Governance



Meeting/Committee	Corporation Board
Date of meeting	20 th October 2021 at 5pm (via Google Meet)

1 Welcome, introduction and apologies for absence

Attendees:

Janet Pryke Jason Austin Jenny Worsdale Jo White Katie Asgari Mirella Palazzo Monika Rodzos Rob Lawson Shirley Collier Steven Bulley Veronica McCoy Katie Curtis Chair CEO/Principal

In attendance:

Maxine Bagshaw Tracy Mace Ackroyd Cath Mollart Tony De'Ath Gavin Teasdale Jane Hartog Interim Director of Governance Deputy Principal / CEO Head of Corporate Services Executive Director of Corporate Services Interim Executive Director of Finance Executive Director HR & Organisational Development ESFA observer

Clive Howarth

Apologies for absence:

Apologies for absence were received from Heather Barnett, Owen Hamilton-Davis and Gareth Owen.

Shirley Collier, Rob Lawson and Katie Asgari were welcomed to their first meeting.

2 Appointment of the Staff Governor (academic)

The interim Director of Governance explained the recruitment process and put forward the recommendation that Katie Asgari be appointed as the new staff governor from 20th October 2021 to 20th October 2025 (or until such time as she ceases to be a member of staff, whichever is the earlier). The Board were happy to approve the recommendation made and Katie Asgari was welcomed to the Board and round table introductions were made.



3 Declarations of interest and eligibility

The Chair requested Governors declare any interest at the appropriate time during the meeting and standing declarations were noted. The interim Director of Governance reminded that annual updates were currently being collated and that a summary, once all were received, would be uploaded to the college website.

4 Minutes of the meeting held on 14th July 2021

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 14th July 2021.

5 Action progress report

The interim Director of Governance drew the boards attention to the summary table. An update was given in relation to line 4 and it was confirmed that signatories have been changed as requested, with Tracy Mace-Akroyd and Jane Hartog being added and Kate Noble being removed.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

6 **CEO's update**

CEO provided an update in a number of areas, including:

1) Progress against FEC recommendations

He reminded that this document was an update following the different visits by FEC and was able to confirm that good progress has been made. He confirmed that this is a tracking document that is also considered with the ESFA during monthly meetings.

2) <u>Presentation update</u>

Information was provided in a number of key areas, including:

- a) <u>Covid positive cases</u>
- Number of positive student cases is now 20 with the staff numbers being 12. No data has been included regarding the UCR however
- College numbers compared to the region are low
- In Rotherham and Bassetlaw the numbers are high at a rate of 500 per 100,000. It is expected that there will be a review by public health after half term, however at this point the college is adhering to its own guidelines including hand washing, face covering in communal areas etc.
- b) <u>Skills Bill update</u>
- It is now at the report stage in the House of Lords
- There is an amendment which requires those developing the Local Skills Improvement Plans to draw on the views of post-16 education providers as well as local or regional authorities, including elected Mayors.
- There are amendments on T Levels, BTECs/applied generals and the defunding of Level 3 qualifications. These amendments prevent IfATE from withdrawing approval for established Level 3 courses including BTECs for four years. If the amendment is accepted it will give a little bit more stability for



the group and will mean that, in some areas there are only T Levels available however in others BTECs will be retained for a period of time.

