

**Minutes of the meeting of the Northampton College Corporation  
held at 1700 hours on 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024 in the Boardroom**

**Present:** Anne-Marie Kilday (Chair), Paul Beers (Teams), Laura Crandley, Neus Garriock, Jason Lancaster (Principal and CEO), Paul Nutter (Teams), Alric Pagon, Mark Robbins, Julie Teckman, Keira White and Rod Wood

**In attendance:** Geraldine Hulley (Clerk via Teams), Jan Hutt (Vice Principal, People and Organisational Development), Joanne Philpott (Deputy Principal Curriculum Success and Quality), and Julian Wood (Deputy Principal, Finance and Corporate Affairs)

**SECTION A – ROUTINE AND GOVERNANCE ITEMS:**

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**93/24 Welcome and introductions (Agenda item 1)**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, in particular, those governors for whom this was their first meeting.

**94/24 Apologies for absence (Agenda item 2)**

Apologies were received from David Bailey, Steve Bunker, Lynn Drinkald, Alexandra Owen, Kay Sellick and Chidiebere Uleme. Patrick Leavey (Deputy Principal) also sent his apologies.

**95/24 Declarations of interest (Agenda item 3)**

There were no declarations of interest.

**96/24 Minutes of last meeting (Agenda item 4, Paper A)**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2024 had been circulated previously and were approved as a true and accurate record.

**97/24 Actions outstanding (Agenda item 5, Paper B)**

The report confirmed all actions had been completed.

**98/24 Governance (Agenda item 6)**

**a. Governor recruitment:** Following interviews held earlier in September, a written resolution had been used to seek agreement of the recommendation to appoint Alexandra Owen, Laura Crandley, Kay Sellick and Alric Pagon as independent governors starting 1<sup>st</sup> December 2024. A written resolution was also used to appoint Luke Bowers as a co-opted member of the Quality and Standards Committee from the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2024. A majority of governors had agreed with the recommendation.

**Resolved:** To ratify the decisions in relation to the appointment of Alexandra Owen, Laura Crandley, Kay Sellick and Alric Pagon as independent governors; and, the appointment of Luke Bowers as a co-opted member of the Quality and Standards Committee.

**99/24 Staff and student voice (Agenda item 7)**

- a.** Staff governor: No report received due to absence.
- b.** Student governor Keira White had prepared a written report which had been tabled. Key points included:
- A successful meeting with the Principal/CEO on the 8<sup>th</sup> November where points raised by both student governors were discussed in more detail. A

number of actions had been implemented including: staff having the option to learn British Sign Language at CPD days; the introduction of a 'box of change' available in each campus reception to capture student voice; and, the introduction of culture/diversity days.

- A meeting of Student Parliament ambassadors had provided a range of feedback. Where feedback on courses was concerned, ambassadors commented that: overall, experience was very good; teachers were good at delivering knowledge in a way for all students to understand; and, teachers were very professional and provided specialist information. Areas for further improvement included: waiting times for the return of assignments was very long; and, there was little notice on assignments or big exams before they were due. Other feedback included: enrichment didn't seem to happen even though they had been advertised; and, improvements were needed with organisation and communication of room bookings.
- The student governor outlined some actions that could be taken forward in support of embedding student voice further within the College including: taking part in the recruitment of new staff by involvement as observers on interview panels; and, being involved in the decision-making process for the canteen in terms of healthy food and crowd management.

The student governor was thanked for her report and the level of detail that she had provided; the points raised were all very valid. Where student involvement in staff recruitment was concerned, this was something that could be incorporated into future plans but it would be important to give due consideration to how this might work in practice. In response to the point about waiting times for feedback, the Deputy Principal, Curriculum Success and Quality (DP CSQ) confirmed there was a policy that confirmed the maximum number of days that a student should have to wait; staff would be reminded of this. The Corporation welcomed the proposal about cultural/ days but also questioned whether the College could be more holistic with inclusion in terms of certain groups needing more support and attention. The Principal/CEO confirmed that at the Strategy Day planned for February 2025, this might be a good time to focus on some of the points raised. The Chair requested that it would be helpful if the student governor informed students of those actions that had been successfully addressed as a concern as part of student voice. Half-termly meetings between the Principal/CEO and two student governors would continue.

