Governance

RNN GROUP

Meeting/Committee	Corporation Board
Date of meeting	6th February 2023 at 5pm

1   Welcome, introductions and apologies for absence

Attendees:

Janet Pryke	Chair
Jason Austin	Principal/CEO
Monika Rodzos	
Jenny Worsdale	
Heather Barnett	
Shirley Collier	
Donna Clifford	
Carol Stanfield	
Debbie Marshall	
Katie Asgari	
Margaret Cobb	
Sharron Blackburn	
Katie Curtis	
Paul Lomas	
Sally Gillborn	
David Grimes	

In attendance:

Maxine Bagshaw	Director of Governance
Phil Curtis	Executive Director of Finance
Jayne Hartog	Executive Director of Marketing OD and HR
Tracey Mace-Akroyd	Deputy Principal/CEO
Cath Mollart	Interim Director of Strategic Planning and Corporate Services

Apologies for absence:

Apologies for absence were received from Stephen Bulley, Wade Makey and Veronica De Bruce McCoy.

2   Declarations of interest

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

3   Minutes of the meeting held on 12th December 2022

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 12th December 2022.

As a matter arising, one governor noted a reference on page 8 in relation to the need to ringfence capital receipts going forward following ONS reclassification. It was agreed that this would be added to the action tracker so that a future update can be provided (Director of Governance, February 2023).

4   Action Progress Report

Board were happy to note the content of the update provided.

5   CEO's Update

CEO provided an update on a number of aspects, including:

1) Strategic indicators/KPI's 2021/22 yearend outturn

He confirmed that these were provided for formal noting having been shared and discussed at the January 2023 strategy day.

2) Strategic indicators/KPI's 2022/23 - final proposals

CEO confirmed that feedback provided at the January strategy day had been incorporated as requested. Particular aspects noted/discussed at the meeting were:

- People and place
  - Reference should be to introducing 'succession' planning and not 'success' planning
  - Item 5 is a repeat of item 4
  - In relation to item 5D, where it makes reference to the health and wellbeing day, what exactly is it that is to be measured. CEO advised that success will be assessed based upon staff feedback rather than anything more formal. Group continues to review this as some staff cannot access because of their contracts i.e. term time only staff. Measure is quantitative, i.e. the level of take up, and qualitative which will be the feedback provided.
- Innovation and growth
  - Is it possible to include reference to worldskills development. All agreed that this was important and that the value to staff should not be underestimated
  - IAG and work ready skills are not mentioned. CEO advised that these can sit in various places and an example given was quality of education. They could also sit within the LSIP response strategy. CEO confirmed that he would look and reflect on where they would best sit (CEO, February 2023).
- Environmental sustainability
  - Aim to have diverse campuses by December 2023 seems to be quite a high ambition and governors asked whether there were any intermediate steps that can be reported on. Governors indicated that they would like a 'sooner rather than later' date and there needs to be a way to reflect on the steps being reported.

It was agreed that governors would provide the CEO with any further comments and feedback by the end of the week, as finalised KPIs are required to then

allow the PDR process across the organisation to take place (Governors, February 2023).

Governors asked how and when progress against these KPIs will be reported. Proposal from the CEO is that they will be by exception at each board meeting i.e. what is red RAG rates, with a summary then provided of the actions being taken to mitigate and address. Challenge from one governor was whether or not it is possible to be clearer in relation to the measures and how they will be reported against, particularly for the KPIs sitting within 'people and place' and 'innovation'. Challenge from the board was to be clear what success looks like in any area e.g. the wellbeing day impact. CEO confirmed that he would try to introduce this in the final document. Challenge from governors was how these will all be used to ensure continual improvements. All agreed that there needs to be regular opportunities to reflect on what is an isn't working so as to better understand the 'so what?'. Governors felt that their focus needed to be more on the why. Quality and Standards committee Chair indicated that there were firm proposals in place for this subcommittee i.e red RAG rated aspects on the KPI report driving the agenda items to be discussed.

Challenge from one governor was for the group to consider working to introduce a board assurance framework and it was agreed that Sharron Blackburn would link with the CEO outside the meeting to discuss this (CEO, March 2023).

