

MINUTES MEETING OF THE FE CORPORATION

Held on Friday 13th December 2024, at 9.30 am in the Skills Park

Governors: Chris Muller (Chair), Nick Vaughan-Barratt (Vice-Chair), Julie Kapsalis (CEO/Principal), Sean Ahearne, Mark Brunt (MBr), Martin Butterfield (MB), Angela Cross-Durrant, Simon Enoch, Asa'ah Nkohkwo, Giuliana Pieri, Clive Palfreyman, Lynn Reddick, Jeremy Williams.

Staff Governors: Slavina Kalendzhieva (Teaching Staff), Amber Watson (Support Staff).

Student Governors: Hannah Lealan (HE), Mikey Bertagna-Agozzino (FE), Oliver Martin (FE).

In Attendance: Julian Roberts (Julian Roberts Consulting), Sarah Watson (Chief Operating Officer), Andy Cowan (Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality), Donna Patterson (Chief People Officer), Dan Thornton (Executive Director Innovation, Strategy & Growth), Susanne Wicks (Head of Governance).

1	Welcome and Apologies for Absence	
	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, and for the benefit of new Governors, staff and visitors, all present made introductions. Apologies for absence were received from Angela Green.	
2	Declarations of Interest	
	The CEO/Principal declared that she is an unremunerated Director of Nescot Enterprises Ltd. (NEL).	
3	Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising	
	a	Governors approved the minutes of the meeting held on 5 th July 2024.
	b	There were no matters arising not otherwise covered on the agenda.
4	CEO/Principal's Report and Updates	
	The CEO/Principal and ELT colleagues delivered a presentation to the Corporation which is available on GovernorHub. They welcomed comments and questions, and matters discussed are set out below. <u>Safeguarding</u> The Deputy Principal highlighted the increased number of referrals at this point in the term compared to the last two years (140 in 2022; 485 in 2023; and 848 in 2024) and reassured Governors that this is partly due to improved staff awareness, leading to an increase in referrals, and better use of the software, CPOMS, which enables more reliable reporting. Governors noted that the greatest proportion of referrals relates to social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) issues, and anxiety in particular, and the Vice-Chair asked if any students report any anxiety related to how safe they feel on campus. The Deputy Principal reassured Governors that most students do feel safe in College, which is supported by student survey outcomes, and explained that there is a difference between a student feeling anxious and having a medical diagnosis of an anxiety disorder, so when a referral is made, it is triaged and appropriate support and advice is given.	

The CEO/Principal commended the all-staff safeguarding update delivered on Monday 9th December by the former Interim Head of the Safeguarding and Wellbeing Team, which included some particularly helpful guidance on how staff can engage with young people. The Head of Governance will share the recording of the briefing with Governors, if possible.

The Corporation noted that the Safeguarding Policy and Procedures had been updated in accordance with the latest version of KCSIE, and approved by the Chair, via the authority delegated to him. The Chair warned that, following the recent conviction of the murder of Sara Shariff by her father and stepmother, all of whom lived in Surrey, there may well be some changes in safeguarding practice, and they may be implemented quickly.

ACD commended the CEO/Principal for the inclusion in the policy of specific guidance relating to students with SEND and suggested that Governors ensure they are aware of the particular risks for this cohort, and measures in place to mitigate those risks.

The Corporation welcomed the introduction of a Code of Conduct for Parents / Guardians, Carers and Visitors, noting their support for all staff, particularly when engaging in challenging interactions with students and families.

Teaching, Learning & Assessment

The Deputy Principal described the positive impact of the Teaching & Learning Coach, who has provided support to those staff identified as needing it through the quality assurance process. Staff are now seeing this as a positive step and she has helped to develop their confidence. The Chair asked how staff needing support are identified and the Deputy Principal explained that every teacher is subject to lesson visits, to ensure they are meeting expectations and to identify not only where they may need support, but also best practice, which can be shared with colleagues. AW added that some experienced staff have self-referred to the 'New to Nescot' programme as a refresher, and noted that how positive it is to see staff engaging with the help on offer, rather than perceiving it as a negative.

In response to a question from MBr, the Deputy Principal reported that 72 members of staff have been visited this half-term. Of those, nine (12.5%) are either not yet meeting the Nescot standards or have only met a small number of them. However, 26 (36%) who have been visited have been given support either through one-to-one meetings or the coaching programme with the Teaching & Learning Coach. The Deputy Principal undertook to provide some feedback on the process to the next meeting of the Curriculum & Quality Committee.

