



HUDDERSFIELD NEW COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

Corporation Meeting held on 5th May 2022 from 5.00pm
at HNC in Room 205.

Confirmed Open Minutes

Present: Ms L Summers, Mr J Dawson, Mr K Webb, Ms M Boryslawskyj, Ms H Haigh, Ms M Dean, Ms N Woodhouse, Ms R Drury, Mrs S Johnson, Mr M Smith-Connor and Mr T Hosker.

In attendance: Mr L Goddard

Clerk: Mrs C Coupland

1. Apologies for Absence/ Declaration of Interests

The Clerk confirmed that Ms H Richards has submitted apologies for today's meeting.

Ms Summers advised the Corporation that Mr A Leach had resigned with immediate effect in February 2022, due to change in work commitments. The corporation asked to record their thanks to Mr Leach for his support, challenge and guidance during his time served as a Governor.

It had been deemed necessary in advance of the meeting for all staff and students to withdraw from conversations for agenda item 2 given sensitivity of information.

2. Principal Appointment – Update (confidential)

Resolved:

- That the verbal update be received
- That the Corporation endorsed the decisions and actions taken by the Chair of the Corporation
- For the Clerk to circulate the revised SLT Structure for 2022/23 as soon as it is made available.

Mr Smith-Connor, Ms Dean, Ms Woodhouse and Mr Goddard joined the meeting at this stage. Mr Smith-Connor was welcomed to the meeting as the college's new Principal. Ms Woodhouse was also welcomed to her first corporation meeting as the newly appointed Student Governor. Time was taken for introductions to be made.

3. Minutes from Meetings held on:

- 16th December 2021 (Non-Confidential)
- 9th February 2022 (Confidential)

Resolved:

- That both sets of minutes be accepted as a true record of each meeting.
- For all governors to advise the Clerk as to the preferred title to be used within meeting minutes (e.g. Mrs, Miss, Ms)

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising

The Clerk confirmed that all required signed documents and financial returns had been signed by the Chair and Principal and submitted to the ESFA by the deadline of 31st December 2021 and that the financial statements and Members report had been published on the colleges website.

5. Corporate Report

Mr Smith-Connor presented the Senior Leadership Team report to the Corporation. Comprehensive updates were provided on key areas of the college and its performance to date against key performance indicators, including:

Performance Update:

Mr Smith-Connor advised the Corporation that in February 2022, the DfE confirmed in their publication of the '16 to 18 accountability measures – update', that there will be no A Level or Applied General Progress Measures (based on the L3VA) published in the 2022 or 2023 Performance Tables. The A-Level and Applied General Performance Tables in 2022 and 2023 will, therefore, be dominated by the College's Average Grades.

Governors were asked to note that the data in the report is based on the Progress Point 3 Progress Grades inputted by staff by 7th March (BTEC and GCSE) and 21st March (A level).

Mr Smith-Connor explained that for all level 3 provision, high grades and value added are projected to decrease. The grade 4+ pass rate for GCSE English and maths is also projected to decrease significantly. Governors were mindful however that this data set needed to be treated with caution for the following reasons:

- This summer's exam grade boundaries are subject to more fluctuation than has ever been the case previously. This is because Ofqual have committed to ensuring that the grade distributions are at a level between 2019 (when exams last ran) and 2021 (TAGs). Although this is a welcome decision it makes grading assessed work in accordance with existing grade boundaries and mark schemes a much more challenging task than usual.
- All providers are reporting that students have knowledge and skills gaps. This will almost certainly have an impact on where the exam boards draw their grade boundaries following the exam series. It seems very likely that the overall impact will be that grade boundaries are lower than would be the case in a 'normal' year.
- The impact on students' performance of the Advance Information which was released by the exam boards on 7th February is very difficult to predict as this has never happened before.
- The effect on grade boundaries and grade distributions between centres of the JCQ's updated approach to student eligibility for special consideration is a further complicating factor. (A student will receive a grade as long as they have completed at least 25% of the total assessment for their GCSE or A level qualification.) The possibility and impact of en masse misuse of the ability to 'opt out' of a less favourable paper by students in other schools and colleges is impossible to predict and is unprecedented.

