

Meeting/Committee	Corporation Board
Date of meeting	9 th February 2022 at 5pm (via Google Meet)

1 Welcome, introductions and apologies for absence

Attendees:

Jenny Worsdale	(Meeting Chair)
Jason Austin	CEO/Principal
Katie Asgari	
Katie Curtis	
Monika Rodzos	
Stephen Bulley	
Heather Barnett	
Donna Clifford	
Margaret Cobb	
Sharron Blackburn	
Carol Stansfield	
Rob Lawson	
Shirley Collier	
Jo White (from 5.15pm)	

In attendance:

Tracey Mace-Akroyd	Deputy Principal / CEO
Maxine Bagshaw	Director of Governance
Cath Mollart	Head of Corporate Services
Tony De'Ath	Executive Director of Corporate Services
Phil Curtis	Executive Director of Finance
Jane Hartog	Executive Director of Marketing, OD and HR

Apologies for absence:

Apologies for absence were received from Mirella Barnes, Janet Pryke and Veronica De Bruce-McCoy.

2 Appointment of the meeting Chair

In the absence of Janet Pryke it was agreed that Jenny Worsdale would Chair the meeting. Phil Curtis was welcomed to his first board meeting.

AGREED: to approve Jenny Worsdale as the meeting Chair.

3 Declarations of interest

The meeting Chair reminded everyone to declare any interests that they may have on matters to be discussed. No specific declarations were made and standing declarations were noted.

4 Minutes of the meeting held on 15th December 2021 and any matters arising

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 15th December 2021.

There were no matters arising that would not be covered in the actions progress tracker.

5 Action Progress Tracker

Board were happy to note the content of the update provided and the good progress being made to address all actions previously identified.

6 CEO's update

CEO provided a presentation to the board and a number of aspects were particularly discussed and/or noted.

1) Strategic Plan

He drew governors' attention to what is proposed to be the final version and key matters highlighted were:

- The design team have worked on the style and presentation
- All feedback from governors, the executive and SLT has been incorporated
- Specific comments made by governors on the November strategic review day have been taken in to account
- Document is still longer than potentially it could be but it is now more visual
- There is still an opportunity to take feedback at the meeting today
- Strategic plan covers the period 2022-2025
- Aim is to publish it soon and undertake an annual review
- Design team are still looking at the photographs to be used and there may be slight amends in relation to these

In considering the updated document, governors acknowledged that it was clear to see that all comments made had been implemented. There is clear evidence of responsive change including the new section on sustainability. It is clear in terms of what the college wants to do and achieve. One governor noted that there were still a few typographical errors and it was agreed that she would email the CEO directly on this outside the meeting. Challenge from the board was to ensure that the photographs utilised reflect the diversity of the student and community population.

One member of the board asked for an update in relation to apprenticeship numbers and the reference in the plan that there are currently circa 1400 in the system. CEO advised that these numbers are linked to the targets set to be achieved by the end of the plan. College currently has 11,000 students, with circa 3,000 of these being apprentices. He advised that the

strategy has been separated in to sections to make it really clear where the group expects to get to at the end of the plan.

A question and challenge from one member of the board was in terms of the strategic objectives set and they asked whether there should be more in terms of quality i.e. Ofsted inspection outcome. They made a comment that the objectives as presented are very numbers driven.

One member of the board asked whether this version has had student design involvement. CEO advised that it had only been possible up to the version presented at the strategic away day in November, simply because the timescale for finalisation was not feasible for the students involved.

As an overarching comment board all agreed that they could clearly see the development and felt that it reads very well and, on this basis, they were happy to approve.

AGREED: to approve the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan as presented.