Subject to the points made in the meeting, the board were happy to approve in principle the 2022/23 strategic indicators/KPIs as presented.

Director of Governance indicated that the student governor had provided some comments via email and she confirmed that she would share them with the CEO outside the meeting.

3) Presentation

CEO confirmed that it was his intention to provide a number of key updates, including:
- Application data
- School partnerships
- Pearl HE platform
- Rotherham plan launch
- LSIP update
- UKAEA STEP
- Removal of level 2 and level 3 qualifications
- CEFSS/curriculum planning – LSE visit
- Higher Technical Education Skills injection fund
- Adult education budget test and learn programmes

(i)   Applications
- Information provided is at 1st February 2023 with data being updated each week
- 16-18 numbers are up, however AEB, HE and part time learners are lower
- When considering the 2021/22 enrolment column for 16-18 study programme learners, if a 55% conversion rate is applied then the difference would be +127. Group does have to continue to work on internal progression. Position in relation to adults is quite similar to the prior year.
- Updated information on this will be provided at each board meeting (CEO, each meeting)

In general discussion, a question from one governor was why 'part time' are separated out from the other lines and what the current position is in relation to T Level applications. In relation to T Levels, it was explained that numbers currently sit within the study programme data and that whilst there has been some interest it is not as much as hoped for at this stage. Governors were reminded that it is subject to applicants getting the required entry grades but that, if they don't get them, then they will be offered an alternative course. Challenge from the board was a need to know how the numbers for T Levels sit against other qualification defunding which will have an impact in 2024. CEO advised that, from next week it will be possible to apply for specific T Levels and not just register an 'expression of interest'. It was agreed that for the next meeting a fuller repot would be provided on T Levels and defunding implications (Deputy CEO, April 2023).

(ii)   Schools partnership – flagship schools

Group is planning to offer a number of particular aspects to 'flagship' schools which is a new initiative. These will include:
- Bespoke taster days with funding for transport
- VIP tours
- Golden ticket invites to open events
- Flagship schools will be featured on the groups websites (much like the employer academies)

This is given on the premise that:
- Grades are met for the course chosen
- Normal application process applies including interviews will curriculum
- Offers may be suggested for other courses or programmes if the course chosen is not right or the grades are not met
- Group will take in to consideration learners with high needs plans and what is ringfenced for each learner

In effect these are special relationships. It is a new initiative but students do still need to get the grades.

(iii)   Access to HE online platform
- Group has an opportunity to enter in to partnership with Pearl (Learn Direct) to establish an online access to HE offer. Challenge from one governor was to be cautious in relation to any association with Learn Direct as they have had quality issues in the past. CEO provided assurance that QA would be undertaken and a test completed as a pilot. Deputy CEO confirmed that Learn Direct is officially closed as an organisation and has no URN number as far as Ofsted is concerned. Challenge from the board was to carefully look at potential risks.
- The platform would enable the fully online delivery of access to HE in several areas. This is the first form of this platform available for access to HE
- It will provide support for higher skills needs
- Initial pilot would see platform, learner recruitment and assessment undertaken in partnership with Pearl
- Pilot would generate an indicative £316k with a 55% contribution rate; internalisation to increase contribution rate of further subsequent delivery
- Provision could see 100 learner pilot in 2022/23, subsequent cohorts to be confirmed and run from 24/25 thereafter
- Provision will be delivered online, broadening potential market share in the SYMCA and the D2N2 region and overcoming geographic/time/personal barriers to accessing training which would be

a positive. One governor queried why there is a geographical limit proposed. CEO indicated that he would need to take ESFA advice on this.

- Pilot would be led, quality assured, performance managed by RNN
- Expansion of groups online training offer in direct response to trends in adult education and improving accessibility through provision of innovation in our communities particularly at level 4 and 5.
- Progression of learners to group HE provision offer, supporting realisation of HE recruitment targets
- Realisation of indicated £316k of adult education budget/advance learner loan activity

In general discussion, question and challenge from one governor was to carefully consider the implications for how the group delivers HE i.e. if students complete access online will they then expect their degree to be online. Suggestion was whether or not the group can look to offer by way of another partnership. Challenge from one governor was to look at what other providers do, so that it is possible to compare. Challenge from one governor was to carefully consider the impact on RNN staff if they are having to quality assure someone else as it can be quite burdensome. Question was whether or not it will stretch/strain RNN staff too far. CEO expressed the view that the pilot will test the platform using their materials which would therefore initially limit the strain on RNN staff.

