

Minutes of Corporation Board – Part 1 (Ratified)

30 March 2023

Board Members: B Kaczmarczyk (Chair) E Pearson
J Battye S Martin-Standley
P Bond L McKenzie
T Campbell L Mycroft
E Cheshire (Student Governor) L Needham (Staff Governor – Curriculum)
J Croot J Richards (Principal and CEO)
H Freeman L Warren (Apprentice Governor)
J Hemper

Attendees: J Shore (Head of Governance) H Taylor-Toone (Deputy Principal)
C Acaster (AP People & Culture) G Varley (AP Engineering & Construction)
J Down (AP Student Experience & Wellbeing) A Godber (Head of Vocational Studies & T-Levels)
M Ward (Head of Creative Industries, Academic Studies & Higher Education)

Apologies: J Battye, J Croot, J Hemper, L Mycroft

CH = Challenge

53/2223 Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded of the need to disclose an interest in any item of business to be considered at the meeting. Nothing was declared for Part 1.

54/2223 Minutes of the Previous Meeting & Matters Arising

The Part 1 minutes of the previous Corporation Board meetings held 9 February 2023 were reviewed and agreed as a true and accurate record. The review of confidential minutes is recorded under Part 2.

The action log was reviewed and there were no matters arising. Previous actions were updated and either marked as complete or carried forward as appropriate. (*Refer to Corporation Action Log – 30.3.23*)

Resolution: The Board **approved** the non-confidential minutes (Part 1) of the previous meetings.

55/223 Student & Apprentice Governor Report

The Student Governor (EC) and Apprentice Governor (LW) presented their first collective report which provided an overview of some of the key focus areas and activities from a student/apprentice perspective.

Development of Student Voice

The Student Union (SU) and Student Council (SC) currently function as two separate entities, however, work is being undertaken to bring the two together to create better connections with the wider student body and to provide greater inclusion of apprentices who work offsite, creating an environment for engaging debates between both students and apprentices and to develop a greater apprentice community. Meetings will also be held more frequently to gather more consistent feedback from students and apprentices and in turn tackle more student-facing issues and optimise the student experience. In addition to the SC meetings, apprentices also plan to have smaller meetings amongst themselves on a regular basis for feedback to be shared with the Apprentice Governor more efficiently.

Campaigning & Voting

The local Labour MP for Chesterfield and Staveley, who is the Shadow Minister for Skills and Further Education, visited the College on 24/3/23 and spoke with students about the importance of voting, democratic processes and being an active citizen. Students gained insight as to what makes an effective election campaign, which can be utilised during the next Student Union elections for those wishing to pursue future positions. JD reported that the event was well represented by both students and apprentices, with mature questions raised for an engaging discussion by all.

Student Union & Heartspace Activities

Following identification by the SU for the requirement for stationery to be available to purchase onsite since the closure of the College shop, a small pot of funds has been allocated to purchase basic stationary items and the SU has been selling these in

the Heartspace during lunchtime. The shop has been well received by the students and plans to promote this further are being discussed, including use of a card machine to encourage more sales. The profits raised are being used to purchase further items, such as scientific calculators.

The SU members have engaged in fundraising activity in the Heartspace, including bingo for Children in Need during the Kindness Festival week, and an Easter raffle and competition as a fundraiser for further SU activities. Discussions are also in progress to identify activities which can be run in the Heartspace to support students and apprentices with exam anxiety, such as supporting the Breakfast Club and running activities to promote wellbeing, which will be considered in conjunction with other activities planned by the College to provide support during exam periods.

Team building activities for the SU have been planned to strengthen peer and working relationships and build team morale and wellbeing.

Resolution: The Board **received** and **noted** the contents of the Student & Apprentice Governor Report.

56/2223

Performance Report

The Principal (JR) provided an overview of the Performance Report, which in addition to the key focus items below included an overview of student data analysis, teaching and learning, curriculum initiatives, applications and offers, and workforce development.

DfE Curriculum Changes / Level 3 Qualification Reforms

AG/MW joined the meeting.

The Head of Vocational Studies & T-Levels (AG) and Head of Creative Industries, Academic Studies & Higher Education (MW) presented an overview of the Department for Education (DfE) curriculum changes and the impact this will have for the College in terms of funding, offer and delivery.

