

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION HELD AT 5:00 PM ON THURSDAY 30 MARCH 2023 IN THE BOARDROOM AT NULC**

Present: Alan Aston, Martin Earnshaw, Craig Hodgson, Gareth Jones, Mary Jones, Steve Jones, Simon Leech (Chair), Bernard Lovatt, Lesley Rollason, Jim Rowley, Francis Tunney

In attendance: Andy Bailey (Head of Compliance and Governance), Shelley Brown (Director of Curriculum and Performance), Ian Hookway (Director of HR and Communication), Jason Lancaster (Director of IoT and Employer Partnerships), Lesley Morrey (Director of Student Engagement and Partnerships), Carl Riding (Director of Estates and Sustainability), Debbie Torjussen (Director of Finance and Corporate Services)

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### **PART 1**

#### **23.1.1 Membership**

Simon provided feedback from the meeting of the Search Committee, held immediately prior to the Corporation, where Steve Jones' re-appointment had been recommended.

**After consideration, it was agreed to re-appoint Steve Jones as a member of the Corporation for a period of four years.**

#### **23.1.2 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Tracy Bullock, Jeff Dutton, Beckie Jones, Alishah Malik and Jeremy Pert. It was noted that Craig and Carl would be slightly late joining the meeting.

#### **23.1.3 Declarations of Interest**

Simon Leech, Gareth Jones and Debbie Torjussen declared an interest as non-remunerated Directors of Axia Solutions Ltd and Gradbach Ltd. Gareth Jones and Jeremy Pert declared an interest as members of Stafford Borough Council.

#### **23.1.4 Minutes of the Meeting held on 13 December 2022 - Part 1**

Approved as a true record of the meeting.

#### **23.1.5 Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

## **23.1.6 Minutes of the Committee Meetings**

- **Education & Standards – 15 March 2023**

Lesley Rollason fed back on the main issues considered at the meeting and drew particular attention to the presentation given by Shelley Brown and Gavin Barker on Level 3 reforms and the letter sent to Aaron Bell MP outlining the College's concerns over this matter very clearly. Of concern to the Committee were the c2000 students who might find themselves without a suitable Level 3 pathway if the proposed reforms go through. Lesley R advised that T Levels are seen as a good qualification for a small number of relatively high achieving students who have clear career goals in mind, however, there is a significant number of students who do not fit into this category.

Regarding the Learner Data Report, members noted that the QoER for English and Maths had been unusual in that its outcomes were Requires Improvement on the whole. Members had interrogated this aspect of the report as it is very rare to see such an outcome and Lesley advised that close attention is now being focussed on this area of provision.

Carl Riding joined the meeting at this stage.

Alan added that a key point relating to our QoER process is that although the College follows a similar approach to Ofsted, it then works closely with areas and supports them to make the improvements needed to bring up the grade.

## **23.1.7 Principal's Report - Part 1**

### **1.1 – BTEC Results**

Shelley was pleased to report that this year's overall results were on par with last year's. For Level 3 they are broadly similar but at Level 2 we have seen a very pleasing increase. She advised that detailed analysis of the results by curriculum area will be considered with the teams involved and steps taken to make improvements where required.

### **1.2 – Ofsted Thematic Reviews**

Shelley advised that Ofsted had requested the opportunity to come in to College to review our Careers Guidance. This had gone really well with very positive feedback received. This was closely followed by a 16-19 Catch Up Funding review, considered from a learner's perspective. Once again really positive feedback was received and both of these visits had provided the College and the teams of staff involved with some very useful experience.

### **1.3 – 16-19 Free School**

Ian advised that the Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form Academy and Staffordshire University are proposing to open a 16-19 Free School in Stoke. This is of concern to us as we recruit around 50% of our learners from Stoke on Trent

and the focus of the proposed curriculum duplicates what we already offer. Ian drew members' attention to the joint letter of objection submitted by ourselves, Burton and South Derbyshire College and South Staffordshire College to the DfE which members considered.

Members noted that this bid has strong support from the 3 Stoke MPs but Ian stressed that we are taking every opportunity available to voice our objections to representatives from Stoke on Trent Local Authority, and also the Principal from the Sixth Form Academy. It was noted that the DfE's decision is due in the early summer.

#### **1.4 – FE Sector Issues**

Members noted that these issues had largely been covered by Bill Watkin at the weekend event at Gradbach.

Shelley advised that discussion with Gillian Keegan, the Secretary of State for Education, has left us with the impression that T Levels are definitely going ahead. She had been receptive to some of the things we outlined in relation to the challenges that the T Level reforms will bring and she appeared to listen to our comments. Shelley added that 98% of students on T Level programmes across the country already have their English and maths qualification and, in addition, some pathways are very Science heavy. This presents an issue for us due to the number of students who do not have their English, Maths or Science qualification.

#### **1.5 – Annual Strategic Conversation**

Members noted the contents of the letter confirming the issues discussed at the Annual Strategic Conversation with the ESFA on behalf of the DfE. Shelley added that she has had conversations with colleagues across the sector and ours appears to have been very positive compared to their experiences.

#### **1.6 – BBC Question Time**

Members were delighted to note that BBC Question Time was filmed at the Performing Arts Centre last week. Fiona Bruce held a Q&A session with students before filming commenced which had gone really and our technical students were given a fantastic experience of a real life production.

#### **1.7 – Awards 2023**

Members noted the plans for this year's Student Awards to be held at both sites.

Craig joined the meeting at this point and asked for his declaration of interest to be recorded as a non-remunerated Director of Axia Solutions Ltd and Gradbach Ltd. He advised that he had recently attended the Sixth Form College's awards evening and had picked up many pointers on how to run a successful event.

Craig referred to Gillian Keegan's visit and read out the fabulous message she had written in the College's Visitors' Book. Craig advised that she had

three times mentioned our T Level funding which he had queried as we have received no notification yet, but we are now very hopeful that we have been successful in our bid. He added that she had been brilliant with the students who had met with her and following this a group of them had been filmed by the DfE production team. Beckie Jones, who is one of the Student Governors, had given an amazing account of the positive difference college has made to her own life and that of her counterparts. Craig will share this film segment with staff once we receive the final cut as it is such an inspiring thing for them to hear.

### **23.1.8 Student Disciplinary Procedure**

Lesley advised that the Student Disciplinary Procedure had been considered by the Education and Standards Committee and recommended to the Corporation for approval.

**After consideration, the Procedure was approved.**

### **23.1.9 Tuition Fees Policy 2023-24**

Gareth advised that the Tuition Fees Policy 2023-24 had been considered by the Finance and General Purposes Committee and recommended for approval, noting that further information will be included once available and that the setting of fees will fall under Debbie's remit along with the updating of remission information.

**After consideration, the Policy was approved.**