

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATION BOARD
HELD IN THE BOARD ROOM ON
TUESDAY 26th MARCH 2024 AT 5.30 PM**

Governors	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
David Allsop	Independent (Chair)	DA	X	-
Chris Todd	Principal and CEO	CT	X	-
Lesley Sewell	Independent	LS	-	X
Carl Bozeate	Independent	CB	X	-
Carole Loader	Independent	CL	-	X
Guy Brown	Independent	GB	X	-
Sarah Jones	Independent	SJ	X	-
Kelly Miller	Independent	KM	X	-
Matthew Taylor	Independent	MT	-	X
Mark Short	Independent	MS	X	-
Vicky McDermott	On sabbatical	VM	-	-
Simon Howard	On sabbatical	SH	-	-
Helen Brennan	Staff Governor	HB	X	-
Nicola Dixon	Staff Governor	ND	X	-

Attendees	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
Susan Errington	Deputy Principal	SE	X	-
Andrew Hayday	Vice Principal – Finance	AH	X	-
Rachel Holmes	Director of HR	RH	X	-
Rebecca Hart	Student Governor	RHa	-	X

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

Observer	Type	Initials	Attendance	Apologies
David McHugh	Potential Governor	DM	X	

1. Welcome, Apologies for Absence and Declarations of Interest

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. A warm welcome was extended to David McHugh who attended as an Observer. The Chair reported that the Governor recruitment is now complete. Interviews took place on Thursday 21st March, David McHugh and Stuart Corbridge were selected for appointment, subject to the approval of the Board. Stuart Corbridge will Observe the May Board meeting.
- 1.2. Apologies were received from LS, CL, MT and RHa. **The Board agreed that the meeting was quorate.**
- 1.3. There were no declarations of interest.
- 1.4. *Appointments* – Apologies were received from the Student Governor (Rebecca Hart) albeit late in the afternoon, it was agreed that this item will be deferred until the next meeting.



2. Minutes of Previous Meetings and Matters Arising

2.1. Minutes – Corporation

The Board **reviewed** the minutes of the meeting held on the 27th February 2024 and **agreed**, that they were a true and accurate record of the meeting. **The minutes were approved.**

3. Strategy and Direction

3.1. Principal and CEO Report

CT introduced his report. The purpose of the report was to provide the Board with a clear view on the current risks and opportunities, the position of the College against the strategic plan, and matters that cause him concern.

- **Senior Post Holder Appointment** - At the Board meeting held on 27th February 2024, Governors delegated authority to the Interview Panel to appoint a suitable candidate to either the role of 'Vice Principal – Finance' or 'Vice Principal – Finance & Resources'. Interviews took place on 28th February 2024. The selection panel included the Corporation Chair, Principal, Sarah Jones and Carl Bozeate. Relevant members of the Senior Leadership Team were also involved in the interview process. The decision to appoint Tina Hannant to the Vice Principal – Finance & Resources role was unanimous. Tina is scheduled to join Derwentside College on 10th June 2024.

CT reported that mentoring support has been requested from the FE Commissioners Team to support the Vice Principal – Finance & Resources during her Induction year. She will also attend the AoC Finance Directors Conference in May.


CT reported the Interim Vice Principal – Finance & Resources will leave at the end of April; AH has expressed an interest to join the Board later in the year. The Budget Setting work will be concluded by the Interim Head of Finance and the Principal.

Key Issues & Concerns

- **Governance** – Recent governor appointments have been very positive. Recruitment of additional governors is progressing well. Planning is underway for the Board Away Day
- **Quality of Education** – Attendance against the College's Education Programmes for Young People is currently lower than usual in February. CT reported he is aware that attendance is a significant issue locally within the local schools and other Colleges. The figures presented are lower than has been achieved in previous years and need to improve. Over the coming weeks a detailed analysis will be conducted to understand the issues and to improve the attendance statistics further. The issue is being addressed by the Full-time Learning Programmes Forum and will be reported on at the next meeting of the Quality & Standards Committee. The quality of tutorial/careers and enterprise teaching is also a concern.