The presentation covered Level 2 and below post-2025, Level 3 Qualification Reforms, funding removal, T-Level implications, Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs), Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs) and Apprenticeship course approvals. The key considerations for the College's 16-19 provision were also outlined including staffing hours and requirements, curriculum structure and matrix from 2025 onwards, identifying courses at risk and potential non-starts for 2023, CIAG upskilling and training, 14-16 awareness and delivery to feeder schools and 2024 priorities identified through curriculum moderation.

In relation to the decoupling of some of the apprenticeship qualifications from the gateway and adding them to the End Point Assessment (EPA), the Board acknowledged the potential benefit this would have for providers in terms of the issues faced with some apprentices not completing their EPA once they have achieved the technical qualification required by their employer. This would support the College in achieving its completion target.

CH: The Board discussed the impact on employers, particularly SMEs, and their capacity to support apprentices with the new qualifications and asked what the plans were for raising employer awareness. AG advised that regarding T-Levels, staff will promote the new placements alongside the apprenticeship and commercial offer, which will be streamlined and marketed as one offer. Training will commence after the Easter break to ensure these staff fully understand the requirements of each T-Level. There is also funding and incentives available for preparing employers to support T level students, which will allow the College to purchase equipment for them once they have committed.

CH: In terms of NEETS and students at lower entry level, the Board discussed the concerns around the local demographic and increased number of NEETs in schools since the pandemic, which will in turn impact the College. It was noted that mental health issues amongst young people remains an issue and will need to be closely monitored by schools and further education providers.

CH: The Board asked how pathways would be developed for lower-level students. AG advised that entry Level 1 and most likely Level 2 would not be affected too much in the short term. It is anticipated that once students reach Level 2, transition courses will be considered, as well as the possibility of including another year for a GCSE preparation course to get students ready to move on to A Levels or a different pathway. GV advised that the College has a solid entry Level 1 offer across most of the College.

JR noted that part of the challenge was the employer market and finding the breadth of activity for the students to engage in line with the new T-Level structure, which can no longer just be work experience. The Board also discussed the challenges around transport and other residual costs for the students/college due to the location of some of the larger employers who can provide the experience required.

The Chair thanked AG/MW for their presentation to the Board.

AG/MW left the meeting. TC joined the meeting.

Performance KPIs

A full summary of in-year performance against the 22/23 Performance targets was provided within the report. It was noted that the updated KPIs would be scrutinised by the Standards & Performance Committee at its next meeting on 9/5/23.

JR advised that generally the data was holding up well compared to the previous year, however, there was still some challenges around maths & English attendance, retention and achievement. The strategy for maths & English will be revisited after the Easter break and the possibility of de-centralising delivery back into the curriculum is currently being explored and piloted; this will include consultation with the Student Council.

Key Risks - Performance

An overview of the Performance key risks was provided within the report. JR advised that the key risks remained the same around apprenticeship retention and noted that the restructure for this provision, including the removal of Health & Social Care, was almost complete. The numbers for 23/24 have been carefully planned and are much lower than in previous years; all final profiles will be reviewed by SLT for final approval.

In relation to the Support to Improve areas, close monitoring and support continues to be provided to classroom based Engineering, which has experienced issues this year with the quality of the provision, predominantly linked to challenges with the recruitment and retention of quality staff. Actions are in place to address the issues and mitigate the risks associated with attendance, retention and achievement, such as re-introduction of data integrity meetings, focused quality support, mini performance reviews and action plans for staff.

JR advised that there was a real focus on student/apprentice RAG ratings to provide a much clearer picture in terms of those at risk of not achieving and predicted achievement rates. The other key areas of focus at present include revisiting the maths and English strategy and the re-base of the Apprenticeship provision.

CH: The Board asked if there were any key updates relating to HE. JR advised that figures were currently down in terms of student numbers and income. Following the departure of J Stocks, M Ward is now managing the provision and the HE offer will be reviewed as part of curriculum moderation. The College is currently on a teach-out contract with the University of Derby for its Early Years and Teacher Training provision, following the sudden increase of their validation fees by 186%. However, even by moving this provision over to Sheffield Hallam University, the minimum group size requirement is 15, with a validation fee of c.£900 per student. As part of the new strategic plan from 24/25, there will be a real focus on the HE offer, including the viability of Degrees and where the new HTQ's will fit into the curriculum, as well as considering more specialist and niche provision. JR proposed that HE provision could be a key focus at a future Board meeting.