The Deputy Principal set out plans to encourage those from industry (such as Construction) to move into teaching, through an initial, comprehensive induction programme, which will enable them to spend their first three weeks in a non-teaching immersive experience, observing high-quality teaching, and working with the Quality Team. In the longer term, they will undertake a teaching qualification, but the initial support is a new initiative for the sector. MBr asked if Nescot can develop a pathway for professionals who may be considering moving into teaching but for whom education was not a particularly positive experience, particularly in those areas where recruitment is a challenge, such as Construction. The CEO/Principal advised that some activity is taking place, but needs further development, and agreed that more can be done to attract people into teaching. MBr suggested that the offer of a part-time contract may encourage applicants.

GP asked about focussing on alumni as future teachers and the Deputy Principal confirmed that it's already a strength at Nescot, with quite a few former students now employees. However, the CEO/Principal acknowledged that this is more embedded in some curriculum areas than others and could be developed further.

HR Update

The Corporation was pleased to hear that, despite challenges in recruitment, a number of posts have been filled this year without the support of an agency, and Nescot's improved reputation in the sector and local community has attracted applicants. In addition, turnover has decreased over the course of the year which has impacted positively on staff morale and budget.

With regard to the staff survey, the Chief People Officer highlighted that the response rate rose to 355 this year, up from 260 last year, and encouraged Governors to focus on the distance travelled data which shows a positive trajectory in many areas. In terms of issues identified from the survey, the Chief People Officer gave details of plans and actions already underway to address feedback on workload and communication.

In response to questions from MBr, the Chief People Officer confirmed that the overall response rate was 55% this year and 37% last year, and that there are a range of reasons why employees choose not to contribute to the survey. MBr asked if the response data could be drilled down to team level, to identify any more specific reasons and the CEO/ Principal explained that, in order to reassure staff that their responses are completely anonymous, they are not asked to provide information on their role or team, or even to indicate if they are a NEL or Nescot employee. MBr suggested it may be helpful to revisit that approach, as the granular detail can be helpful when reviewing the staff survey results. The CEO/Principal reassured Governors that there are many other ways in which staff can make comments and raise concerns, both formally and informally and anonymously, should they wish to do so. AW added that many staff feel confident to approach the CEO/Principal directly, and that confidence may have contributed to the increased response rate this year. The Chair and Vice-Chair confirmed that, as was the case last year, they received all of the staff survey data and comments, and the Vice-Chair reassured the Corporation that the summary report presented to them was a very fair and impartial summary of the responses.

JW observed that the generally positive tone of the staff survey summary report is not wholly reflected in the notes of the Staff Voice meeting held in November, although acknowledged that there were only eight members of staff present. AW reported that she and SK are keen to ensure that as many staff as possible are represented at Staff Voice meetings and gave details of efforts to encourage colleagues to volunteer as Staff Reps, representing their team or department, which should encourage a balance of views, both negative and positive.

Governors welcomed the update on good news stories, noting that the details shared are just a small proportion of events and activities that have taken place over the term. The Chair particularly welcomed the awards won by staff and students.

The Chair thanked the CEO/Principal and her team for their detailed and informative presentation.

5	Compliance Matters	
	a	<u>The Annual Report and Financial Statements of Nescot Group 2023-24</u> The Chief Operating Officer reported that the financial statements comprise the results of the activities of the Nescot Group. The College Group has four subsidiary companies, only one of which was active during the year ended 31 July 2024, NESCOT Enterprises Ltd (NEL), which is 100% owned by the College. Any surpluses generated by NEL are gift-aided to the College. There was no change in the financial position of the three dormant subsidiary companies (North East Surrey College of Technology Trust, Nescot Holdings Ltd and Epsom Downs Business Centre Ltd) and work is underway to close these three companies. The Chief Operating Officer advised that, on 3rd December 2024, the ESFA notified the College that they have compared the 2023/24 R04 return to the R14 return and found irregularities, although no further detail was provided. As a result, the ESFA have advised that Nescot is no longer eligible for the in-year growth funding that was awarded, and so £124k will be clawed back in January 2025, which has been included in the in-year adjustments section of the report. The Corporation noted that the year-end position was healthier than forecast with a lower deficit, largely due to the positive impact of the LGPS revaluation. Noting that both the Finance & General Purposes Committee and the Audit & Risk Committee had scrutinised the Annual Accounts and recommended them to the Corporation, Governors approved the Annual Report and Financial Statements 2023-24.
	b	<u>External Audit Findings 2023-24</u> The Corporation approved the Management Letter and Letters of Representation.
	c	<u>Regularity Self-Assessment 2023-24</u> The Corporation approved the Self-Assessment.
	d	<u>Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2023-24</u> The Corporation approved the Annual Report.
6	Reports from Committees	
	The Corporation received an update on this term's Committee meetings, minutes of which are all available on GovernorHub.	
	a	<u>Search & Governance Committee 15.10.2024</u> The Chair gave a brief summary of matters discussed at the meeting and highlighted the report presented on Governor Attendance during 2023-24, which showed that overall performance was above the target set.
	B	<u>Curriculum & Quality Committee 21.11.2024</u> The Chair of this Committee, ACD left the meeting at this point, so the Vice-Chair of the Committee, GP, gave a brief summary of matters discussed. She highlighted how crucial the work of this Committee is as it monitors the core business of the College, which means that there is a huge amount to be covered in meetings. The Chair of the Committee has raised this with the Chair of the Corporation.

