

Agenda No: 01



MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS – MAIN MINUTES

Wednesday 6 November 2024 – 4.00pm to 6.00pm

Governors	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
Michael Wood-Williams	Chair / Independent	MWW	X	
David Alexander	Principal / CEO	DA	X	
Martin Hedley	Vice Chair / Independent	MH	X	
Aneela Ali	Vice Chair / Independent	AA	X	
David Brind	Independent	DB	X^	
Lisa Crichton-Jones	Independent	LCJ		X
Carol Davenport	Independent	CD		X
Martin Gannon	Independent	MG	X^	
Darren Curry	Independent	DCu	X	
Claire-Jane Rewcastle	Independent	CJR		X
Eamon Toland	Independent	ET		X
Maria Craig	Independent	MC	X	
Peter Francis	Independent	PF	X	
Richard Wensley	Staff Governor (Teaching)	RW	X	
Dan Wallace	Staff Governor (Support)	DW	X	
Dan Green	Student Governor (16-18)	DG	X	
Milly Wall	Student Governor (19+)	MP	X	
Clerk				
Nicola Taylor	Director of Governance & Compliance	NT	X	
Attendees				
Chris Toon	Deputy Principal: Curriculum and Quality	CT	X	
Jeremy Cook	Deputy Principal: Finance and Resources	JC	X	
Ivan Jepson	Director of Business Development and Innovation	IJ	X	
Nadine Hudspeth	Director of Brand and Learner Experience	NH	X	
Vicki Casey	Director of People & OD	VC	X	
Deni Chambers	Director of Curriculum & Skills	DCh	X	

*Attended via Teams / ^Attended for part of the meeting.

3399 1. Chair's welcome, apologies, conflicts of interest

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed the attendees.

Apologies had been received from LCJ, CD, ET. **The Board agreed that the meeting was quorate.**

There was an ongoing conflict of interest of MG relating to Gateshead International Stadium.

There were no additional conflicts of interests noted. Members were reminded to declare any conflicts which arose during the meeting. It was agreed members would remain in the meeting where their appointment / reappointment would be discussed.

1.1. Appointment of Student Governors

The report was presented by NT. A student election had taken place in October 2024 to elect the 16-18 and 19+ student governors.

The Board **approved** the appointment of Daniel Green, as the 16-18 Student Governor, and appointment to the Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee for the length of his studies (July 2024).

The Board **approved** the appointment of Milly Wall as the 19+ Student Governor, and appointment to the Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee for the length of her studies (July 2024).

The report was approved.

3400 2. Minutes of Last meetings

A) The Board **reviewed** the main minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2024 and **agreed** that they were a true and accurate record of the meeting.

The minutes were approved.

3401 3. Matters arising and Action Log

3.1. Action Log

The action log was presented; 3 actions were ongoing with updates provided as per the report. All other actions had been completed or closed.

The report was noted.

3.1. Staff Survey Headlines 2024

The success of the staff survey results 2024 had been recognised at the People Committee with a request for an overview of the results to be shared with the full Board for information.

A presentation was shared by VC outlining headlines from the 2024 staff survey, covering the following:

- Headline scores for 2024, including category averages, using 2023 data as a comparator.
- The increased response rate, increasing 17% from 2023, at 84%.

- A year on year scaled question breakdown, showing an increase in positive responses against all areas.
- The themes emerging from the data; confidence in the college, supportive managers and a learning culture, health and wellbeing, and reward and recognition.
- Staff feedback and free text comments to provide an element of staff voice.

The Board **queried** the College's results in comparison with local colleges. It was suggested Hive were able to benchmark against others within the educational sector, however this was not specific to local colleges.

A Staff Governor noted his agreement with staff feeling supported.

The Board **noted** the improved response rate and the level of work undertaken to achieve this. It was noted the People Committee has recognised the level of hard work required to maintain response and satisfaction levels going forward.

The report was noted.

3402 4. Chair's Report

The Chair provided a verbal update, noting the increase in learner numbers for 2024/2025 enrolment, above the planned growth within business planning, and reiterated the focus of maintaining a quality experience for all learners.

The update was noted.