- It is clear that some BTECs will continue to be funded, like Performing Arts and Sport and that others will become unused once T Levels are established e.g. Childcare.
- There is an amendment that would require LSIPs to consider green skills, climate change and the environment. College is happy to adopt the AOC green agenda commitment and governors were asked to provide support to deliver the green agenda. CEO advised that there would be an opportunity to discuss environmental sustainability and future strategies at the review day planned for 3rd November.
- c) AOC covid survey report
- The AOC covid survey focused on education recovery, lost learning, devices and connectivity, apprenticeships, the workforce and 16-19 tuition fund.
- It highlights the challenges the sector has had in the wake of the pandemic and the continuing issues surrounding wider softer skills, wellbeing and mental health support.
- There are also concerns around staff recruitment which was described as a real challenge for the group in key areas including Engineering, Construction and digital and particularly trade skills areas.
- d) <u>Covid employment incentives</u> there has been an extension of the apprenticeship incentives to employers to the 31st January 2022 and the extension of Kick Start to 31st March 2022, both of which are positives for the group.
- e) <u>AEB reconciliation threshold</u>
- After reviewing the ongoing impact of covid-19, the Department for Education and ESFA have confirmed a lower reconciliation threshold for ESFA providers who are paid on profile throughout the academic year (grant funded) to 90% for the 2020-2021 academic year.
- The impact on RNN Group is potentially £2 million and staff are currently in discussion with the ESFA about the proposed timescale for this
- A business case approach for colleges outlining whether clawback causes financial difficulties, or where circumstances mean it was not possible to hit the threshold, have been submitted. The timescale for a decision on this is not certain but the expectation is circa mid-November.
- f) Cyber security breaches survey
 - The department for digital, culture, media and sport (DCMS) and Ipsos MORI are carrying out the cyber security breaches survey for the period October to December 2021. The college will participate and takes the survey very seriously. It asks how colleges and further education institutions are approaching cyber security.
 - The survey is intended for senior colleagues directly responsible for cyber security. Ipsos MORI will call colleges and further education institutions to take part and arrange an interview.
- g) Changes to grading
- The plan is to set 2022 grade boundaries at a mid-point between 2021 and the pre-pandemic level (i.e. higher than 2019 but not as high as 2020). This autumns GCSE English and Maths exams will be aligned to summer 2021. There is also guidance on predicting grades for 2022 UCAS applications with teachers asked to start with the 2019 standard but to give borderline students the benefit of any doubt. If a teacher believes the student is borderline



between two grades they should predict the higher one. The aim in 2023 is to return to the pre-pandemic level.

- Contingency arrangements DFE and Ofqual have published a consultation document on the contingency arrangements for GCSE and A Level in the event of serious disruption to exams in summer 2022, based on teacher assessed grades. Consultation closed on the 13th October and the group participated.
- h) <u>Vocational and technical qualifications</u>
- Awarding bodies will be expected to ensure that VTQ learners are not disadvantaged compared with their GCSE and A Level peers.
- Key points include:
 - VTQs most similar to GCSEs, AS and A Levels would be awarded using teacher assessed grades
 - VTQs that require students to demonstrate occupational/professional competence would need to be delayed, if necessary, rather than awarding using a TAG in order to ensure that students are able demonstrate the full set of knowledge and skills required. CEO advised that this would have an impact on a significant number of RNN students.

One member of the Board asked what the impact of delays to assessments would have on future employment prospects for students and particularly how any issues can be mitigated. CEO advised that the college works with employers and will try and support wherever it can. CEO advised that, at this stage, it is unclear whether the policy design will be implemented as it would have a significant national impact. One member of the Board asked how many students this would relate to. Whilst a specific number could not be provided it was explained that it is all those who need to demonstrate and evidence practical skills.

- i) <u>Higher/Further Education/Skills Minister update</u>
- DfE have clarified the responsibilities for the governments new education team
- Michelle Donolan is now Minister for Further and Higher Education and will attend the cabinet. She will also have sole responsibility for the strategy of post-16 education, which was previously shared with the Apprenticeship and Skills Minister.
- Alex Bughart is the Minister for Skills. He will have responsibility for the implementation of T Levels, apprenticeships, careers education, adult education and skills accelerators.
- Changes have been quite positively received within the sector and it is envisaged that there will be some joint thinking.
- j) <u>Revised version of the AOC Code of Good Governance</u>
- An updated version of the AOCs Code of Good Governance for colleges has been published. There is no expectation that colleges report against the new version however until 2022.
- The objective of the review was to ensure that the code provides the expected standards and expectations for colleges in the current context.

k) Autumn and winter plan for covid

- The government has published an autumn and winter covid plan
- The current plan (plan A) is to stick with the rules last updated in August with vaccinations the main strategy and with lateral flow testing expected to continue in education for the rest of this term.
- There is a contingency plan (plan B) including work at home advice, mask wearing in certain locations and vaccine passports for events with larger numbers of people. Under this plan, education would remain open.
- College will continue to monitor and adapt to any change in advice