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

- **T-Level Capital Project** – This project will transform the Level 3 vocational facilities. Works commenced on 25th March and will conclude in August 2024. Governors will be given a brief tour of the project works to date, prior to the July Board meeting.
- **Apprenticeship Achievement Rates** – Achievement rates are looking more positive this year; the number of learners past their planned end date is also expected to



reduce significantly by the end of the year. It is anticipated that within the next 12 to 24 months, the College's performance will be at a much higher level.

News and Updates

Annual Strategic Conversation with the DfE – This took place on 5th March 2024 with the DfE and members of the FE Commissioner's Team were also in attendance. The conversation focussed on the College's alignment with the local, regional, and national skills priorities, the recently introduced 'duty to review' requirement and the introduction of College-led 'accountability agreements'.

The DfE were pleased with the progress that has been made in relation to Governance Developments, the growth in full-time provision particularly at Level 3 and the significant progress made regarding the improved quality of Apprenticeships.

During the meeting, the FE Commissioner's 'active support' offer and the potential for a curriculum efficiency review was discussed. This is a free service, providing Colleges with an external review of their curriculum model and efficiency. This is a piece of work the Executive Team are keen to undertake internally, although the current limited capacity in the Finance Team will hinder this. Utilising the FE Commissioner's Team for this work represents a good opportunity, therefore this will be pursued. CT is aware that other Colleges have used this service and have found it to be useful.

The College's strategic direction more generally was discussed including the aspirations for the future. All parties agreed that the College's drive to become an outstanding provider was positive, but also that growth represented a key priority going forward. The potential for growth and any opportunities to develop the curriculum offer would be a feature at the upcoming Board Away Day. The DfE commented that this meeting was the most positive of the last three years and the College was making good progress. A letter confirming this will be received from the DfE, and this will be shared with the Board.

Corporation Board – Away Day – Planning for the Strategic Away Day in June is underway. The draft programme so far was outlined, further planning will take place in the weeks ahead and Governors were invited to contribute or provide feedback. The draft programme was also included in section 5.3 of the Principals report to Governors.

Political Landscape – CT reminded Governors of the significant change that has taken place within the FE sector over recent years, including:

- The Skills Act and Duty to Review
- LSIFs / LSIPs
- Accountability Agreement
- Advance British Standard qualification.

CT reported that College Principals have concerns about the position of the AoC regarding the above. An update has been requested from David Hughes (the AoC Chief Executive) regarding his political lobbying in order to gain an understanding of what the AoC are campaigning for. The Principal was keen for an evolutionary process when it comes to politics, rather than more revolution in the years ahead.

CT invited questions/comments from Governors.

KM asked a question relating to the Apprenticeship Overdues, she wanted to know for those in the 365+ days overdue, how many are actively engaged and how many are likely to be withdrawn. In response the Deputy Principal reported there are approximately 30 learners that Managers are concerned about. Conversations continue with all relevant parties. A detailed tracking spreadsheet is used to monitor progress.



KM asked a question in relation to the recently published College Financial Handbook (which is effective from 1 August 2024). She wanted to know from a Governance perspective, how the impact of each risk is demonstrated. In response the Corporation Chair reported that previously the Risk Register was circulated to the Board, work is taking place in this area.

KM noted that the Principal has completed the online Ofsted Big Listen survey, she wanted to know what his thoughts were. In response CT outlined some of his responses i.e. that he felt the Ofsted inspections are too infrequent, he suggested that Ofsted are invited to attend the Annual Strategic Conversations and that more thematic work is required to support Colleges.

