

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATION BOARD
HELD IN THE BOARD ROOM ON
TUESDAY 15th OCTOBER 2024 AT 5.00 PM**

Governors	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
David Allsop	Independent (Chair)	DA	X	-
Chris Todd	Principal and CEO	CT	X	-
Carl Bozeate	Independent	CB	X	-
Carole Loader	Independent	CL	-	X
Guy Brown	Independent	GB	X	-
Sarah Jones	Independent	SJ	X	-
Matthew Taylor	Independent	MT	X	-
Mark Short	Independent	MS	X	-
David McHugh	Independent	DM	-	X
Stuart Corbridge	Independent	SC	X	-
Simon Howard	Independent	SH	-	X
Andrew Hayday	Independent	AH	X	-
Helen Brennan	Staff Governor	HB	X	-
Nicola Dixon	Staff Governor	ND	X	-

Attendees	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
Susan Errington	Deputy Principal	SE	X	-
Rachel Holmes	Director of HR	RH	X	-
Tina Hannant	Vice Principal – Finance & Resources	TH	X	-
Michael Johnson	Assistant Principal – Student Services	MJ	X	-

Clerk	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
Elaine Gaines	Head of Governance	EG	X	

At 5pm individual Curriculum Leaders presentations took place until 5.50 pm.

At 5.50 pm Chris Nicholls (AoC Area Director, North East, Yorkshire & Humber and the National Lead for Workforce) delivered his presentation to the Board regarding Skills Priorities. Questions and discussion followed. This concluded at 6.30 pm and the Board meeting began.

1. Welcome, Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

The Chair welcomed everyone to the first Board meeting of the academic year. A welcome was extended to Michael Johnson in attendance to present his report - agenda item 4.1 (Safeguarding, Prevent & Welfare Update) and item 5.1 (Safeguarding Policy was a document for approval). With the agreement of the Board the Chair suggested items 4.1 and 5.1 were taken at the beginning of the meeting.

Apologies were received from CL, SH and DMch. **The Board agreed that the meeting was quorate.**

There were no declarations of interest.

1.1. Appointments

Following the successful completion of their probationary period, as recommended by the Search & Governance Committee the Board agreed to **approve** the following appointments:

- Mr Guy Brown was appointed to the Corporation Board for a four-year term.
- Ms Sarah Jones was appointed to the Corporation Board for a four-year term.

[Redacted – GDPR]

No other questions/comments were raised.

As recommended by the Search & Governance Committee, the Board **approved** the following appointments to the Remuneration Committee:

- Mr Guy Brown and Ms Sarah Jones were appointed to the Remuneration Committee for a four-year term.

2. Minutes of Previous Meetings and Matters Arising

2.1. Minutes – Corporation

Governors **reviewed** the minutes of the meeting held on the 9th July 2024. An amendment to item 5.1 of the minutes was proposed and agreed as follows: *SC referred to Table 2.2 and asked why the staff pay to income ratio was shown as 71% rather than 65%, as the numbers initially seemed to suggest: £6.97mn/£10.7mn. DM agreed to check the figures and report back.*

The word 'with' was missing from line 2 on page 8, the sentence should read *SE reported that working with the Assistant Principal.*

Subject to the amendments above, the Corporation Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2024.

Matters arising

Student Governor – As recommended by the Search & Governance Committee, the Student Governor roles have been advertised, to recruit two Student Governors (one Apprentice and one Full-time learner). The Head of Governance reported interest has been received from a couple of Apprentices and this will be discussed with the Search & Governance Committee later this week. To date there has been very little interest from full-time learners, however, the Head of Governance visited Health & Social Care and Childcare students earlier this week to try to generate some interest.

2.2. Minutes – Finance & Resources Committee

The Finance & Resources Committee Chair provided a verbal update to Governors, and drew their attention to the following points:

T-Levels – The building project was successfully completed and incurred a small overspend. The internal doors installed, were not the doors specified on the plans. Checks are taking place to establish if the doors installed meet the required health & safety specifications.

MS stated the contractor has a duty to seek approval first before installing alternative items to those specified on the agreed plans.

MT was interested to know what progress had been made with regard to the 'snagging'. In response, TH reported the glazing to the CAD room will be installed this weekend, and progress is being made with the items on the snagging list.