(iv) <u>Rotherham plan launch</u> – this was an exceptional PR opportunity for the group and specifically UCR building with 100 attendees

(v) <u>Local Skills Improvement Plan update</u>
- SYMCA – working group/forum on 23rd March 2023 at Magna
- In relation to D2N2 there are a number of key themes emerging, including:
  - Work readiness and soft skills
  - Digitalisation
  - Recruitment and retention of employees
  - Approach to training provision

(vi) <u>UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) STEP skills assessment – stakeholder engagement with RNN Group</u>
- Following the UK AEA's announcement of the preferred site for the STEP fusion energy programme in West Burton, North Nottinghamshire, Mace has been appointed to carry out a skills study for the STEP (Spherical Tokomak Energy Production) programme educational facility.
- The STEP plant will be designed and constructed to demonstrate the ability to put net electricity on the grid
- Mace are now engaging with education establishments and businesses in close proximity to the site. STEM course is being considered ranging from chemical and electrical engineering through to data technology and cyber security.
- Working with Mace, RNN Group is looking to better align the offer and identify opportunities for collaboration
- Key areas include:
  - A review of HE and FE numbers in engineering related subjects in the surrounding areas
  - A review of HE and FE teacher numbers and recruitment and retention issues in engineering related subjects in the surrounding areas
  - A review of new engineering related businesses that are planning to relocate to those areas

This is a potential opportunity within the next 5 years.

(vii) <u>Post 16 qualifications landscape at level 3 and below for 2025 and beyond</u>

- IfATE will take on responsibility for approving new and revised technical qualifications at level 3, requiring them to be linked much more closely to employers needs and setting specific criteria that they will need to meet to improve quality and outcomes.
- DfE will approve academic qualifications against quality and progression criteria
- As well as removing funding from qualifications which overlap with T Levels, the government has also decided not to fund academic qualifications in certain subjects from 2025.

Future funding of Level 3 alternative academic qualifications:
Post 2025 academic landscape at 16-19 and for adults
- Qualifications that support students to progress on to and achieve high quality further education and higher education academic courses.
- A/AS levels
- Small qualifications (up to the size of an A Level) alongside A Levels
- Large qualifications (the size of two or 3 A Levels) taken as alternatives to A Levels

Large alternative academic qualifications
- Large AAQ's (equivalent to at least two A Levels) will be considered for public funding in 2026 in subjects where
  - There are no T Levels
  - There is a need for a large qualification enabling entry in to more specialist areas of higher education such as performing arts
  - There is a clear and direct progression link in to higher education

Future funding of technical qualifications at 16 to 19
- T Levels will form the core of the technical offer at Level 3 and will cover most of the core occupations a student might train for at 16-19. In addition to T Levels there are three main types of technical qualification that will be funded in the post 2025 landscape. These will be known as
  - Technical occupational entry and technical occupational progression
  - Technical additional specialist
  - Technical cross cutting function

Post 2025 technical landscape at 16-19
- Education providing the knowledge, skills and behaviour students need to progress to skilled employment or higher technical study
- T Levels
- Apprenticeships
- Technical occupational entry and technical occupational progression qualifications in areas not served by T Levels
- Technical additional specialist qualifications
- Technical cross cutting function qualifications

So, what will this mean for RNN?
- Zero impact in relation to short courses
- What we don't yet know is what awarding organisations will put forward where there are gaps.

- Awarding organisations need to put their proposals in and then DfE will decide what is and isn't funded
- In two years time there will be further level 2 review
- Significant potential impact in relation to long qualifications in particular subjects. It will impact on business, travel and tourism, public services and creative digital media.
- It is going to be important to have the right IAG in place
- There is an AOC meeting tomorrow to discuss this as part of the curriculum planning group

One governor asked how these changes will impact on schools and academies. CEO indicated that it is unusual for academies to offer public services and therefore a likely limited impact only, however more schools and academies offer creative digital and media which will have an impact.