SJ wanted to know if the Risk Register was a system or a spreadsheet. The Corporation Chair reported that a spreadsheet model is used for this. It was noted that risk appetite is something that requires attention; however, there is work taking place regarding this. CT agreed and reminded Governors that there have been capacity issues within the Senior Team. Once the Vice Principal – Finance & Resources is in post, this will be a task that is assigned to her. SJ and KM both offered their support for this task.

GB asked a question regarding Apprenticeship Overdues. He noted there were delays relating to EPA and asked how significant the delays were. In response SE reported that it varies from one Awarding Body to the next, she cited electrical installation, the lead-in-time is currently 20 weeks, therefore this needs to be well planned. This is discussed at the Apprenticeships Forum. SE reported the College has good links with NCFE, some EPA dates received were in May, however, the last set of dates received were March; this demonstrates additional resource has been put in place. CT cited the letter last week from Robert Halfon MP regarding Apprenticeship Achievement Rates, he noted that a lot of work has been done to reduce bureaucracy and there is now talk about removing EPA – a big potential shift in policy. Governors will be updated accordingly.

Governors received the Principal and CEO report and:

- **Approved** the decision made by the selection panel regarding the appointment of Tina Hannant as the College's incoming Vice Principal – Finance & Resources.
- **Noted** – the College's positive performance against the strategic plan KPIs and considered the key issues, risks, and implications presented within the report.

4. Curriculum Quality and Learning

4.1. Compliments and Complaints

SE introduced her report. The purpose of the report was to provide the Board with an update on the number of compliments and complaints received during the 2022-23 academic year. The report also provided an update on the level of compliments and complaints received to date in the 2023-24 academic year. The final position for this year will be reported to the Board as part of its business cycle schedule in 2024-25.

Compliments - In 22-23, the same level of compliments was retained compared to the previous year at 40. This was down to an improved oversight of the policy and a greater awareness amongst staff. SE believes that there are some excellent individuals who further thrive on appreciation for the service they provide, and compliments provide them with this recognition. SE referred to the compliments table for 22-23 in section 3.1.1 of her report. This showed the number of compliments received by curriculum area, the PBS Apprenticeships Team really stood out (22) and significantly increased during 22-23, from 7 in the previous year. The PBS Team is continuing that upward trend in this current year and this is in line with an increased achievement rate in year, which is currently 18% up on the previous year, including an increase in high grades as the PBS staff are now getting to grips



with the Distinction requirements for their Standard. 22 compliments have been received to date this year these were provided in Appendix 1 of the report for Governors).

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

- **Complaints** – The College normally receive very few formal complaints. One formal complaint was received in 21-22 and three were received in the previous year. One complaint has been received so far in the year to date. However, in 22-23, 11 formal complaints were received which is higher than usual. The areas were detailed in the table in section 3.2.1 of the report. Upon review, SE could not establish any emerging patterns and the themes were wide-ranging.

[Redacted – sensitive].

[Redacted – sensitive].

The Board received the Compliments and Complaints Report and:

- **Noted** the formal number of compliments and complaints recorded in the 2022-23 academic year.
- **Noted** the progress being made towards compliments and complaints in the current academic year.
- **Noted** the [Redacted – sensitive].

4.2. Teaching, Learning & Assessment

HB introduced her report. The purpose of the report was to provide the Board with a clear view of the progress made towards raising the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The report also provided an overview of the professional development activities that have been undertaken by staff.

- **Learning Visits** – The process for Learning Visits began in October 2023 and to date 70 learning visits have been conducted, the outcomes of which reinforce that the quality of teaching and learning is good. Appendix 1 of the report provided a detailed overview of the outcomes of Learning Visits completed across all college provision.

Within the cross-college provision, the quality of planning and sequencing of teaching and learning and the embedding of Fundamental British Values feature as a strength. Each curriculum area of the college provision has been evaluated individually and the strengths and areas for development were provided in Appendix 2 of the report.

