

Minutes of the meeting of the Northampton College Corporation held at 1700 hrs 15 December 2022.

Present	Mim Ansell	Pat Brennan Barrett (Principal)	David Bailey	Sharon Bunker
	Philip Hilton (acting Chair)	Paul Nutter	Molly Pic	Mark Robbins
	Helen Scott (until 15/22)	Michael Watkins	Rod Wood	
In Attendance	Jane Deery (VP(Curr&Stud Prog))	Ralph Devereux (Clerk)	Jan Hutt (VP(P&OD))	Patrick Leavey (DP)
	Phil O'Hara (VP(Skills & Adults))	Paul Thompson	Julian Wood (DP(FCA))	
Apologies	Becky Bradshaw	Geraldine Schofield (Chair)	Helen Scott (early departure)	David Smith

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. Paul Thompson from the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) then delivered a short interactive electronic presentation explaining data sources that informed consideration of local skills needs. The content included relevant issues including general local employment, vacancies, labour market, employment patterns across the region and current routes and pathways, all supported by graphical and tabulated data. The Local Skills Improvement Plan, which listed local priorities to inform employers, providers and stakeholders and which placed employers at the heart of local skills systems and facilitated direct and dynamic working arrangements between employers and providers, was explained. The presentation concluded with a lively Q&A session.

13/22 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. The Chair had tested positive for Covid and had sent apologies, PH would Chair the meeting. **(Action 1RD)**

14/22 STANDING ITEMS

- a. The minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2022 were confirmed for electronic signature, Clerk to Action. **(Action 2RD)**
- 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
Action 1	01/22. DB, PN & MW unanimously appointed as Members.	Complete
Action 2	02/22. Last minutes (23.06.22) confirmed for signature.	
Action 3	03/22b. HAS Policy approved for signature.	
Action 4	07/22b. Sub-Contract Policy approved for signature.	
Action 5	09/22b. DD&E Policy approved for signature.	
Action 6	10/22a. Induction programme for new members tbd.	
Action 7	10/22c. Regulatory Documents approved.	
Action 8	11/22b. Next meeting in person if possible.	

- d. Urgent Business. There was no urgent business requested.

The information was received.

Actions had been identified. (See Register 26/22 below.)

15/22 COMMITTEE MINUTES

The unconfirmed Committee Minutes were then considered and recommendations noted.

- a. Audit Committee (AC) re 05/22d, (the meeting had been inquorate but David Smith had reviewed and confirmed the outcomes and the recommendations were accepted as valid) **(Action 3)**: the underlying surplus was corrected to £3.275m. The unconfirmed minutes of the last AC meeting were explained by the Committee Chair, were noted and the associated recommendations:
 - (ii) minute 03/22b (IASAR) would inform Item 7b;
 - (iii) 03/22c (IAS Strategy & Plan) required approval;
 - (iv) 05/22 would inform Item 7b; and
 - (v) 06&07/22 would inform Item 7b;
- a. Quality of Teaching Learning and Assurance (QTLA). The unconfirmed minutes of the last QTLA meeting were explained by the Committee Chair, these were noted and the associated recommendations would:
 - (i) 04&05/22 would inform Item 5; and
 - (ii) 08/22 would inform Items 5 and 11 respectively.

The information was received.

Actions had been identified. (See Register 26/22 below.)

HS left the meeting

16/22 PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE

- a. Report, The Report was considered, informed by a verbal update with reference to a progressive colour coded table Blue, Red, Amber, Green (BRAG); blue coding was Covid related. Final RAG rated outcomes were included for 2021/22; all were green excepting English and Maths (EAM) (Amber); this had been foreseen and had prompted the deep scrutiny and comprehensive refocus to a (previously discussed) dispersed and contextualised EAM delivery process. The current report was explained and noted, EAM remained Amber and Finance remained RED however there was nothing further to bring to the meeting's attention.
- b. Training Day, The recently joined Members' induction session planned for the 16 January had now become a Corporation training event, the Chair hoped that all who could do so, would attend in person. Details would be circulated in due course. **(Action 4RD)**

The information was received.

Actions had been identified. (See Register 26/22 below.)

17/22 COVID

The Covid environment was improving, with only 19 cases emerging during the last fortnight. However, the flu situation was becoming a concern, particularly true for the IT and Estates departments.

Q.	<i>Is there still a Covid testing programme?</i>
A.	Teaching staff are tested twice each week Students are self-testing out of College.

