

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE FE CORPORATION
Held on Friday 20th October 2023, at 9.30 am in the Skills Park

Present: Nick Vaughan-Barratt (Vice-Chair), Julie Kapsalis (CEO/Principal), Sean Ahearne, Mark Brunt (MBr) Martin Butterfield (MBu), Angela Cross-Durrant, Simon Enoch, Nadine Guy, Charley Johnson, Slavina Kalendzhieva, Margaret Martin, Asa’ah Nkohkwo, Clive Palfreyman, Giuliana Pieri, Lynn Reddick, Jeremy Williams.

In Attendance: Andy Cowan (Deputy Principal, Curriculum & Quality), Sarah Watson (Chief Operating Officer), Donna Patterson (Assistant Principal HR & OD), Susanne Wicks (Head of Governance).

1	Welcome and Apologies for Absence	
	Apologies for absence were received from Rory Boggett (Support Staff Governor) and Chris Muller (Chair). In his absence, NVB chaired the meeting. At the request of the Vice-Chair, for the benefit of the new governors, all present introduced themselves.	
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	
	i	Governors approved the minutes of the meeting held on 7 th July 2023.
	ii	<u>Matters arising not otherwise covered on the agenda</u> a) The CEO/Principal confirmed that the Head of Customer Engagement, Joe Ballantine, joined Nescot in September and would attend a future meeting of the Corporation. b) The CEO/Principal had not been able to establish the rationale behind the target in the previous Strategic Plan “ <i>percentage of new courses delivered</i> ” and reassured Governors that the KPI emerging from the recently approved new Plan would be clear and comprehensible. c) The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality confirmed that safeguarding data, including comparison with previous years, would be presented to the Curriculum & Quality Committee. d) The Head of Governance confirmed that the ‘You Said, We Did’ document compiled in response to issues raised at the Staff Voice meeting was shared with Governors, via GovernorHub , and with all staff, via Sharepoint.
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.	

Enrolment

The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality reported that enrolment was very busy and generally the process ran smoothly, with only one day where waiting times were longer than he would have wished. On the busiest day there were 620 enrolments.

A staff and student experience survey has been carried out and a working group has been established to review processes and procedures, with the aim of digitising as much of the process as possible next year.

Governors noted the positive growth in enrolment numbers in the 16-18 cohort, as set out on the slides. MBr asked if the increased numbers could be attributed to the outreach work done with schools in the area and the CEO/Principal responded that the impact of that work will be probably be more evident in next year's intake. She noted that the work should also impact on HE numbers, given that some schools were previously unaware of the HE offer at Nescot, in particular the PGCE, in which some schools were particularly interested for their staff. The work done last year will be built on by the School Liaison Officer who will develop a 'Results Day Offer' for local schools.

Governors noted that around 100 learners are currently in the process of withdrawing. The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality set out some of the reasons for withdrawal which are typical across the sector. He expressed his wish to achieve an attrition rate of around 6% but noted the need to ensure that students are in the right college, on the right course, with the right support in place to achieve.

The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality acknowledged that HE numbers remain challenging, with approximately 140 enrolments against a target of 195. However, this hasn't led to any courses being closed, but operating smaller groups presents a financial challenge which must be managed appropriately.

In terms of apprenticeships, Governors noted the popularity of Electrical Installation, Plumbing, Gas and Carpentry, all of which were over target. However, there have been some delayed starts, with further enrolment taking place over the next two weeks. Recruitment of assessors, as previously reported, remains a challenge.

Outcomes and Achievements

The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality gave a summary of outcomes and achievements for the 2022-23 academic year, which would be discussed in further detail at the forthcoming Curriculum & Quality Committee meeting.

MBr asked if the College measured value added and the Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality confirmed that this would be introduced, and discussions are underway about how best to record and measure each student's progress whilst at Nescot. He also advised that the College is required by the DfE to measure value added for Level 3 students via ALPS.

The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality advised that whole-College attainment was not as high as he would like, at 76%, but compares well with other provisions. At the request of MBr, he explained how the figure is calculated and advised that the definition of attainment will vary according to the course undertaken by each individual learner.

With regard to apprentices, the Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality advised that a decision was made to remove those students who were beyond the end date for their course from the data.

The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality expressed confidence that there is evidence to show that students who stay in College and attend well will achieve. ACD asked about the strategy in place to effect the increases in achievement and the Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality undertook to share with her the newly developed Risk Indicator Forecast Dashboard which will enable a secure forecast for every student to be logged and monitored and which will enable accurate target setting.

Returning to the HE provision, JW asked what the average cost of an HE course would be. The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality advised that it varies between £5000 and £9750 per year, depending on the course, but it's generally cheaper for a student to study here than in a university. JW noted the impact of lower HE recruitment on income and suggested this could amount to as much as £250K per year. The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality agreed, particularly as HE funding is awarded in-year rather than lagged. He also noted that the most positive growth is in group sizes. JW asked if the vacancies in the Sales Team, discussed at the last meeting, have been filled and the Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality advised that the team spends the majority of its time recruiting apprenticeships in subjects other than the trades, which are very popular. However, the newly appointed Head of Customer Engagement has reshaped the Sales Team and included a Business Development Executive and created an Account Manager for Placements role.

The CEO/Principal set out plans to hold an event after Christmas with local schools with the aim of developing a PGCE cohort for 2024-25, which would be targeted and relationship driven. CJ advised Governors of the cost of her Counselling course, noting that it's a two-year course as students don't qualify until they have completed Level 5. She advised that the intake of new students this year has been high but described the struggle for students to find appropriate placements. The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality undertook to meet with her to discuss the issue of qualification.