3403 5. Principal's Report

5.1. Main Report

DA presented the report, providing updates from across the College and the wider landscape. DA specifically highlighted the following:

- The Further Education Commissioner had visited the College on 4 November 2024.
- *Covered under a confidential minute.*
- There was a positive working relationship with the newly appointed CEO of Gateshead Council. The College were working with the council on a number of projects and collaborations. Discussions regarding Gateshead International Stadium continued.

Covered under a confidential minute.

- The College continued to engage with NECA as North East devolution continued at pace.
- NT and VC had been elected as Chairs on their respective (Governance and HR) AoC regional networks and subsequently regional reps at their national groups. This showed strength in representation with the AoC, with DA also sitting on the AoC Employment Group and MWW being the North East Chairs' Chair and a member of the National Chairs Group.
- *Covered under a confidential minute.*
- The College were planning their birthday celebrations and further information regarding this would be provided at the December 2024 Board meeting.

The report also included a range of success stories from staff and learners.

The report was noted.

5.2. College Strategic Plan – Progress Update

DA presented the report and highlighted the following:

- Good progress had been made in further developing the College's approach to planning and performance. This included working with the Planning and Performance Link Governor.
- Good progress could be seen in all areas of the College Strategic Plan.
- KPIs continued to be monitored at Committee and Board level.

DCh provided a presentation and covered the following:

- An overview of operational planning year end outcomes, per strategic priorities, and how the process interlinked. 89% of actions were completed or on track.
- An overview of key areas of improvement made during 2023/2024 and areas of focus for 2024/2025.

The Board **queried** the pace of achievement and whether this was sustainable – it was agreed the College were ambitious however the College Strategic Plan was underpinned by a robust corporate planning framework which ensured a high level of interactivity between teams and departments to ensure actions were achievable. The potential of external factors having a negative impact on progress was discussed, with the need for adaptability to remain responsive. The College worked with staff across 2023/2024 to ensure staff members were aware of their part within the success of the College Strategic Plan.

The Board **noted** the impact and influence of external parties on progress in some areas.

A Student Governor **queried** the accessibility of the College's Strategic Plan, and associated progress reporting, to learners. It was suggested this could be brought to students' attention through induction or personal social development sessions, and that this could further inspire students into student leadership roles and engagement with the plan. The Board **agreed** to take this suggestion forward, and for NH to work with the student governors to consider communicating progress to learners.

Action: NH to work with the Student Governors regarding the accessibility of the College's Strategic Plan and the associated progress made.

The report was noted.

5.3. Board KPI Update Report

DA presented the report, noting that the majority of KPIs were green, with a few being amber and one being red. Committees were currently reviewing their Committee level KPIs, and KPIs to be provided at Board level. As previously discussed, the KPI around energy was no longer sustainable and was due to be updated, aligning with the Sustainability Strategy.

The Board **queried** pressures on the pay:income ratio and it was noted that if the increase in National Insurance contributions weren't funded, this would have a greater impact.

The report was noted.

3404 6. Learner Voice

NH presented the report, highlighting the success of the course representative structure during 2023/2024, providing a vehicle to create a better experience for learners, and for learners to inform decision making. The College were focussing on impact, ensuring there were continued opportunities to enhance learners' employment edge.

Work was being undertaken with the ESOL department and multi faith groups to ensure improved student engagement within these areas.

The report also included summarised results from the learner end of year survey which was presented to the Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee. There had been a decrease in the response rate and work was underway to improve this, including re-timing of the survey.

MG left the meeting.

The Board **asked the Student Governors** if they thought students felt heard, the Student Governors noted that all anecdotal feedback they had was that students did, and the course representative framework was a good way to facilitate this. Examples of student feedback being acted upon and evidenced was provided.

The Board **asked the Student Governors** if they felt able to shape the College, and if it changed in line with needs of learners. The Student Governors noted the work of the Course Representative system and suggested once this was up and running for 2024/2025 this would allow learners to feel more involved. NH noted that recruitment had taken place earlier than 2023/2024, based on feedback, to ensure this was in place earlier in the year.

The Board **noted** it was positive to see a high percentage of learners feeling supported and safe at College.

The Safeguarding Link Governor noted the work of the Safeguarding Steering Group and the continued focus and determination to effectively support learners, even with limitations on resource. The Group continued to consider a range of different approaches and initiatives.

The report was noted.