2) General update

CEO provided an update on a number of operational and sector matters, including:

a) Covid

- Public health has given specific guidance for the Rotherham area
- Current staff cases of covid are 18 with the cumulative position being 282
- Current positive student cases are 55 with a cumulative grand total of 711
- College and the area are starting to see some instances of reinfection in relation to the omicron variant
- Covid arrangements in college include the continuation with face coverings in communal areas until after February half term

b) Funding for the 22/23 academic year

- Core funding rates will increase by between 8% and 9%. The full time rate will rise from £4,188 to £4,542.
- An additional 40 hours teaching will be required, hence part of this increase is to pay for that. Whilst the college will be paid more it will have to do more.
- There will be a 50% increase of the high value course premium (from £400 to £600)
- Disadvantaged premiums will go up 5%
- Programme weighting factors in some subject areas will rise
- Enhanced funding for T Level students (who study for more hours) will continue

c) Institute of Technology

- South Yorkshire wins £12 million bid to establish an IOT
- Further education institutions, higher education institutions and local employers to come together to provide pathways from STEM based T-Levels to higher technical qualifications, apprenticeships and degrees. The IOT will also offer flexible courses for adults looking to reskill or upskill.
- RNN will offer higher technical education to close skills gaps in key STEM areas
- Current risk to the group is the Ofsted requires improvement grade

- The collaboration includes DN Colleges Group, Sheffield Hallam University, Barnsley College and the University of Sheffield AMRC training centre as core education providers. RNN group, the Sheffield college and the national centre for advanced transport and infrastructure (NCATI) are associate partners. RNN group, whilst at the table, cannot be a full partner until a grade 2 at Ofsted is obtained. Being an associate includes funding support to prepare for being a full partner.
 - The IOT will work closely with employers to provide specialist provision for over 1,500 learners aiming to respond to the demand for digital, engineering/manufacturing and health care science higher level technical skills within the region.
- d) Pay claim 2021/22
- The AOC recommendation for 2021/22 is for a 1% increase or £250 (whichever is the greater) recommending that the real living wage calculated by the living wage foundation should be the minimum wage in the sector. Those colleges who do not currently pay it should work towards its implementation as quickly as possible.
 - AOC advises colleges who can afford to award staff more should do so whilst acknowledging that some colleges may be unable to meet both aspects of the recommendation which must be subject to affordability.
 - The intention is to provide a full report and analysis to the Finance Committee so that they in turn can make a recommendation to the board once there is a greater level of certainty, either at the end of this academic year or in the autumn term following audited accounts. (Executive Director Finance, July 2022)
- e) MiDES data
- The R04 data collected through MiDES shows that overall 16-19 numbers in colleges are down, indicating that lagged funding will hit many colleges in 2022/23.
 - 25% of FE colleges report falls of 5% or more so some could see no increase in the cash received for 16-18 education next year.
 - Key risk is that the small drop in recruitment this year is a one off as a result of better achievement at age 16 because of centre assessed grades.
 - There might also be more young people needing to attend college this summer after a potential difficult year in their school sixth form
 - Lagged funding will potentially be a challenge as the college may have to support more than it is paid for
- f) FE Commissioner feedback
- Since 2019 the board and senior leadership team have made significant progress in addressing the issues which triggered formal intervention. On this basis the FEC team supports the plan to move RNN in to post intervention monitoring and support (PIMS).
 - There is an agenda in place for the planned first PIMS meeting and an action plan has been created in dialogue with the ESFA and the aim is to finalise it shortly. Once this meeting has taken place the college will formally move out of intervention and in to PIMS.
 - There are two ongoing FEC stocktake recommendations, which are:
 - Recommendation 3 – the SLT should develop a clearer set of strategies to reduce the groups reliance on subcontractor provision by 21/22 or sooner. The strategy should be in place by November 2020. This recommendation is ongoing. Whilst the

college has made some progress in reducing its volume of subcontracting provision and applies greater scrutiny to this area of work, the reliance on subcontractor provision remains an area of substantial risk. The colleges ambition to significantly increase the direct delivery proportion of its adult skills provision rather than through delivery through subcontracting has yet to be realised. Current proportion of subcontracted activity is 23%.

- Recommendation 4 – the CEO/Principal and Deputy CEO/Principal should monitor the impact of the new role of Director of Adult Education and Contracts in growing direct adult skills delivery as a way of minimising the risk of a shortfall against the adult skills budget in 2020/21 and reducing reliance on subcontracting from 21/22. Target date was July 2021 and ongoing. This recommendation is ongoing. The colleges underachievement against its AEB contract was significant in 2020/21 impacted heavily by covid-19. Based on year to date figures for 21/22 full achievement of the AEB targets remains a significant area of risk for the college this academic year.