The Corporation enquired as to what benchmarks had been used by teachers to determine the progress point 3 grades. Mr Smith-Connor explained that as no new work schemes or descriptors had been issued, staff had used those last published in 2019.

Destinations and Progression:

It was noted from the report that direct entry into higher education remains the destination of choice for most students. The national trend for large numbers of students applying to local universities is replicated within

HNC. In this application cycle, 63% of HNC students progressed to universities in Huddersfield, Leeds, Bradford, Manchester or Sheffield; 33% choosing to study at the University of Huddersfield alone.

Mr Smith-Connor advised that the AspireXL Programme for higher achieving students, along with the proactive promotion of university summer schools, student take up of the Social Mobility 'Aspiring Professionals' Programme and greater use of widening participation progression agreements have all had an impact and the college will continue to develop and promote these strategies. The purchase of the careers tool "Unifrog" will also support the push to include at least one aspirational choice in the 5, as a result of categorising searches to aspirational, safe and secure.

It was noted that in 2020, 72 students progressed to apprenticeships, ranging from tattoo artist to weapons technician. Of particular note were three students who secured degree level apprenticeships, which are extremely competitive.

Mr Smith-Connor explained that internal progression remains a key strength of the College. The level 2 to level 3 progression rate is particularly noteworthy as most of these students applied to HNC to study a level 3 programme but didn't achieve the necessary GCSE grade profile. As such, they tend to be reluctant learners with low levels of confidence. To transform these students into learners ready for level 3 in one academic year is an outstanding achievement.

Furthermore, Year 12 to Year 13 progression has recovered from a dip in 2018/19 to be at a 5-year high. This is a consequence of the College-wide focus on the promotion of 2-year study programmes throughout the application, enrolment, induction and progression phases of a students' time with the College.

College Quality Improvement Plan – Update:

Mr Smith-Connor shared the updated College Quality Improvement Plan to inform Governors understanding of the progress made to date. It was confirmed that at the end of term 2, all Quality Improvement Priorities are reported to be on track to achieving all (green) or some (amber) of the success criteria. The Corporation noted that there are no red progress areas to be reported.

The corporation was satisfied with the evaluation of the progress being made on planned improvement activities, for the college to be on track to achieve goals as set out in the autumn term.

Staffing:

Mr Smith Connor explained that the most notable staffing pattern is the planned departure of 4 science teachers, this is in addition to the member of the team who left in January. It is also anticipated that another member of the team will decide to leave the College in the summer.

Governors were advised that this high level of turnover is the culmination of a number of factors including the departure last summer of the long-standing Head of Department, issues highlighted by this year's TLA Quality Assurances process, and the post-covid re-evaluation of life priorities which many people are undertaking.

The Corporation was however satisfied with the information received to date in respect of the college's ongoing response to addressing the significant change in staff within this one area to ensure that the students' experience and outcomes are not to be compromised.

Safeguarding & Prevent Update:

Mr Goddard advised the Corporation that of the 1352 respondents to the recent student perceptions survey, 98% confirmed that they felt safe in College. Governors welcomed this news, especially in light of the recent Ofsted Review (June 2021) into Sexual Harassment/Abuse in Schools and Colleges.

Mr Goddard confirmed that on 17th February, all staff completed a half day of professional development and training on sexual harassment. The session was recorded for staff and governors that were not present.

In preparation for the staff development and training on Sexual Harassment, an anonymous student survey was launched enabling students to report their experience of sexual harassment at school and at College. Thus far there have been 252 responses (the survey has been presented to students via MS Teams and will continue to be advertised to them each half term).

- 233 confirmed that they knew what the term sexual harassment meant.
- 160 confirmed that, if they experience SH at HNC, they know where to get help.
- 34 have reported “not really” and
- 58 did not answer the question.