- I) Increase in national insurance rates
- The announcement of the increase to national insurance rates in April 2022 by 1.25% each for employees and employers will have implications for the college.
- Colleges will not be covered in any compensation arrangements because of their private sector status (unlike schools)
- The average teacher will lose around £260 per year from their pay
- Impact for the RNN Group is circa 0.4% approximately

m) Local Skills Improvement Plans

- The DfE is piloting 'new local skills improvement plans' created by employers, colleges and training providers in trailblazing local areas in 2021.
- A £65 million strategic development fund has been launched to aid the plans and support providers to 'reshape their provision' to address local priorities that have been agreed with local employers.
- RNN group is involved in the Sheffield City Region and the D2N2 region
- This is something that is very much on the radar for the college and NFPC
- Group have passed the ministerial approval stage and have been awarded the full revised value (£498k) by March 2022 as opposed to £240k a year until 2026 with potential for extension following spending review (specifically D2N2 and NFPC)
- A large proportion of the award relates to capital. CEO advised that there was a 50/50 split between capital and training, with £246,692 going towards digital diagnostic services, digital and IT equipment and £230,757 going towards training, development and delivery. It was explained that the award supports NFPC to work with local providers, colleges and IPTs and also includes purchasing new kit and equipment. Capital funding will go towards digitalising the offer and training can start almost straight away. Challenge now is to make sure that the college can meet the spend deadline. This was described as a genuinely positive skills development opportunity.

A question and challenge from the board was in terms of how confident the college is that it can meet the spend deadlines. CEO confirmed that there was strong confidence as the team has spent a lot of time on this in the last three weeks and that the plan has been revised with real clarity in terms of the spend.

- n) <u>Capital funding</u> RNN has two bids that are successfully through to the second round (submitted October 2021). A refurbishment project for Rotherham Campus (£900k) and an advanced construction facility located at the UCR (£6 million with some group contribution).
- o) <u>Urgent and important issues</u>
- AEB reconciliation for this year business case approach
- Grades 2021/22 this will be tracked over the year
- Planning assumptions for covid safety for autumn term
- Use of Ofsted grades to exclude colleges from funding
- Funding pots eligibility, bidding issues, timescales etc.
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Delivering capital spend
- p) <u>ERASMUS/TURING scheme</u>
- College is currently involved with both
- College is working closely with TEEP to hopefully get the first mobilities going to Italy, Spain, France, Germany and Malta. This will be 150 learners in the areas of Engineering, Childcare, Health, Business, Tourism and Digital.
- Planned dates are February/March 2022 which will mean a delay of a year
- Staff are arranged to accompany the students



- Board were reminded that on DfE advice all international visits were postponed until at least September 2021, however the situation still remains unclear in terms of some students requiring double vaccinations to enter into European countries.
- q) <u>RNN application data</u>

CEO reminded of the application data reported in the summer and that this should be compared with enrolment numbers. In terms of the 2021/22 forecast he explained that, for various reasons, the college did not hit its growth targets. Influencing factors included:

- Students obtaining higher GCSE grades and therefore choosing to go to sixth form provision in schools
- A number of HE students obtaining grades that allow them to access red brick universities and are therefore progressing to them as first choice
- Impact of GCSE grades and A Level grades

CEO confirmed that, at the current point in time, the college is down against forecast in all areas and, whilst in a number of areas there are enrolments which take place throughout the year, there is a need to keep a very close eye on student numbers. In terms of HE provision it was acknowledged that the college needs to do more on the higher skills agenda.

A challenge from the Board was that there appeared to be a reoccurring issue throughout committee papers and reports for this meeting in terms of student numbers and enrolment and they asked what more could be done to attract students who the college may not have historically attracted. The CEO advised that there were a number of actions being taken, including:

- Curriculum review
- Assessment of types of provision and those that the college has not traditionally provided
- Consideration of new government initiatives
- Planning for T Levels

Board were also advised that staff are currently reviewing class sizes and decisions may be taken to merge some to make them more efficient. College is not intending any redundancies as there is a large AEB delivery opportunity and currently the skills set of staff are being considered to support this.

Deputy CEO advised that the next curriculum review will be for a 2 year period with a midpoint analysis undertaken. There are a number of areas which are emerging with opportunities e.g. e-games and e-sport. She provided assurance that the college will be responsive to in year demand as well as planning for the longer terms i.e. T Levels. AEB continues to be a focus and a priority.