(viii)   CEFSS
- The Department for Education offers colleges support from specialists within the FE Commissioner team and peer to peer support including from NLFE's and NLG's. Support is tailored to individual needs and planned in agreement with the college.
- To achieve this the Curriculum Efficiency and Financial Sustainability Support (CEFSS) pilots aim to:
  - Utilise existing/trusted FEC and NLFE expertise to review challenge and advise colleges
  - Join up FEC, NLFE and college expertise to achieve improved efficiencies
  - Share best practice
  - Create a coordinated and jointly agreed suggested action plan
  - Engage in periodic FEC/NLFE follow up sessions to capture successes and lessons learned
  - Provide practical guidance and support to the sector to encourage continuous improvement

Part of the process includes benchmarking analysis using published 2020/21 finance record data from a list of colleges.

CEFSS first visit took place on the 12th December 2022 and included:
- Overview – revisit/confirm CEFSS themes and areas to explore
- Review of current curriculum planning processes, tools, outputs and reports
- Staff contracts, utilisation and remission
- Conversion rates, internal progression
- Curriculum strategy, intent, meeting skills needs and future planning
- Finance benchmarking, review of non-curriculum support services and resources
- Apprenticeship and higher level apprenticeships
- Curriculum manager perspectives on curriculum planning
- Feedback and summary of next steps

Curriculum planning visit to LSEC on Friday 27th January 2023 included:
- Demonstration of 4cast – how source data for the curriculum plan is captured and how contribution rates are calculated for study programmes, AEB, Apps and HE. Plus, how does 4cast integrate/link with other systems and data sets.
- Management of average class sizes – target setting, strategies for minimising small groups particularly at entry/level 1 and HE

- LSEC approach to KPI reporting/dashboards and report to governors on curriculum planning/contribution rates/curriculum efficiency
- Comparative data/processes/policies for teaching staff remission, recording/monitoring staff utilisation.

(ix)   Higher Technical Education Skills Injection Fund
- A consortium bid for funding for HTQ's (Sheffield College, Doncaster College, Barnsley College, RNN Group) – RNN will get a share of the funding
- To support providers to build and create additional capacity to grow high quality and higher technical qualifications and raise the prestige of Level 4/Level 5 provision
- Capital is £911,250
- Resource is £214,205

(x)   Adult Education Budget Test and Learn Programmes for commencement January 2023 – these are new programmes:
- Using devolved AEB flexibilities the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority has launched a set of local 'Test and Learn' policy initiatives from January to July 2023.
- Building on delivery in 2021/22 the authority will provide and agree a financial schedule to underpin these policy initiatives
- Cost of living – direct support to learners
- Improving digital skills in the most disadvantaged communities
- ESOL
- Increased take up of level 2 and level 3 qualifications
- Care leaver support
- Level 3 – additional offer to FE colleges
- These programmes will have to delivered quite quickly

AGREED: to note the content of the information provided.

It was agreed that a copy of the presentation slides would be circulated outside the meeting (Director of Governance, February 2023).

6   **Discussion items identified by committees**

1) Finance and Resources Committee

Governors' attention was drawn to the detailed minutes of the meeting held on 17th January 2023 and key matters highlighted were:
- There was significant debate regarding AEB performance which remains 'one to watch'.
- There are a number of items identified for greater focus and/or approval
    - LGPS policy – this is all about our discretions as an employer. Each of the discretionary options has a financial implication. The recommendation from committee is that any decision in relation to these has to be by the board, albeit it was acknowledged that any request to apply them would be rare. There are implications for pension and potential ill health costs.
    - Treasury and Reserves policy – this is all about maximising income from cash. Group does not currently have revenue reserves but does have reserves overall. No timescales have been set in the policy and these are linked to the groups KPIs.
    - AEB – recommendation is to increase the subcontractor allocations to maximise options. In addition to this, there is an

opportunity to do more with Rotherham United and this will be presented to the next meeting of the committee. Proposed changes are to offset lower numbers with other subcontractors.

In relation to subcontracting, a challenge from one governor was that she didn't really feel that she fully understood subcontracting risks and therefore wished to abstain from participating in the decision to approve. It was agreed that the CEO would provide a subcontracting Q&A session for any governors who would find it useful. Challenge from the board was to not over expose the organisation. The board, whilst supportive of the increase proposed to Construction Skills People (+£114k) did challenge in terms of being mindful of the strategic target set to reduce the level of subcontracting overall.

