

NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

Minutes of a meeting held on Monday 30th November 2015 at the Hitchin campus

PRESENT

Members

Richard Alberg (Chair)	Paul Holgate
Lynne Ceeney	Rob Irving
Matt Hamnett (Principal / CEO)	Vernon McClure
Paul Harrison	Ruth Orpwood
Adrian Hawkins	Karl Scott

In Attendance

Kit Davies (Deputy Principal, NHC)	Paul Randall (Interim Finance Director)
Lucy Hann (Managing Director, Hart L&D)	Robert Dale (Designate Clerk to the Corporation)
Emma Masters (Safeguarding Manager)	

APOLOGIES

- Apologies were received from David Green and David Williams (who has resigned from the board for personal reasons).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- None.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

- Minutes, including the Part 2 Minutes, were approved as an accurate record and signed accordingly.
- Actions from the previous meeting were on the agenda or had been completed.

TERMLY HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

- The report was noted by the Board.

AUDIT COMMITTEE CHAIR'S FEEDBACK ON RECENT MEETINGS

- The most recent Committee meeting considered the draft financial statements and external auditors' management letter. These were being finalised and circulated to the Committee for approval before circulation to the Board in w/c 7 December and submission to the SFA by 18 December 2015.
- The Board **appointed** Vernon McClure to the Audit Committee.

Action: MH to ensure draft statements circulated for Board approval, and submitted to SFA.

QUALITY COMMITTEE CHAIR'S FEEDBACK ON RECENT MEETINGS

- Governor participation in quality assurance was supported by quality walks at Hitchin and Stevenage (the former unannounced). Vernon McClure reported a very positive discussion with Hitchin students.

SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENT

- Emma Masters joined the meeting to report on Safeguarding and Prevent. During discussion:
 - E-learning for staff and governors was available. Those who had tried the safeguarding e-learning had not found it engaging and asked if an alternative could be found.
 - Kit Davies is the strategic lead, Emma Masters the designated senior professional, and there are four deputies giving cover on all four sites. Site based colleagues have local knowledge to supplement specialist support. Good links exist with the local Safeguarding Board; though most support for students can be delivered by college staff, this helps access specialist services. Understanding hand-off points is crucial.
 - Pastoral care is aided by support coaches, tasked especially with helping high-risk groups like care leavers, assisting transition from care to independence. Coaches can signpost to services (e.g. sources of bursary funding, help with homelessness, mental health support). They work closely with tutors – but are not counsellors or caseworkers. They support students going through disciplinary processes.
 - There are group interventions (e.g. on bullying, health and welfare). Other student support may be by phone/text but is always personalised.
 - A safeguarding portal gives staff access to reference/support material and online reporting for concerns. Resources include staff contact details so that key people can be reached quickly.
 - The Government's Prevent strategy requires staff and governors to undergo training. There are links with safeguarding, equality and diversity and British Values; the programme is embedded in sport and wellbeing and tutorial activities. Staff have been trained and new joiners will be picked up by the college/school with a County refresh after three years. Staff failing to complete training would be followed up and were told that participation is tracked using iTrent (the NHC HR module); refresher training dates are automatically notified. Future IT system changes will help integrate tracking and recording and the portal is being further extended.
 - Governors asked how management information obtained from reporting (which can be analysed by year and by institution) was used. Data showed a growing need to address mental health issues across all institutions – so staff training in this area has been boosted. Data also informed staff briefings and SMT discussions. Analysis would identify anomalies and highlight areas for further investigation.

Action: EM to research alternative safeguarding training for governors.

CEO OVERVIEW

- The CEO presented an overview of progress across the Hart Learning Group. During his presentation the following key points were discussed:
 - The quality of teaching and learning is improving in both NHC and HL&D.
 - Staff engagement has been good. Their hard work and commitment to improving the quality of teaching and learning, at times in spite rather than because of NHC systems, was to be commended.
 - The college and its senior managers are beginning to get positive national attention. A positive local and national profile, reflecting our distinctive positioning, will be important in the coming period.
 - The financial outlook for 15/16 looks reasonable, though December's data return to the SFA and a reforecasting exercise under way would inform a better judgement on the outturn for the year.
 - The BIS spending settlement was better than feared. The base funding rate for 16-18 year-olds would stay constant until 2020 (helpful for planning assumptions). The age threshold for FE loans (rather than grant-funded programmes) will drop to 19 impacting NHC's 2016/17 financial position.
 - The apprenticeship levy will create big opportunities for well-positioned providers, whilst also posing challenges for colleges.
 - The Hertfordshire area review is likely to later in the process (end 2016/early 2017). Work to establish strong local relationships and build momentum behind our thinking is in hand.
 - Hart Learning & Development was beginning to make real progress, having taken a fresh, commercial approach with energy and enthusiasm. Delivery/revenue timelines mean that the positive financial impact won't be felt until 16/17. The business is well placed to respond to stimulus from the apprenticeship levy.
 - Corporate Services is the hardest to turn around; it suffers from longstanding inefficiencies and a lack of robust policies and processes. Marketing and communications are making good progress, but other teams are not there yet. The estates function needs ongoing performance management.
 - Heads of Terms have been agreed for the Centre for the Arts with the NHDC planners (£5.4m plus £1m ring fenced). This is felt to be a good outcome.
 - There were two offers for the Shephalbury playing fields. Governors **agreed** to accept the higher of the two, which is from the Coptic Church.
 - Capita Property Services is working pro bono to assess the NHC estate; its report will be shared with the Board; Governors may then consider disposing of assets so as to build funds. The Board recognised the importance to local stakeholders of NHC keeping a presence in Hitchin, Stevenage and Letchworth.