The ESFA observer present expressed the expectation that there will be an AEB reconciliation decision made by the ESFA on business cases submitted on or around 15th November. CEO expressed the view that the college being in intervention does also have an impact on some opportunities and that the FEC visit in November will hopefully be a trigger point for exiting intervention.

- r) <u>Emerging opportunities</u> (as detailed on the register as well as risks)
- Traineeships
- Institute of Technology
- Digital bootcamps
- T Levels
- Adult entitlement
- Re-invigorated timetabling



- Reviewed role of delivery staff (work based learning)
- Full cost provision
- NFPC heat pumps, HE opportunities, carbon dioxide, increased links in the SCR region, LSIP bid.

s) <u>Risks</u>

CEO advised that the intention was to do some further work on these at the 3rd November strategy day but that current headlines include:

- Under recruitment against 14-19, higher education, apprenticeships, adult education and commercial income targets
- Failure to exercise adequate cost control through planning and budgets and the inability to achieve costs savings in year where provision has reduced.
- Oversized estate leading to higher than necessary costs and limiting capacity for reinvestment
- Cash reserves becoming critically low
- Failure to make sufficient progress by Ofsted monitoring visit
- Failure to improve teaching, learning and assessment particularly in blended strategy
- Failure to improve education, training and apprenticeships achievements
- Inability to recruit and retain appropriately skilled/qualified staff
- IT investment, utilisation and systems harmonisation begins to fall behind need, leading to poor experiences and inefficiency
- Projects fail to deliver as expected (financial/outcome achievements including grant clawback)
- t) Google enterprise for education
- Group has an ambitious vision for outstanding teaching and learning that provides a real world advantage and, following extensive research it was clear that Google G Suite for education is aligned to these ambitions.
- It is important that the learning experience enables work readiness and providing digital skills as a core element of the vision for todays rapidly evolving workplace.
- College currently awaits confirmation of google enterprise status
- u) Good for me good for FE
- The impact of this campaign will be measured through a 'social value calculator' developed by LSEC. It will calculate how many volunteering hours have been contributed in monetary terms to social goals such as increasing access to employment and skills, helping the environment and growing businesses.
- The good for me good for FE campaign aims to generate £1 million of social value via a sustainable programme of community action including volunteering, fundraising and charitable partnership.
- At the start of October the national campaign had generated £15,000 social value, 951 volunteering hours and 550 items of food. The college is participating and fully committed to contributing to this initiative.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.



7 Report form the Audit and Risk Committee

Committee Chair introduced this item and drew governors attention to the summary report and also the detailed minutes of the meeting held on 27th September 2021. He summarised the main items of business considered and he explained that the draft internal auditors report for the prior academic year was considered and the final report is planned for presentation to the next meeting. He specifically asked the board to note that there has been an increase in external audit fees because of the additional work they are required to complete this year to test funding, as they can no longer rely on data provided by the ESFA. He advised that there was some discussion regarding the sample size proposed and that this was considered to be high which would have an impact on cost.

He advised that key risks have already been highlighted in the areas of a) apprenticeship provision & b) AEB clawback.

He invited the board to reflect on the risk appetite workshop and confirmed that there will be more to do when the committee next meets, particularly a review of the risk appetite statement to be proposed by management. This will then be followed up once the new Executive Director Finance is in post in January, given that he has some considerable experience in this area.

He drew the committees attention to the updated risk register and reminded that this sits alongside the new 4risk system introduced. This is now a complete integrated system and makes it much easier to use as part of day to day activities.

Interim Executive Director Finance advised that the risk appetite statement is currently in draft form and is being considered by the executive and will then be shared with governors for feedback and comments.

Committee Chair summarised the 'other matters of relevance to the board' and confirmed that embedding the new risk management processes and systems continues. In terms of work with internal auditors, he advised that the committee has asked for information and early sight of the scopes of activity so that there is a greater line of sight in relation to this and three have already been received.