- **Classroom provision** - There were 35 Learning Visits completed with staff working across the College's classroom provision, resulting in 3 members of staff not meeting standard. One member of staff has now met standard, one has now left the organisation and the other is a full-time lecturer working with both apprentices and full-time learners. The remaining member of staff who has not met standard has been given detailed feedback regarding the session that was visited and coaching to identify the actions that need to be taken to improve teaching practice. To ensure the member of staff has time to develop skills and implement new approaches the follow up Learning Visit will take place towards the end of April 2024.
- **Apprenticeship Provision** – There were 32 Learning Visits conducted across the Apprenticeship Provision with two members of staff not meeting standard during the



Learning Visit timeframe. Currently one staff member has now met standard, and the other has left the organisation.

- **Care Apprenticeships** - Within the Care Apprenticeship provision 13 Learning Visits were conducted. Care Training Consultants develop a positive rapport with their apprentices that allows them to confidently challenge them and assess their progress. Areas for development within the Care Apprenticeship team is to focus on the implementation of planning and to reflect on how to raise apprentice participation by using more interactive resources.
- **PBS Apprenticeships** – There were 14 Learning Visits conducted within PBS Apprenticeships during which sessions were planned effectively with clear messages of intent. Although sessions are planned well, PBS Training Consultants should explore in more depth the naturally occurring opportunities to embed Fundamental British Values in their subject areas. PBS Training Consultants should place more emphasis on challenging apprentices by creating opportunities for them to take more ownership within sessions. Recall prior learning must be checked more rigorously to assess the knowledge retained by apprentices from previous teaching sessions.
- **Adult Education** – Within the area of Adult Education the teaching and learning is very good, four learning visits were conducted, all of which met standard. Resources are of good quality and the sessions paced well. To raise the bar even higher the Team should build on and expand the opportunities to make teaching sessions more learner led.
- **Close the Loop Activity** - To date 23 close the loop activities were completed following Learning Visits across the college provision. The purpose of these activities is to reflect and evaluate the impact of the individual professional development that staff have undertaken since the Learning Visit. All staff involved in close the loop conversations have reflected upon and adapted their teaching which has brought about a positive outcome on learners and learning.
The process has highlighted that the outcome is not always the most important part of the professional development, HB cited an example of a member of staff who had identified a particular piece of technology they wanted to use, however after completing research they discovered several other tools, therefore they now have a much broader bank of resources to enhance their teaching and can adapt these to achieve the best fit for their delivery. Consequently, the small changes that staff are making to improve their practice, as part of the close the loop activities, is contributing to raising the bar in teaching and learning at Derwentside College. An overview of the close the loop activities was included in the report for Governor's perusal.
- **New Staff Teaching and Learning Induction Programme** - At present there have been 25 new members of staff who have been involved in the Teaching and Learning Induction Programme, of which 16 have now completed a range of professional development, mentoring and coaching according to their personal development needs. To date feedback has been positive and the impact of the training is monitored during Learning Visits and Line Manager appraisals. There are six members of staff still involved in the process and all future new staff will be included in the programme as they begin their employment.
- **Professional Development** – To date this year two Teacher Innovation Days have taken place, one in October 2023 and one in February 2024. The range of topics and themes delivered to date was summarised in Appendix 3 of the report.



HB invited questions/comments from Governors.

CT informed Governors that a Quality Strategy is being developed and the Business Cycle for next year is also in the final draft stages; in future the Teaching & Learning report will be an agenda item for the Quality & Standards Committee. The revised 2024-25 Business Cycle is structured to facilitate a more strategic focus in Board meetings, and for more operational matters to be dealt with at Committee level, with recommendations made to the Board for approval/decision.

CB wanted to know what the 'buy-in' was like from staff who have not met the standard; he noted that two staff have left the business. In response, HB reported the message is delivered in a positive way, staff are coached and supported to improve. The two staff chose to leave the College due to other reasons. CT informed Governors the process is developmental and learning visits inform discussions on performance, alongside other issues.

