



Minutes of the Board meeting held via Microsoft Teams on Thursday 11th February 2021 at 5pm

GOVERNORS PRESENT: Sean Lyons, Chair
Andrew Copley, Principal & CEO
Charles Heaton
Neil McDonald
Rebecca Joyce
Sardip Sandhu
Kate Truscott
Steve Sutton
Tony Westwater
Spencer Moore (until 7pm)
Anna Teal (until 7pm)
David Gillies
Keith Spiers (until 7pm)
Nathan Clements
Andrew Spencer
Elliott Parker
Bev Whitefoot

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Maxine Bagshaw, Director of Governance
Louise Knott, Vice Principal: Communications, Engagement & Student Experience
Jon Fearon, Finance Director
Matt Vaughan, Vice Principal: Curriculum and Quality
Suzanna Smith, Director: HR & Organisational Development
Gavin Peake, Director: IT, Estates & Learning Resources
Mike Firth, ESFA Observer

		ACTION by whom	DATE by when
1	<u>DECLARATION OF INTERESTS</u>		
	The chair reminded everyone present to declare any interest that they may have on matters to be discussed. No specific declarations were made and standing declarations were noted.		
2	<u>WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u>		
	Apologies for absence were received from Mary Mamik, John Gray and		

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Rebecca Chambers.

The chair advised that John Gray has confirmed the intention to tender his resignation shortly; this is because of increased personal and business commitments. He has indicated that he will remain connected to the college and will provide input wherever it is possible. All agreed that this was important in terms of employers in the area and Emsi data. The chair explained that this does now leave the board with a recruitment need for the Standards Committee, particularly someone with a background in education, training and curriculum. He put forward the proposal that Peridot be engaged to support the recruitment process, and the board were happy to endorse and agree this recommendation.

3 STAFF GOVERNOR (ACADEMIC) APPOINTMENT

The director of governance outlined the process for recruiting to the academic staff governor vacancy and summarised the outcome of the election process. She confirmed that the successful candidate at the close of voting was Bev Whitefoot and, therefore, proposed that she be appointed by the board. A summary of her background and role in the college was provided.

AGREED: to appoint Bev Whitefoot as the staff governor (academic) from 11th February 2021 to 11th February 2025 or until such time as she ceases to be a member of staff, whichever is the earlier.

4 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10TH DECEMBER 2020

The minutes were reviewed and it was agreed that they were an accurate record of discussions.

AGREED: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10th December 2020.

There were no matters arising.

5 ACTION PROGRESS REPORT

The board considered the update and a number of matters were noted:

- Line 4 – this is an ongoing action.
- Line 6 – the chair advised that there are opportunities for governors to support the learning companies, and he indicated that it may be possible to combine two initiatives into a social for governors in the summer, i.e. the Mansfield walking tours and the bakery.
- Line 8 – the requested clarification from students will be invited at the April 2021 meeting.

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AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

6 SCENE SETTING

The chair provided a verbal update and reflected back on the review of governance processes, particularly those discussed at the earlier meeting. He confirmed that the intention had been to look at the time that the board spends together and ensure that meetings are effective and focused on the right areas. As a consequence of the review, the agenda has been reshaped to give more time for deeper discussion on a smaller number of key topics at each meeting. He confirmed that all feedback following the introduction of the new format would be welcomed.

The chair indicated that one of the other initiatives to be introduced is that, at each board meeting, there will be a 'talking heads' film that has been prepared by students. Over the next few meetings there will be one each representing the five key areas on the QIAP. If successful, these will continue to be aligned for the board meetings throughout this year and into the next academic year. The intention is that the student feedback provided will underpin the deep dive topic areas, which for this meeting is teaching and learning.

He confirmed that the talking heads piece was intended as an opportunity for students to share their views and experiences. The film was shared and a number of themes were outlined, including:

- Remote learning
- Home learning
- Practical limitations
- Internet connections
- Interaction with teachers
- Staff are passionate and helpful
- Students can rely on teachers
- Activities and trips, when possible, have been helpful
- Students have welcomed roleplay activities to support them with interviews
- Tutors are very encouraging
- Staff have had to improvise
- Use of cameras are very welcome as it helps to read body language
- College is considerate in terms of any technical difficulties that may arise, e.g. microphones.
- Tutors are adapting really well
- Some students appreciate the opportunity to come into college, which is helpful, particularly if there is a need to utilise specialist IT equipment
- College clearly providing support
- Really good teaching both for vocational and English and maths

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elements

- Pace of work can be a challenge
- Many students would definitely rather be on site
- One student commented that it had been really great to get back to on-site education after four years of home schooling
- There could be improvements in a number of areas.

