elemental in this, one increasing rapidly (20/25%) and the other receding. The DP(FCA) shared a spreadsheet breakdown of the costings to inform discussions; the original cost of c£579k had now risen to c£675 and the roof panel availability now stood at 23 weeks. The matter had been considered with the builders that day and a value engineering increase of c£140k with delayed payments to a total of c£905k was the outcome. After considerations, which included acceptance of the widely report delays, it was unanimously agreed to accept the new price. **(Action 3)**

Question.

The importance of the facility and the financial strength of the College surely combine to persuade that the unavoidable, and nationwide building increased had to be accepted.

Yes that was accepted absolutely.

- c. Awarding Bodies. The Teacher Assessed Grade (TAG) process had applied to 60% of the awards at the end of 2020/21, the remainder had all been subject to requirements of the various awarding bodies and Ofqual. All TAG assessments had been robustly moderated and checked for sensible relationship with previous year's results. The notifications, had prompted 192 queries, mostly GCSE related and 18 appeals had been referred upwards to relevant bodies; none had been upheld.
- d. EAM. EAM had been considered during the Principal's Report, however Members were informed that the GCSE November examinations would involve c200 students. Outcomes would be interesting it had been assumed that a difference between grade and ability would be one GCSE Grade but in reality it was much greater in some cases.
- e. Learner Data. Further detail was shared and discussed; retention and achievement continued to improve and remained ahead of the National Average (NA) which was however now 2 years out of date. These were heartening results in the tremendously challenging environment of the last 2 years.

Questions.

There were sound improvements, for example in Sport, was this influenced by increased use of digital?

That was a tricky point to answer until all analysis was complete, subjectively, it was likely. It was important to note that this year had a far greater proportion of on-line delivery, whilst 2019/20 terms 1&2 had been almost normal.

Will delayed publication of the NA numbers would make any post 2019 benchmarking difficult?

Yes, but it will apply equally across the sector and Ofsted have indicated that data over the period in question would not be used for assessments.

The information was received and noted.

Actions had been identified. (See Register at 12/21 below)

06/21 FINANCE REPORT

- a. Management Accounts. The Management Accounts to the end of July referencing the unaudited year-end position comprised a narrative informed by graphical and tabulated detail. The accounts, showed a c£2.184 outturn, above budget by c£2.063k. Income, at c£947k above budget had been supported by several grants; all were listed in the accompanying paper. Pay costs had been favourable by c£1.2m all variances were explained. Non-pay costs had been c£59k worse than budget for several contributory reasons, all fully detailed in the paper. The Balance Sheet showed outstanding Loans £4.05m (14% of operating income) and cash available was c£15m. Despite the red highlighted "Pension Liability" element, which was explained, all Bank Covenants were in scope. Key Performance Indicators (KPI) were considered, discussed and noted; the financial health assessment, had been provisionally graded as "Outstanding." The Report was received and welcomed.
- b. Sub-Contract Policy. The College Sub-Contract Policy required Corporation approval. The attached Policy explained the reasons for sub-contracting, together with the procurement and charging processes; the additional requirement for review of the provision and reduction, as part of a 3-year review, was included. Changes had been highlighted in yellow, and the Policy was considered and unanimously approved. **(Action 4)**

The information was received and noted.

Actions had been identified. (See Register at 12/21 below)

07/21 ENROLMENT

The current enrolment position was then discussed; the current position was somewhat disappointing, however anecdotally this was a sector-wide experience. The process had not yet passed the 42 day period leading to "census day" and the numbers could be subject to withdrawals until then; total full-time (FT) enrolments were 1% ahead of the previous year and specifically 16-18 was 3616 against the target of 3583. Reasons for the below expected level could include, last year's Teacher Assessed Grade (TAG) process, which had led to grade inflation at GCSE level and this may well have prompted some potential entrants to choose school sixth forms from which they would have been excluded under the previous examination based criteria. The jobs market was buoyant; apprenticeships were in favour and all had probably contributed to the present situation. The process was fully discussed however, there were a further 3 weeks of enrolment before census day and full focus would be maintained.

