

## MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION BOARD MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2024

Present:

### Governors:

Ruth Brook	Peter Grant
Bella Burton-Mano (FE Student Governor)	Helen Kirby-Hawkins (via MS Teams)
Rebecca Chamley (Staff Governor)	Philippa Poland
Greg Clarke (via MS Teams)	John Rees (CEO) (via MS Teams)
Sue Craggs	Mark Swales (Acting Chair)
Dan Fell (via MS Teams)	Lee Walker

The quorum for the meeting was eight members. The meeting was quorate throughout.

### In attendance:

Sharon Harmon	Clerk to the Corporation
Barrie Shipley	Chief Operating Officer, Finance and Infrastructure (COOFI)
Rachel Maguire	Chief Operating Officer, People and Information (COOPI)
Danny Fenwick	Deputy Principal (DP)

The meeting took place in the Lindsey Suite Lounge, North Lindsey College and started at 5.30pm.

Item	Minutes	Action
<b>1</b>	<b>Apologies</b>	
	Apologies for absence were received from A Briggs (Chair of the Corporation), K Jackson (Governor), P Kumar (Governor) and S Hewson (HE Student Governor) L Brown (HE Student Governor) and Emma Kirk (Staff Governor).	
<b>2</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	
	Members should declare any personal or financial obligation, allegiance or loyalty which would in any way affect decisions in relation to the subjects under discussion.	
	There were no declaration of interest made.	
<b>3</b>	<b>Minutes and Confidential Minutes of the Corporation Board meetings held on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2024 and any matters arising</b>	
	The minutes and confidential minutes of the Corporation Board meeting held on 16 <sup>th</sup> October 2024 were agreed as a true and accurate record.	
	There were no matters arising.	
<b>4</b>	<b>Feedback from Committee Meetings</b>	
	The Corporation Board received committee Chairs' feedback reports from the CQP Committee meeting on held on Monday 18 <sup>th</sup> November, the People and Transformation Committee meeting held on Wednesday 20 <sup>th</sup> November, the HEPQ	

Committee meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> November, the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> November, and the Finance and Resources Committee meeting held on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> December.

## **5 CEO Update**

The CEO provided an update report covering a range of whole College updates including People Services, policy and funding, and partnerships. Members noted and discussed the contents of the report.

Members discussed the update on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Members noted the wide range of projects either already underway or planned, and the key areas of focus throughout 2024/25. Members were assured by the update. Members noted that there would be an in-depth overview of EDI presented at the Governors Development Day on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> December.

Members discussed the policy and funding update. Members discussed additional funding and changes to National Insurance employers' contribution. The CEO reported that the position regarding funding to offset additional contributions is not yet known.

Members discussed the recently published Getting Britain Working White Paper. Members noted that South Yorkshire has developed its Pathways to Work approach and that across the region, including DN Colleges Group, have recently been engaged in cross-sector workshops led by the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA).

Members noted and discussed the update on the Level 3 qualifications Funding Review.

Members discussed the update on Lincolnshire Devolution. Member noted it has been confirmed that Greater Lincolnshire will become a devolved area in the form of a Mayoral County Combined Authority (MCCA), with elections for a county mayor taking place in May 2025. In the meantime, work is proceeding to establish the operational and governance structures so that the MCCA can receive devolved funding and powers following the election. Members noted that the College have been engaged at both a strategic and operational level by those authorities which will operate within the new MCCA region to inform the planning and focused use of devolved funding aligned to regional skills priorities.

Members noted there would be further opportunity to address any further questions that arise from the CEO's report and updates with additional information if available at the Governors Development Day on 16<sup>th</sup> December.

## **6 Strategic Plan Progress Report**

The CEO presented a Strategic Plan Progress Report providing progress updates against each of the strategic plan projects confirmed for 2024/25. Members noted the contents of the report providing a snapshot of key actions and impact to date which are provided at a headline level for information at this stage. Members noted that the Executive Team will provide additional updates on two of the projects in further detail at the forthcoming Governors Development Day scheduled on 16 December.

**Note:** D Fell joined the meeting.

## 7 Curriculum & Quality Performance Update

The Deputy Principal (DP) presented a curriculum and quality performance update report. Members noted a new format for the performance and targets report. The DP explained the new report setting out performance targets and progress against targets. Members noted the new report provides annual measurement against targets year on year and includes RAG rated updates throughout the year. Members noted the metrics, KPIs, and curriculum developments.