HR Update

The Assistant Principal HR & OD advised that the staff survey opened on 22nd September and closed on 16th October 2023 and that the results data would be reported to the Corporation on 8th December 2023. The CEO/Principal added that a 'You Said, We Did' document would be compiled to respond to common themes arising from the staff survey.

MM asked about staff morale in this academic year, and the Assistant Principal advised that most staff seem to be positive, with many welcoming the new structure and the reduction in weekly teaching hours. In addition, Heads of Curriculum no longer teach which has had a positive impact on their workload.

The Assistant Principal HR & OD set out the new approach to CPD to be launched after half-term. Staff will have one hour per week protected time to carry out CPD, which might comprise a distance learning course, but the details will be agreed with managers.

Financial Update

The CEO/Principal advised that a task group comprising she and other senior colleagues has been established to discuss and draft an options paper for the use of the additional government funding, for Governors to consider at Finance & General Purposes Committee and Corporation in December. She summarised the issues that must be considered, not least the need to take into account what other local colleges will do with the funding, as it may impact on recruitment and retention.

The CEO/Principal confirmed that a new Head of MIS has been appointed and will start on 11th January 2024. Until then the interim will remain in place.

Governors noted that pension costs in the 2022-23 outturn were £0.9M lower than budgeted and GP asked if the costs are likely to fluctuate. The Chief Operating Officer confirmed that was the case, and that they would be monitored throughout the year and not built into the forecast until there is more certainty towards the end of the year. In addition, discussion is underway with the Auditors on how best to present the information in the Annual Accounts.

Governors were glad to hear that the Chief Operating Officer was able to work with the Chief Finance Officer before he left, to enable a thorough handover. AN asked if there would be any financial benchmarking data presented to Governors and the Chief Operating Officer confirmed that it would be presented to the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

CP, a new governor with extensive experience in public sector finance, asked what plans were in place to address the predicted deficit of £1.6M for 2023-24. The Chief Operating Officer advised that a range of measures are being considered. She (who had been in post for 6 weeks) and the CEO/Principal outlined a number of broad-brush options being worked on, but none of these options had been worked up and discussed in detail by ELT or presented to the Finance & General Purposes Committee. Such potential actions would normally be discussed in the confidential part of Corporation meetings, and the Chair of the meeting has asked for the minutes of this discussion to be placed in the confidential minutes.

Strategic Plan 2023-26

The CEO/Principal advised that the College Leadership Team are developing an action plan which will set out how the objectives in the new Strategic Plan will be developed, along with associated KPI which are being rigorously tested to ensure they are SMART. In addition, the objectives in the Strategic Plan will form the basis for individual staff objectives in their annual appraisal, creating a 'golden thread' through the appraisal process.

Priorities for the term

The CEO/Principal confirmed that updates on the priorities listed would be given to Governors via the Committee and Corporation meetings in the second half of term.

AN asked if colleagues have observed any impact on the College community of the current situation in Gaza. The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality advised that Professional Development Coaches have discussed how best to address this sensitive subject in a neutral and informative way in tutorials.

	<p><u>Good News Stories</u></p> <p>Governors were pleased to hear that the Seasons Café have raised £190 for Macmillan Cancer Support.</p> <p>SK updated Governors on the very positive impact of the new Head of 14-16 Provision, in particular in terms of engagement in their learning.</p> <p>The CEO/Principal advised that there have been record numbers of attendees at this year's Open Events, which reached around 1800 on the first Wednesday Open Day (a 40% increase from the same event last year) and around 1200 at the first Saturday Open Day (up 20% on last year).</p>
5	Governance Matters
i	<p><u>Report from the Vice-Chair</u></p> <p>In the absence of the Chair, the Vice-Chair gave a short verbal report. He advised Governors that an external review of governance would take place during this academic year. The Head of Governance reported that Governance4FE had been commissioned to undertake the review and gave a brief summary of the process.</p> <p>The Vice-Chair advised that at its recent meeting, the Search & Governance Committee considered Governor attendance at meetings in 2022-23, which they compared against data for previous year and with data submitted by other colleges that participated in a recent survey. He advised that the average weighted attendance was 80% which is the target set by Governors, and compares well with the average attendance shown in the survey, but encouraged Governors to ensure they attend meetings wherever possible.</p>
ii	<p><u>Membership</u></p> <p>a) The Corporation approved the Committee Membership for 2023-24 as set out in Appendix A to the report.</p> <p>b) In accordance with Standing Orders 3.3 and 3.8, the Corporation approved the appointment of Rory Boggett and Slavina Kalendzhieva as Support Staff Governor and Teaching Staff Governor for a two-year commencing 20th October 2023.</p>
iii	<p><u>Decision made in writing</u></p> <p>In accordance with Standing Order 7.5, the Corporation noted that an urgent decision regarding the appointment of three external governors was made in writing on 18th September 2023.</p>
6	Any Other Business
	The CEO/Principal invited Governors to attend the Remembrance Survey on Friday 10 th November at 10.50 am.
7	Date and Time of Next Meeting
	Friday 8 th December 2023 at 9.30 am.

8	Confidential Items
	The discussion of confidential matters is contained within a separate minute.

The meeting closed at 11.05 am.

Decisions:

The Corporation:

- Approved the minutes of the meeting held on 7th July 2023
- Approved the Committee Membership for 2023-24.
- Approved the appointment of Rory Boggett and Slavina Kalendzhieva as Support Staff Governor and Teaching Staff Governor for a two-year commencing 20th October 2023.

Actions:

- The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality to share the newly developed Risk Indicator Forecast Dashboard with the Chair of the Curriculum & Quality Committee.
- The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality to meet with the HE Student Governor to discuss the issue of qualification on her Counselling Degree course.