DA informed governors the completed works look good and have certainly enhanced the estate.

Cleaning Contract – DA informed governors that Durham County Council (DCC) has served notice with regard to the cleaning contract; therefore, between now and April 2025 we need to either secure a new service provider or take the service in-house. TH reported the process has already started and she is scheduled to meet with Crescent Purchasing Consortium (an external provider).

AH assumed the preferred option would be to use an external provider for the service. MT asked if the service was brought in-house, was the college obliged to pay the Real Living Wage. In response RH stated DCC does not pay the Real Living Wage to these employees.

The Board **received** the minutes of the Finance & Resources Committee held on the 17th September 2024.

Following the recommendations by the Finance & Receives Committee, Governors **received and approved** the following documents:

- Subcontracting Policy
- Fees & Charges Policy
- GDPR Policy
- Financial Regulations Policy – for clarity SJ suggested section 4 was reviewed
- Reserves Policy
- Financial Support for Learners Policy
- Safer Recruitment Policy

2.3. **Minutes – Quality & Standards Committee**

Due to the timing of the Quality & Standards Committee (8th October 2024) and the issue date for the Board meeting papers, there was insufficient time to include the minutes of the Quality & Standards Committee into the Board meeting pack, therefore, the Quality & Standards Committee Chair provided a verbal update to the Board.

The Committee Chair reported that at the meeting on 8th October 2024, the Quality & Standards Committee endorsed the Terms of Reference, the Self-Assessment Report (2023-24) and the proposed Quality Improvement Plan. To provide assurance to the Board, the areas for development within the QIP will be key areas of focus for the Committee during the year. The Quality Strategy was endorsed. The Committee also received a report regarding the Implications of AI on the College.

Questions/comments were invited.

MT asked a question regarding the targets in KPI 8 of the QIP. He wanted to know if the targets were set 'by design'. In response, CT explained that these targets had been set at an ambitious level, but in previous years the College had exceeded this.

MT also wanted to know if the financials within the QIP were in accordance with the Budget, CT confirmed they were.

Following the recommendations by the Quality & Standards Committee, Governors **received and approved** the following documents:

- Annual Report – Quality & Standards Committee (2023-24)
- Quality & Standards Committee Terms of Reference
- Self-Assessment Report 2023-24
- Quality Improvement Plan 2024-25
- Quality Strategy

3. Strategy & Direction

3.1. Annual Report

CT introduced his report. The purpose of the report was to provide the Board with a clear view on the performance of the College in 2023-24 against the Strategic Plan and the identified key performance indicators.

Key Achievements

- **Key Performance Indicators** – Excellent performance is evident across a range of key performance indicators, with significant improvements on the prior year in critical areas.
- **Governance Enhancements:** New governance structures and the recruitment of high-quality governors has strengthened the Board.
- **Quality of Teaching:** Innovation in teaching practices has resulted in high learner satisfaction rates and achievement rate benchmarks being met / exceeded.
- **Curriculum Development:** Successful rollout of T-Level programmes has strengthened our offer at level 3. Securing LSIF and T-Level Capital Funding has significantly improved the quality of our facilities and resources.
- **Improved Student Outcomes:** Notable increases in apprenticeship achievement rates, particularly in Health and Social Care and the removal of DfE intervention in apprenticeships.
- **Community Partnerships:** Strengthened relationships with local schools, Colleges and Higher Education to enhance educational pathways through systems leadership. Built strong relationships with the new North-East Combined Authority.
- **Digital Transformation:** Adoption of advanced educational technologies and achieving Cyber Essentials Plus accreditation.
- **Student Outcomes:** Improved Apprenticeship Rates: Notable improvement in Health & Social Care achievement from 33% to 55%, now exceeding national benchmarks. Achievement rates against all provision types are above national averages.

Next Steps

To further enhance strategic performance, a comprehensive Business Plan will be developed to align strategic objectives with actionable steps. CT proposed a Task Group of Governors is formed to improve performance measurement and reporting. The group will focus on reviewing current reports, evaluating strategic document alignment, and structuring the new Business Plan to ensure clear insights and accountability. Volunteers were invited. The following Governors volunteered – GB, SC and DA. It was agreed that CT will produce the Task Group Terms of Reference.