Members asked if the new report format covered the whole organisation. The DP confirmed that it does and explained how the report is shared across the organisation.

Members asked about the monitoring of risk. The DP explained systematic approach to monitoring and reporting risk.

Members asked about the quality of data and the DP explained the checking of quality of data and data compliance monitoring.

The DP further explained the support mechanisms for students and how these are reviewed and implemented.

Members thanked the DP and agreed the new report format was well thought out and helpful for monitoring curriculum and quality performance and receiving updates.

Members noted and discussed the contents of the performance report. Members noted an excellent start to the year with a strong overall performance across provision types. Members agree the report provides high levels of assurance that the recruitment and retention position continue to be very strong across all provision types. Members asked a question about the apprenticeship enrolment data and process. The DP explained apprenticeship enrolment process, which ensures appropriate matching of apprentice to programme and the induction model.

Members noted the performance report had been presented and discussed in detail at both the CQP Committee meeting on held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> November and the HEPQ Committee meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> November.

Members noted the quality update, and the DP provided a further update on progress against the Quality Improvement Plan. Members noted the Self-Assessment Profile for 2023/24 noting grading against each area. Members discussed learning support provision across the group. Members discussed the student Wellbeing centre and signposting for students to available support resources.

**Action:** The FE Student Governor and the COOPI agreed to meet to discuss student resources, learning support and signing posting for students to these resources.

Clerk

Members thanked the Deputy Principal for the update report.

## 8 Management Accounts 31 October 2024

The COOFI presented the Management Accounts update report providing an update to the 2023-24 year-end financial position post audit. Members noted the

audit is substantially complete but may be subject to change pending final year end confirmation statements of funding from the ESFA.

Members further noted the update on the financial performance to 31st October 2024, and current forecast outturn for the 2024-25 financial year following student recruitment. Members reviewed the College's Managements Account to 31 October 2023. Members noted the variations to income and expenditure and the current projections. Members noted the Management Accounts 31 October 2024 has been reviewed in detail by the Finance & Resources Committee at its meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2024.

Members noted that the year-to-date financial performance adjusted operating surplus vs budget deficit provides a positive variance. Members were assured of banking covenant compliance and financial health expected to be achieved. Members noted additional provision for the NLC project has been added to project capital spend.

Members noted and discussed variants in income and expenditure vs budget. Members discussed the impact of the increase in national insurance contributions and national living wage from April 2025. Members noted the funding position has not yet been set out and this increase could increase pressure on finances in future years. Members noted that pay negotiations with the Trade Unions have been delayed until further clarity on the additional funding has been received. Members reiterated their commitment to offering the best pay award that can be achieved within the Groups affordability and financial stability.

Members were asked to consider a proposal to increase the budget for the North Lindsey Campus re-development by £300k to provide all new furniture for staff and students. The COOFI fully explained purpose of the increased capital spend. Members noted the proposal had been considered and discussed in detail by the Finance and Resources Committee at its meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> December and recommended for approval. Members discussed how to utilise space more efficiently. Members agreed the furniture will enhance the staff and student experience, reduce the risk to business continuity and increase the staff desk capacity within the new building.

**Resolution:** The Corporation Board approved the £300k increase in the budget for the North Lindsey Campus re-development.

## **9 Regularity Self-Assessment Questionnaire**

The Corporation Board received and considered the Regulatory Self-Assessment Questionnaire (RSAQ) completed for DN Colleges Group for 2023/24. Members noted the RSAQ is reviewed by the external auditors in line with their reporting accountant's responsibilities for reporting on regularity to the Corporation and to the ESFA in accordance with the requirements of the Post-16 Audit Code of Practice. Members noted the RSAQ had been reviewed and recommended for approval by the Audit and Risk Committee.

**Resolution:** The Corporation Board approved the Regulatory Self-Assessment Questionnaire (RSAQ) completed for DN Colleges Group for 2023/24.