GB noted the report was a good report. He wanted to know if the Close the Loop activity involved all staff. In response HB reported the process involves all staff, HB provided a verbal overview of the process. GB asked HB if an exemplary session is observed, are opportunities provided for the exemplary member of staff to mentor others. In response HB reported there are; staff are 'paired up'. GB's view was that best practice could be used as an opportunity to celebrate best practice. SE supported this and noted that she has discussed this with HB.

KM also thought the report was a good report. She wanted to know how staff are being prepared for the delivery of T-Levels. In response HB reported staff are being encouraged to think about 'long retrieval' they are being encouraged to change their whole teaching philosophy to make things more memorable i.e. more interactive lessons, encourage long retrieval, teaching to be more learner-led and placements will feature within the T-Levels. KM wanted to know more about the strategy relating to improving Tutorial. In response HB reported that learning visits take place frequently and there is an action plan in place. KM asked if consideration had been given to external validation. HB informed KM internal judgements are used supported by the Standardisation process. KM also questioned whether the College had considered using an external firm to undertake observations to provide a more independent evaluation. In response, CT reported that he has had experience of utilising external companies for observation previously, but this was not a positive experience. He also reported that in his view the judgements of HB and her team are accurate, and this was evident in our last Ofsted inspection. During discussions, CT had suggested to HB that she should consider applying to become an Ofsted inspector.

The Board received the Teaching, Learning & Assessment report and:

- **Noted** the outcomes from Learning Visits and the themes arising from each Curriculum Area regarding their areas of strength and development.
- **Noted** the professional development activities implemented during the year to date and how they link with the key outcomes from Learning Visits and the priorities outlined within the College's Quality Improvement Plan.

5. Finance & Resources

5.1. Management Accounts – 2023-24

AH introduced his report. The purpose of the report was to present the monthly accounts to the Corporation Board, highlighting any areas of concern and points to consider.



There is an EBITDA deficit for the period to date of £130k against an expected budget surplus of £199k, giving a negative variance of £329k. Last month saw a significant shift in Adult Education Budget course delivery and income, with most of this course income being realised in January. The next round of course delivery will take place in March, when another upturn in Adult Education Budget income is expected. Budgets are profiled evenly and therefore do not take cognisance of these peaks and troughs in income as course delivery comes in waves throughout the year. This, therefore, creates erratic shifts in college outturn from one month to the next. Current projections have been recalculated based on the pipeline, giving a projected year-end under-recovery of £44k.

Meetings continue to take place with budget holders and senior leaders to update year-end projections. This has been done for all budget lines, using funding reports, pipelines, and professional intelligence, and included in the month 06 set of accounts, with updates thereafter. The next formal review will take place in month 09, with a final review in month 12.

The College cash flow has been reworked to include the T-level capital funding, T-level specialist equipment grant and the current projected outturn position. Notice has been given to the bank regarding funds held in the high interest deposit account, as these are needed to support the College's day-to-day business, to fund the c.£500k contribution to the T-level capital project, the 2-month lag in ESFA capital funding for this project, and finally to fund the Adult Education Budget clawback, due to under-delivery in the previous academic year.

The College's financial health grade continues to demonstrate GOOD financial health. The performance ratio and current ratio have been updated with the financial health score identified as 190 points. The projected outturn and inclusion of the T-Level capital project will impact on the College's overall cash balance, and therefore the health score is likely to drop to the bottom end of the grading, but still achieve a rating of 'GOOD'.

AH invited questions/comments from Governors.

The Corporation Chair asked a question in relation to profiling. In response CT acknowledged that there is a lot of work to do in this area to ensure that budgets, actuals and funding reports are aligned and that a consistent approach is taken to income recognition. The Budget for 2024-25 is currently in draft, however further work is required in this area. AH supported this and reminded Governors there are two interims in post at present (AH and the HoF); once the new VP – Finance & Resources is in post; this will have a positive impact.