When the film had concluded, it was explained that this was feedback giving 16 students' own personal perspective. The board all agreed that it was really great to hear the 'voice of the customer'.

The student governor present expressed the view that the opinions provided were accurate and similar to his own experience. He felt that staff were clearly looking to get the best potential out of each and every student, but he felt that it was not always possible for them to fully understand what is happening in students' personal lives.

The board all acknowledged that the feedback provided had predominantly been positive, and they asked that this be shared with individual tutors. They took the opportunity to express thanks to Josh Levy and Callan Kemp, the two apprentices who had supported preparation of the film piece, including the drone work.

A question from one member of the board was what the college is doing in relation to the few who are struggling. It was confirmed that this would be picked up as part of agenda item 8 discussions later in the meeting.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

7 BALANCED SCORECARD

The principal introduced this item and confirmed that the vice chair, Sardip Sandhu, has continued to work with the executive to help to develop this reporting structure. He confirmed that the executive team have adapted the original format and the introduction of four domains has particularly helped to identify any areas where activities may be considered as 'light'. He confirmed that, as an organisation and as a board, this gives a focus for developments.

He indicated that, in recent meetings, the team have started to talk more about the quantifiable measures and, save for the financial position, the executive believe that most are within the college's gift to set. He explained that there are some sector norms and benchmarks that do exist which can be used as a starting point; however, there are also areas that clearly require stretch.

In considering the format and targets proposed, a challenge from the

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board was to consider what is realistic, unrealistic, and ambitious. The principal indicated that in a number of areas the college wants to really 'shoot for it' – for example maths and English – and the right framework has now been put in place to support this. He indicated that, as a college, it is important to see how far staff and students can push themselves.

He confirmed that the vice chair has had an opportunity to look at the systems that sit underneath the dynamic measures, and it has been agreed that there will be less leeway/tolerance on the areas where the college really wants to get to. He confirmed that, as the team obtain more confidence regarding the data that populates this tool, it will continue to be refined and developed.

The principal indicated that there were four red RAG-rated areas reported on for this meeting. These are:

- 1) Finance – key matters noted were:
 - The college now has three RAG-rated aspects and, by comparison, there was only one at the last meeting, which reflects a number of increased challenges.
 - Apprenticeship provision – there is a pipeline built up but activity cannot start. This is leading to a delay and will also lead to a capacity challenge when activity can recommence.
 - AEB – there has been no ESFA assurance this year. The college is currently at 50% of target and the gap is likely to increase. That said, the impact on the bottom line is not as significant: most provision is subcontracted and, therefore, there is only a 20% impact to the bottom line. On the upside, the pandemic has given the college more time to best plan direct delivery. There are a number of initiatives being considered to address the gap, including buying online training opportunities; however, it is challenging to start a new offer mid-year.
 - The EBITDA position is lower than target – he confirmed that the college is having to be really careful to ensure that bank covenants are not breached.
 - As a positive, he confirmed that the college has been granted 16-18 in-year growth funding which, at 50% of actual, means an additional circa £600k.

The board asked for an update in relation to the yearend EBITDA forecast. The finance director explained that there were a number of components influencing these, including:

- The college is still awaiting final confirmation of the 16-18 growth funding number.
- AEB – the college knows that there will not be 100% protection but is aware that a number of models and support are being considered by the ESFA.
- The college is currently finalising the new online learning offer,

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and it is anticipated that this will provide some ability to close the gap.

- AEB support mechanisms are being discussed nationally, for example +10% on actual earned.
- If the college does not replace subcontracted activity, it will be circa £2 million down against target.

In general discussion, the finance director explained that more certainty is anticipated next week and gave assurance that the college does have some plans in place to plug the subcontracting gap. The college is also seeking support from Lloyds, and they have agreed in principle to change the EBITDA covenant to avoid any breach. He reminded that the college is very close to repaying a large amount of debt and, therefore, stakeholders are keen to support where possible. He confirmed that there are a number of elements at play which are intended to de-risk the position as much as possible.

In relation to apprenticeship provision, one member of the board asked whether the college has looked at forward modelling regarding the macro implications, i.e. the industry factor. As an example, the beauty industry analysis shows that circa 15% of salons won't reopen, and this is likely to have a direct impact on student recruitment for a number of courses. The board asked whether the college has also undertaken a number of lockdown scenarios, i.e. potentially when the site will reopen. In relation to AEB, the board were advised that the assumption is to have the bulk/reliance on online learning and there seems to be demand in this area. The college is not intending to rely upon classroom-based delivery up to July 2021.