3405 7. Performance and Enrolment Report

CT presented the report and highlighted the following:

- There continued to be a focus on retention and achievement, this included the stretch and challenge of learners' abilities.
- Attendance had improved for 16-18 learners.
- Any achievement gaps highlighted within 2023/2024 between different ethnicities had been improved.
- The College continued to support mental health and wellbeing. Additional financial support for learners had been implemented and this was believed to positively impact attendance and retention. Learners had a range of differing and complex circumstances, and the College were supporting wherever possible.
- There was further work to do regarding the achievement of adults and apprentices. This was being explored as part of the College Self-Assessment Report. CT caveated this with results still being above national average rates, however the College wanted to improve.
- In terms of enrolment for 2024/2025, the College had admitted approximately 350 16–18 year-old additional learners, mainly those on Level 1 and Level 2 courses. A large majority of these learners required English and Maths qualifications. 4 additional staff had been recruited to support this, whilst ensuring reasonable and supportive class sizes. The College were responding to increased learner numbers, in some areas this was easier than others due to space and resource availability. The main challenges were within the Maths and English department for these reasons.

The Board **asked the Student Governors** if the College building felt obviously busier, the Student Governors noted the busy but positive atmosphere.

The Board **discussed and queried** the following:

- Learner number growth across the sector – CT noted that anecdotal feedback was local colleges were approximately 20% up on the previous year's learner numbers.
- The adverse impact of growth – it was noted the College remained agile and flexible. Some growth had been planned as part of business planning, however it was easier to respond to in some areas compared with others. Staff were focussing on ensuing a positive learner experience. CT noted a number of withdrawals had been seen within the first few weeks of term however reiterated this was not due to poor experience.
- Attendance trends across the first term of a new academic year – CT noted that the core body of students attended relatively well however attendance was an area to improve. It was noted some students wished for more flexibility however this was not always possible depending on timetabling and room resource. Schools were facing challenges with persistent non-attenders and the College were inherently inheriting a proportion of these learners as part of their progression. A number of new staff had been appointed to support attendance and achievement. Attendance continued to be monitored closely, and interventions implemented quickly.
- Improving the experience for those previously persistently absent from school – it was noted improvement could be seen, and the Board would be considering barriers to learning at the Board Strategy Day on 7 November 2024.

The Board **discussed** horizon scanning regarding additional transport options and a potential impact on future learner growth.

The report was noted.

3406 8. Finance Report

JC presented the report and highlighted the following:

- Minor changes had been made to the Subcontracting Plan for 2024/2025, none of which impacted the Board approved budget. This had been recommended by Finance & General Purposes Committee.

The Board **approved** the updated Subcontracting Plan for 2024/2025.

- The outturn within the July 2024 management accounts was in line, and slightly better than the Board approved budget. Work was ongoing with the External Auditors to confirm the year end position, with the financial statements due to be taken to the Joint Audit and Finance & General Purposes Committee in November 2024, ahead of seeking approval at the December 2024 Board meeting. Following approval, the financial statements and annual accounts would be submitted to the ESFA ahead of the 31 December 2024 deadline.
- The growth in 16-18 year old learner numbers had been discussed at each committee which had taken place so far this academic year, with Finance & General Purposes Committee considering finances, Curriculum & Quality Standards Committee considering learner experience, and People Committee considering staffing. JC reminded the Board of the lagged funding model for 16-18 learners and confirmed initial modelling of funding had taken place at Finance & General Purposes Committee. The growth in 16-18 year old learner numbers was due to be funded, as per guidance from the ESFA, however this would not be confirmed until 2025, and only partial funding was expected in-year. The College were facing significant costs to support and deliver to the additional students, and this was adversely impacting pay and non-pay costs. There was also a financial impact on the student bursary fund, with this being fully committed from early September 2024. Additional College funds had been added to this to support learners, along with funds from the Gateshead College Foundation. The College were continuing to support learners where possible.

- A number of capital projects had taken place, with some still underway, across the summer period. This included the new Science Labs, the Digital Hub, engineering workshops and PV on the car park roof as part of the College's sustainability project.

Covered under a confidential minute.

The report was noted.