g) Moving forward

- Subcontract provision needs to continue to be reviewed
- Adult skills needs to be reviewed on an ongoing basis
- Finances need to continue to be monitored although the college has made significant progress
- Challenge on enrolment targets will lead to tight control over budget moving forward
- To continue to make improvements in the quality of education

h) Urgent and important issues

- Grades 2021/22 and the potential use of TAGS
- Covid recovery and particularly the impact that covid has had on young people
- Planning assumptions for covid post-February half term. There is the potential that after half-term there may be no restrictions at all.
- Use of Ofsted grades to exclude colleges from funding
- Funding pots – eligibility, bidding issues, time scaling etc.
- Mental health and wellbeing – this is a significant issue and the college has increased the number of mental health first aiders to try and address
- Delivering capital spend – college is awaiting the outcomes for two bids, most significant of which is in relation to the advanced construction centre proposed. All that is known is that outcomes will be communicated in the 'spring'. College also has a bid submitted to allow other elements of works to the existing estate.
- Staff recruitment and retention challenges
- Student recruitment – there is a marketing workshop planned with governors in March to consider this in more detail
- Student behaviour and attendance – this is becoming more of an issue with many aspects linked to mental health
- Ofsted inspection
- Initiatives e.g. white paper and levelling up

i) Ofsted – the future

- RNN is due an inspection and Ofsted could call at any time
- Ofsted will inspect all schools and colleges by summer 2025

- Aim is to provide an up to date picture of quality of education
 - Inspections will be enhanced to take account of local skills needs in line with proposals set out in the white paper.
 - All college inspections in September 2022 up to September 2025 will be full, graded inspections.
- j) Levelling up white paper
- This was published on 2nd February 2022
 - There are 12 targets (missions) for 2030
 - Skills target – 200,000 more adult achievements
 - Devolution offer – there are 11 areas offered, one of which is North Notts.
 - No new money beyond shared prosperity fund (revenue) and levelling up fund (capital)
 - Promise of a UK wide digital education service which is a new initiative
- k) Education investment areas
- 55 education investment areas identified (including opportunity areas). Rotherham is one of these areas.
 - Areas selected are on the basis of analysis on 2017-2018 Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 data
 - Areas get school teacher retention payments, academisation of schools with RI grade and priority for new 16-18 free schools
 - 16-18 free schools
 - Conservative manifesto promise to build new free schools
 - Last bidding round was in 2019 and didn't include 16-19
 - 30 16-19 free schools exist some of which are college backed and equates to circa 15,000 students. Focus is on A Level provision.
- l) Local area update
- Retford post-16 centre – curriculum planning opportunities
 - Bridge skills hub in Worksop is developing
 - RNN is looking to put in classes from April 2022. This will be a small offer initially based on 1 room and 1 office.
 - From September 2022 the group is looking to broaden delivery including foundation in Health, Early Education, Level 6 Chartered management, Level 4 Counselling, Level 5 Care and 2 x Level 3 classes in access. Delivery will require 2 to 3 classrooms and an office and there may also be an option to book clinical teaching areas.
 - Original costs quoted have reduced and therefore group is looking to reforecast.
 - Marketing teams are involved in developing advertising for the new offer
 - Site visit has been completed
 - Outwood Valley Academy post 16 centre (based in Worksop) – group in dialogue to confirm the agreement reached regarding the split between A Level and vocational, however where there is a need to overlap there is a consensus that the organisations will work together.
 - West Burton stakeholder engagement event on 8th February
 - West Burton Power Plant are really keen to be involved with the college and are taking forward the nuclear fusion agenda. This will provide green jobs, upskilling etc.
 - Rotherham regeneration timeline

m) Enrolment numbers

Numbers as at 9th February 2022 were shared and key matters highlighted were:

- In relation to 16-19 there is no expectation regarding any further withdrawals
- In relation to AEB the risks have been discussed in detail by the Finance Committee
- Actual apprenticeship position is at R06. It is important to ensure that delivery does not grow where the group does not have capacity.

Board took the opportunity to discuss apprenticeship numbers in more detail and asked whether there is a quality/performance concern as well as the numbers. How does the group balance capacity, performance and numbers. Board were reminded that an apprenticeship task and finish group is in place and that part of their discussions include not taking on more where there isn't capacity or where there are quality concerns e.g. in construction and engineering. Governors were reminded that in 2019 the group took the decision to stop apprenticeship provision so that it could be refocused to ensure that the quality was right. It is an option for the group to decide not to take on any more in particular areas, but the financial implications of this as well capacity and quality need to be considered.