Questions/comments were invited.

GB liked the table and commentary included in section 2.2 of the report.

No other comments or questions were raised.

Governors **received** and the Principal and CEO report and:

- **Noted** the College's performance against the strategic plan in 2023-24, including the KPIs and considered the key issues, risks and implications presented within the report.
- **Approved** the formation of a Task Group of Governors to consider the development of a College Business Plan and to review how the College reports on the strategic performance going forward.

3.2. **Principal and CEO Report**

CT invited questions/comments/clarity from Governors, on the basis they had read the report.

SC expressed his approval of the report and, regarding sections 4.1 and 4.4, inquired whether the Executive Team was mindful of the Employment Rights Bill. In response, RH reported that she had attended a CIPD-hosted session earlier that day, noting that a two-year consultation period is planned for the Employment Rights Bill. RH assured Governors that she would provide updates as developments occur.

ND noted that Ofsted is transitioning to a non-graded system but pointed out that staff appraisals remain graded. She expressed interest in hearing thoughts on this, particularly from the perspective of staff wellbeing and mental health. CT and RH acknowledged ND's concerns and agreed to consider them; however, they clarified that the appraisal system is more nuanced and does not rely on a single overall grade.

CT provided Governors with a verbal update on the recent visit to the College by Liz Twist MP. The visit was positive, as Liz was highly engaged and showed great interest in the College. During her visit, she was given a tour, which included Little Learners and the Macmillan Coffee Morning.

SE reported that, following the visit, Liz Twist's office assisted in arranging a visit to the Houses of Parliament for students during their upcoming trip to London.

[Redacted – commercially sensitive].

MT inquired whether the College was considering rescinding its commitment to the Real Living Wage. CT responded that 'everything is on the table' at this stage and acknowledged that some Real Living Wage employees have expressed frustration over the disparity in pay approaches between them and the wider staff group. He explained that these concerns will be reviewed by the Executive Team when reassessing the College's commitment to the Real

Living Wage. The matter will be considered post-Christmas, after which a recommendation will be made to the Board for consideration.

[Redacted – commercially sensitive].

Governors **received** and the Principal and CEO report and:

- **Noted** the intention to review the commitment to the Real Living Wage, arising from issues recently raised.
- **Noted** the key risks identified relating to:
 - Financial pressures and risks arising from underfunded growth (Full-time 16-18);
 - Impact of potential policy changes on apprenticeship skills funding;
 - Changes to Ofsted Inspections;
 - ESFA closure and transition to DfE;
 - Budgetary constraints and pay issues.

4. Curriculum Quality & Learning

(This agenda item was taken at the start of the meeting).

4.1. Safeguarding, Prevent and Welfare Update

MJ introduced his report. The purpose of the report was to provide the Corporation with a summary of key recent legislative changes relating to the Safeguarding and Prevent agenda, as well as providing an update on current wellbeing support activity.

The College has effective Safeguarding policies and procedures in place. The Safeguarding Committee meets termly and is attended by the Board Safeguarding Lead (Carole Loader). An effective Board Assurance Framework (BAF) and Data Dashboard relating to key performance indicators has been established for Safeguarding and Prevent. This allows for rigorous self-assessment of current practices and action planning for improvement. Progress against the BAF action points is reviewed regularly at the Safeguarding Committee and at Corporation Board meetings and was last presented in July 2024.

The KCSIE guidance is updated annually, with the latest version coming into effect on 1st September 2024. Changes in the 2024 version were relatively minor and included a change to the definition of Safeguarding with the addition of information around when children may require early help. These changes have been incorporated into the latest College Safeguarding policy and procedure.

MJ paused and invited comments/questions – none were raised.

Prevent – Martyn’s Law - In the area of Prevent, there has been no significant updates, however, the introduction of Martyn’s Law was confirmed in the King’s Speech in November 2023 and re-affirmed by the new Government in the July 2024 King’s Speech to be on the legislative agenda in the year ahead. The Bill is aimed at enhancing security measures in public venues. The Bill’s main objective is to improve the preparedness of these spaces to mitigate the risk of terrorist attacks and other security threats.