Sustainability Fair

JR advised that the Sustainability Fair held 29/3/23 was a huge success and phenomenal feedback had been received from both staff and students. The Student Governor (EC) and Apprentice Governor (LW) provided an overview of some of the activities they took part in on the day and agreed it was an engaging and thought-provoking event, enjoyed by everyone. TC advised that he attended and commended the staff and students for their tremendous effort and input.

Safeguarding & EDI Update

The Safeguarding Team continue to grow their offer of 'preventative education' as part of the college Aspire tutorial programme, with a number of initiatives and workshops planned for the remainder of the year. There will also be a dedicated two-day awareness event at the end of the academic year with a festival theme, encompassing all aspects of safeguarding and wellbeing to promote summer safety.

In January an awareness event focusing on mental health and suicide prevention was a great success and encouraging feedback was received from external guests. Student engagement throughout the event was positive, with curriculum areas supporting some of the activities by providing music and holistic therapies.

The Safeguarding Manager has worked to develop safeguarding reports which are shared on a weekly basis with curriculum colleagues, which enables them to be aware of specific risk and the broader safeguarding landscape within their day-to-day roles.

An update from the recent EDI Committee was provided within the report. It was also noted that the extensive work that has taken place within the SEND department to improve delivery of SEND support has resulted in an increase in the college High Needs funded places for 23/24, with 10 further funded places allocated holding a monetary value of £60k.

Annual Committee Reports for Safeguarding and EDI will be prepared and shared with the Board at the next meeting.

Resolution: The Board **received** and **noted** the contents of the Performance Report.

57/2223 Corporate Report

The Principal (JR) presented the Corporate Report which, in addition to the key areas discussed below, included an update on the National Picture (including Government Policy & Legislation) and Strategic Relationships & Events.

Level 3 Qualification Reforms

Following publication of the Government's plans for qualifications at Level 3, analysis of the College's current enrolments suggests that 554 (22%) of its 16-18 students would not have a qualification to work towards. The College's concerns have been expressed in a letter to the Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education, and a copy of the letter and response received was shared within the report.

Accountability Agreement

As previously discussed with the Board, it is now a requirement to submit an Accountability Agreement on an annual basis, following the funding and accountability reforms. The College's agreement for 2023/24 must be submitted to the Department for Education (DfE) by 31/5/23 and this will be discussed with SLT as well as governors at the strategic session on 20/4/23 in terms of objectives for next year and alignment with Local Skills Improvement Plan. The final agreement will be presented for Board approval.

Key Performance Indicators

The overall KPI position was shared with the Board, including commentary against each target. As at 28/2/23, the KPI achievement was rag rated as 53% green, 13% amber and 34% red.

The Corporate KPIs were highlighted within the report. JR advised that there had been no update since the previous meeting and that all KPIs had been achieved against target, except for Performance & Development Review (PDR) completion which was now at 93% (a 13% increase since the last report). However, it was noted that the majority of the outstanding PDRs were confined to 2 specific curriculum areas affected by management sickness absence and a restructure.

Key Risks – Corporate

An overview of the key Corporate risks and mitigations was provided within the report. Key risks were recorded as staff workload and wellbeing, recruitment and retention of staff, volatility of the apprenticeship market, inadequate levels of core funding, and the bureaucracy and restrictions relating to reclassification and commercial borrowing not permitted.

JR reported that the final session of the 'Leading from the Middle' programme had been held with the ETF, with JR/CA in attendance to provide certificates. The feedback from mentors was exceptionally strong and positive, and they commended the managers for their professionalism and advised that a lot of the projects developed on the course could be shared at a national level. This is a fantastic outcome for the staff involved, and the College will consider how more staff can be developed.

The staff survey will be launched 31/3/23 and feedback will be provided to the Board later in the year.

Health & Safety

An update from the Health & Safety Committee was included within the report, including agreed actions, statutory audits and reports, and mandatory training.

Resolution: The Board **received** and **noted** the contents of the Corporate Report.