## **10 Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report**

The Corporation Board received and considered the Audit & Risk Committee's Annual Report for 2023/24. Members noted the Audit & Risk Committee's Annual Report is a requirement of the Post-16 Audit Code of Practice 2023/24 (ACOP) and is designed to assist the Chief Executive and the Corporation Board with their respective responsibilities for the College's systems, controls, and risk management, which underpin the strategic objectives. Members were assured by the contents of the report.

**Resolution:** The Corporation Board approved the Audit & Risk Committee's Annual Report for 2023/24.

## **11 Financial Statements and Regularity Assurance Report 2023/24**

Members received and considered the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year end 31 July 2024 for DN Colleges Group (DNCG) and its subsidiaries. Members considered the regularity assurance report, final auditors report and letters of representation. Members noted that the Report and Financial Statements had already been thoroughly reviewed and recommended for approval by both the Finance and Resources Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee. Members noted that the two trading subsidiaries Kingsway Consulting Ltd and Optime Support Ltd sets of accounts have been fully audited. There are no audit recommendations and no irregularities. The accounts were approved by the subsidiaries' Boards at their Annual General Meetings on 27 November 2024.

Members noted an unqualified audit opinion had been confirmed by the auditors and the Group remained in a sound financial position. Members noted the external audit work will be concluded once the final year end confirmation statements of funding are received from the ESFA in December 2024.

**Resolution:** The Corporation Board approved the Report and Financial Statements 2023/24 and letters of representation for submission, subject to no material change following receipt of the final ESFA confirmation statements.

**Action:** The COOFI to notify the Corporation Board if further approval required following receipt of the final ESFA confirmation statements.

**COOFI**

## **12 HE Fee Proposal**

The COOFI presented a fees proposal for HE fees for 2025/26 for approval. Members were advised that the fees need to be finalised for the 2025-26 Academic Year to ensure students are fully aware of the financial commitments, and the Group is compliant with CMA legislation.

Members noted that the Corporation Board has previously approved the Access and Participation Plan for 2025-26 to 2028-29 which sets out the maximum fees to be charged for HE courses and future years inflationary increases. Members considered the proposal to charge the maximum fee already submitted in the APP of £7,940 except for HN Engineering and Construction Programmes. It is proposed these programmes are increased to £6,950, in light of the national increase in the fee cap and to match the position of other providers' response to this. Members noted the fees breakdown and competitor analysis.

Members were assured that the fees are consistent with the APP and are linked to APP interventions and higher fee income targets within the APP. Members noted a

small saving will be achieved by charging a lower rate for HN in Engineering and Construction.

**Resolution:** The Corporation Board approved the proposed HE fees for 2025/26.

### **13 DNCG Draft Self-Assessment Report**

Members received and considered the draft DNCG Self-Assessment Report 2023/24. The Deputy Principal provided an overview of the self-assessment process and thanked governors for their attendance at the governance self-assessment panels. Members who had attended SAR panels expressed their confidence in the robust and rigorous review process.

Members reviewed the report and discussed the strengths, areas identified for improvement or further development and overall grades set out in the report. Members asked about progress on the Quality Improvement Plan for 2024/25. The DP outlined work underway and explained that further detail would be provided at the Governors Development Day on 16<sup>th</sup> December.

Members noted that following the rigorous self-assessment process and detailed consideration of the grades, reflecting the Education Inspection Framework (Ofsted, 2019), the overall effectiveness grade for DNCG is Outstanding. The quality of education is graded Outstanding. All provision types are graded outstanding except for Apprenticeships which are graded good. Safeguarding is effective. Members agreed with the content of the report.

**Resolution:** The Corporation Board approved the DNCG Self-Assessment Report 2023/24.

### **14 DNCG Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement 2024**

The COOPI presented the DN Colleges Group (DNCG) Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking Statement 2024 to the Corporation Board for consideration. The COOPI advised that the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking statement is made pursuant to section 54(1) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and constitutes DNCG's (and its subsidiaries) slavery and human trafficking statement for the financial year ending 31 July 2024. It sets out the preventative steps that DNCG is taking and intends to take to avoid the risk of modern slavery occurring within its supply chain or services.

Members noted that the statement has been reviewed in line with the latest government guidance. Members were assured that each year, DNCG should and do assess whether it meets all criteria outlined in the guidance. Members discussed the measures the Group takes to avoid the risk of modern slavery occurring within its supply chain. Members noted that the DNCG Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking Statement 2024 was reviewed by the People and Transformation Committee at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> November and is recommended for approval.

