

Minutes of the meeting of the Northampton College Corporation held at 1700 hrs 14 December 2023.

Present	David Bailey	Becky Bradshaw	Pat Brennan Barrett (Principal)	Steven Bunker
	Philip Hilton	Anne-Marie Kilday	Molly Pick (18/23 to 22/23)	Mark Robbins
	Helen Scott (Chair)	David Smith	Julie Teckman	Rod Wood
In Attendance	Ralph Devereux (Clerk)	Patrick Leavey (DP)	Julian Wood (DP(FCA))	
Apologies	Mike Watkins	Paul Nutter		

12/23 OPENING

- Congratulations.** The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and explained that, against formidable competitors such as Oxford University, the College had taken first place in the 19th UK & Ireland Green Gown Awards competition held in Liverpool on Thursday, November 30. The award recognises and celebrates innovative and change-making sustainability projects by universities and colleges that are leading the way in creating a greener future and signposted that sustainability was integral to the College ethos and extended students' skills dramatically in associated disciplines. Members formally recorded congratulations to the leadership for the focused and inspiring initiatives, which had been diligently and consistently applied by all staff colleagues. **(Action 1HS)**
- Julie Teckman was welcomed to her first meeting as a Corporation Member. **(Action 2RD)**
- The apologies were accepted and it was noted that Molly Pick had advised limited attendance at this meeting. 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 information was received.

Actions had been identified. (See Register 28/23 below.)

13/23 STANDING ITEMS

- The minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2023 were confirmed for electronic signature, Clerk to Action. **(Action 3RD)**
- Matters Arising. There were no matters arising.
- Outstanding Actions. Actions from the previous meeting had been completed or were in progress.

See referenced minute for full action.		Status
Action 1	01/23. Agenda sequence amended.	Complete
Action 2	03/23. HAS Policy approved for signature	
Action 3	04/23. Estates Annual Report commended.	
Action 4	05/23. Last Corporation minutes confirmed for signature.	
Action 5	05/23b(i). QTLA meeting date amended.	
Action 6	05/23b(i) BB to join Governance Committee (vice HS)	
Action 7	05/23 b(ii) JT appointed to Corporation.	
Action 8	07/23b. Sub-Contact Policy and Procurement approved.	
Action 9	09/23a(ii) RW appointed to AC. RC and TFG confirmed.	
Action 10	09/23b. Regulatory Documents tbc.	
Action 11	10/23b. Next meeting attendance to be confirmed.	

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

The information was received.

Actions had been identified. (See Register 28/23 below.)

15/23 COMMITTEE MINUTES

The unconfirmed Committee Minutes were then considered and recommendations noted.

a. Audit Committee (AC) (10/10.23 (Special) & 23.11.23). A special meeting had preceded the annual schedule to consider some issues carried over from last year and the confirmed minutes of that meeting, together with the unconfirmed version of the November meeting, were explained by the Committee Chair. This was noted together with the associated recommendations:

(i) minute 03/23b (IAS Strategy) the IAS strategy required approval and that had been recommended; **(Action 4JW)** and

(ii) 04/23a to 08/23 (all rec) would inform consideration of Agenda Item 6b. **(Action 5MR)**

b. Quality of Teaching Learning and Assurance (QTLA). (27.11.23). The unconfirmed minutes of the last QTLA meeting were explained by the Committee Chair, these were noted and the associated recommendations would:

(i) 03&04/23 (rec) inform consideration of Item 4; **(Action 6HS)** and

(ii) 09/23 the TORs were approved. **(Action 7RD)**

The information was received.

Actions had been identified. (See Register 28/23 below.)