No other questions/comments were raised.

The Board received the Month 07 Finance Report, provided support, challenge, and guidance to the Interim Vice Principal – Finance and Resources

5.2. Cash Management

AH introduced his report. This report was prepared at the request of the Audit & Risk Committee Chair. The purpose of the report was to provide an overview of the College's current financial management strategies and practices relating to cash. It provided a narrative on cash management principles being followed by the Finance Team and provided an up-to-date review of the College's cash flows in the 2023/24 financial year and beyond.



The report reviewed the need for good cash/treasury management in a college environment, highlighting the need for more accurate cash flow forecasting so that funds can be invested to maximise the return for the College. This is also closely linked to the ESFA financial health scores, noting how important it is that these are monitored regularly, and mitigation measures taken, for the College to achieve a good or outstanding health grade and thereby not raise any financial warning signs to the FE Commissioner's office.

The report will be updated during 2024/25, highlighting the improvements which have been made in systems and processes to maximise returns and ensure that funds are managed dynamically, and the College's reserves are being managed in the most efficient and effective way possible.

AH invited questions/comments from Governors.

The Corporation Chair noted that agreeing a 2.1% interest rate on a current account is an excellent outcome.

CT noted that once the VP – F&R is in place, this will provide an opportunity for stabilisation within the Finance Team.

No other comments/questions were raised.

The Board received the Cash Management report.

6. Policies for Approval

Following the two-week policy review window and feedback from governors on the policies presented, governors approved the following policies:

- **Compliments & Complaints Policy** – SJ noted the word employee was missing from section 2.1 of the policy. Subject to this amendment being made the policy was approved.
- **Anti-Fraud, Bribery, Corruption and Money Laundering Policy** – the policy was approved.

7. Any Other Items of Urgent Business

- 7.1. **Business Cycle – 2024-25** – SJ wanted to know the types of reports that will come to the Committees / Board for 2024-25. It was noted that this will be an item for discussion at the Board Away Day in June. It was agreed that the Head of Governance will send the draft Business Cycle to SJ for her feedback and consideration. Other Governors will be given the opportunity to comment on an advanced draft at the away day in June.

The meeting ended at 7.05 pm.



Board Meetings

Actions Arising

Date of Meeting: 26th March 2024

Minute Ref	Action	Responsible Officer	Status & Deadline
7.1	<u>2024-25 Business Cycle</u> The Head of Governance will send the draft Business Cycle to SJ.	Head of Governance	<u>Complete</u> - 2 April 2024

Date of Meeting: 27th February 2024

Minute Ref	Action	Responsible Officer	Status & Deadline
4.3	<u>Quality Strategy</u> Carole Loader to provide the College with some examples of effective quality strategies.	Deputy Principal / Head of Quality and Standards	<u>Complete</u> End of March 2024
7.2	<u>T-Level Capital Programme Reports</u> Regular reports will be provided to the Board by the Interim Vice Principal – Finance on progress made towards the implementation of the College's T-Level capital programme.	Interim VP - Finance	<u>Ongoing</u> March to September 2024

Date of Meeting: 26 September 2023

Minute Ref	Action	Responsible Officer	Status & Deadline
5.1	<u>Financial Planning</u> Formulate a longer-term financial plan from 2024-25 onwards (three years up to the end of July 2027) that is aligned to the strategic plan.	Interim VP - Finance	<u>Ongoing</u> 21 st May 2024 Board meeting
7.3	<u>Risk Management Policy</u> Develop a new risk management policy and approach to the management of risk at the College.	Interim VP - Finance	<u>Ongoing</u> End of July 2024

Date of Meeting: 11 July 2023

Minute Ref	Action	Responsible Officer	Status & Deadline
5.2	<u>Board Away Day</u> The financial performance and profitability of the curriculum will be an item for the next Board Away Day.	Principal / Chair	<u>Ongoing</u> 11 th June 2024