The student focus groups in Faculty Deep Dives did not identify any students who did not have a member of staff they would go to should they need help in relation to Sexual Harassment. In order to continue reaffirming where students can get help, sexual harassment is a standing agenda item in 121 discussions with progress tutors. These happen termly. Mr Goddard also explained that given the high profile of this safeguarding concern, the College has developed a separate and distinct Harmful Sexual Behaviour Policy which is available to view on the College’s website.

Governors were informed that Mr Knightley (Director of Safeguarding) has been invited to complete a BETA test of the new home office WRAP (Workshop to Raise Awareness of Prevent) training. Feedback will be given before the training is approved for national use.

Mr Goddard confirmed that the College Prevent sub group continue to meet on a termly basis, and Prevent updates are given to the Safeguarding link governor each half term.

The Corporation was satisfied on hearing that every student continues to have a 1-1 meeting with their Progress Tutor each term, where Fundamental British Values and the Prevent Agenda are standing agenda items.

Capital projects:

Mr Smith-Connor explained to the Corporation that the Post-16 capacity expansion project has encountered a slight delay of 5 weeks to the overall programme plan. The new handover date is 14th October 2022, a contingency plan is in place to manage this, which the F&R Committee remain briefed on. The Corporation agreed it necessary for year 13 tutorial programmes to continue to be delivered remotely for the first half term and to minimise staff and student disruption, the switch in accommodation will therefore take place at October half term.

It was confirmed to the Corporation that the monthly returns that are required by the Department for Education Post-16 Capacity Fund Team have been submitted accurately, to cost and on a timely basis. Project meetings are ongoing with the architects (AHR) and the College. Members of the F&R Committee will also be present at the tender opening meeting, as per the financial regulations.

National Developments:

Ms Summers and Mr Smith-Connor briefed Governors on key national developments regarding academisation and T Levels. Governors were informed that both areas are to be considered in more detail at the forthcoming strategy planning day on 6th June 2022.

Resolved:

- **That the report and supporting papers be received**

6. Deep Dive Faculty Summary 2021/22:

Mr Smith-Connor explained that the curriculum deep dives are to bring the evidence together to determine underlying problems or strengths across all faculties. The intent of the deep dives are therefore to establish a coherent evidence base on quality of education at HNC.

Mr Smith-Connor advised the Corporation that the process adopted had been based on Ofsted's current inspection methodology. To date, faculty deep dives have been completed in all six areas. The decision was taken not to grade each of the deep dives but rather provide a summative review of findings on the quality of provision, as presented to the Corporation for consideration. The full report for each Faculty had been provided to governors in the papers for this meeting.

Mr Smith-Connor in answer to a specific question raised by Governors stated that he was of the opinion that based on the senior leaders' findings – an outstanding judgement would be reached by inspectors for the quality of education – given the range of evidence secured overall for curriculum intent, implementation and impact.

Mr Smith-Connor advised the Corporation that concerns however were reported by female students regarding inappropriate sexual behaviour in one faculty. Time was taken to brief the Governors on details of the senior leaders concerns for this one area of the curriculum. Mr Goddard confirmed that he had previously briefed, and had several discussions with, Mrs Johnson as the Safeguarding Link Governor.

The Corporation considered and endorsed the prompt response that had been taken by the college namely;

- A presentation on what constitutes inappropriate sexual behaviour and how to report it, to every group in the faculty.
- Increased staff presence in the corridors, and particularly around the toilet area, where it was reported that sexual harassment has happened the most.
- An amendment to the CCTV procedures to make it easier for staff to report concerns.
- Increased signage that there is CCTV coverage in the area.

The Corporation was informed that a further deep dive specifically about inappropriate sexual behaviour will take place in this faculty after half-term to determine with female students whether they have seen a positive difference, as a result of these actions.

Governors asked for an update to be provided to the Corporation post follow-up.

Resolved:

- **That the report be received**
- **That an update is provided to the Corporation post follow up.**

Minutes of the Committee Meetings:

7. Search & Governance Committee (Meeting held on 2nd March 2022)

Ms Boryslawskij briefed the corporation on the business of the committee.