The information was received

18/22 SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR)

Report. The College SAR, a comprehensive document comprising 11 elements (including the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) had been extensively reviewed by the QTLA Committee and had been extensively scrutinised and moderated by an Ofsted qualified staff member, was ready for validation and had covered a challenging year emerging from the Covid era. The QTLA Committee had discussed the detail and recommended approval of the SAR and QIP (QTLA minute 04&05/22) The document had been prepared to reflect the current Enhanced Inspection Framework (EIF) which detailed how Ofsted would inspect Further Education (FE) providers including the special focus on local skills provision. There was then a full discussion informed by the self-assessed grades, which were:

Area	2021.22
a. Overall Effectiveness Judgement	2 (Oct 18 - 2)
b. Quality of Education	2
c. Behaviour and Attitudes	1
d. Personal Development	2
e. Leadership & Management	2
f. Education programmes for young people	2
g. Adult Learning Programmes	2
h. Apprenticeships (provisional)	3
i. Provision for students with high needs	1

These suggested outcomes were comprehensively explained in the narrative. Data was the basis for all assessments and the resumption of written examinations instead of Teacher Assessed Grades (TAG) had been welcomed and students had completed the process remarkably well. Quality of Provision clearly focussed on the curriculum ambition and purpose dedicated to local requirements and students' outstanding behaviour and attitudes had been drawn out. Influences considered included management performance throughout the difficult period recovering from the TAG/CAG regime and lack of nationwide data; positive leadership relating to the recovery from pandemic related issues and the executive focus on the wider strategic aims had been constant. The challenges with apprenticeships were particularly considered, Overall achievement rates for 2021/22 at 91.1% now matched the pre-pandemic position. The SAR was approved. **(Action 5PL)**

<i>Sample questions from considerations</i>	
Q	<i>Is the SAR required to be submitted to Ofsted?</i>
A	No; self-assessment is not mandatory but we forward the complete document for their information.
<i>Are there any post pandemic accurate national achievement benchmarks/data emerging?</i>	
Yes and these would be considered in Item 6.	
<i>This is an excellent report has it been externally moderated?</i>	
No but the AP(TLQ) is currently Ofsted qualified and was involved throughout the process.	
<i>Has the self-assessment accurately reflected elements of the Report?</i>	
Perhaps it could have been more sympathetic but is easy to become complacent and to ween on extra caution is no bad thing,	

The information was received and noted.
Action had been identified. (Register at 22/22)

19/22 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (QIP)

After completion, the SAR became one of the source documents for the attached QIP, which focussed on the necessary areas and on raising aspirations, it was an essential element in the incremental overall management policy, including the Strategic Plan; the detail included an update on underperforming subjects and particularly, apprenticeships which had been the sole Grade 3 assessment. The QIP had been recommended to the Corporation. **(Action 5PL)(18/22/above)**

The information was received and noted.
Action had been identified. (Register at 26/22)

20/22 LEARNER DATA MONITORING

The Learner Data Monitoring comprised 5 comprehensive data tables. National performances had now resumed publication post Covid allowing cross sector comparisons, which were reassuring. Comparisons with past performance had been realistically based on data from 2018/19 and showed solid progress. For example overall retention stood at 93.2% whilst sector average was 90.9%, particularly heartening in the present and challenging post-lockdown environment. This evidenced the effectiveness of the carefully constructed and administered student support framework (School of Academic and Vocational Support), which had helped 1200+ students through challenges. Other excellent detail was also apparent, the GCSE pass rate was 95.9% against the National Average (NA) of 90.1%. The sound information extended into elements of Higher Education (HE) where: the Level 3 (L3) Business Extended Diploma had averaged 3 x "Distinctions" against the national comparator of 3 x "Merit"; and the L3 Applied Science had achieved 2 x "Distinction" and 1 x "Merit" against the 1 x "Distinction" and 2 x "Merit", Members took comfort from the outcomes.

The information was received and noted.

21/22 FINANCE REPORT

a. Management Accounts. The management accounts up to October 2022 (R03) 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. At this early point in the year performance was generally in line with the budget however some income and expenditure variances were explained together with the prudent approach to potential energy costs. The EBITDA was projected at £1660k (Budget £2011k) resulting in an operating surplus of £607k. Advice had been received of 2 unexpected capital grants:

- (i) £315k to be prioritised for energy efficiency measures; and
- (ii) £790k to partly compensate for reduced access to commercial borrowing (ONS Statement related).

The accounts were received.

b. Annual Financial Statements. The External Auditors had completed the financial statements and regularity audits of the College with clean opinions; a full and thorough consideration of the detail had been completed by the AC on 24 November and they had recommended acceptance (AC Minutes 05/22). There had been 2 small amendments to the Audit Findings Report received and considered by the AC they related to:

- (iii) reconciliation of ESFA income resulting in a non-material adjustment of 180k; and
- (iv) an adjustment to the Financial Health Rating score from 300 to 290.

The information was then considered and discussed partly informed by those Minutes. The AC had also considered the Internal Auditors' Annual Report, the External Auditors' Letter of Representation, the Audit Findings, and the AC Annual Report, all of which had also been recommended to the Corporation and would also inform consideration of the AFS. The Letters of Representation had been recommended for signature by the AC and the included associated assurances were received, welcomed, and noted. The Final Account numbers were fully included in the papers. The strong financial position (outstanding Financial Health) and the full narrative, including the Corporate Governance Statement had been considered and had recommended the AFS, and necessary associated documents to the Corporation for acceptance, approval, and signature; that was accepted and the following were approved (**Action 6**):

- (v) AFS for the year to 31 July 2022 was approved for signature;
- (vi) the Letter of Representation – Regularity was approved for signature; and
- (vii) the Letter of Representation – Financial Statements was approved for signature.