3407 9. Committee Chairs Update

The report was presented for information, and the following verbal updates were provided:

The Chair of the Curriculum and Quality Standards (CQS) Committee noted the Committee had a positive conversation regarding Key Performance Indicators of the Curriculum and Quality Strategies and the ask to ensure these aligned with impact. The Committee also received assurance reports relating to Safeguarding, Special Educational Needs provision and Higher Education. The Committee noted the length of papers and were working towards reducing length whilst maintaining quality of reporting.

A member of the People Committee noted the Committee had received annual reports relating to Human Resources and Health and Safety.

The Board **approved** the following documents following committee recommendation:

- ***Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy***
- ***Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy***
- ***Prevent Policy***
- ***Health and Safety Policy***
- ***Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement***

Action: NT to progress the publication of the Board approved documents.

The report was noted.

3408 10. Corporation Matters

The report was presented by NT.

In relation to Board appointments recommended by the Governance Committee:

DB left the meeting

The Board **approved** the re-appointment of David Brind for a further term of 4 years, with effect from December 2024.

DB re-joined the meeting

The Board **approved** the re-appointment of Carol Davenport for a further term of 4 years, with effect from December 2024.

In relation to the proposed work plan for 2024/2025:

The Board **queried** the maturity of this and if this included relevant themes for discussion. NT confirmed not, noting that the work plan covered the items which were to be covered as a matter of business, however additional items / discussion items would be picked up as part of the agenda setting process with the Committee Chair and relevant Executive Lead.

The Board **approved** the workplan for 2024/2025.

In relation to the proposed additions to the Finance & General Purposes and Audit Committees Terms of Reference to capture their respective roles in the annual joint Audit and Finance & General Purposes Committee:

The Board **approved** the updated Terms of Reference.

The report was noted.

3409 11. Review of Strategic Risk Register

JC presented the report, noting that growth in learner numbers had been discussed in each committee meeting which had taken place within the new academic year, specific to remit.

JC highlighted there was the recommendation for the Board to approve 2 new risks to the register, as required by the College's Risk Management Policy. JC noted this would usually come to Board following discussion at the Audit Committee, however the Audit Committee weren't due to meet until 12 November 2024.

The Board **queried** the wording of the risks, **suggesting** that non-compliance would relate to regulation, rather than guidance and / or best practice which wasn't mandated.

The Board **approved** the addition of the 2 new risks to the Strategic Risk Register (R17 and R18), subject to the wording amends suggested.

Action: JC to add R17 and R18 to the Strategic Risk Register and amend wording as discussed. It was agreed that this would be tracked through the Audit Committee.

The Board **queried** the risks to be treated and requested clarity on when risks outside of their tolerable levels were expected to be within tolerable levels. The Chair of Audit Committee agreed for this conversation to be carried out at the Audit Committee.

Action: JC to consider timing of risks to be treated to be within tolerable levels.

JC provided assurance of the work of the Operational Risk Management Group and the utilisation of this when the Executive Team were considering the Strategic Risks.

The report was noted.

3410 Corporation Board Terms of Reference and Work Plan 2024/2025

NT presented the report noting that the Board Work Plan had been approved under Item 10, and that this would be standing item on the agenda to remind the Board of their remit and upcoming planned items.

The report was noted.

3411 12. Any Other Business

N/A

The Student Governors provided their thanks to the Board for welcoming them, and to NT for the support provided through their recruitment and appointment.

The Chair invited attendees to provide post-meeting evaluation feedback and the following comments were made:

Positives:

- Papers conveyed key messages and allowed discussion.
- There was insightful and actionable contribution from the Student Governors.

- There had been good chairing through the agenda.
- There had been challenge within the meeting and this displayed a high level of trust.
- The presentation of items with graphs and images provided additional context and clarity.
- There was a high level of assurance provided by the papers.
- There was a sense of shared values amongst discussion.
- There was a relaxed environment, with a positive and supportive culture.

Areas for improvement:

- Consideration of horizon scanning in greater detail as part of discussion.
- More learner voice.
- Utilisation of the wider perspective of governors by bringing challenges at an earlier stage.
- Papers could be more forward focussed in terms of future plans, future thinking and next steps.
- The papers included a high level of operational detail, and this created an increased ask of governors time by having lengthy papers.

The Board **noted** the level of work undertaken to produce the papers for the meeting.

3412 13. Date of next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 11 December 2024 at 4.00pm.