16/23 PRINCIPAL'S UPDATE

The Report was considered, informed by a verbal update with reference to a progressive colour coded table Blue, Red, Amber, Green (BRAG); the Covid related blue coding had been retained since it remained active in College. Several items had been upgraded from Amber to Green, unusually at this early stage in the academic year, evidencing the inherent strength of the curriculum and the College learning environment. Some typos in the presented document were explained and noted. Several particularly rewarding performances were highlighted; including sound retention and the "Good or Better" percentage from the lesson observation process together with the moves towards bolstering and developing of the existing digital focus. Included in associated considerations was clarification that the "ProSuite" was an inclusive group of interlinked products covering all necessary administrative aspects; and the relatively high proportion of Amber grades in Section 2 was explained and accepted. Progress with the transfer of responsibility for local "Skills" oversight from SEMLEP (South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership) to the Local Authority was discussed and hopefully the College offer of hosting associated activities if accepted would facilitate a more inclusive arrangement.

Challenges associated with cross-training of trade specialists into the transfer of their skills through teaching and learning (T&L) were discussed. The Update was received and noted.

The information was received.

17/23 SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR)

The College SAR, a comprehensive document comprising 11 elements (including the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)), had now been completed and the SAR, having been extensively scrutinised, internally and externally moderated and considered by the QTLA Committee (15/23b(i)) the Report was considered for final approval. The DP introduced the associated paper. The detail covered an excellent year in all areas, for example exemplary outcomes for retention, pass and achievement rates evidenced by the College standing in the top 10% of national Further Education (FE) providers. The past 7/8 years had seen progressive and sustained annual improvements in performance (National Achievement Rate placing had risen from 267th to 7th) and, in determining this draft Report, considerable appropriate and expert external advice had reinforced the internal determination of the final assessment; an

unequivocally robust, well evidenced and justified outcome. To avoid perception of “complacency” the narrative took account of all influencing effects, supplemented by a comprehensive suite of tabulated data and areas of note. There was then a full discussion informed by the self-assessed grades, which were:

Area	2022/23
a. Overall Effectiveness Judgement	1 (Oct 18 - 2)
b. Quality of Education	1
c. Behaviour and Attitudes	1
d. Personal Development	1
e. Leadership & Management	1
f. Education programmes for young people	1
g. Adult Learning Programmes	1
h. Apprenticeships (provisional)	1
i. Provision for students with high needs	1

These recommended outcomes, comprehensively explained in the narrative were individually considered; apprenticeship performance and outcomes were particularly welcomed. Quality of Provision clearly focussed on the curriculum ambition and purpose dedicated to local requirements, for example footwear and logistics, together with students’ outstanding behaviour and attitudes, which had been particularly drawn out. Influences considered included inspired leadership and management (L&M) performance at all levels and the absolute and constant executive focus on the wider strategic aims. Overall achievement had now recovered to the pre-pandemic position. The QTLA Committee had unanimously agreed and endorsed the recommended Grade 1 and recommended that to the Corporation, as explained by the QTLA Chair; that was accepted and the **SAR was unanimously approved. (Action 8HS)**

Sample questions from considerations	
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>This is an excellent report has it been externally moderated?</i>	
Yes, the Principal of a recently inspected group of colleges provided consultancy and inhouse oversight was from a currently Ofsted qualified manager (AP(TLQ)) who had been involved throughout the process.	

**The information was received and noted.
Action had been identified. (Register at 28/23)**

Molly Pick joined the meeting.

18/23 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 QIP based on the SAR 2022/23 was attached and had been considered by the QTLA Committee (15/23b(i)) the RAG rated document was noted for implementation and was explained, challenged, and fully considered. The QIP comprised actions formed around the five primary SAR and three enhanced objectives, which had been robustly distilled from the SAR, which had all been evaluated and assessed as: specific; measurable, and realistic. Each section was thoroughly considered individually, discussed, and challenged. Detail was well informed by data and included evidenced judgements. The Committee recommendation was accepted **and the QIP was approved. (Action 9HS)**

