

**Meeting of the Kendal College Corporation
Wednesday 23rd March 2016 at 5.00 pm
Dem Kitchen
MINUTES**

Present:

Joseph Brown (Student Governor)
Michelle Clement (Staff Governor)
Fra Cooke
Cath Dutton (Chair)
Sam Phillipson (Student Governor)
Zaeed Mohammed (Staff Governor)
Rebecca Sandham
Jon Thedham
John Tiscornia
Gordon Watson
Graham Wilkinson (Principal)

(attendance 93%)

In attendance:

Maggie Cawthorn, Carole Drury (Clerk), Craig Owen, Louise Shrapnel
Jeff Edginton, Emily Harris

The Chair welcomed the 2 new board applicants to the meeting who had been issued with a set of papers for the meeting.

1627 **Apologies for Absence**

Claire Willett and Ian Clinton (agreed leave of absence)

1628 **Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interest

1629 **To approve the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 10th February 2016**

The minutes of the meeting were accepted as an accurate record and signed by the Chair

1630 **Matters Arising from the Minutes & Action Plan**

The action plan was reviewed and key actions noted.

Following a proposal from Search & Governance Committee, Board members had been invited to join an Area Review Task & Finish Group. In addition to the Board Chair and Vice Chair, Jon Thedham, Fra Cooke and Rebecca Sandham had agreed to join.

1631 **Principal's Report and Data Dashboard**

The Principal presented his report providing an update on international activity including the recent visit by Head of School, Robert Marshall-Slater to Brazil, who will give a presentation at the next board meeting.

The report detailed A level provision at the College, showing the number of students progressing to year 2 of the programme as well as an increase in applications for next year, up by 33 to 88 in 13 subjects, with 21 applying for a full A level package. Information on expected reform of the higher education sector was provided along with a report of activity put on by the College to support National Apprenticeship Week. It was reported that more

schools are requesting a presentation on apprenticeships and that 400 College students and 150 members of the public had attended the recent Apprenticeship & Careers Fair at the College that included two key enterprise speakers.

The report included a proposal for the College to make Life Sciences one of its new specialisms and to become a North West specialist college. Specific links with senior staff at GSK in Ulverston were being used to develop a business plan for this area. F Cooke asked about competition for becoming a Bio-Pharmaceutical site and was advised that the College would become an exemplar. C Dutton asked about how any capital project for this area would be funded and the Principal advised that tenders for funding would need to be prepared.

The Board discussed the development of A level provision, receiving assurance that the break-even number for funding is 6 per A level group with funding for those who add an A level coming from their Study Programme. Z Mohammed asked about success rates with M Cawthorn responding that there were some risks but there were good levels of attendance being recorded for A level groups. Delivery hours were raised with the College delivering 4 hours per week per subject compared with 5-6 in schools. M Cawthorn reported that teaching on A level courses was all adjudged good or better. Two students were causing concern over their progress and some students were seeking to drop their add-on A level but apart from that, good progress was being made.

The data dashboard for March was presented, showing College performance against key performance indicators. Concern was raised over apprenticeship success rates not meeting target, explained as being due to the number of students withdrawing early from their programmes. It was noted that all apprenticeship figures were above national benchmark.

English and maths performance identified that attendance rates needed to be monitored to ensure targets were reached. Z Mohammed assured Board members that weekly meetings of staff were being held to track individual student progress but that attendance overall is better than national benchmark with the College disciplinary procedure being used where appropriate with letters being sent out to students whose attendance is lower than required. A proposal to introduce a student contract was being considered for next year.