Over the next few months, in conjunction with the Director of Estates and Facilities a Critical Incident Procedure will be developed; taking into account key aspects of Martyn’s Law to ensure that the College is as prepared as it can be, should it be presented with a security threat. Any changes to the proposed law, as it passes through parliament, will be taken into consideration and included within the updated Procedure.

MJ invited comments/questions from Governors – none were raised.

Wellbeing Update – Early indications for 2024-25 suggest that there has been a slight increase in the total number of learners being supported by the Wellbeing Team compared with previous years. In 2023-24, the total number of learners receiving support increased by 20% compared to the previous year following on from a small increase in 2022-23. It is expected that there will be significant movement of learners between the categories as Practitioners complete their initial meetings. MJ explained this process is currently underway, hence the reason why the column in the table in Appendix 1 of the report says TBC.

MJ invited comments/questions – none were raised.

Governors **received** the Safeguarding, Prevent and Welfare Update and:

- **noted** the key legislative and policy changes from September 2024;
- **noted** the wellbeing activity in the new academic year of 2024-25 and trends over a three-year period.

(MJ left the meeting at 6.40 pm).

4.2. **Enrolment Update**

SE introduced her report. The purpose of the report was to provide the Board with an update on the College's recruitment to Education Programmes for Young People in 2024-25, including the roll-out of the new T-Level routes; whilst taking account of the recruitment position in the previous two years.

16-18 recruitment

SE was delighted to report that as of 30th September, the same data capture point as last year, 53 more learners aged 16-18 have been enrolled. This increase builds on the growth achieved in 2023 and follows years of static recruitment. SE was really satisfied with this result, especially considering the extensive effort staff have dedicated to this initiative. Furthermore, it's reassuring to note that our recruitment aligns with the increased attendance at Open Events and that enrolments largely reflect our application data.

Frustratingly, late enrolments in September have had to be limited compared to last year, it is the first time we have encountered this situation. This limitation is primarily due to workspace capacity issues in specific areas - particularly in Construction, Level 2 Engineering, and Level 1 Hairdressing. However, the Construction waiting list has been accommodated. SE and her team are actively working on resolving the ongoing capacity issues in the other areas.

The importance of retaining the learners cannot be underestimated, and early evidence indicates that learners are settling well, and in some areas our new starters are perceived as being very able. There appears to be a good atmosphere throughout the College and overall, there is a significant focus on learner attendance, conduct and attitudes.

Funding

At this stage it is anticipated this year's allocation will be surpassed; but it is not known if there will be any in-year growth. It is highly likely that the recruitment will have a positive impact on the 2025-26 allocation in terms of funding growth. Governors noted, at this stage, it appears that Delta North have recruited 10 fewer learners compared to last year. The next key window will be the learner number position at R04 in early December, which will provide an important comparator position to last year.

SE referred Governors to section 3.2 of her report and highlighted some areas where good levels of recruitment have taken place. There are other areas intended for growth, and the focus on achieving further growth next year is already underway – SE cited the activity with the local academies to date.

SE paused and invited questions/comments.

DA wanted to know if recruitment had been paused due to lack of capacity within the Estate. SE stated that in Hairdressing there are 16 stations and 19 learners. Two learners have been referred to Delta North (and the reason for this is, their provision is more suited to these learners). Two learners have been identified as possible referral to T-Level provision. With regard to Construction, we are not able to take any more Construction learners.

DA presumed this information, will be used to inform the Estates Review and Curriculum Planning. SE reported we have over-recruited in Engineering and as places become available, staff are responding accordingly, ensuring the decisions made, are right for the learner.

No other questions were raised.

T-Levels

SE referred to section 4 of the report. 58 learners recruited across all five proposed T-Level routes, just shy of the target of 62. This is a positive outcome for two key reasons. First, the T-Level programme faced significant criticism last year from schools, parents, and students following the Conservative Government's announcement of the Advanced British Standard, which has since been 'shelved' by the new government. Second, as previously highlighted, recruitment to the T-Level Engineering Design route was uncertain due to low applications, recruitment to date is into double digits.

Additionally, SE was pleased to report we have grown the Level 3 numbers overall and retained our Level 3 BTEC in Health and Social Care with 16 learners, which would have been impossible if the defunding of these qualifications in favour of T-Levels had gone ahead. Importantly, it is the right decision for the learners in question.