**The information was received and noted.
Action had been identified. (Register at 28/23)**

20/23 LEARNER DATA MONITORING

The Learner Data Monitoring comprised 5 comprehensive data tables, each complemented by listed informative main bullet points, the first of which was included and had been considered in the previous Item; all data from these tables was analytically challenged, discussed and agreed as re-assuring. Comparisons with alternative performance data was realistically based and showed continuing solid progress. For example, 16-18 enrolments were impressive and out-performed national GFE numbers, as did the 2022/23 pass rates. The yearly, incremental improvement was particularly rewarding in the challenging post-lockdown environment. This evidenced the ongoing effectiveness of the carefully constructed and administered student support framework (School of Academic and Vocational Support), which helped students through challenges. Other excellent detail was also apparent and English and Maths (EAM) was considered in particular where the initiative related to the challenging expectation for GCSE Level 1(L1) students to achieve an improvement of at least 2 grades in a single year, was revisited; the local policy of extending the study period to 2 years was effective. As had been explained and considered in the previous meeting the sound progress extended into elements of Higher Education (HE). Members took assurance from the information which was noted.

The information was received and noted.

21/23 FINANCE REPORT

- a. Management Accounts. The management accounts up to October 2023 (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, including those relating to apprenticeships, 16-18 income and pay costs. The EBITDA was projected at £2,217k (revised budget £1,682k) resulting in an operating surplus of £1125k. The cash balance at the end of October was £18,510k. Significantly increased 16-18 funding related to the high enrolments was expected through in-year growth funding and a revised Budget incorporating all income and expenditure variations, including any recommendations from the Task & Finish Group (TFG) regarding the pay structure, and the overall surplus figure, would be brought to the next Corporation meeting (29.02.24) for consideration. **(Action 10JW)** The accounts were received.
- b. Annual Financial Statements (AFS). The AFS had been considered by the AC whose remit was to consider the findings of the Internal and External Auditors and to scrutinize the documents, including the Corporate Governance Statements with respect to the systems of financial control, Risk Management (RM) and governance processes and then to recommend (or not) the document(s) for approval and signature; the circulated documents were to inform the Board considerations. The Financial Position showed an underlying operating surplus prior to depreciation and other adjustments of £1,657m (2021/22 £(242k) deficit). This includes a non-cash Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 102 adjustment to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) of minus £324k (2021 £2,311k) The Statement of Comprehensive Income (SOI) showed a total comprehensive income of c£2.194m with an LGPS Actuarial Gain of £537k (2021/22 £22,588k). The strong financial position was explained and Members took comfort from the considerations. The provisional unqualified opinion on the accounts was noted and welcomed. The AFS were then fully and closely scrutinised and discussed. The strong financial position (outstanding Financial Health) and the full narrative, including the Corporate Governance Statement had been considered by the AC, which had recommended the AFS, and necessary associated documents to the Corporation for acceptance, approval, and signature. That was accepted informed by input from the AC Chair and the attached AC Annual Report (ACAR), including no recordable consequences on the inquiracy issue, which had now been resolved. The following were then **approved for signature and submission as necessary (Action 11HS)**:
 - (i) AFS for the year to 31 July 2023 **was approved for signature**;
 - (ii) the Letter of Representation – Regularity and **was approved for signature**; and
 - (iii) the Letter of Representation – Financial Statements **was approved for signature**.

The information was noted and received.
Actions had been identified (Register at 11/23)

22/23 ENROLMENT 2023/24

Enrolment detail funding target dates (42 day point & RO4) had now passed and all necessary data had been submitted and, as of 5 December 2023:

- a. there were 4,439 (2022 - 3,896) full time students on roll - a 14% increase, including an increase of 562 16-18 students and the positive implications for increased funding were explained and welcomed;
- b. challenges with TLevel recruitment, reported at the last meeting, had continued and there were now 38/121 in roll – the consequent estimated clawback would be c£120k;
- c. Adults recruit throughout the year , currently standing at 1178 (19+) a pattern similar to last year and an income estimate for the year would be included in the management accounts at the next meeting;
- d. Apprenticeship recruitment showed 477, lower than the similar point in 2022 partly through more timely achievement; and
- e. HNC/D stood at 79 (2022 – 78) with 11 part-time and a modestly increased related income was forecast.

More detailed information would be available at the February meeting.

The information was received and noted.

