

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION HELD AT 5 PM ON TUESDAY 14 DECEMBER 2021 VIA ZOOM

Present: Simon Leech, Gareth Jones, Alan Aston, Mary Jones, Lesley Rollason, Bernard Lovatt, Jeremy Pert, Francis Tunney, Veruschka Mbai, Karen Dobson, Steve Jones, Jim Rowley, Martin Earnshaw

In attendance: Craig Hodgson (Vice Principal), Shelley Brown (Director of Curriculum and Performance), Andy Bailey (Head of Compliance and Governance), Lesley Morrey (Director of Student Engagement and Partnerships), Lisa Saville (Group Accountant), Joy Smith (Deputy Clerk), Dale Thorpe (RSM) for agenda item 21.5.20 only

In the absence of Simon Leech at the start of the meeting Gareth Jones took the chair.

Jim explained that the new Post-16 Audit Code of Practice (ACOP) requires the College's financial statements auditor to present his Audit Findings Report to the Corporation. Dale Thorpe from RSM will, therefore, join the meeting via Zoom and item 21.5.20 will be considered first.

21.5.20 Draft Regularity Audit and Financial Statements Management Letters (Audit Findings Report)

Dale explained that this was the final version of the Audit Findings Report for members' consideration. He was pleased to advise that the College's Financial Statements audit had been undertaken on site, as planned. There had been six recommendations made in relation to Axia's operation which had all been accepted by management.

The external audit opinion is a positive opinion, confirming that the financial statements provide a true and fair view of the College's finances, that the accounts have been appropriately compiled and there are no material uncertainties around the College's going concern position.

Dale advised that a separate report on Regularity is provided and he was pleased to confirm that the funding received by the College has been correctly expended in accordance with the intended purposes.

It was noted that the only change to the Letter of Engagement from that previously seen by members related to the incorporation of the requirements of the new Post-16 ACOP.

Jim explained that the further agenda items in relation to RSM were the Letters of Representation for the College Group, Axia and Gradbach, all of which had been considered at the Audit Committee meeting and all of which were recommended to the Corporation for approval.

After consideration, members approved the Audit Findings Report and agreed

that the Management Letters should be signed on behalf of the Group and its subsidiaries.

Dale was thanked for his input and retired from the meeting at this stage.

PART 1

21.5.1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Jeff Dutton.

21.5.2 Declarations of Interest

Simon Leech, Gareth Jones, Karen Dobson and Craig Hodgson all declared an interest as non-remunerated Directors of Axia Solutions Limited and Gradbach Limited.

21.5.3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 October 2021 - Part 1

Approved as an accurate record of the meeting, subject to the following amendments. Mary Jones has been elected as the Governor to represent non-teaching staff. Tim O'Neill should be removed and replaced with Tim Collier.

21.5.4 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

21.5.5 Minutes of the Committee Meetings

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Lesley Rollason gave a summary of the items discussed at the meeting. Lesley Morrey had provided a presentation on safeguarding and prevent and the particular focus currently on students' mental health and wellbeing. It had been noted that questions on this important area are included in the current student survey, the outcome of which will be considered at the next meeting. Awareness of issues around sexual harassment and sexual violence were also highlighted as important topics. It was noted that governors will be asked to undertake their mandatory Prevent refresher training early in 2022.

Members had also considered the final performance outcomes for 2020-21 and had been pleased with the very strong and positive overall performance. Any dips identified are being addressed. Level 2 performance and refreshing the College's adult education offer are particular areas of focus going forward.

The current Learner Data Report was also considered and members had been provided with information on recruitment and attendance. The latest Quality of Education Reviews and Walkthroughs had been discussed and members had particularly noted the success of the new Walkthrough approach. The very useful 10 tips to effective mental health video, produced by the College, had been viewed during the meeting.

21.5.6 Principal's Report - Part 1

1.1 Open Events

Karen was pleased to report that the two events held so far on both sites have been very busy.

1.2 Vaccination Clinics

Members noted that the College had secured 2 on-site vaccination clinics in the autumn term for students having their first and second jabs along with booster jabs for eligible staff. We are hoping to be able to offer further clinics in the first half of the spring term.

Karen added that although we have had buoyant Covid numbers throughout the term we no longer have to send whole student groups home to isolate which is far less disruptive for everyone.

1.3 Carol Concerts

Members noted that, due to the current Omicron developments, both Carol Concerts had been cancelled and the College will close to staff and students at the end of the week.

2.1 Student Awards

Members were very pleased to note the recent student successes. In particular Karen drew attention to the Chamber of Commerce awards where the 3 finalists were all NSCG students.

In addition, members commended the voluntary work undertaken by Eve Adams from Stafford who has provided much needed help and support at New Cross Hospital throughout the pandemic.

The students who had taken part in the Cambridge HE+ competition were congratulated and Karen confirmed that all four are expected to move on to Russell Group or Oxbridge institutions for their higher education.

2.2 Sporting Successes

Members congratulated the latest students who had achieved sporting successes and wished all of them good luck in their future training camps and games. A particular mention was given to Charlotte Clarke, currently working as the College's FA apprentice, who has been signed for Liverpool Women's team on a full time contract as their number 2 goalkeeper.

2.3 A Word of Thanks

Karen extended thanks, once again, to all staff who have dealt amazingly with the difficulties and challenges of this tough term.

She went on to advise that she and Shelley had attended a Teams meeting earlier in the day with Alex Burghart, the Minister for Skills and Apprenticeships, where they discussed a range of initiatives including T Levels. He had explained that he had chosen to speak to NSCG due to our reputation and he wanted to question how we address the skills agenda and how we tie in with local skills plans. He had also mentioned a possible visit to NSCG and Karen had extended a welcome at any time.

21.5.7 Governor Training, Development and Engagement

Andy drew attention to possible options available relating to Governor training development and engagement and outlined the events currently planned and in progress.

With regard to the Governor pairing scheme, it was noted that some managers have reported positive engagement with their pair although it is acknowledged that lockdown has made this more difficult.

There are two Link Governor Roles – Safeguarding and Careers - both of which are undertaken by Alan Aston. Alan advised that these roles are a statutory requirement and he explained the expectations in the sector and at Ofsted level about how the roles are discharged. He was seeking members' preferences on how best to report back to the Corporation. It was noted that Safeguarding and Prevent is covered by Lesley Morrey through regular reports to the Education & Standards Committee and it was agreed that that Committee should be the conduit for Alan's feedback, which will then come to the full Corporation via the minutes and report from the Chair.

Simon Leech joined the meeting at this stage.

Members noted the differences in the link governor role and the governor pairing arrangement and Alan explained that his link role had highlighted his lack of awareness of what is happening across the wider College. He wondered if a mechanism could be arranged for members to share their knowledge and experiences gained through the pairing scheme and it was agreed that Andy would devise a system to facilitate this.

Andy also referred to the Governor Activities and Opportunities document which included the Learning Walks, QoER Weeks etc along with the additional offer for Governors to assist the College in other ways, all of which facilitate greater engagement.

Members noted that the Governor-Manager event at Gradbach is scheduled for March 2022 and time will be allocated at the event for the Governor skills audits and appraisals to be undertaken.

Members noted the various webinars and videos shared throughout the year and those planned for the coming year, and Andy advised that there is also an ETF Governance Development Programme which will be rolled out to everyone.

Karen reported on a recent Skills Advisory Panel presentation she had attended about local and national skills issues and advised that a similar presentation would be arranged for the Gradbach event if possible.