58/2223 Governance Report

The Head of Governance (JS) presented the Governance Report which, in addition to the key items highlighted below, included an update on the next governor strategic session, policies approved at Committee-level, and the latest ratified Committee minutes.

Committee Membership

J Evans has been appointed as Co-opted Governor by the Transformation Fund Sub-Committee. JS provided the Board with an overview of JE's skills and background within the construction industry, and it was noted that he is already actively involved with the College in providing onsite construction site visits to students. The Board agreed that this addressed the skills gap and recommendation from the Governance & Search Committee that a co-opted member with construction expertise should be recruited to compliment the wider Board's skill set.

FE Good Governance Guide - SEND

Updates to the FE Governance Guide were published on 2/3/23 and the key changes for governors to note were highlighted within the report. A new section has been added on Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and it was flagged that there is a recommendation that the Board should have a governor with responsibility for championing SEND.

Action: JS to discuss potential candidates from the school sector with JD. EC to liaise with the Headteacher at her work placement (SEND school).

There are also some associated amendments to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion section which were outlined within the report for information. The recommendations for the Board were flagged, including the annual publication of an EDI Review, which should include data on protected characteristics at board, executive leadership, staff and student level and actions to address disparities.

Action: JS to add to Annual EDI Review to the governance QIP and JR/JD to implement moving forward.

In addition, the section on Executive pay has been amended to reflect the new senior pay controls which are in place, as a consequence of reclassification.

Resolution: The Board **received** and **noted** the contents of the Governance Report.

59/2223 Statutory Reporting & Link Governor Updates

- Equality Diversity & Inclusion – The membership of the EDI Committee has been reformed to include wider staff and student representation to really drive the EDI agenda across College with as much vigour as Safeguarding. The College has also signed up with the LGBTQ+ Rainbow Accreditation who offer unconscious bias training, which will be undertaken by the EDI Committee. The ratified minutes from the EDI Committee were shared as part of the Governance Report.
- Safeguarding – JD reported that mental health remains the most reported safeguarding issue and this has a “domino effect” for the staff who are dealing with these safeguarding issues. The updated Safeguarding Policy will be brought to the Board for approval at its next meeting. **Action: BK to share mental health webinar which he delivered externally on 29/3/23.**

- Health and Safety – A new student representative based at Lockford Lane Automotive has joined the Committee. There has been First Aid training in College which was attended by some students, as well as the routine Fire Safety Drills. The minutes from the Health & Safety Committee were shared as part of the Governance Report.

CH: The Board asked whether there was also a requirement from Defibrillator training in College. CA advised that this is delivered as part of the First Aid course undertaken by the Security Team.

- Sustainability – In addition to the Sustainability Fair discussed under the Performance Report, HTT reported that the College has also taken receipt of a hydrogen car which staff members are insured to drive and promote the College with. The next meeting of the Sustainability Working Group is being planned and EC advised that sustainability is a key focus of the Student Union and students across College are really starting to engage with the agenda.

Link Governor Feedback

Governors were given the opportunity to provide a verbal update on their recent link government engagement with staff and students. TC reported that he and CA had reviewed the People Strategy, with a focus on health and wellbeing. TC has also supported the Senior Leadership Team with the Transformation Project.

Resolution: The Board **noted** the Statutory Reporting and Link Governor updates.

60/2223 Statutory Accounts 2021/22 – Subsidiary Accounts

HTT reminded the Board that due to the recent reclassification of all colleges as public sector institutions, sign-off was required from the Department for Education (DfE) to use letters of support for the College’s 4 subsidiary companies; Learning Unlimited ATA Ltd, Chesterfield College Enterprises Ltd, Recruit Unlimited Ltd and Training Services 2000 Ltd. Approval has now been received and assurance has also been provided by the College’s external auditors.

The final 2021/22 Statutory Accounts for the 4 subsidiary companies were shared with the Board, alongside a summary of changes since they were last presented as draft in December 2022 which was provided within the report. The Letters of Representation/Support were also shared for information.

Resolution: The Board **approved** the final statutory accounts for the 4 subsidiary companies.

61/2223 Confidential Items

Confidential items are minuted separately under Part 2.

62/223 Date of Next Meeting

25 May 2023

The meeting concluded.