Molly Pick left the meeting

23/23 UTILITIES PROCUREMENT

The Public Contract Regulations (PCR) 2015 and subsequent procurement guidance are required to tender for services above specific cost limits and applies to the College's sourcing of gas and electricity. Since 2013, as approved by the Corporation, the College has met this requirement by purchasing gas and electricity through a pre-tendered framework operated by the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO), who operate their own framework and are fully compliant with PCR, which also comply with the College Financial Regulations. Associated costs had increased but procurement requirements remain unchanged and Corporation approval is necessary. The VP(Estates and Resources (Res)) had sent unavoidable short notice apologies for this meeting and was therefore unavailable to answer questions regarding the content of the associated paper. Members had such queries, considering the sums involved, and further information was required before the proposal could be considered; it was necessary, despite the potential time constraints, to seek more detailed authentication of these. It was decided as a matter of urgency that the DP(FCA) would seek the required information from the VP (Res) and pass it to the Clerk for, if necessary, prompt circulation to Members (**Action 12RD**) who would then signify their decision electronically to the Corporation Chair, who would advise the aggregated decision to the DP(FCA). (**Action 13HS**)

The information was received and noted.
Actions had been identified (Register at 28/23 below)

24/23 OVERSEAS TRIPS

Pre-Pandemic, it had been normal practice to inform the Corporation of future overseas visits but it had been discontinued largely since this was a management responsibility, excepting, in accordance with College Financial Regulation (viz 11.8.2), where Corporation approval remains necessary for trips costing >£15k. It had now been decided that as well as seeking necessary approval, to inform the Corporation in advance (where possible) of all visits. Accordingly, Members were asked to consider the attached detail of 3 trips and:

- a. approve the visit to LA; (**Action 14JW**) and
- b. to note the detail of the other 2 trips.

The information was received and noted.
Actions had been identified (Register at 28/23 below)

25/23 CEO AND PRINCIPAL

The CEO & Principal Item would be considered in Part 3.

The information was received and noted.
Actions had been identified (Register at 28/23 below)

26/23 GOVERNANCE

There were 3 Governance items for consideration;

- a. Becky Bradshaw's term of office expired on 29 November and she was unanimously re-appointed for a further 4 years; **(Action 15RD)**
- b. the current Corporation Business Plan and meeting schedule were noted; and
- c. the Regulatory Documents may be amended after the next Governance Committee meeting (29.02.24) and in the interim the existing version approved in 2022/23, would continue. **(Action 16RD)**. it was noted that the updated SPH Pay regulations had informed the new Principals consideration. (Part 2)

The information was received and noted.
Actions had been identified (Register at 28/23 below)

27/23 URGENT BUSINESS AND NEXT MEETING

- a. There had been no Urgent Business requested.
- b. The next meeting would be held at 1700 on 29 February 2024.

The information was received.

28/23 ACTION REGISTER

See referenced minute for full action.		Resp	By
Action 1	12/23a. Congratulations recoded re Green Gowns award.	Chair	wie
Action 2	12/23b. JT welcomed to Corporation.	Clerk	
Action 3	13/23a. Last minutes (04.10.23) confirmed.		
Action 4	15/23a (i). IAS Strategy approved.	DPFCA	
Action 5	15/23a (ii). Agenda Item 6b recommended for approval.	DP	
Action 6	15/23b (i). Agenda Item 4 recommended for approval.	Clerk	
Action 7	15/23b (ii). QTLA TOR approved.	DP	
Action 8	17/23. SAR approved.		
Action 9	18/23. QIP approved.		
Action 10	21/13a. Revised budget 2023/24 to next meeting.	DPFCA	29.02.24
Action 11	21/23b. Necessary approval & signatures confirmed.		wie
Action 12	23/23. Info to be circulated to Members for decision.	Clerk	asap
Action 13	23/23. Comments re Action 12 to Chair to relay to JW.	Chair	
Action 14	24/23. Visit to LA approved.	DPFCA	wie
Action 15	26/23a. BB re-appointed to Corporation.	Clerk	
Action 16	26/23c. Regulatory documents interim approval.		