**Resolved:** To note the student governor's report.

#### **100/24 Health and safety (Agenda item 8)**

The Deputy Principal Finance and Corporate Affairs (DP FCA) confirmed there had been one RIDDOR reportable incident to report which took place several weeks ago. A member of the catering staff had suffered a back injury whilst lifting. As she had been off work for more than 7 days, this had become a RIDDOR event. The member of staff had previously had manual handling training but not for two years. This was an issue being taken forward. An individual risk assessment had been put in place for the member of staff and the position of all catering staff was being reviewed to find out if they required risk assessments. A bespoke manual handling training session was planned for the staff CPD day next week. The Corporation was informed that the College had been late in reporting the incident to the Health and Safety Executive<sup>1</sup>.

**Resolved:** To note the health and safety report.

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<sup>1</sup> Corporation to note that the consequences of not reporting RIDDOR depends on the seriousness of the incident. The courts can impose a custodial prison sentence of up to 2 years for the responsible person, or persons, and an unlimited fine for the business.

## **SECTION B – COLLEGE STRATEGIC DIRECTION:**

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### **101/24 a. CEO and Principal's report (Agenda item 9, Paper C)**

The report set out indicators of progress and impact against each strand of the College's strategic plan to provide assurance to the Corporation that leaders and staff continued to progress against its objectives. Potential areas of concern/for monitoring were highlighted in orange. Indicative 'BRAG' grading of progress was included for clarity and to prompt discussion and challenge. Key features and issues included:

- The large majority of sections remained 'green' or better, reflecting ongoing positive progress (further examples were included throughout the report).
- Three items were graded 'amber' and required ongoing monitoring, including item 2.3 (curriculum offer) which had been changed for this period to reflect Ofsted's findings recommending improvements to Supported Learning.
- Additional updates in this report included: final R04 student numbers confirmed substantial growth of 16-19 full-time students, however, there were ongoing challenges in recruiting to T-Levels; progress with trauma informed/digital strategies; strengthening of curriculum planning process; change of pay review timescales to January 2025; current challenges with filling staff vacancies and staff sickness; adjustment of timing of immersive space installation to early 2025; and, Ofsted inspection (October 2024) identifying substantial strengths and also areas for further improvement.
- A range of good news stories: introduction of Principal's Awards; AoC Adult Student of the Year; World Skills Gold winner; and, Lifetime Achievement Award (Northants Education Awards).

Feedback from the Corporation included:

- To what extent was there a threshold for saying the College was no longer able to meet the demands of some SEND students and what does that mean in terms of reputation? *The College was facing a national SEND crisis. The College was particularly good at supporting diagnosed and/or non-diagnosed SEND students. Some College students had very complex mental health and wellbeing issues. Alternative programmes were being run with the Saints Foundation; additional programmes were also being explored. The curriculum plan would also include programmes that would not have qualifications due to demand. Conversations were ongoing with the local authority to provide support for students that are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and cannot engage with education. Although the landscape was complex, the team was doing everything possible to offer as many different types of provision to meet students' needs.*
- Does this imply that there may have been students that were taken in the past that the College can no longer support? *The College had many more complex students now than previously. As numbers were growing, the team was keen to match the right kind of provision for them. Partnerships across the county remained crucial in order to ensure a coherent offer for all students. An external SEND specialist would be providing some support around some of the points raised by Ofsted as well as making suggestions about alternative provision that could be put in place.*
- What progress was being made with trauma-informed practice? *The DP CSQ explained that to have a full trauma-informed education was a 'journey in itself'. Sessions linked to this and SEND were planned for the forthcoming CPD/training day. Learning walks and evidence from ProMonitor were confirming that there was a much supportive approach being adopted.*

