

MINUTES OF THE CORPORATION BOARD MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 9TH JULY 2025

Present:

Governors:

Chris Bovis	Sam Hewson (HE Student Governor)
Angela Briggs (Chair)	Preetha Kumar (via Teams)
Ruth Brook	Philippa Poland
Greg Clarke	John Rees (CEO)
Sue Craggs	Mike Welsh (via Teams)
Peter Grant	

The quorum for the meeting was nine members. The meeting was quorate.

In attendance:

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

The meeting took place in the Boardroom at Doncaster College and via Teams and started at 17.30 pm.

Item	Minutes	Action
1	Apologies	
	Apologies for absence were received from Lizzie Brown (Student Governor), Bella Burton-Mano (Student Governor), Rebecca Chamley (Staff Governor), Dan Fell (Governor), Karen Jackson (Governor), Helen Kirby-Hawkins (Governor), Emma Kirk (Staff Governor), Mark Swales (Governor) and Lee Walker (Governor).	
2	Declarations of Interest	
	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 declarations of interest.	
3	Minutes of the Corporation Board meetings held on 24th March 2025 and any matters arising	
	The minutes of the Corporation Board meetings held on 24th March 2025 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.	
	There were no matters arising.	
4	Feedback from Committee Meetings	
	The Corporation Board received committee Chairs' feedback reports from the Search and Governance committee meeting held on 14 th May 2025, the People and Transformation Committee meeting held on 4 th June 2025, the Curriculum Quality and Performance Committee meeting on held on 11 th June 2025, the Audit and Risk	

Committee meeting held on 16th June 2025, the Finance and Resources Committee meeting held on 25th June 2025, and the HE Performance and Quality Committee meeting held on 2nd July 2025.

5 CEO Report

The CEO presented an update report covering matters of significance since the last report to the Corporation Board, encompassing both internal and external areas and including significant policy developments, changes to the regulatory environment and key staffing topics. Members noted and discussed the contents of the report.

The CEO updated members on the HE National Student Survey results which were published that day. Members were pleased to note that the results for DNCG were extremely positive and outperformed the sector averages in six out of the seven categories. Members felt assured by the positive results and about the quality of provision and student experience. Members were advised that the results would be examined in greater detail with a comprehensive analysis to be discussed at the next HEPQ committee meeting.

The CEO reported on an update from the Skills Minister setting out intentions in relation to the Lifelong Learning Entitlement and attached funding model. Members noted the update and discussed Lifelong Learning Entitlement.

The CEO updated members on the government's Industrial Strategy released in the week commencing 2nd July and outlined the eight high growth sectors with workforce plans. The CEO provided an overview on where the Group's curriculum aligns with the areas of focus and highlighted areas of strengths and opportunities. Members discussed planned next steps and the Group in response to the Industrial Strategy. The CEO assured members that planning included mapping curriculum against skills priorities and the Industrial Strategy. Members noted that the Group is already active in seven of the eight sectors identified.

The CEO highlighted recent changes in local and regional politics. Members discussed changes to the political landscape and considered potential implications on DN Colleges Group. Members discussed building relationships, the future of the skills policy and potential strategic opportunities and challenges.

Members discussed the Construction Technical Excellence Colleges agenda and were assured by the Group's approach in this space.

Members noted that the Group had recently been reassessed against the Matrix Standard for Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) and have gained reaccreditation and received extremely positive feedback in the process. Members noted the positive report highlighting the Groups many strengths.

Members further discussed updates in the report covering staffing, funding, policy and partnerships.

Members thanked the CEO for the comprehensive report.

6 Strategic Plan Progress Report

The CEO presented a Strategic Plan update report outlining progress made against each of the strategic plan projects and providing a snapshot of key actions, impact to date and next steps planned. Members noted that updates on progress against

Strategic Plan projects are also provided and discussed in detail around the actions and impacts of specific projects at relevant committee meetings. Members noted that some projects have been reorganised following changes to senior staff in-year.

Members were assured that there is good progress being made against the Strategic Plan objectives.

7 Performance Update

The Deputy Principal presented an update report covering curriculum performance and quality covering destinations, retention, achievement, student feedback and quality activities and planning. Members noted that curriculum performance and quality reports had been presented and discussed in detail at both the CPQ committee and the HEPQ committee meetings.