Q	<i>What constitutes “Outstanding” financial health in ESFA terms?</i>
A	The basis is 3 elements “Profitability (Sustainability); “Solvency” (Current ratio); and “Gearing” (Debt ratio); each attracts points score and the resultant indicates the outcome. Outstanding 240/300 points; Good 180/230; Satisfactory 120/170; and Inadequate <130.

The information was received and noted.

Actions had been identified (Register at 26/22 below)

22/22 COLLEGE RECLASSIFICATION

The recent announcement from the Office of National Statistics (ONS) had reclassified FE Institutions [in England] from ‘Non-Profit Institutions Serving Households (NPISH) to central government sector’. The decision is both Immediate from 29 November 2023 and retrospective from 1 April 1993, the latter with no practical effect on colleges. The situation had adjusted the powers and control exercised by the Department for Education (DfE) over colleges. For example, intervention powers (irrespective of use) to e.g. remove Governors and in the case of failure to meet local needs in Skills Act 2022 to e.g. direct mergers and change governing body. Subsidiary companies also reclassified as central government. The DP(FCA) then delivered an electronic presentation (attached to the filed copy of these minutes) explaining the wider aspects of the situation.

Q	<i>Does this dilution of full responsibilities detract from Members (Trustees) personal and collective freedoms?</i>
A	Possibly, this would be examined during the session tbh on 16 January 2023/

The information was received and noted.

23/22 LOCAL SKILLS NEEDS

The VP (16-18 Curriculum and Student Progress) and the VP (Skills and Adult Curriculum) then jointly explained the arrangements for the 16-18 Study Programme (Local Skills Needs). The approach to this important element would be assessed by a future Ofsted inspection and would result in a “Substantial”, “Reasonable” or “Limited” grading. The SEMLEP presentation, which had preceded this meeting had provided useful background information of the wider community approach to the issue. This was a comprehensive report, which provided an overview of the requirements, looked at the types and numbers of local “Job Postings” for the last 6 months and then moved on to examine and discuss the College areas of focus; there were 7, which had been tabulated and examined individually, each was then presented and discussed and the briefing concluded with an update on apprenticeship provision and preparation for “TLevels” including work placements, continuing post-Covid challenges with apprenticeships and generally with work placements were highlighted. During general discussion the strong liaison between local employers and the College was explained and welcomed, the recent Job Fair had been excellently attended with the Theatre venue full.

Q	<i>The L2 Logistics qualification appears to satisfy a strong local need; will there be further progression to L3?</i>
A	Yes it is planned to make that available from November 2023,

The information was received and noted

24/22 GOVERNANCE

There were 2 Governance items for consideration;

- the QTLA Terms of Reference (ToR) had been recommended (QTLA minute 08/22) and they were approved. **(Action 7)**; and
- Robert Turner had been recommended by the interview panel for appointment to the Corporation and that was conditionally approved (HR awaiting some routine clearances). **(Action 8RD)**

The information was received and noted.

Actions had been identified (Register at 26/22 below)

25/22 URGENT BUSINESS AND NEXT MEETING

- a. Urgent Business. There had been no Urgent Business requested however the acting Chair explained that the sometimes relatively lengthy interval between corporation meetings could prompt dilution of awareness. This was discussed and it was agreed that the pre-lockdown practice of "link governors" and individual visits to departments should be re-introduced. **(Action 9PBB)**. The Chair then invited the student Members to comment and they both stressed the value of events similar to the job fair, as an excellent source of advice regarding progression.
- b. The next meetings would be:
- (i) the Corporation training session at 1400-1700 (all were invited) on 16 January 2023; and
 - (ii) Corporation business at 1700 on 9 March 2023.

The information was received.

Actions had been identified. (See Register 26/22 below.)

26/22 ACTION REGISTER

See referenced minute for full action.		Resp	By
Action 1	13/22. PH to Chair the meeting.	Clerk	wie
Action 2	14/22a. Last minutes (06.10.22) confirmed.		
Action 3	15/22a. AV recommendations valid.		
Action 4	16/22b. 16 January to be a full Corporation event.		
Action 5	18/19/22. SAR & QIP approved.	DP	
Action 6	21/22b. AFS & associated documents approved.	VPFR	
Action 7	24/22a. QTLA TORs approved.	Clerk	
Action 8	24/22b. Robert Taylor(prov) appointed to Corporation.		
Action 9	25/22. Link Governors and College visits to be restored.	PBB	

Signature: *Ralph Devereux for Philip Hilton(Acting Chair)*
Ralph Devereux for Philip Hilton(Acting Chair) (Mar 13, 2023 10:22 GMT)

Email: office.mpe@btinternet.com







CorpMinutes15.12.22RD

Final Audit Report

2023-03-13

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