In relation to apprenticeships, the pandemic is impacting many sectors. What the college is seeing is an increased demand to ensure that students are 'job ready' for 2022, and the college is using learning companies to support this. The board were advised that there is very strong demand in the construction and engineering sectors but that the starts just keep getting pushed back. All acknowledged that, going forward, there will be a real change in terms of employment patterns. The board also accepted that there were growing macro-economic implications.

The principal discussed the hardest hit apprenticeship areas and confirmed that there are 38 hairdressing apprentices on furlough, and 10 beauty. For each of these, their positions are being individually reviewed and RAG-rated. The college has a waiting list of between 35 and 40 for the hair and beauty courses.

The principal advised that the college has not furloughed any of its staff, nor has it made a single member of staff redundant. This has been possible by providing some staff with an opportunity to support in other

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areas.

A challenge from one member of the board was to carefully consider the uptake of online learning, particularly the focus on the 'here and now'. The principal confirmed that the college was not intending to invest any capital in this area and that, instead, it was a way for the college to 'do its bit' at the same time as protecting income. He expressed the view that there will be an opportunity for the college to learn from these initiatives. The board were assured that the long-term objective is direct delivery for the communities that the college serves.

2) Learning and innovation

The board considered the data provided and acknowledged that, in the absence of any red RAG-rated items, there was no expectation to receive a detailed update. In relation to the four amber items, it was explained that good progress is being made.

3) Operational excellence

There are three RAG-rated items including:

- Staffing data for mandatory training percentage – the principal expressed confidence that this will be addressed through the staff development day planned for after half term.
- Percentage of deep dives graded 1 or 2 – he reminded that the areas requiring greatest focus/highest risk have been the subject of deep dives thus far, which has impacted upon the actual percentage against target. The board were advised that the college will have to work hard to hit the target set in this area, if it can be achieved.
- Percentage of apprentices receiving 20% off the job training – all acknowledged that this had been impacted by COVID. The picture was described as variable, with some areas doing better than others.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

8 ANNUAL KPI REPORTING

The principal confirmed that there was one KPI scheduled for reporting to this meeting, and this is the destinations of leavers (which was also discussed in detail by the Standards Committee at their most recent meeting). The principal confirmed that the team has done a great job to get to really understand the position and all felt that there were really pleasing results in the current circumstances. It was confirmed that the college is relentless in terms of staff focus to get the right/best destination and the need to know, with certainty, both intended and actual destinations.

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The board all agreed that the college had done well given the current economic circumstances. They described this as a quality report which gives confidence and assurance, and all felt that there was a much clearer picture when compared to the prior year.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

9 QUALITY AND STANDARDS

There were a number of aspects presented including:

1) Standards Committee chair's report

Kate Truscott, committee member, presented the detailed report in the absence of the chair. She confirmed that a significant amount of detail was considered at the meeting, with valuable reports provided giving the ability to obtain assurance. The committee is confident that the college is making good progress whilst being realistic and acknowledging that there are still areas for improvement. OneFile was again discussed, and it was explained that part of the compliance issue relates to apprentices themselves completing system requirements. The committee has urged the college to do all that it can to resolve this longstanding issue.

2) Minutes of the meeting held on 7th January 2021

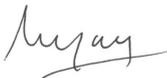
The board were happy to note the content and were advised that one aspect that the committee seeks board approval of is the updated Safeguarding Policy annex. It was explained that this has been reviewed to reflect the current operational elements.

AGREED: to approve the updated annex to the Safeguarding Policy as presented.

3) Deep dive – teaching and learning

The vice principal: curriculum and quality introduced the detailed report and cross-referenced it with the detail in the QIAP. He explained that the QIAP is intended to present the position 'warts and all'. He confirmed that the college has taken a very self-critical view and the position is predicated on the impact on the learner. There are eight sectors included within the QIAP for teaching and learning, and all are amber except for one. Key matters brought to the board's attention were:

- In most cases, the RAG-rating of amber is because there is not yet sufficient evidence of the impact on the learner.
- The college has some great teaching and learning, and there has been some real movement in some areas (but not all).
- The college is empowering teachers to take risks.

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- English & maths and health & social care need to be improved.
- Progress of learners is not good enough and has, in fact, declined since December 2017; however, this is mainly due to COVID. The challenge is to enable learners to make up the gap online.
- 60% of areas are not yet good enough.
- 40% are outstanding and/or good enough.
- Current position is better than the same point in the prior year.
- Standards Committee can see that progress is being made, but it is important not to take the 'foot off the gas'.

In considering the data provided, there were a number of specific questions by the Board; these included:

- The position regarding A-Level Science progression.
- 18% progression to Russell Group – what is the benchmark to compare with?
- NTU – what are the success measures to be put in place?