- The self-assessment (SAR) process was likely to conclude that NHC is Grade 3 (requires improvement). Good progress is being made to improve this in 2015/16, but addressing longstanding issues in a single year is tough.
- There is inherent tension between doing business as usual and driving transformational activity. The Head of Transformation was key to managing; discrete transformation projects were handled separately from ongoing operations. The challenge is the distraction of the unexpected, inherited, issues.
- **The Board agreed** that it would be helpful to undertake a tightly defined piece of work to assess the risks and areas for attention in corporate services.

Actions:

- MH to conclude deal with Coptic Church re Shephalbury.
- MH to progress planning application with Crest Nicholson re CfA building.
- MH to scope piece of work re corporate services.

FINANCE UPDATE

- Paul Randall introduced the finance update. The short term priority is to deliver the 15/16 business plan. In the longer term, transformational action is needed to create a fund for investing in future priorities. Key discussion points were:
 - 2014/15 Year-end: Final draft accounts will be circulated to the Audit Committee on 1st December and then to the Board on 8/9th December before submission to the SFA by 18th December. Provision for losses in HERTVEC (and monies owed to NHC by HERTVEC) would be declared in 2014/15.
 - Engagement with SFA & Lloyds: BIS and SFA officials supported the steps NHC has taken to address issues identified in 2015. Discussions are ongoing as to how NHC can best be helped by SFA in drawing a line under those issues. Lloyds Bank is positive about NHC's plans.
 - The Exceptional item (£75,000) in the 14/15 management accounts related to a short term lease in Letchworth where the cost of remediation needed to be provided for before lease end.
 - The Balance Sheet showed material movements between iterations – for example, the cash position was c£4m higher and the net pension liability different – but most related to the timing of disclosure at the year end. Future reports would include commentary on such movements.
 - The sale of the Centre for the Arts (CFA) was important to 2016 cash flow. Options would be reviewed after the NHDC planning meeting on 17/12. The SMT monitors cash flow every week.
 - A briefing note on pension scheme arrangements including the timing of the next valuation would be circulated.

Action: PR to circulate a briefing note on pension scheme arrangements.

QUALITY UPDATE

- Kit Davies introduced the quality update:
 - Governors were pleased that a significant range of monitoring and improvement activities were being undertaken to drive teaching and learning performance up. Attendance has improved year on year. Relentless campaigning to highlight the relevance of Maths and English to future career opportunities is vital and Governors agreed there is a need to monitor progress closely.
 - Governors will be expected to support a forthcoming Ofsted inspection and FAQs were provided which members are encouraged to study. Any questions colleagues have will be shared by email. There will also be a ‘walk through’ of the Self-Assessment Review (SAR) and examples of supporting evidence. The question and answer document will be updated as data becomes available.
 - Paul Holgate agreed to be lead Governor for Safeguarding working with Kit Davies and Emma Masters. Training and briefings will be arranged.
 - The Chair will consult over a lead Governor for Equality and Diversity.

Actions:

- Kit Davies (with Emma Masters) to support Paul Holgate as lead Safeguarding governor.
- Richard Alberg to discuss nominating a lead Governor for Equality and Diversity.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- None. The Chair thanked Governors and staff for their participation and wished them a Merry Christmas and a prosperous 2016.

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

- Meetings will be scheduled for the first Monday of the month in which a meeting is due, and will start at 18.00

The meeting concluded at 20.25

.....
Signed as an accurate record of proceedings – Chair

.....
Date

CORPORATION ACTION LOG

Meeting	Summary of action	Lead / timing
Corporation, 30/11/15	MH to ensure draft statements circulated for Board approval, and submitted to SFA.	MH 18/12/15
	EM to research alternative safeguarding training for governors.	Emma Masters 31/01/16
	MH to conclude deal with Coptic Church re Shephalbury.	MH 31/01/16
	MH to progress planning application with Crest Nicholson re CfA building.	MH 31/01/16
	MH to scope piece of work re corporate services.	MH 31/01/16
	PR to circulate a briefing note on pension scheme arrangements.	Paul Randall 31/01/16
	Kit Davies (with Emma Masters) to support Paul Holgate as lead Safeguarding governor.	KD Ongoing
	Richard Alberg to discuss nominating a lead Governor for Equality and Diversity.	RA 01/02/16