

Minutes of the meeting of the Northampton College Corporation held at 1700 hrs 10 May 2021.

<b>Present</b>	Pat Brennan Barrett (Principal)	Sharon Bunker	Becky Bradshaw	Tracey Griffiths
	Philip Hilton (Acting Chair)	Mark Robbins	Helen Scott (44/21)	Rod Wood
<b>In Attendance</b>	Julian Wood (DP(FCA))	Ralph Devereux (Clerk)	Jan Hutt (VP (HRSS))(till 43/21)	Patrick Leavey (DP)
	Phil O'Hara (VP(CSP))			
<b>Apologies</b>	Rob Davey	Geraldine Schofield (Chair)	Helen Scott (Late arrival)	David Smith

#### 42/21 OPENING

- The apologies were accepted. 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.
- The Chair had sent unavoidable and short notice apologies and Philip Hilton would chair the meeting (**Action 1 RD**); he thanked all for attending and explained that the HR Report would be taken as the first item and would include Item 4 from the Agenda. (**Action 2 RD**)

**The information was received.**

**Actions had been identified.** (See Register 53/21 below.)

#### 43/21 HUMAN RESOURCES (HR)

The Report examined the period from 01.09.20 to 31.08.21 although some later information was included and clearly indicated as such. The initial section of the report comprehensively reviewed the considerable Covid related activity undertaken by the HR Department from the outset; the detailed narrative, supplemented by tabulated information was considered in depth. The tabulated information provided valuable detail, for example infection and vaccination numbers for staff and students throughout (including data up to January and February 2022). The Sickness Absence Policy had been widened to consider Covid issues, it was at Appendix 1 to the report and was endorsed. (**Action 3 JH**) It was clear from the information that the Department had remained committed throughout and that the flexible, sensitive and timely nature of that commitment had been commendable. Thanks were recorded to Jan Hutt and all those involved (**Action 4 RD**) and a formal "NC Special Statement" would be raised. (**Action 5 PBB**) The Report moved on the wider HR issues. Workforce and Structural changes, performance management, disciplinaries, staff concerns grievances and absence were considered, informed by data over the last four years. Causes and numbers of sickness absence had been tabulated and mental health was particularly scrutinised. Vacancies continued to be hard to fill and this was particularly discussed; it was not a local issue, it was sector-wide and agreed as driven largely by the relatively lower salaries on offer. The post-covid restriction employment environment provided wide choices for many former FE colleagues. The local remuneration record was discussed: it had been more generous than most, it was hoped that could be continued and that would be closely considered after the enrolments for 2022/23 were known.

<b>Q</b>	<i>An excellent comprehensive report, TY. Are we looking outside the sector to recruit to fill our vacancies?</i>
<b>A</b>	Yes we do all the time. We market our "open days" which are well attended and the last event had led to a sound shortlist and interview schedule. Also, we stress our additional

	staff benefits which supplement the lower salary levels. We seek to become the “employer of choice”
	<i>How does our staff turnover currently compare across the sector?</i>
	That is difficult, our latest comparator data (AoC) relates only to 2021 but we are in line.
	<i>What about absence?</i>
	The same data caveat, but generally no concern and several long-term sick cases have recently returned.
	<i>How does our pay profile compare across the sector?</i>
	We are competitive and locally, we offer higher rates than our competitors. We also apply “Market Supplements” where appropriate.

**The information was received.**

**Actions had been identified.** (See Register 53/21 below.)

**The VP (HRSS) left the meeting.**

**Helen Scott joined the meeting,**

#### 44/21 **STANDING ITEMS**

- a. The minutes of the last meeting (08.03.22) were confirmed for electronic signature (**Action 6 RD**)
- b. Matters Arising. There were no matters arising.
- c. Outstanding Actions. Actions from the previous meeting had been completed or were in progress.