		With regard to the discussion about the inquest and Preventing Future Deaths report, GP emphasised the need to ensure that, in any organisation, there is a culture in place where every member of staff is aware of their responsibilities for safeguarding young people, and that there are clear lines of accountability.
	c	<u>Finance & General Purposes Committee 29.11. 2024</u> The Chair of the Committee, CP, presented a summary of the recent meeting, and set out the priorities agreed by the Committee for the current academic year. He reassured the Corporation that the Committee has confidence in the robust budget management in place, which has contributed to strong year-end position.
	d	<u>Audit & Risk Committee 06.12.2024</u> The Chair of the Committee, SE, presented a summary of the recent meeting and set out the Committee's intention to closely monitor some of the high-risk activities planned for the year, including the procurement and implementation of new financial software, and changes needed to ensure the ILR is accurate. SE advised that the Committee have expressed support to the College's leadership in engaging additional resource, should it be required to oversee those projects.
7	Governance Matters	
	a	<u>Chair's Report</u> The Chair encouraged all Governors to come into College, when possible, to attend events, as this is such a positive way to engage with staff and students and develop knowledge of Nescot. The Head of Governance would share a list of future events.
	b	<u>Membership</u> The Corporation approved the appointment of: • Mikey Bertagna-Agozzino (FE Student Governor) • Oliver Martin (FE Student Governor) • Hannah Lealan (HE Student Governor) With effect from 14th December 2024 to 31st August 2025. And the appointment of: • Amber Watson (Support Staff Governor) With effect from 14th December 2024 to 31st August 2026.
	c	<u>Staff Governors' Report</u> AW and SK introduced their report which was circulated prior to the meeting. SK advised that this term has been very successful in terms of communication with staff, and described the work she and AW have done to encourage and empower colleagues to share their feedback, via a range of methods. In the last few days, a new Staff Voice site has been set up on SharePoint, on which will be shared notes of Staff Voice meetings and responses from the CEO/Principal and her leadership team. With regard to Staff Voice meetings, SK reported that the times, days and locations are varied to enable a range of staff to attend. However, as previously discussed,

		attendance has not been as high as hoped, which is part of the reason for inviting volunteers to act as Staff Reps. The CEO/Principal thanked both SK and AW for their hard work as Staff Governors, and for regularly meeting with her to discuss issues raised and seek resolution where possible. She acknowledged that not all feedback received can be quickly and easily addressed, but is nonetheless invaluable.
	d	<u>Chair's Action</u> The Corporation noted that, on 7 th November 2024, in accordance with Standing Order 9.1, the Chair approved, via the authority delegated to him, the updated Safeguarding Policy & Procedures.
	e	<u>Scheme of Delegation</u> The Corporation approved the amended Scheme of Delegation.
8	Any Other Business	
	a	No matters were raised.
9	Date of Next Meeting	
	Awayday on 14 th February 2025 at 9.30 am	
10	Confidential Items	
	The discussion of confidential matters is contained within a separate minute.	

The meeting closed at 11 am.

Decisions:

The Corporation:

- Approved the minutes of the meeting held on 5th July 2024.
- Approved the Annual Report & Financial Statements of Nescot Group 2023-24.
- Approved the Management Letter of the External Auditors and Letter of Representation 2023-24.
- Approved the Regularity Self-Assessment 2023-24.
- Approved the Annual Report of the Audit Committee 2023-24.
- Approved the Scheme of Delegation.