Members considered and discussed the contents of the report. Members were assured that overall recruitment, retention and achievement remained strong across provision. Members noted and discussed the update on quality activities and quality planning across provision. Members discussed the Curriculum Accountability Framework. The DP provided members with an outline of the new Curriculum Accountability Framework and explained the purpose and objectives as a tool for improvement and development. Members discussed student feedback and were assured by the significant improvement in participation and positive feedback.

Members discussed the positive destinations data noting that 93% of all students from 2023/24 have progressed into employment, further and higher education, or training, a 3% increase compared to previous year of 2022/23. Members sought further details on the breakdown of destination data. The DP explain how data is analysed and broken down.

Members discussed further highlights across provision. Members noted that the Apprentices employer satisfactory score had significantly improved. Members asked what was driving the improvement. The DP explained the changes made in apprenticeships. Members also noted that achievement for high needs learners was very strong. The DP explained the excellent supports in place for high needs learners.

Members thanked the Deputy Principal for the update report.

8 Management Accounts to 31 May 2025

The Chief Operating Officer, Finance and Infrastructure (COOFI) presented the Management Accounts update report providing an update on the Group's financial performance to 31 May 2025 and the current forecast outturn for the 2024-25 financial year.

Members noted the advised variations to income and expenditure and the current projections. Members were assured that overall, income is broadly in line with budget, with forecast income shortfalls mitigated by continued underspends on both pay and no-pay expenditure. Members noted an overall positive variance to the year-to-date performance tracking an operating surplus vs budget deficit. Members were advised on in-year and future year additional funding. Members were assured by the overall strong financial position and forecast financial health rating 'Outstanding' and banking covenant compliance achieved.

Members considered, in the context of the improved financial performance forecast, a proposed £300 pro-rata staff bonus payment recommended to the Corporation Board, with payment deferred to December 2025. Members were advised that this is included in the revised forecast and can be accrued in the 2024/25 financial year with payment deferred to December 2025. Members recognised the positive performance of the college and the commitment from staff.

Resolution: The Corporation Board approved the £300 bonus payment (pro rata), with payment to be deferred to December 2025.

Members thanked the COOFI for the update report.

9 Draft Financial Plan 2025-27 and Commentary

The COOFI presented the Financial Plan 2025-27 and commentary and advised it is required for approval and submission to the DfE by the 31st of July 2025 and will be the baseline budget for the 2025/26 financial year. Members were advised that the financial plan follows a comprehensive business planning round and confirm and challenge meetings with all budget holders. Members were assured that a first draft of the financial plan was reviewed in detail by the Finance and Resources Committee at its meeting on 25 June 2025. Members noted a revision to the plan after receiving notice of additional funding, presenting a slightly improved position since the plan was reviewed by the Finance and Resources Committee.

Members were advised that the Financial Plan for 2025/26 to 2026/27 once approved by the Corporation Board and will form the basis for completion of the College Financial Forecast Return (CFFR) to be submitted to the DfE by 31st July 2025.

Members considered the Financial Plan 2025-27 noting current planning assumptions and key risks identified within the plan. Members noted that the financial plan presents an improved position against the two-year financial plan approved in July 2024. Members sought further clarification of assumptions around funding streams. The COOFI provided a detailed explanation of funding streams.

Members sought assurance in relation to financial modelling on income and growth and staff costs as a ratio. The COOFI explained assumptions and modelling and explained the position regarding staff costs. Members sought further detail on energy costs. The COOFI explained the currently position and cost saving strategies.

Members were assured that the plan reflects the strong financial position of the College, with opportunities for significant capital investment to support the delivery of the Colleges strategic objectives. Members were assured that the Financial Plan complies with the College's bank loan covenants and translates into DfE Financial Health grades of 'Outstanding' for all years 2025-2027.

Resolution: The Corporation Board approved the Financial Plan for 2025-27 for submission to the DfE by 31st July 2025.

Members thanked the COOFI for preparing and presenting the Financial Plan 2025-27 and the detailed commentary report.