T-Level Learners have settled in well, with some strong candidates. In Childcare all learners are matched to an individual industry placement starting in November, and concluded the employer interviews for our Health learners, who will commence placement in January 2025. Progress with Engineering and Digital placements is good, but there is more work to do in placing all learners.

Year 10

Our Year 10 collaboration with Consett Academy has significantly grown and SE believes this is an important foundation to future growth. We are also in the early stages of reviewing if we could accommodate North Durham Academy in adopting a similar model for their pupils next year.

SE invited comments/questions.

DA noted the content of the report and asked SE to congratulate the Team.

ND agreed and explained that her daughter is a Year 8 student at Consett Academy; the school now mentions Derwentside College to their students, which is a significant shift from

previous years. ND appreciated that, although it has taken time and considerable effort to strengthen the connections, the results are now starting to show.

SE informed Governors she has learnt a lot from the collaboration. SE stated all Consett Academy learners including their parents are aware of the Learner Code of Conduct.

SE also reported that she will be monitoring this collaboration closely, it all needs to link to into the Estates Strategy and Growth. CT agreed and cited the DfE Curriculum Efficiency Review which will begin after the RO4 funding return.

GB noted the decline in Adult enrolments, he wanted to know if this was unique to the College or if it was across the sector. In response, CT stated this was an outcome of the current economic situation, there is not a lot of support available for adult learners, and more adults are needing to work and earn. The Access to HE course has been a direct impact of this.

SE agreed, and reminded Governors that T-Levels don't cater for adults, this provision is for learners aged 16-18 only. However, there may be more opportunities to deliver training via the NECA Adult Education funding stream.

Governors **received** the Enrolment Update 2024-25 (Education Programmes for Young People) and:

- **Noted** the excellent progress made in 16-18 recruitment in line with one of the College's strategic key objectives of continuing to grow provision across Education Programmes for Young People as outlined within the Annual Accountability Agreement for 2024-25.
- **Noted** the rollout of a suite of new T-Level programmes in line with the targets agreed across Engineering, Digital and Healthcare, albeit numbers lower than anticipated in T-Level Health, but this has been offset by the retainment of the BTEC Level 3 route in Health.

5. **Policy for Review**

Following the two-week policy review window and feedback received from Governors on the policy presented. Governors **approved** the following policy:

- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy
- Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Procedure

6. **Any Other Items of Urgent Business**

Governor Recruitment – DA provided a verbal update regarding the current Governor recruitment. The focus of this recruitment is to source high-calibre Governors as follows:

- one Audit & Risk professional as a Governor and member of the Audit & Risk Committee;
- a co-opted member of the Audit & Risk Committee;
- a local strategic leader to join the Board, but not necessarily to a committee unless they have a particular interest, skills set and time to commit; and
- an experienced governor to join the Quality & Standards Committee.

To date, seven applications have been received and there are eight potential applicants who have expressed an interest in the roles. Shortlisting will take place on 6th November, and interviews will be held on 22nd November.

The meeting closed at 7.30 pm.

Board Meetings

Actions Arising

Date: 15th October 2024

Minute Ref	Action	Responsible Officer	Status & Deadline
3.1	<u>Task Group</u> - to improve performance measurement and reporting a Task Group will be formed to include DA, GB, SC and SJ.	Principal November 2024	<u>Complete</u> – First meeting will be held 3 December
3.1	<u>Terms of Reference</u> – Terms of Reference will be drafted for the Task Group (see above)	Principal October 2024	<u>Complete</u>
3.2	<u>Delta North Timeline</u> – CT will produce a timeline to report back to Governors	Principal December 2024	

Date of Meeting: 9th July 2024

Minute Ref	Action	Responsible Officer	Status & Deadline
4.1	<u>TeacherMatic</u> – A report will be provided to the Quality & Standards Committee regarding the impact of the TeacherMatic software	Head of Quality & Standards	4 February 2025

Date of Meeting: 21st May 2024

Minute Ref	Action	Responsible Officer	Status & Deadline
2.2	<u>Student Governors</u> The Head of Governance will advertise and seek to recruit two Student Governors.	Head of Governance	<u>In progress</u> December 2024