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 27th September 2021
- b) Note the content of the 2021/22 risk register
- c) Note the intention of the management team to create a risk appetite statement
- d) Note that there were no instances of fraud, irregularity or whistleblowing in 2020/21
- e) Note the content of the ILR data integrity guidance
- f) Approve the proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference as presented

8 Report form the Quality & Standards Committee

The committee Chair introduced this item and drew the boards attention to the detailed minutes of the meeting held on 29th September 2021 and the summary report. Key matters highlighted were:

- On 18th November 2021 there is a SAR scrutiny meeting planned and all governors are invited. It was made clear that this is not a validation exercise and is instead an opportunity for professional dialogue in relation to the initial summary papers provided.
- Data for 2020/21 closes today and will therefore be available at the November meeting



- In relation to English and Maths the college has seen a focused move to GCSEs rather than Functional Skills
- In relation to apprenticeship provision, the new task and finish group continues to meet and is assured that a lot of work is happening, albeit that there are significant improvements still be made.
- In relation to the equality data provided to the meeting there is further work to be done in terms of analysis
- Regular safeguarding and prevent reports are received and there is confidence regarding the robustness of the college systems and processes in place
- The planned meeting of the committee on 1st December will be an opportunity to validate the SAR by the Quality & Standards Committee and then it will be presented to the December Board meeting for final approval.

AGREED:

- a) to note the content of the detailed minutes of the meeting
- b) note the content of the data summary report for 2020/21 provided
- c) note the content of the QIAP
- d) note the content of the Safeguarding, Prevent and E&D report

9 Safeguarding for all policy – updated September 2021

The interim Director of Governance reminded that this update to the policy had been circulated by email as part of the college response to the updated Keeping Children Safe in Education policy. She confirmed that any governor feedback provided by email had been incorporated and that what was presented today was the final version which would, once approved, be uploaded to the college website.

AGREED: to approve the Safeguarding For All policy as presented.

10 Report from the Finance Committee

The committee Chair introduced this item and drew Governors attention to the detailed minutes of the meeting held on 30th September 2021 and the summary feedback report. Key matters that she drew to everyones' attention included:

- Covid it has been agreed that the committee will continue to receive a report at each meeting, this will highlight any risks to service delivery and financial implications.
- External audit this is now underway with the college taking a `no news is good news approach'. Nothing has been flagged as an issue by external auditors and the expectations at this stage are that the numbers will not materially change.
- College has a positive cash position and therefore there is confidence that it will be able to confirm that it remains a going concern
- Expenditure is well under control
- An additional board meeting took place to approve the capital bid proposals and these have now been submitted
- Day 42 is the this week and thereafter the college will have a much better idea of the position in relation to in year funding
- AEB enrolment continues throughout the year, however this does need to be carefully monitored given the targets set and the challenges regarding under performance in the prior year.
- Joint venture proposal was received by Cube in relation to the remaining Dinnington site on the day of the meeting. Representatives will be joining the full board on 3rd November where they will be given 30 minutes, which will cover a presentation and also Q&A session. It is hoped that by that stage the Executive Director: Corporate Services can also give an update on



surveys. College is very much embracing the opportunity to hear from them directly.

Executive Director: Corporate Services advised that he was in contact with LocateEd who are professional advisors recommended by the ESFA and he envisages being in a position to provide feedback from them on the joint venture proposal ready for the meeting on 3rd November 2021.

A question from one member of the board are whether or not there are any risks that other joint venture options and/or potential purchasers would read more in to this presentation than is meant i.e. a preference. All agreed that the risks in relation to this were very low. It was explained that Cube represents Dinnington regeneration and therefore have a broader remit than just the college site. Board were reminded that all other interest is from developers and relates to a more simple sale rather than a joint venture. LocateEd have been invited to provide comment on all options currently known.

AGREED:

- a) to note the detailed minutes of the meeting
- b) note the content of the July 2021 monthly Management Accounts
- c) note the content of the 2020/21 Health and Safety report
- d) note the update in relation to the presentation proposals from Cube in relation to Dinnington regeneration.

11 Report form the Search and Governance Committee

The meeting Chair introduced this item and drew the boards attention to the minutes of the meeting held on 13th October 2021 and the summary feedback report. She explained that there were a number of recommendations following a very full meeting. Board considered the detailed minutes and all agreed that they were self-explanatory. Each of the recommendations were considered on an individual basis.

1) Determination of board size – it was explained that the proposal is to increase to 'up to 20' is to give more flexibility and capacity. This would allow committees to be strengthened and supports plans for diversity.