The vice principal: curriculum and quality responded and indicated that:

- In relation to A-Level Science, the A*-B results have improved but there are too many students not moving the required distance, i.e. not hitting their targets and therefore not securing what they are capable of. Provision is good but it could be outstanding. Progression levels in science do not hit the target set and the college needs to drive this forward.
- There are no Russell Group benchmarks in place as many students choose not to apply for financial reasons; however, the college does want to see the percentage increase.
- In relation to NTU, staff are working to create more local pathways to help students stay local where they need to.

A challenge from one member of the board was to check the A-level variant against the national picture so as to get a better view of proportionality.

In relation to maths and English, a newer member of the board asked why it is repeatedly a topic of conversation. It was agreed to arrange a one-to-one meeting to give background information and context between Matt Vaughan and Anna Teal. He explained that the IDSR has just been released and, whilst it is 'unofficial' because of COVID, it does show that this is an issue nationally. He indicated that, in relation to English and maths, the college is teaching with a repository of resistance from students. The position is improving in relation to English but is not where it needs to be in relation to maths.

4) QIAP

In terms of an overview, the vice principal: curriculum and quality indicated that the majority is RAG-rated as amber, which reflects the fact

VP C&Q

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that the evidence on the impact of learners is running behind. A challenge from one member of the board was in terms of what is needed to move to an 'on target' position. He explained that:

- The college needs to continue on the current trajectory but pace is at present too slow and needs to be accelerated
- It is important to get students and staff back on site
- Ownership and management are needed in a few areas.

The principal confirmed that the college's absolute focus is on a number of key areas, including:

- Quality of student experience
- Raising aspirations
- Teaching and learning

He confirmed that the ethos is for WNC to be a 'development college' and that this is both for staff and students.

The board indicated that it was important to remind ourselves of where we have come from and what has been achieved. There is evidence of real focus, a good pace, and COVID not hampering developments or aspirations. The board acknowledged that their focus for many years had been financial stability; however, this is now the core business. They felt that it was possible to see a high degree of progress and that this was down to staff and student commitment alongside good leadership.

The board were advised that there has also been a cultural shift including mindset; this was described as a profound shift even whilst dealing with a pandemic. The board were given assurance that progress will continue with a high degree of momentum and that senior staff feel that improvements can now be pushed forward more quickly as all of the foundations are in place.

5) Safeguarding/Prevent report

Key matters brought to the board's attention were:

- January saw a decline in the number of referrals, and the position has declined again. It is believed the fact that staff do not have 'eyes on the students' because they are not on site is impacting upon this.
- The college has 55 young LAC students – a number of these have helped to rewrite the local strategy, which has been really well received.
- The student involved in a train accident is now in a position where the college can support her to return to learning.
- On average, there are 70 students on campus, which should be compared with March 2020 when 15 was the highest. The college is seeing more demand from students to come to site and is also seeing a higher rate of 'lockdown fatigue'.

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The board made the observation that the position seems to be well under control, even in difficult circumstances, and all acknowledged that safeguarding was a high-performing team.

The board were given an update in relation to Inspire and Achieve, and it was confirmed that definite progress has been made following Bev Whitefoot's work with them recently. It was confirmed that they have responded positively and proactively to work to allay any concerns. The board were reminded that this was a true partnership, even though it operates through a subcontracting arrangement.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

10 **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

The committee chair drew governors' attention to her summary report and confirmed that the areas of assurance include:

- Staff recruitment
- Staff development and upskilling
- Wellbeing and resilience.

There is still more work to be done in relation to:

- Policies and procedures
- E&D targets and objectives
- Ratios of support staff to teaching staff once the pandemic has receded.

Staff have been challenged by governors to identify what 'makes the college special', and the senior team are really looking to try and develop this: for example, the staff development offer to both new and existing staff. Governors really commended the 'meet the staff' sessions, and all agreed that they had been really informative. It was noted that the college continues with staff COVID update sessions and it was acknowledged that this is another governor engagement opportunity.