- Why did the rating change from Green to Amber? *This was specifically around Ofsted feedback as they had identified the discrete high needs provision was not as ambitious as it could be. Due to changes that had been implemented to date, some in-year impact would be observed. Next year would see a much sharper focus on practical skills and therefore greater impact was expected.*
- What is the reason for 1.3 'investing in technology being Amber and not Green. This objective is about investment which the College had achieved? *This was really about the progress the College had made with things like immersive rooms which were not ready and artificial intelligence. The DP FCA confirmed that where investment was concerned, the College was relatively unusual in its level of commitment to supplying all students with devices. Further, the College was careful of not running out of date operating systems so this also incurred a cost each year. Although the College was able to afford this level of investment in its students, the more successful it was in terms of student recruitment, the more this would cost.*
- A request was made to ensure the report met accessibility guidelines; one governor was colour blind.

**b. Key performance indicators:**

The report proposed revised key performance indicators (KPIs) to support oversight of the College's progress using a limited range of quantitative measures. The draft KPIs presented at the previous meeting had been revised based on Governors' feedback. Changes included: reordering of some KPIs to better facilitate interpretation; including a measure aimed to increase intervention in teacher skills to support an increased focus on developmental support over 'meeting a grade threshold' in teaching observations; adjustment of targets based on prior out-turn (for review/feedback); inclusion of staff turnover measure for Strategic Aim 3; and, out-turn for 2023/24 had been updated based on latest available data.

Feedback from the Corporation included:

- Where safeguarding was concerned, it was not felt that training was an appropriate proxy for students feeling safe; it was not easy to get a measure without evidence from a survey.
- Governors welcomed the KPIs as this had been something that had been requested for several years. Confirmation was received that as more evidence became available throughout the year, adjustments would be made.
- The KPIs were also a good starting point to be used to cascade down to different levels of the organisation to enable staff to own their operational aspects of the KPIs and contribute to the College's strategic objectives; it was considered important that these were embedded with the work of teams.
- Clarification was sought from the VP P&OD about the staff turnover KPI where the outturn for 2023-24 was 13.8% but the proposed target for 2024-25 was 17.8%. This was in light of the ongoing Pay Review which should conclude in January 2025 and had a primary objective to reduce staff turnover. The Corporation was informed that staff turnover had been consistently decreasing for the last 3 years. The growth in student numbers had put additional pressure on staff; there had been higher support staff turnover this year to date; and, the highest demographic was in the 60-65 age group. The VP P&OD confirmed the need to look holistically at how to engage and retain staff; this would be a broader piece of work to share with the Corporation at a later date. The proposed target of 17.8% was considered

quite high and a request was made to look at a more ambitious target in view of the Pay Review.

**Resolved:** To receive the CEO/Principal's report including the KPIs for 2024-25.

## **SECTION C – TEACHING AND LEARNING:**

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### **102/24 Student Learning and Performance (Agenda item 10, Paper D)**

This report provided an overview of progress made in recruitment, learning and performance in the first term as well as giving an overview of priorities related to quality, teaching and learning. Points to note included:

- Generally positive recruitment, particularly for full-time provision.
- Student retention remained positive at this early stage, although the increasing complexity of students' prior experience meant this remained an area of close focus.
- Attendance, while above the College target, also remained an area of close focus. Work was ongoing to address those students whose attendance was not meeting expectations.
- Applications for 2025-26 appeared positive at this early stage. Careful preparations were underway to ensure the College made well-informed decisions on staffing, recruitment and resource allocation.
- Quality activities underway for 2024-25 included: the assessment of student progress through the Key Assessment (KA) process; observation of teaching, learning and assessment; a strengthened internal quality review process (I3QR). Development priorities for teachers were shared.