AGREED: to approve the recommendation that board size be determined as 'up to 20'.

Committee noted the resignation of Gareth Owen with effect from 20th October 2021.

2) Proposals regarding four new Governor appointments

Committee Chair advised that all four individuals proposed were very strong in terms of their skills and experience and would each bring very different qualities. She confirmed that the committee remains conscious about diversity and that there are plans in place to progress a number of options in the new calendar year.

AGREED: to approve the recommendation made that Margaret Cobb, Carol Stanfield, Sharron Blackburn and Donna Clifford be appointed as independent Governors from 20th October 2021 to 20th October 2025.



3) Extension of the current term of office for Veronica De Bruce McCoy – it was explained that her initial appointment had been for a 2 rather than a 4 year period and that the recommendation from the committee is to extend this and bring it more in to line with sector norms.

AGREED: to approve the recommendation that the first term of office for Veronica De Bruce McCoy be extended to 17th December 2023.

e) Student governor vacancy

The interim Director of Governance provided an update on the recruitment process and the expressions of interest received. She confirmed that she had been able to interview two candidates and would wish to put forward the recommendation that Keane Ward is appointed, who is a performing arts student.

AGREED: to approve the appointment of Keane Ward as a student governor from 20th October 2021 to 31st August 2022.

f) Governor links

It was explained that these have been updated with the anticipation that new governors would be appointed. Board were happy to support the proposals as presented.

g) Updated committee membership for 2021/2022

It was explained that this has again been updated in anticipation of the new governor appointments. Board were happy to approve as recommended.

AGREED: to approve the updated committee membership list for 2021/22 as presented.

h) Updated AOC Code of Good Governance

This was presented with the recommendation that it be adopted by the board and, in addition, governor oversight links be agreed. It was explained that these, where possible, have been aligned to the governor link scheme proposed and the board were supportive of the introduction and roll out as presented.

AGREED: to approve the adoption of 2021 updated AOC Code of Good Governance.

12 Gender Pay Gap Report 2020

The Director for HR, Marketing and Organisational Development introduced this report and key matters noted were:

- This is a report that colleges have to prepare every year. In terms of reporting requirements there was an extension this year because of covid.
- There are no real changes from the prior year position
- The college does have a gap and it was explained that this is impacted by bonuses paid and the market rates/market force supplements. She advised that these tend to be male positions and are impacted by recruitment challenges which have been previously reported to the board.
- There is a slightly larger gap than national but it is believed that the national data is somewhat out of date and will change



Board were happy to receive the information provided but challenged in terms of the need to create an action plan. They acknowledged that there is a difference between unfair pay conditions versus a gender gap but indicated that it is important that the college is committed to taking action to close the gap that is known. One governor present indicated that following a short review of gender pay gaps report published by other colleges there are competitors who have lower gaps and therefore this may be influencing what has previously been described as 'poaching'. A challenge from the board was whether or not there is a reputational issue to address and they felt that having a significant gender pay gap may not be helping with this.

All acknowledged that there was a different approach needed to increasing the pool of staff available in certain areas and they urged the college to look at both succession planning and broadening the talent pool. A suggestion made was to contact the AOC as they may have a diversity lead who is able to support in relation to this.

AGREED:

- a) To note and approve the Gender Pay Gap report as presented for 2020
- b) Request that the college develop a gender pay gap action plan to clarify how it will seek to close the gap (Director HR & OD, January 2022)

13 Governance items

The interim Director of Governance introduced this item and presented a number of written resolutions for formal ratification, these were:

- Initial subcontracting allocations for 2021/22 these were set out in an email dated 2nd August 2021
- Appointment of Shirley Collier as an independent Governor
- Appointment of Roopa Patel-Harji as an Audit Committee co-optee
- The appointments of Jane Hartog and Sarah Herberts as Directors on the Board of Res Limited.

These three proposals were set out in an email dated 31st August 2021.

AGREED: to formally ratify the written resolutions approved as presented.

14 AOB

There were no items of additional business.

15 Date and time of next meeting

This was confirmed as Wednesday 15th December 2021 at 5pm.

16 Confidential items

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

Meeting closed at 6.40pm.

Signed	Chair
Date	