One member of the board noted that there has been a 5% decrease in the 16-18 numbers and asked whether this has been compensated for by an increase in apprenticeship numbers. CEO indicated that there has been some offset but not significantly. In terms of 16-18 numbers most of the decrease relates to students choosing to remain in school sixth forms because of TAGs or going in to employment. Most of the schools in the Rotherham area have their own sixth form.

Board asked for more information in relation to the nuclear fusion developments. CEO advised that the plan revolves around a research and development site which should be in place for 30 to 40 years. There will be a need to build it and it includes apprentices. There are also business development opportunities for companies as there are planned to be circa 4,000 employees which would make it the largest employer in the area. Decision is expected by the end of the year and then a government decision would be required in early 2023.

Board discussed the developments at the bridge hub and all agreed that it was very exciting and it was confirmed that there is an opening event on 4th April. Site is in a really key area right in the heart of Worksop.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

7 Quality and Standards

The Committee Chair presented the feedback report and also the detailed minutes of the meeting held on 19th January 2022. Key matters highlighted were:

- It was a full meeting with lots of questions and discussion

- One item particularly discussed was the HE self evaluation document and specifically data provided in relation to BAME and whether or not more support can be arranged.
- Committee discussed ongoing monitoring arrangements
- There was a focus on AEB and apprenticeship provision
- Committee also took the opportunity to review how it will focus on key issues going forward. Proposal is to use the QIP and risk report as key mechanisms for analysis. This will allow the committee to focus on themes. Reports are also being provided for each distinct area of provision as they are of use in other parts of the organisation.

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the detailed minutes of the meeting held on 19th January 2022
- b) To note the committee feedback report
- c) To approve the HE SED for 2020/21 as presented
- d) To note the update provided in relation to apprenticeships
- e) To note the content of the safeguarding, prevent and E&D report.

8 Finance

Boards attention was drawn to the detailed minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2022 and the summary feedback report. It was confirmed that there had been detailed discussion regarding AEB and subcontracting and that this had also been part of detailed discussions with the AEB link governor, Margaret Cobb, outside the meeting. There is a risk of failing to hit target. £7.8 million is the target and the current forecast is to achieve £7.2 million. Board were reminded that there has been a higher allocation this year and that activity is split between Sheffield City Region and ESFA funding. There are lots of different pots of money available and it is known that there are regional challenges regarding spend, which is making everyone quite competitive in terms of securing learners.

College has been in dialogue with the ESFA regarding the possibility of subcontracting some activity in D2N2 which would be from the ESFA funding stream. There is currently no subcontracting activity in relation to this. There is potential for one further subcontract in D2N2 as there is a need in this area and it aligns with the colleges strategic plan.

AGREED:

- a) To note the minutes of the meeting held on 26th January 2022
- b) To note the summary committee feedback report
- c) To note the content of the December 2021 management accounts
- d) To note the content of the estates report
- e) To note the update provided in relation to AEB and subcontracting proposals.

9 HR Reporting

The Executive Director HR, Organisational Development and Marketing presented a number of reports to the board, including:

- 1) 2021 year end – key matters highlighted were:
 - The report covers key deliverables

- In terms of recruitment, it summarises the position for last year but there are ongoing challenges. There is an increase in the number of vacancies.
- Last year saw a total of 261 recruits with an average of 75 vacancies. This is a large number for the group to manage and there are a mix of full time, part time, RES limited and agency.
- Hard to fill roles continue to be a problem
- Group has trialled a number of initiatives and what seems to have worked best is building good agency relationships
- Level of vacancies was higher than in previous years
- Group saw a higher number of starters per department
- In terms of leavers, the team need to look more at those individuals who leave the soonest. Exit interviews seem to show a number of factors influencing departure, including:
 - a) Covid
 - b) Perception/reality of the job
 - c) Support for off site working

One member of the board asked whether the group has Teaching Further support, it was confirmed that it does and that there are 3 members of staff in place.

Board noted the update provided in relation to the work required to harmonise and align following the merger of three colleges. All agreed that the information provided was much appreciated and that it was really good to see progress.