The Board RESOLVED to:

- Accept the Principal's report noting progress with A level and apprenticeship provision
- Accept the Data Dashboard, taking assurance that measures are in place to closely monitor maths and English attendance

1632 **Area Review update**

Confidential update papers had been provided on the Area Review process but were now out of date following the announcement this week that Carlisle College were intending to join the Newcastle College Group (NCG) subject to satisfactory due diligence and consultation. The Chair of Carlisle had advised C Dutton that they would remain an independent college under the NCG group and would be encouraged to continue working in partnership with the Cumbria Colleges. Board members agreed that the proposal would be good for that college and that the board had taken a business decision based on its financial position. The Board discussed the benefits of merging into an FE College group such as Newcastle. J Thedham asked whether there would be other mergers that could be considered and asked about the implications for future partnership working. Board members discussed the options of developing more focussed and differentiated provision as an alternative to size as well as other options for looking at a revenue-focussed take-over based on the high quality of the College. The emphasis of ensuring financial stability was raised by Z Mohammed, suggesting the College should be prepared to be more aggressive.

The Principal tabled a confidential update paper to put forward a strategy to remain independent and for growth. The Chair reported that concrete discussions had already

taken place with two out-of-county colleges re closer working relationships . J Thedham suggested that the business case for remaining independent needed to be strong both as to reasons and costs. F Cooke reminded the Board that the objective was not to be independent but to provide outstanding provision for the local community. C Dutton asked about the impact of future funding cuts to which C Owen advised that it had been announced that adult skills funding would not be cut for the next 3 years and that apprenticeship growth would be funded.

The issue of independence was further explored with a strong emphasis on how the College could be even more efficient by staying independent and how that would be articulated to the Area Review team. J Thedham said that the cultural fit would be as important as finance with the focus on learners, employers and stakeholders on how the service supported their needs. F Cooke suggested that merger with a larger group should be added to the options so that the future viability of the College against financial pressures could be sustained and the Principal confirmed that this option was included. Z Mohammed suggested that an alliance with another outstanding college such as Runshaw, with whom the College already has a good synergy, should be considered.

It was reported that the information requested by the FE Commissioner was due to be submitted by 1st April, recognising that this was a short turn-around time with extensive working needing to be done by the Senior Management Team. The paper also outlined the meeting structure for the Area Review process.

The Chair concluded the discussions thanking members for their input. She asked the Principal to put more information into the business plan that the Task & Finish Group would pick up at their first meeting, identifying preferred options but not discounting other ideas put forward.

The Board RESOLVED to:

- Request that the Task & Finish Group meet to identify preferred options

1633 **Teaching, Learning & Assessment report**

The Director of Curriculum & Quality presented the Teaching, Learning & Assessment Report providing an update on the status of applications for 2015/16 academic year and highlighting areas of concern. Overall, recruitment to full time programmes is lower than the same time last year but apprenticeship recruitment is up. The largest growth area is for A level packages with 21 applications received already in just the second year of recruitment. Concern was raised over unexpected lower recruitment to construction courses but it was explained that the figures did not include students who were recruited through Construction Skills (Sector Skills body).

The second part of the report focussed on apprenticeship performance reviews that included monitoring of success rates, by individual assessor, and apprentice progress. It was reported that there had been a decline in 2014/15 apprenticeship success rates and governors were assured that close monitoring of this position was in place to ensure retention rates were maintained. The report raised concerns over the achievement of functional skills but also advised on the increase in staffing resource to address the concern.

The Board was provided with an overview of the 16-18 Study Programme and its key components. It was explained that there was a focus on the intended destination of the individual student that determined what elements they enrolled on. The expectations of Ofsted in respect of Study Programmes were also provided so that governors were able to develop a greater understanding of the priorities of the curriculum and quality teams in ensuring high standards are reached.

C Dutton asked about space utilisation in respect of hair and beauty salons and student recruitment. J Thedham challenged the decision to retain cleaning apprenticeships but it was explained that the framework was linked to NHS full cost delivery.

The Board RESOLVED to:

- Accept the report taking assurance that recruitment was being monitored effectively

1634 **Strategic Plan update**

The Principal outlined the rationale for updating the College's Strategic Plan to better reflect the priorities of the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership Skills Investment Plan with specific reference to visitor economy and STEM investments. Alongside it, the updated strategic operating plan was presented providing more detail on the measures and progress of the plan, including the links to the Skills Investment Plan.