In response to a request for further information about issues around mental health, resilience and the pandemic, the DP CSQ confirmed that from an educational perspective, the pandemic had created a whole range of issues including lost learning. The student governor concurred that her peer group missed out on their introduction to secondary school. In terms of any structural changes that were required from a College perspective, there was a need to develop a much better understanding of the different student cohorts. It was not just about the pandemic; Generation Alpha students would be joining the College next year and have had access to devices from very early years. This would have an impact on how they learn; there was further work for the College to do around teacher training and pedagogy. One of the major changes that needed further consideration was the incorporation of technology and the need to teach in different ways to accommodate the fact that students now learn differently. Students were now more able to synthesize information from a range of different sources and bring it together holistically; there was a need for this to be accommodated as part of the student experience.

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and the need to teach in different ways to accommodate the fact that students now learn differently. Students were now more able to synthesize information from a range of different sources and bring it together holistically; there was a need for this to be accommodated as part of the student experience.

**Resolved:** To note the report on student learning and performance.

## **SECTION D – FINANCE:**

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### **103/24 Management Accounts: Period 3 (Agenda item 11, Paper E)**

The format of the pack had been refreshed for 2024-25 with further updates to follow in subsequent months. The Management Accounts pack now included a Headlines report and commentary on the KPIs and an income and expenditure variance analysis against year to date and forecasted performance. Period 3 was a relatively early reporting point, and much income was still forecasted to profile ahead of the R04 data return. Costs were largely also forecasted to budget as Period 3 was used to identify areas for review and updating in subsequent periods. Year to date EBITDA was marginally (£23k) ahead of budget reflecting balancing impacts of lower operating income, lower pay costs and lower non-pay costs. Operating surplus was well ahead of budget due to higher interest received and this was projected to continue to the year-end position. The College's projected ESFA Financial Health rating was expected to remain 'Outstanding' with a score of 250/300 in line with budget. Ahead of future periods there would be a review adult and apprenticeship income forecasts and estimate any in-year 16-19 growth funding net of T-level clawback. A capital report would be added to future Management Accounts and balance sheet and cashflow profiles would be reviewed and revised.

Feedback from the Corporation included:

- National insurance (NI) increases were not mentioned in the report. The DP FCA confirmed that an assumption had been made that for the period April to July the additional cost of contributions would be equivalent to the underspend to date ie £0.5m. The Government had made a commitment to compensate public sector bodies for the increase in NI costs. No confirmation had been received about how much that would be. An announcement was expected at the end of February. A recommendation was made to reference increases in NI costs in the report.
- In response to a request for an update on a number of capital grants that were underspent that needed to be spent in a short timeframe the DP FCA confirmed that further work was required by the team. The most urgent grants were those that would expire in March 2025. These were estate-related grants where there was still an underspend of £200k. There were also a couple of T Level grants. The team was looking to mitigate any risk over the next three months.

**Resolved:** To receive the Period 3 management accounts.

### **104/24 Enrolment (Agenda item 12)**

The Deputy Principal Finance and Corporate Affairs (DP FCA) provided a brief update on enrolment numbers. Where full-time students were concerned (adult and 16-18), there had been a 16% increase compared to the same period last year. For the 16-18 cohort, these were 563 above the allocation figure and 616 above the number at the same period as last year. There were more enrolments for adults; there was a new funding structure which had enabled more people to be eligible for full funding. The team was projecting the implications of this. Higher education remained static at 85 students. Apprenticeships were lower but recruitment continued and enrolments would be added to the system. Where T Levels were concerned,

numbers were higher than last year but below the funding allocation. A clawback of c. £200k was expected. A brief summary of the outcomes of the review of qualifications reform at level 3 was outlined to explain any implications for the College. A Level provision was healthy with 106 learners. Student numbers for 16-18 had shown year on year growth over an extended period particularly since 2022-23. This had put a lot of pressure on staff from across the organisation. The Principal/CEO believed it would be difficult to manage a similar level of growth next year and there would be a need to give this serious consideration as part of the curriculum planning process. The DfE (Department of Education) had confirmed a reluctance for the College to cap numbers but the team had outlined the implications in terms of physical space; staff recruitment; support function; and, Ofsted. In conclusion, the DP FCA confirmed that funding for next year was largely based on numbers outlined in the presentation and subject to funding rates being announced in January 2025, the College would expect a significant increase in 16-19 income. This was based on this year's student numbers.