Governors were advised that the skills for jobs white paper sets out new requirements for boards, including the expectation of regular appraisal by an external reviewer (expected minimum every 3 years). The Corporation was advised that it is the committee's intention to use the next academic year to research options and plan for contractor appointment. The first external governance review will need to be commissioned by end of 2023/24.

Guidance for Sixth Form Colleges and FE colleges on external governance reviews was due Easter 2022 but the committee has been made aware by the Clerk that there is a delay on publication by several months. The publication of competency frameworks for clerks, chairs and governors is also expected to be delayed. (no reason again has been given by the DfE for this delay).

The Corporation supported the committee's decision to stay at present, with the current AOC Code of Good Governance and plan for the changes being brought into this Code for 2022-23. With a view, to undertaking a formal review of Codes of Governance if and when the College converts to Academy status because an inherent part of such a conversion will be a fundamental review of Governance structures recognising that Corporations must adopt a governance code that best reflects their legal structure, operations and stakeholders.

Ms Boryslawskyj explained that the introduction of an Environmental Sustainability principle to the new AoC Code of good governance was particularly considered in detail given that Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG) is an area of increasing importance, especially given how strongly students feel towards the green agenda. The college's Property Strategy Group has therefore been tasked with drafting an Environmental Sustainability Strategy for Corporation to consider at a later stage.

The Corporation was advised that the Governance quality improvement plan for 2021/211 had been reviewed by the committee. The committee was satisfied that good progress was being made on the actions agreed as necessary to enable the corporation to maintain its high performance; efforts should now be focussed on stakeholder engagement opportunities.

The Corporation took time to consider Ms Cooke's governor application, recommended for appointment by the committee. The corporation supported Ms Cooke's appointment.

Mrs Johnson confirmed her willingness to be appointed as SEND Link Governor, in light of Mr Leach's recent resignation. The Corporation welcomed this news.

Mr Smith-Connor raised that he was encouraging SLT members to take up governor appointments at local schools or colleges; this opportunity could be reciprocated with HNC reaching out to the sector to possibly recruit senior and or aspiring leaders from other organisations. It was agreed for Search & Governance Committee to consider these arrangements further at a future meeting.

Resolved:

- **That the minutes be received**
- **For Ms Peggy Cooke to be appointed as an External Governor with immediate effect for a duration of up to 4 years. For Ms Cooke to also serve the Audit Committee and to be appointed as the Corporation's EDI Link Governor with immediate effect.**
- **For Ms Johnson to be appointed as the Corporation's SEND Link Governor with immediate effect.**
- **For the Search & Governance Committee to further consider the option of 'reciprocal' governor arrangements with other educational institutions.**

8. Audit Committee (Meeting held on 22nd March 2022)

Ms Haigh, Vice Chair of the Committee, presented the minutes to the Corporation. Particular attention was given to the following:

Ms Haigh asked the Corporation to note that due to the invasion of the Ukraine by Russia, the National Cyber Security Centre has called on all organisations in the UK to bolster their online defences. The Audit committee was satisfied that appropriate action had been taken by the IT Services Team to prioritise further preventative cyber security measures to boost the college's online defences. Staff and Governors are to continue to take personal responsibility to help defend the security of the College's IT network by remaining extra vigilant, especially with emails.

Ms Haigh briefed the Corporation on the outcome of the tender process for auditor appointments; in particular the difficulties experienced in securing interest from external audit companies.

Ms Haigh advised the corporation that the two audit firms recommended for re-appointment have always been assessed positively overall against their performance indicators by the Audit Committee, for each year since they were first appointed. The Committee has also previously agreed that the External Auditors and Internal Auditors had fulfilled the agreed service requirements, and have remained satisfied that both auditors have continued to provide appropriate assurance, to enable the committee and the corporation, to fulfil corporate responsibilities.

Ms Haigh explained that the Audit Code of Practice makes clear that the audit committee must ensure that there is regular retendering of the external audit service ensuring quality of the audit service required as well as the price. The Corporation was advised that retendering does not necessarily require a different firm of auditors to be appointed. The tender process has therefore satisfied the Codes requirements. The Corporation agreed with the recommendations made by the committee.