AGREED:
   a) To approve the LGPS Policy as presented
   b) Approve the Treasury Management and Reserves Policies as presented
   c) Note the update provided in relation to AEB
   d) Approve subcontract allocation increase to Construction Skills People of +£114k.

Executive Director of Finance and Estates then provided an update on the PWC audit on behalf of the ESFA and he confirmed that it is still not concluded. It is hoped that the last piece of evidence requested from them was sent on 27th January. Group has applied to ESFA for formal extension to filing the yearend accounts. He provided assurance that the bank are being kept fully informed and they remain understanding and have had sight of the draft accounts.

One member of the group asked whether the groups external auditors KavanaghKelly are now happy with the NFPC loan repayment proposals. He confirmed that they are satisfied with the 21/22 position and that there is a need to formalise arrangements for 2022/23. Group has taken tax advice on this and it is a tax neutral position i.e. whether the company pays back to the group via gift aid or loan repayment.

AGREED: to note the content of the update provided.

   2) Quality and Standards Committee

Committee Chair drew governors' attention to the detailed minutes of the meeting which took place on 23rd January 2023 and key matters highlighted were:
   • Student recruitment – how does the 2022/23 shortfall impact on future predictions and strategic plans
   • Attendance – what is our strategic approach to improvements required
   • Digital – what are our strategic investment plans – how do we balance the need to invest to ensure our curriculum delivery is at the leading edge within a challenging financial situation. Committee acknowledged that this was a difficult but a really important area.
   • HE – strategy to improve student recruitment and an update on leadership arrangements.
   • AEB – whilst positive performance repots are received, how confident are we about achieving the allocation numbers. How much is already secured.

Committee Chair indicated that there were two documents that required board approval, these are:

- Final version of the 2021/22 SAR – this is a document that has been seen previously and has been updated following the Ofsted inspection
- 2021/22 SED

Deputy CEO confirmed that the content of the SAR is now fully reflective of all Ofsted feedback and not just the content of the written report.

AGREED: to approve
  a) 2021/22 SAR as presented
  b) 2021/22 SED as presented

7   Governance

The Director of Governance presented her written report which included a request for ratification of one written resolution which related to the appointment of new Governor Sally Gillborn. She also set out proposals for recruitment of the second student governor vacancy and requested that the board provide delegated authority to the Chair to approve the successful candidate following interviews.

AGREED:
  a) To formally ratify the written resolution approved in relation to the appointment of Sally Gillborn as a governor
  b) To delegate authority to the Chair to appoint the second student governor.

8   Feedback and Complaints Policy

The interim Executive Director for Strategic Planning and Corporate Services presented the report and identified the changes proposed, particularly to section 9 and appendix 1. Question and challenge from one governor was whether or not this policy integrates effectively with the other policies referred to. It was confirmed that it does. Governors asked how feedback and complaints are reported internally. Staff advised that there is a monthly complaints report collated internally. Governors asked that staff give consideration to how feedback and complaints are reported to governors i.e. is it a full board report or to a committee. Staff were asked to make recommendations on where the report will sit and the frequency (interim ED/CEO, April 2023).

AGREED: to approve the Feedback and Complaints Policy as presented.

9   Committee Chairs report – Finance and Resources

Board were happy to note the content of the summary report alongside the detailed minutes of the meeting.

10   Committee Chairs report – Quality and Standards

Board were again happy to note the content of the summary note together with the detailed minutes of the meeting.

11   Key documents

Board were happy to note the key documents provided and confirmed that there were no questions arising from review.

AGREED: to note the content of
    a) Ofsted report
    b) QIP 2022/23
    c) Safeguarding and Prevent report
    d) November 2022 Management Accounts
    e) 2022 HR Annual Report.

12 AOB

There were no items of additional business.

13 Date and time of next meeting

This was confirmed as 27th March 2023 at 5pm. This to be an on site meeting.

14 Confidential items

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

(Staff and Student governors left the meeting at 6.20pm)

Signed _____ Chair

Date _____