**Resolved:** To note the report on enrolment for 2024-25.

## **SECTION E – COMMITTEES:**

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### **105/24 Quality and Standards Committee (Agenda item 13)**

- a. **Minutes of meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> November (Paper F.1):** Minutes of the meeting had been circulated for information. The self-assessment report 2023-24 (Paper F.2a) and quality improvement plan 2024-25 (Paper F.2b) had been scrutinised in detail. Both were recommended for approval. A summary of the Ofsted report (Paper F.3) had been considered at the meeting and the wider Corporation was encouraged to read the paper as it provided assurances around planned improvement activities in response to the inspection. The HE Strategy (Paper F.4) was also considered at the meeting and it was agreed an updated version would be presented to the next Committee meeting in March 2025.

**Resolved:** To approve the self-assessment report 2023-24 and quality improvement plan 2024-25; to note the Ofsted update and HE Strategy.

### **106/24 Audit Committee (Agenda item 14)**

- a. **Minutes of last meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2024 (Paper G.1):** Minutes were circulated for information. The main focus of the meeting had been around reviewing reports relating to the year-end financial statements. These were: Draft financial statements (Paper G.2); Draft Audit findings report (Paper G.3); Draft letters of representation (Paper G.4); Draft regulatory self-assessment questionnaire (Paper G.5); Audit Committee Annual Report (Paper G.6). The financial statements auditor had given an unqualified opinion which had been welcomed. The Chair of Audit informed the Corporation of a late change that had to be made to the financial statements; regulatory self-assessment report; and, Audit Committee annual report. The College had commissioned two external governance reviews and the reports had been amended to reflect this together with any actions that had been taken. The Chair highlighted the need for Paper G.5 to be updated to reflect the fact that the property strategy was being refreshed. The Corporation agreed to these changes in the relevant reports.

**Resolved:** The Corporation agreed to approve the: Annual Financial Statements; draft letters of representation; regulatory self-assessment questionnaire (subject to above amendment); and, the Audit Committee annual report.

### **107/24 Governance and Search Committee (Agenda item 15)**

**a. Minutes of meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2024 (Paper H)**

The Chair of Governance and Search Committee provided a summary of key points of discussion at the meeting. This included: monitoring of the governance improvement plan where good progress was being made with the agreed actions; a report on governance activity for 2023-24 focusing on attendance where it was agreed that minimum attendance should be 80%; and, approval of the Committee's terms of reference and annual workplan. The minutes also recorded the introduction of a link governor scheme; governors were encouraged to be involved in this. Confirmation of Committee membership was also agreed.

**Resolved:** To note the report on the Governance and Search Committee.

**108/24 Date of next meeting (Agenda item 16)**

Thursday, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2025 at 12 noon via Teams. This would be a one item agenda to agree recommendations from the Task and Finish Group: Pay Review which was due to meet on the 7<sup>th</sup> January 2025. The scheduled Corporation was next due to meet on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2025.

**109/24 Any other business (Agenda item 19)**

**a. Overseas trip 2025 (Paper I)**

The report proposed a trip to Berlin for level 3 year 2 students studying music, acting and technical theatre programmes at the College. The College Overseas Visits process had been followed, including costing the visit, completion of a risk assessment to the required standard and approval in principle from the Principal/CEO. The trip was self-funded with costs to the College for two or three members of staff.

**b. Governor term of office:**

David Smith had completed 9 years as an independent governor and would be stepping down from the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024. He would be attending the staff CPD and training day on the following Monday where he would be presented with a thank you present on behalf of the Corporation.

**Resolved:** To approve the overseas trip to Barcelona in February 2025; and, to note David Smith's position on the board.

Keira White left the meeting.