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

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

**The information was received.**

**Actions had been identified.** (See Register 53/21 below.)

#### 45/21 **COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The unconfirmed Committee Minutes were then considered:

- a. Quality Committee (QC). The unconfirmed minutes of the last Quality of Teaching and Learning Assurance (QTLA) meeting (07.03.22) were noted:
- b. Governance Committee (GC) The unconfirmed minutes of the last GC Working Group (08.03.22) were noted.
- c. Audit Committee. (AC). The unconfirmed minutes of the last AC meeting (22.03.22) were discussed. **re 15/21**. The Clerk had circulated all Members with the recommendation to pay off the Bank loan, a majority had confirmed and this was notified by the Clerk to the Chair, Principal and the DP(FCA) by email on 05.04.22. All actions were approved and endorsed. (**Action 7 RD**)

**The information was received.**

**Actions had been identified.** (See Register 53/21 below.)

#### **46/21 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 Covid related. The overall picture had improved over the last report and was considerably less gloomy. All "Expected Outcomes" (excepting 1.5 English and Maths (EAM) Competencies, which remained Amber) had been promoted to Green. It had emerged that the effects of the Covid related "missed learning" appeared to have been overstated and students were progressing well; solid exam results were becoming apparent, although the number of high grades was reduced. The objectives were considered and discussed individually. Some issues raised in these discussions would be considered in the next item.

**The information was received and noted.**

#### **47/21 LEARNING DATA**

Issue that had been discussed in the previous item were considered :

- a. there was a considerable increase in examination entries for EAM, which would complicate the practical arrangements for sitting the exams, for example the 1217 Maths entries would require provision of 138 rooms and 150 invigilators. The number was the result of "missed learning" initiatives based on the "Collaboration, Commitment and Context" principles. Exams had been spaced as a contingency to allow students' recovery from Covid should they become infected. Pre-Covid support processes had been re-introduced and regulations had been eased to allow students' teachers to invigilate accompanied by at least one other.
- b. The South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) logistics initiative ([https://www.semlep.com/modules/downloads/download.php?file\\_name=2554](https://www.semlep.com/modules/downloads/download.php?file_name=2554)). The local area, recognised as having one of the most innovative regional economies, had twice as many people employed in the logistics sector than the national average benefiting from a central location, connected into the major arterial transport routes. The DP was actively engaged in the development of appropriate provision and pathways working with local logistics employers and the National Careers Service. The aim was to establish a Study Programme with 2 cohorts (c35 students) leading to an appropriate qualification.

The Report examined current levels of Retention, Attendance and Progress. Retention and Attendance data had been tabulated and compared with the previous year.

- c. Retention was at similar levels as in the previous year, although 16-18 was slightly lower however all were expected to stabilise at 95%. The significant effect of Covid, particularly in the first quarter this year, had been challenging; and
- d. Attendance, unsurprisingly was lower than for the previous year and significant efforts were being made to keep students engaged in readiness for their first full summer examinations for 3 years. Numbers were monitored and reported each week and focus was on preparation of students. There were 1379 students with 95%+ attendance, although EAM was lower than the previous year and higher anxiety levels were apparent.

Weekly opportunities to support students in the recovery of "missed learning" (accelerated sessions) were provided together with support initiatives to prepare and revise. Nine examples of direct practical support were listed in the Report and were welcomed.

- e. Progress. Key Assessment 4 (KA4) taken at the end of March and comparisons with the previous year had been separately tabulated by School and by Level, there had been an overall reduction of 8% of students working to target and a higher proportion of Amber ratings. These data reflected the continuing challenges associated with "missed learning" across L1 to L3.

**The information was received and noted.**

#### **48/21 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS**

The management accounts up to 30 March 2022 (P8) were explained and discussed; the comprehensive document comprised a narrative informed by graphical and tabulated detail, which was explained and considered; a summary of the forecast had been tabulated and was

noted. The forecast EBITDA was c£3.7m (Budget £612k) resulting in an operating surplus of c£2.4m. Income was forecast at £30.2m, a c£846k increase on the budget, the variances were fully explained in the report. Year-end pay costs were forecast to be c£660k and non-pay c£393k below budget, again all variances were detailed in the Report. This result would result in an EBITDA ratio of 12.4% against the target of 8% and a staff cost ratio of 62.6% of turnover (target 65%). Cash was c£14.4m although about to be reduced by the repayment of the loan (45/21c refers); post repayment cash days and the current ratio would continue above sector benchmarks. The financial health would remain "outstanding" for the year.

