

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2021 IN THE BOARDROOM AT NEWCASTLE COLLEGE, OR VIA ZOOM

Present: Simon Leech (Chair), Alan Aston, Jeff Dutton, Mary Jones, Lesley Rollason, Bernard Lovatt, Jeremy Pert, Gareth Jones, Francis Tunney, Veruschka Mbai, Karen Dobson, Steve Jones (via Zoom), Jim Rowley (via Zoom), Martin Earnshaw (via Zoom)

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), Gavin Barker (for the Performance Presentation only)

Shelley and Gavin Barker went through the detail of the headline performance for 2020-21, and members noted that a final picture will be presented to the meeting of the Education and Standards Committee at the next cycle of meetings.

Members considered the 16-18, 19+ and All Ages overall achievements at Level 1, 2 and 3 compared to 2018-19 and 2019-20 along with the rates for this year by department. High grades in A Levels and vocational courses were noted along with those in English and Maths, and members particularly noted the areas where high grades are significantly ahead compared to previous years. Members were delighted to note the very strong picture. Shelley advised that the teacher assessed grades were supported by robust evidence gathered throughout the year from student work, assessments etc but members were cautioned that such high grades may not have been achieved if the students had taken formal examinations.

Discussion took place about the whole year groups of students who have never had the experience of taking formal exams and Bernard asked if we have received any feedback from HE institutions about this issue. Karen added that it is still early to ascertain the affect going forward that far and she confirmed that significant effort is being made to support students with the areas they need to catch up.

Simon referred to the improvements we have seen due to TAGs/CAGs and asked if we have any information about other local institutions and whether their allocated grades have been moderated and/or considered inaccurate. Karen advised that because of differing evidence bases, it is difficult for awarding bodies to substantiate this. Our own substantial and robust evidence provided us with comfort that what we presented was accurate. Gavin advised that there were some colleges in the West Midlands who were asked for further evidence to back up their gradings.

Francis referred to the media reports about disadvantaged students falling further behind and Gavin confirmed that early indicators this year show that there are no issues at NSCG following the significant assistance we have provided for these students. Lesley added that the Looked After Learners cohort had done very well working from home with supervision, and the challenge with this cohort going forward will be getting them back into the routine of

attending college.

Francis asked about our expectations on what the future holds and Karen advised on our current understanding about how gradings will be approached next year and where they will be pegged. A Levels and GCSEs seem to be the focus of those in Government but we also need to consider our BTEC students as we are aware that the last two years' worth of grade profiles have been higher because of the circumstances.

Shelley and Gavin were thanked for a very useful presentation and Gavin left the meeting at this stage.

PART 1

21.4.1 Membership

Members considered and approved the memberships of the two new student Governors, Veruschka Mbai and Angellos Koulli, Tim O Neill, the co-opted Audit Committee member and Mary Jones, the new staff governor for the Newcastle site.

21.4.2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Ian Hookway.

21.4.3 Declarations of Interest

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

21.4.4 Minutes of the Meeting held on 19 July 2021 - Part 1

Approved as a true record of the meeting, subject to an amendment to agenda item 21.3.3 to read that Bernard, Martin and Lesley's memberships were each renewed for a further 4 years.

21.4.5 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

21.4.6 Principal's Report - Part 1

1.1 – September 2021 Return

Karen advised that we have been very pleased to be able to welcome students back on a more normal basis from September, subject to the continuation of regular hand washing/sanitising and optional mask wearing.

She thanked members for their support with the various awards events held at the start of term.

1.2 – Lateral Flow Testing

Members noted that a 2 week period of lateral flow testing for students had taken place at the start of term, in line with the latest Government guidance. Karen confirmed that, although numbers have risen, the difference this year is that we no longer have to send large groups of students home.

We will continue to encourage twice weekly testing for all students and send out reminders to encourage them to undertake tests prior to returning after half term.

1.3 – Vaccination Clinics

Karen confirmed that we were pleased to be able to offer vaccination clinics on site for our students. These took place at the end of September, one at Stafford College and two at Newcastle College. We did feel that the process and organisation could have been a lot more efficient, however, we were glad to have been able to vaccinate a total of 386 students. She added that we are hoping to secure further dates after half term. Jeremy advised that he would be happy to help secure this if necessary.

1.4 – Mental Health and Wellbeing

Members noted the growth in the need to support students in terms of their mental health and wellbeing, particularly since Covid. A number of initiatives have already been arranged and we now have Mental Health Champions in each department. They will support their colleagues in identifying issues relating to mental health and finding the best and most appropriate ways to deal with this. A whole College strategy is now being developed which Lesley will lead on.

2.1 – 20-21 Performance

Members noted the information on performance which had been covered in detail at the start of the meeting.

2.2 – Construction Plant Awards 2021

Congratulations were extended to everyone who had been involved and received awards at the CPA Stars of the Future event in September.

2.3 - New T Levels

Karen explained the College's approach to the introduction of the new T Levels and advised that the Government now appears to be amending their approach to the withdrawal of funding for BTECs with the new Minister being more inclined to listen to the sector's arguments. It was noted that the College will continue to take a carefully managed approach to ensure that our offer provides the best pathways and opportunities possible for students.