The principal advised that the college is now running its own COVID testing centre, which is staffed by volunteers. Its creation has involved a huge amount of work but all are finding it really reassuring; this includes staff, family, and friends. 147 tests have been completed over the last four weeks, and the college is now very much planning for the return to site. The principal indicated that the college now has a full years' experience of COVID and is, therefore, in a much stronger position. Some staff are experiencing bereavement and the college is working to enhance its arrangements outside of the policies and procedures. The college is also looking to develop its long-term COVID support.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

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The committee chair drew governors' attention to his summary report, and it was acknowledged that a lot had already been discussed. Key points to bring to the board's attention are:

- There is nothing from the meeting that requires formal board approval
- Capital works are progressing well and it is not envisaged that there are any risks in relation to failing to spend the £1.3 million. In fact, there is a potential to do more than originally envisaged as some of the estimates are being found to be high. The spend deadline has been extended, which minimises the risk even further.
- Revenue risks
- Subcontractor performance
- AEB – the committee received details of the proposed online proposition and asked the finance director to create a bridge to explain the variance.
- bksb is contributing well and is ahead of budget. Contributions are on a monthly basis.
- Cash – in December 2020, the college paid back debt of £4.3 million, which has taken the pressure off covenants. The college has had the benefit of Gift Aid from bksb, both historic amounts owing, and will also start to pull over more regularly throughout this academic year.
- The committee received interesting information regarding contribution analysis and, whilst there were acknowledged to be a few technical issues to iron out, all agreed that it was a very useful tool.
- Risks are very influenced by COVID.
- January pay was ahead of forecast; this was because of payment of the Christmas bonus and also increased temporary staff costs (+30%).
- The college should start to see some movements that will ease the pressures.
- The college remains well managed and there are no real committee concerns.
- Thoresby street – the committee received a recommendation regarding acceleration of the sale. The college can accommodate this. All agreed that this was not a change in strategy and that it was merely an acceleration and will mean that the college receives the sale proceeds earlier than forecast.
- The committee felt that the link between the commentary in the management accounts to the risk register was a helpful development, and the diagram included within the management accounts clearly shows the scale of the AEB challenge.
- £2.3 million Gift Aid was previously held up by bksb pension treatment. This has been resolved following confirmed auditor

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position in December 2020.

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the summary report and detailed minutes of the meeting,
- b) To note the content of the management accounts for December 2020.

12 PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The principal drew governors' attention to his detailed report and explained that there were a number of emerging risks. Key matters that he brought to the board's attention were:

- Summer assessments – the college has responded to the government consultation. The concern is that there is less evidence than the prior year upon which to base assessments and, therefore, colleges could be asked to do much more in the remaining part of this year. This could be a significant burden.
- The position continues to be positive in terms of the number of applications for 21/22.
- There has been bad news in relation to the area securing funds from the Future High Street Fund; this has been a disappointment to many.
- The area is still waiting to hear in relation to the Towns Fund position.
- Good progress is being made in relation to automation and robotics.
- Curriculum strategy is progressing well and will be presented to the board at the March 2021 development day.
- The Skills Conference has now been arranged for 5th March, and governors are invited.
- The Rising Stars initiative continues to make good progress with good feedback given from staff.
- The Skills White Paper has now been issued – it sets a broad agenda but there are still a significant number of questions to be answered; however, this is generally seen as an opportunity for the FE sector. The college is hoping to place itself, along with NTU, as a trailblazer. The college will now engage with David Cragg and he will help to support the development of thinking, as he was heavily involved in the White Paper development.
- Review of level 3 qualifications – this is a concern as the future is said to be T-Levels or nothing. This will be very different to current qualifications and very much narrows choice.
- AoC Conference – The principal agreed to circulate the AoC Conference resource links he has received in an email.

Principal 25.3.21

Principal Feb. 2021

As an overview, the principal indicated that the White Paper really seems to chime with the college's own strategic objectives and aims; therefore,

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the college should be very much ahead of the curve. Whilst there is a lack of detail in relation to the 'how', it really does give optimism for the future.

A challenge from one member of the board was in terms of the college's position in relation to sustainability and climate change. It was agreed that there may need to be a higher profile at board level. The principal agreed to provide a summary of what has already been done, although he acknowledged that, at board level, there needs to be more focus on E&D and sustainability going forward. The data seems to suggest that there will be more jobs in this area and, therefore, more opportunities for students.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

13 **RISK REGISTER**

This was provided for information and it was explained that this was reviewed in detail by the Audit Committee, who met earlier in the week. The full report and any changes will flow through the chair's summary report, which is due at the next meeting.

AGREED: to note the content of the updated risk register presented.

14 **AOB**

There were no items of additional business.

15 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The director of governance confirmed that this is Thursday 11th March 2021 at 5pm.

16 **CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**

It was agreed that confidential items would be recorded on a separate basis.

Governors who left the meeting at 7pm were Spencer Moore, Anna Teal, Keith Spiers, Bev Whitefoot, Andrew Spencer, and Elliot Parker. Staff who left the meeting were Gavin Peake, Suzanna Smith, Matt Vaughan, and Louise Knott.

Meeting closed at 7.40pm.

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