The Clerk advised the corporation that the difficulties experienced throughout the tender process with regards to attracting interest from external audit companies, is not specific to HNC but is wide spread throughout the sector. The SFCA are to raise these issues directly with the ESFA, on behalf of colleges.

Resolved:

- **That the minutes be received.**
- **The Corporation approved the re-appointment of Tiaa as the college's internal audit providers as of 1st August 2022 for three years in the first instance, extendable in annual increments thereafter, subject to satisfactory performance and agreement of fees, up to a maximum duration of 5 years.**
- **The Corporation approved the reappointment of Wylie & Bisset as the college's external audit providers as of 1st August 2022 for three years in the first instance, extendable in annual increments thereafter, subject to satisfactory performance and agreement of fees, up to a maximum duration of 5 years.**

9. Finance & Resources Committee (Meeting held on 22nd March 2021)

Mr Dawson briefed the corporation on the business of the committee.

Mr Dawson presented the finance dashboard ensuring that all governors understood the data included; in particular, the reason for the over budgeted cash position of £0.886m at this point in the academic year.

Mr Dawson advised the Corporation that the committee considered the financial parameters for the next financial year 2022/23, in light of the current external environment and the planned strategic direction of the college going forward.

Governors were informed that the committee was of the view that it remained appropriate for the college to continue to maintain the three parameters, as last approved by the corporation in April 2021:

- Operating expenditure does not exceed income for each period;
- Cash is maintained at a level of £2.1m and
- Financial health is maintained at 'Good or 'Outstanding' category for the whole period.

The corporation endorsed the committee's recommendations. Ms Dawson asked Governors to note that the college is currently researching as to what extent the cash held level (first determined in July 2017) is still appropriate given the need to continue to:

- Maintain the financial health of the College at 'Good' or 'Outstanding';
- Ensure the College continues to pass the 'Going Concern' test;
- Ensure that funding is applied to support those learners in College at any given time.

This work will inform a revised reserves policy that will be brought to the Committee at the next meeting (if appropriate). The Corporation supported this approach.

Resolved:

- **That the minutes be received.**
- **That the recommended financial parameters be approved:
Maintain the financial health of the College at 'Good' or 'Outstanding';
Cash is maintained at a level of £2.1M; and
Operating expenditure does not exceed income for the period.**
- **That the financial KPI Dashboard be received.**

10. Remuneration Committee (meeting held on 5th April 2022)

Ms Drury briefed the corporation on the remaining business of the committee (given update for agenda item 2). Minutes were received.

- **That the minutes be received.**

11. Ofsted Training: Assisting Governor Preparations

Time was taken to re-familiarise Governors with the Education Inspection Framework. Particular attention was given to briefing the corporation on the specific role of governors during Ofsted inspections and areas of focus from inspectors; namely to be able to articulate the impact of governance at HNC and describe board processes, policies and procedures.

Resolved:

- To receive the presentation
- To note that Moodle had been updated to include specific section on Ofsted Inspection to support knowledge, understanding and preparations.

12. Any other Business

There was no other business to be considered.

13. Learner Impact Reflection

- **Effective leadership is critical in enabling HNC to continue to provide the best learning experience and enrichment opportunities for all students and thereby improve their life choices and their life chances.**
- **A high performing and efficient corporation is able to support the college to achieve its aims and objectives and secure positive outcomes for students**
- **A healthy, supported, resourced and successful staff force will reap strong performance for all students which contributes to the college's reputation as a good place to learn and work.**
- **To ensure that HNC continues to succeed and is able to continue to deliver a high quality of student outcome and experience**
- **Assurance received that the College continues to provide a welcoming, safe and supportive environment for all students to develop personally and emotionally**
- **Commitment to safe learning practice**

14. Determination of confidentiality

Minutes relating to agenda item 2 and supporting papers for agenda items 5 and 6 relating to deep dives are to remain confidential given nature of business.

15. Date of next meeting: 5th July 2022 from 5pm (face to face meeting at College)

Please note the strategy day is scheduled to take place at HNC on Monday 6th June 2022 from 10am – 3pm in room 205.