Question

It seems the College increased capability and resources has not effectively contributed to enrolment?

The Digital Centre would be operational in the near future and should be an extremely attractive inducement; a full report would be brought to the next meeting. **(Action 5)**

The information was received and noted.

08/21 HEALTH AND SAFETY (HAS)

- a. The Annual HAS Report. The Report 2020/21 was considered and discussed, the detail clearly showed the College was well served in this area; comprehensive detail over the year was a digest of the required and necessary measures and responses, which had been regularly brought to Members' attention through reports. There was a comprehensive training regime. The Risk Assessment process had been extensively and recently developed and Members were assured that residual risks continued to be considered. The Report was received and welcomed.
- b. Policy Statement. The HAS Policy, supported by specific HAS risk assessments. Control procedures and safety management procedures had been reviewed for immediate implementation and it was discussed and approved for signatures. **(Action 6)**

The information was received and noted.

Actions had been identified. (See Register at 12/21 below)

09/21 ESTATES ANNUAL REPORT

The annual report on the Estate 2020/21 was considered and discussed; the comprehensive document was presented as a written narrative supplemented by photographic and tabulated detail. That detail would inform Members of the major work completed during the year and inform on the maintenance programme, management of utilities and security, accidents and update on ICT. Also included were full details of the Covid arrangements throughout. The written report was supplemented by an interactive presentation from the VP(Est), with particular emphasis on cyber-security and the expenditure associated with the reported requirement for all colleges to be "cyber-essentials plus" compliant in the next few years. The excellent report, the last from Gary whose planned retirement predated the next, was well received with appreciation recorded. **(Action 7)**

The information was received and noted.

Actions had been identified. (See Register at 12/21 below)

10/21 COMMITTEES

- a. Remuneration Committee (RC). The RC had recommended their revised ToR for approval and the attached draft was approved. **(Action 8)**
- b. Quality Teaching Learning & Assessment (QTLA) Committee.
 - (i) Minutes. The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 21 June 2021 were attached for information; they were welcomed as extremely valuable curriculum

management information and thanks were recorded for the commitment so clearly evidenced. **(Action 9)**

- (ii) Terms of Reference (TOR). The current TORs had been attached for information and any necessary amendment would be considered at their next meeting.
- c. Membership. Corporation and Committee membership was discussed informed by the attached draft detail, several changes were agreed wie: **(Action 10)**
 - (i) AC – Geraldine Schofield to cease membership;
 - (ii) QTLA Committee - David Smith to cease membership, Geraldine Schofield & Rod Wood to join; and
 - (iii) RC – Geraldine Schofield to join.

A revised register would be circulated. **(Action 11)**

The information was received and noted.

Actions had been identified. (See Register at 12/21 below)

11/21 URGENT BUSINESS AND NEXT MEETING

- a. There had been no urgent business agreed.
- b. The next meeting would be at 1700 on 30 November 2121.

12/21 ACTION REGISTER

See referenced minute for full action.		Resp	By
Action 1	re 02/21a. Last minutes (22.06.21) confirmed..	Clerk	30.11.21
Action 2	re 05/21b(i). SDC appointed as main contractor.	VP(Res)	
Action 3	re 05/21b(iii). Revised costing accepted.		
Action 4	re 06/21b. Sub Contract Policy approved.	DP (FCA)	
Action 5	re 07/21. Report on enrolment to next meeting.		
Action 6	re 08/21b. HAS Policy Statement to be signed.	Chair	wie
Action 7	re 09/21. Appreciation recorded to Gary Brough.	All	
Action 8	re 10/21a. RC ToR approved.	Clerk	
Action 9	re 10/21b(ii). QTLA Cttee thanked for work.	All	
Action 10	re 10/21c. Membership Register amendments agreed.	Clerk	
Action 11	re 10/21c. Revised register to be circulated.		
			asap

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Final Audit Report

2021-12-01

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