One member of the board questioned the role of agencies and in particular whether they understand the roles that are being recruited to. It was confirmed that the HR team review agencies used every year and that any issues predominantly related to agencies who were not on the preferred supplier list. In general terms however, the retention challenges seem to be related to those individuals that the group recruited directly. Challenge raised by one member of the board was that retention is a concern, particularly in relation to curriculum managers and early retention challenges. View expressed was that a key to addressing this was to get the key new starters 'more sticky' and they questioned whether there was something to be done in terms of reviewing the induction processes. Executive Director of HR confirmed that the induction process has been amended and that the team are now looking at the structure to be able to support HR team getting out and about more in the business. Intention is to introduce a separate onboard programme linked to iTrent and also to look at a dedicated induction person to cover all of the recruitment processes.

Other matters highlighted in the report included:

- Recruitment costs are up
- Section 3 covers the number of staff who are in 'acting up' roles
- Section 4 provides assurance regarding compliance with the single central register. College has always been very focused and good with this.
- Section 5 provides data on sickness absence. It looks to be high but the sector does not yet have the benefit of the latest figures from the AOC
- Group continues to work hard to manage and address stress albeit that not all is work related. College is doing more in terms of health and wellbeing.

- HR team know that it is important to support staff but that it is also important to ensure that staff can return to work
- Employee relations continue to be positive
- In relation to equality and diversity, the college acknowledges that it needs to do more in terms of the collection of personal data
- In relation to training and development, the plan is to develop a hub. RNN skills academy would be able to capture all of the training and development which is provided and taken up through the group.
- In relation to turnover, college is starting to see an increase. Feedback seems to suggest that influencing factors are salaries and work pressures.
- Data is provided regarding the length of service and an issue highlighted is in relation to RNN training.
- Update provided in relation to covid
- Section headed 'actions' summarises what the HR team will do in 2022

One board member asked whether, in relation to training, all applicants get to do what they ask for. It was explained that many do but that there is a relevance ratio that is considered. Question and challenge from the board was whether or not the HR team evaluate and test the impact of training. It was explained that, internally evaluation forms are used and that those who undertake external training are expected to give feedback and disseminate learning with their peers. College is also able to capture impact through the curriculum plans and resources.

One member of the board asked whether the college will be recording the number of staff who undertake the carbon literacy project training as part of the sustainability metrics. It was confirmed that this is possible and that there is a staff training day on 11th May where sustainability will be part of the focus. Aim is to be able to use iTrent more fully by the end of the year to log and track training and development.

One member of the board considered the information provided in relation to disciplinarys and grievances and asked whether there was any particular trend in terms of the increases. Executive Director HR indicated that there was no particular trend and that it is a broad range of issues, with many relating to new managers who are taking steps to tackle underperformance.

2) Staff voice/employee council meetings – autumn term themes

Director HR OD & Marketing confirmed that the report was discussed at Finance Committee. She acknowledged that the employee council was an important group of individuals and that the group considers their input very seriously.

3) Gender pay gap report 2021

Board were advised that the deadline date for publication is April 2022. It covers a lot of information but there were a few particular points drawn to the boards attention:

- The gender pay gap position has improved when compared with the previous year and improved when looking at education establishments.
- Gap is influenced by the fact that market force supplements are considered to be a 'bonus' and are in the main paid in the hard to fill roles.
- Whilst there do continue to be gaps there are key reasons for this which would be hard to address in the current market circumstances.

A challenge from the board was that they would like the sector to do more and they asked for staff to better understand what the 'best of the best' are doing in the sector and tap in to their wisdom and learn the lessons. Challenge from the board was that they would want the RNN group to be part of a change. It was agreed that the HR department would look at other organisations and look to learn from them when developing an action plan (ED HR, OD & Marketing, 2022).

AGREED:

- a) To note the content of the 20/21 HR yearend report
- b) To note the content of the staff voice/employee council report
- c) To approve the Gender Pay Gap Report 2021 as presented.

10 AOB

As a matter of additional business the board discussed electricity supply. It was agreed that this item would be recorded on a confidential basis.

11 Date of next meeting

This was confirmed as Wednesday 30th March 2022.

12 Confidential items

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

(Staff governors left the meeting at 6.40pm)

Signed _____ Chair

Date _____