F Cooke requested that it would be helpful for quick wins and issues to be identified from the operating plan and it was agreed that a traffic light system be introduced. J Tiscornia asked about the impact on European social funded provision if the UK leaves the EU. Z Mohammed advised that a student debate on the referendum would be held in the College on 15th April.

The Board RESOLVED to:

- Accept the amendments to the strategic plan
- Request that a traffic light system be applied to the next presentation of the operating plan

1635 **Policy update**

- Safeguarding
- Health and Safety

Two key policies were presented for approval by the Board, both containing updates based on legislation and update briefings. The amendments were noted and the policies approved, subject to minor amendments, for publication to staff and via the College website.

The Board RESOLVED to:

- Approve the policies for Safeguarding and Health and Safety

1636 **Capital Projects Update**

The Director of Finance & Resources presented an update report on the Wildman Street and Castle Dairy building work. A comprehensive report, including financial analysis, for Wildman Street was considered, showing that the project was £143,901 over target. The Board was assured that spend was being closely monitored to ensure it was within overdraft limit. It was reported that the full amount had now been received from the LEP. C Dutton questioned the increase in overspend since the previous report and requested L Shrapnel to look into it and report back to the next meeting.

In respect of the Castle Dairy, it was reported that the building continues to dry out after the December floods and that insurance payments would be used to progress new designs for the bar and kitchen areas.

The Board RESOLVED to:

- Accept the report subject to confirmation on the overspend position

1637 **Financial Health**

The Principal reported that the Skills Funding Agency had reviewed the College's financial health following submission of the Financial Statements and Finance Record for the year ended 31st July 2015 and had confirmed that Financial Health was now categorised as good and that the underlying financial health was satisfactory with not significant concerns with regard to the College's financial control arrangements.

The Board congratulated the Finance Team at the College for this improved position and in particular the work done by the Finance Manager, K Naylor.

The Board RESOLVED to:

- Note the good financial health position of the College

1638 **Management Accounts**

The Director of Finance & Resources presented the January management accounts along with commentary on key performance indicators, cashflow position and balance sheet. The Finance Working Group had met in early March and had reviewed the accounts with no concerns raised. February's accounts would be circulated to the working group once completed.

The Board RESOLVED to:

- Approve the accounts based on the recommendation of the Finance Working Group

1639 **Search & Governance Committee – new member search**

The Chair of Search & Governance reported that the College had received three new governor applications, two of which were to be taken forward. J Edginton and E Harris were both in attendance at the meeting and asked to leave while the Board considered their applications. Both were unanimously appointed to the Board. An induction for new members would be organised for April and both new members would be subject to a probationary period.

The Board RESOLVED to:

- Approve the recommendation to appoint J Edginton and E Harris to the Board.

1640 **Equality Objectives**

The Director of External Relations & Client Services outlined the requirement for the College to agree and publish new equality objectives in line with statutory guidelines from the Equality Act 2010. Following scrutiny of College websites by the Equalities Commission, new guidelines had been issued on developing more measurable objectives. The proposed objectives had been developed from key data from the College 2014/15 Self-Assessment Report and would support the closing of achievement gaps for students with protected characteristics.

The Board RESOLVED to:

- Accept the proposed equality objectives with minor amendments and agree to them being published on the College website by end of April 2016 in line with statutory duty.

1641 **Strategic Planning Event – 20th April**

C Dutton outlined proposals for the next strategic planning event suggesting that the event be used to focus on both opportunities for growth and the Area Review process. It was suggested that the event be in two parts with part 1 to include external stakeholder speakers.

An agenda for the event would be circulated to Board members a week before.

1642 **Date of Next Meeting**

Wednesday 4th May 2016