Members recognised and supported the actions of the DNCG Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking Statement 2024. Members were assured that the statement will be made available to all staff members, stakeholders and the general public by publication on the intranet and DNCG websites in line with statutory requirements.

**Resolution:** The Corporation Board approved the DNCG Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking Statement 2024 for publication.

## **15 DNCG Gender Pay Gap Report**

The COOPI presented the DN Colleges Group (DNCG) Gender Pay Gap Report 2024. Members noted the contents of the report providing detailed information and outlining actions in relation to the Group's statutory Gender Pay Gap reporting requirements for 2024/25.

Members noted that the DNCG mean gender pay gap has increased slightly, however the median gender pay gap has significantly reduced on 2023 data. Members further noted that Optime Support Limited (OSL) mean and median gender pay gaps have continued to decrease significantly. Members were assured that DNCG continues to compare favourably against the national figures, and OSL now falls below the national figures. Members congratulated the Group on the considerable work to address the gender pay gap. Members recognised and supported the actions that the Gender Pay Gap Report identifies for 2024/25.

Members noted the DNCG Gender Pay Gap Report 2024 was reviewed by the People and Transformation Committee at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> November and the Optime Support Limited Board at its meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2024 and is recommended for approval.

**Resolution:** The Corporation Board approved the DNCG Gender Pay Gap report 2024 for publication in line with statutory duties.

## **16 Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy**

The Corporation Board received the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy for consideration. Member noted that there are no proposed changes to the policy since it was last reviewed and approved by the Corporation Board. Members noted the only updates in the document are to the titles of staff members and an up-to-date reference to the Equality Act 2010 (Amendment) Regulations 2023. Members noted the policy was considered by the People and Transformation Committee at its meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> November and is recommended for approval.

Members considered the policy and agreed it remains appropriate.

**Resolution:** The Corporation Board approved the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy.

## **17 Conflict of Interests Policy**

The Corporation Board received the Conflict of Interests Policy for consideration. Member noted that there were some minor updates to the document since it was last reviewed and approved by the Corporation Board. Members reviewed and agreed the updates to the policy.

**Resolution:** The Corporation Board approved the Conflict of Interests Policy.

## **18 Approval of Committee Terms of Reference**

Members noted that the Terms of Reference (ToRs) for each of the Corporation Board committees have been reviewed. The review of the ToRs has resulted in one proposed minor update to the Audit and Risk Committee ToRs. All other ToRs remain the same for 2024-25. Members noted that the People and Transformation

committee have agreed to conduct a further review of its ToRs in light of changes to reporting to the committee.

Members considered the committees' ToRs and agreed the proposed update to the Audit and Risk Committee ToRs. Members were satisfied all other committee ToRs remain appropriate. Members had no further comments on the committee ToRs.

**Resolution:** The Corporation Board approved the committees' Terms of References for 2024-25.

## **19 Written Resolutions and Chair's Actions**

Members noted the Chair's actions and Written Resolutions which had been approved since the last Corporation Board meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> October 2024.

## **20 Minutes of Committee Meetings:**

Members noted the draft minutes of the meetings of the CQP Committee meeting on held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> November and the People and Transformation Committee meeting held on Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November.

## **21 People Services Annual Reports - Staff and Students**

The COOPI presented the People Services Annual Reports for Staff and Students for the Corporation Board's information. Members commented on the quality of the reports and the many achievements of the People Services team and thanked the COOPI for the reports.

## **22 Any Other Business**

There were no items of any other business.

## **23 Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Members noted the next meeting of the Corporation Board is scheduled for Monday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at 5.30 pm in the Boardroom at Doncaster College.

The meeting closed at 7.35 pm.

**Sharon Harmon**  
**Clerk to the Corporation**

**Signed:** ..... (Chair)      **Date:** .....

TABLE OF ACTIONS				
Date	Minute	Action	Responsibility	Date Due
11/12/24	7	The FE Student Governor and the COOPI to meet to discuss student resources,	Clerk – to facilitate the meeting.	March 2025

		learning support and signing posting for students to these resources.		
11/12/24	11	The COOFI to notify the Corporation Board if further approvals required following receipt of the final ESFA confirmation statements.	COOFI	December 2024