10 Sub-contracting 2025-26

The Board received a detailed report prepared by the Vice Principal Business Growth, Skills & Partnerships (VPBGS&P) covering proposed subcontracting arrangements for 2025/26. Members were advised that an annual review of subcontracted provision

was undertaken by the projects and contracts team in May 2025. The review included evaluating the quality of existing providers, the demand for provision, cost efficiency and the rationale for subcontracted provision in line with ESFA and ASF funding rules.

Members considered the recommendation for subcontracting for 2025/26. Member considered the management fees and rationale for the recommended subcontracting provision. Members discussed longer term expectations in relation to subcontracting. Members considered the value and quality of proposed subcontracting programmes and were assured the recommended subcontracting was fulfilling a necessary gap in provision.

Resolution: The Corporation Board approved the recommended subcontracting provision for 2025/26.

11 HE Freedom of Speech Act 2023 and EDI Update

The Chief Operating Officer, People and Information (COOPI) presented an update report outlining the work undertaken and the measures put in place to enhance the Group's commitment to Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI). Members noted the contents of the report proving a summary of the EDI work that is underway. Members noted that the SLT have approved the actions outlined in the report, particularly in respect of the HE Freedom of Speech Act Action Plan and the Supreme Court Ruling.

Members were assured that the SLT and the People and Transformation Committee had examined the report and action plan in detail and supported the actions of the HE Freedom of Speech Act Action Plan action plan and report.

Members considered the contents of the update report and reviewed the Freedom of Speech Compliance Action Plan. Members sought further assurance on the impact of the Supreme Court Ruling on the college. COOPI explained the colleges response and approach. Members were reassured by the Groups approach. Members were assured that a comprehensive review of EDI and related policies has been conducted to ensure that any ongoing compliance required from evolving legislation and guidance will be adhered to and policies amended accordingly. Members were assured that legal assurances had been sought in regard to the proposed policies and amendments. Members noted updates to internal communications to clearly reflect a balanced approach between EDI and freedom of expression. Members were assured that there was a comprehensive review of training provided to ensure an understanding of the distinction between offensive speech and unlawful harassment and the Supreme Court Ruling.

The Corporation Board considered and supported the actions set out in the HE Freedom of Speech Act Action Plan and report.

12 Membership Update and Ratification of New Governors

Members received and considered the Board membership update report. Members noted and agreed membership of the Corporation Board, Subsidiaries' Boards and the Corporation Board Committees. The Clerk provided an update on the governor recruitment programme to fill the external governor vacancies on the Board. The Clerk advised that the search committee had conducted interviews with perspective external governors on Friday 27th June and that following interviews the search committee recommends the appointment of Helen Nyanzu, Katherine Lees, Oluwasegun Odumoye, Jug Johal and Andrew Oldham to the Corporation Board.

Members considered applications and voted on the appointments.

Resolution: The Corporation Board ratified the appointment of Helen Nyanzu, Katherine Lees, Oluwasegun Odumoye, Jug Johal and Andrew Oldham to the Corporation Board for four-year terms of office commencing on 1 August 2025.

Members further noted that P Grant will complete a first term of office on 31st July 2025 and is nominated to be appointed for a second four-year term of office starting on 1st August 2025.

Note: P Grant left the meeting for the Board to consider his reappointment.

Members were advised that the Search and Governance committee recommend P Grant's reappointment for a second term of office. Members considered the reappointment of P Grant for a second term of office. Members recognised the valuable experience and expertise that P Grant provides to the Board.

Resolution: The Corporation Board ratified the reappointment of P Grant as a member of the Corporation Board for a second 4-year term of office with effect from the 1 August 2024.

Note: P Grant rejoined the meeting and was advised that his reappointment to the Board had been ratified.

Members were advised that S Hewson (Student Governor HE) is nominated for a second two-year term of office starting on 1st August 2025 for Board ratification.

Note: S Hewson left the meeting for the Board to consider his reappointment

Members were advised that the Search and Governance committee recommend the reappointment for a second term of office. Members considered the reappointment of S Hewson for a second term of office and recognised his valuable contribution to the Board.

Resolution: The Corporation Board ratified the reappointment of S Hewson as a Student Governor (HE) for a second 2-year term of office with effect from the 1 August 2024.

Note: S Hewson rejoined the meeting and was advised that his reappointment to the Board had been ratified.

Members were advised that R Brook, G Clarke and M Swales. will be stepping down from the Board as of 31 July 2025 after completing more than two terms of office. Members were further advised that K Jackson will also be stepping down from the Board as of 31 July 2025 after completing a first term of office.