<i>What are the implications of "deep and painful" accounting practices if we failed to pay off the loan in the current year?</i>
The processes involved if the loan were not completely repaid by year-end would be complex but if completed by the time of the accounts determination they would be straightforward.
<i>Whilst these numbers are reassuring the Management Costs have incurred a loss of £63k, are we neglecting this area?</i>
The total is accurate; the line includes many curriculum manager costs and we have invested in EAM and Adult provision including managers.

**The information was received and noted.**

#### **49/21 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The College Financial Regulations required annual approval by the Corporation and the updated and marked up version was attached for consideration. Changes included the removal of references to the European Union (EU), updates to public procurement requirements, the College cashless environment and some small accuracy amendments. There were 3 amendments relating specifically to the Corporation:

- a. re 4.3.8. clarification that the external auditors would be appointed for any wholly owned subsidiaries but not joint ventures (neither exist or are planned);
- b. re 7.8.7. alignment of standard and tendered procurement levels requiring Corporation approval to £250k; and
- c. re Schedule 3. Reference to "Chair of the Finance Committee" replace with "Chair of the Corporation" to reflect agreed governance processes.

All changes were noted and the amended document was unanimously approved. **(Action 8 JW)**

**The information was received and noted.**

**Actions had been identified.** (See Register 53/21 below.)

#### **50/21 TUITION FEES AND CHARGING POLICY**

The Corporation was responsible for determination of fees and charges together with remission and refunds. These processes were detailed in the Tuition Fees and Charging Policy, which had been updated and required approval; the marked up version was attached for consideration. The changes generally related to base funding rates and changing costs. In response to a challenge Members were assured that the Policy was fair and equitable and generated sufficient income to maintain financial good health and it was approved. **(Action 9 JW)**.

**The information was received and noted.**

**Actions had been identified.** (See Register 53/21 below.)

#### **51/21 GOVERNANCE**

- a. Corporation Calendar. The Corporation business calendar had been drafted with reference to this year's successful schedule and minor changes influenced by Covid experiences. It was approved. **(Action 10 all)**
- b. Change of Responsibility. The departure of the former DP(FCA), who had been the nominated reserve Accounting Officer (AO) (should the Principal be unavailable) required

a replacement; accordingly the DP (Patrick Leavey) was unanimously appointed. **(Action 11 GS)**

**The information was received and noted.**

**Actions had been identified.** (See Register 53/21 below.)

## 52/21 URGENT BUSINESS AND NEXT MEETING

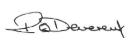
- a. There had been no urgent business requested.
- b. The next meeting would be hybrid attendance at 1700 on 23 June 2022. Members were requested to advise attendance intention to the Clerk in advance. **(Action 12 All)**

**The information was received.**

**Actions had been identified.** (See Register 53/21 below.)

## 53/21 ACTION REGISTER

ACTION REGISTER		Resp	By
See referenced minute for full action.			
Action 1	42/21b. PH to Chair meeting.	Clerk	wie
Action 2	42/21b. Agenda change noted.		
Action 3	43/21. Sickness Absence Policy endorsed.	VPHRSS	
Action 4	43/21. Thanks recorded to HR Department.	Clerk	
Action 5	43/21. NC Special Statement to be initiated re above.	PBB	
Action 6	44/21. Last minutes (08.03.22) confirmed.	Clerk	
Action 7	45/21c. AC (AC15/21) Recommendation approved.	DPFCA	
Action 8	49/21. Financial regulations approved.		
Action 9	49/21. Tuition Fees & Charging Policy approved		
Action 10	51/21a. calendar 2022/23 approved.	All	2022/23
Action 11	51/21b. DP appointed nominated Reserve AO.	Chair	wie
Action 12	52/21b. Next meeting attendance intention pass to Clerk	All	21.06.22




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Final Audit Report


2022-06-28


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