Members recorded their thanks and appreciation for all the hard work and valuable contributions from the governors stepping down as of 31st July 2025.

13 Governance Calendar of Meetings 2025/26

Members considered the Board's proposed calendar of meetings for the academic year 2025/26.

Members reviewed the meeting dates and considered a proposal to suspend the People and Transformation Committee for the 2025/26 academic year. Members considered the objectives of the committee and reviewed the committee Terms of Reference. Members agreed the objectives of the committee particularly in relation to organisational change and transformation had been achieved. Members recognised the considerable work undertaken in relation to organisational change. Members agreed the regular reporting to the committee could now be absorbed effectively into the cycle of business of the other committees of the Board. Members discussed where the reports to the committee would most appropriately sit within the committee structure and agreed further consultation with the Search and Governance committee and the Chairs of the other committees should be undertaken to agree an approach. The Clerk agreed to work with the COOPI and the Search and Governance Committee to map the responsibilities of the committee and put together a proposed approach for the consideration of the Corporation Board.

Action: The Clerk and the COOPI to map the responsibilities of the People and Transformation committee in consultation with the Search and Governance Committee and committee Chairs.

Resolution: The Corporation Board approved the Board's calendar of meetings for the academic year 2024/25 with the suspension of the People and Transformation Committee for the academic year 2024/25.

14 Board and Committee Cycles of Business

Members reviewed the proposed Cycle of Business for the Corporation Board and its Committees for 2025-26.

Members noted that each committee cycle of business had been considered by the respective committee and recommended to the Board for approval.

Members agreed the Cycle of Business for the Corporation Board.

Resolution: The Corporation Board approved the Cycle of Business for the Corporation Board and its Committees for 2025-26.

15 Link governor Reports

Members received Link Governor reports from Link Governors covering Link Governor visits and activities during the 2024-25 academic year. Reports were presented from the Link Governor for Safeguarding / EDI, the Link Governor for Digital IT Infrastructure and Business Systems and Information, the Link Governor for Apprenticeships, the Link Governor for Estates & H&S, the Link Governor for Careers/IAG and the Link Governor for SEND.

Link Governors reported that they had found the link visits and activities valuable and informative and were impressed and assured by the work ongoing across the Group.

Members thanked the Link Governors for providing comprehensive reports and for the exceptional work that had been undertaken throughout the 2024/26 academic year. Members reiterated the value of the link roles and great deal of assurance received from the Link Governor reports.

16 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 24th March 2025.

17 Use of Whistleblowing Policy and College Seal

Members received a report detailing the use of the College of Whistleblowing Policy and use of the College Seal during the 2024/25 academic year. Members noted that the College seal had been applied four times since the last report to the Board in July 2024 and noted the details of the occasions on which the seal had been applied. Members noted that there have been no reports raised under the Whistleblowing Policy during the 2024/25 academic year.

18 Governance Development Plan

Members reviewed the summer term 2025 updates to Governance Development Plan 2024-27. Members noted that progress against planned actions and noted the good progress made. Members noted the Governance Development Plan would be reviewed as part of the Governance self-assessment process and updated for consideration for approval at the next Board meeting in October 2025.

19 Minutes of Committee Meetings:

Members received and noted the draft minutes of the meetings of the Search and Governance committee held on 14th May 2025, the People and Transformation Committee meeting held on 4th June 2025, the CQP Committee meeting on held on 11th June 2025 and the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 16th June 2025.

20 Any Other Business

The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked the College Leadership Team and all staff for all their hard work and achievements during the 2024-25 academic year.

The Chair, on behalf of the Board and the College, again thanked R Brook, G Clarke, M Swales and K Jackson for their tremendous contribution and commitment during their time on the Board.

21 Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Corporation Board is scheduled for Wednesday 15th October, 5.30 pm, venue to be confirmed.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm.

Sharon Harmon
Clerk to the Corporation

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

TABLE OF ACTIONS				
Date	Minute	Action	Responsibility	Date Due
09/07/25	13	The Clerk and the COOPI to map the responsibilities of the People and Transformation committee in consultation with the Search and Governance Committee and committee Chairs.	Clerk COOPI	Sept 2025