

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION HELD AT 5 PM ON WEDNESDAY 11 DECEMBER 2024 IN THE BOARDROOM AT NEWCASTLE COLLEGE

Present: Alan Aston (via Teams), Rebecca Bagguley (via Teams), Sam Barber, Helen Blaikie, Freddie Crisp, Martin Earnshaw, Craig Hodgson, Gareth Jones, Simon Leech (Chair), Bernard Lovatt, Irene Mortimer (via Teams), Jeremy Pert, Nathan Roberts, David Styche, Francis Tunney, Diana Zaoui

In attendance: Andy Bailey (Head of Compliance and Governance), Georgina Barnard (Director of IoT), Shelley Brown (Director of Curriculum and Performance), Ian Hookway (Director of HR and Communication), Carl Riding (Director of Work Based Learning and Estates), Debbie Torjussen (Director of Finance and Corporate Services), Lisa Saville (Group Accountant), Joy Smith (Deputy Clerk), Isabelle Higham (RSM) (via Teams for agenda item 24.4.2 only)

PART 1

In accordance with the requirements of the Post-16 Audit Code of Practice, the College's financial statements auditor should present their Audit Findings Report to the Corporation. Therefore, Isabelle Higham from RSM joined the meeting via Zoom for agenda items 24.4.2 and 24.4.3.

24.4.1 Membership

Members recalled that David Styche was initially approved as a co-opted member of the Audit Committee with the intention that he become a full member of the Corporation once a vacancy arose. Jim Rowley's subsequent resignation had created this vacancy and, after consideration, David's appointment as a member of the Corporation for a four year term of office was approved.

24.4.2 RSM Audit Findings Report

Isabelle Higham was welcomed to the meeting and was invited to take members through the Audit Findings Report and the Emerging Issues.

She advised on the approach taken towards the review of the financial statements and the methods of testing. Three control recommendations in relation to income had been made and the College's management had provided appropriate responses. She drew particular attention to the Going Concern statement and was pleased to confirm that the regularity checks had not picked up any novel, contentious or repercussive transactions to report. There were also no issues in relation to capital projects to bring to the Board's attention.

After consideration, members approved the RSM Audit Findings Report.

24.4.3 Emerging Issues

The key risks affecting the sector and associated information, along with links to webinars, were noted from the Emerging Issues Report.

Isabelle was thanked for her attendance and confirmed that she had nothing further to draw to members' attention at this stage.

24.4.4 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Sarah Burns, Mark Ormerod, Kevin Simpson and Steve Jones.

24.4.5 Declarations of Interest

Simon Leech, Gareth Jones, Craig Hodgson and Debbie Torjussen declared an interest as non-remunerated directors of Axia Solutions Ltd and Gradbach Ltd.

24.4.6 Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 October 2024 Part 1

Approved as a true record of the meeting.

24.4.7 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

24.4.8 Minutes of the Committee Meetings

Education and Standards – 2 December 2024

Alan Aston took members through the issues discussed at the meeting of the Education and Standards Committee. The student data report had presented some very encouraging information about attendance and retention, the very high standards and the actions taken to address any identified issues. The huge numbers of students undertaking exams at any one time and the logistical challenges this presents were also discussed. Members had been pleased to note that applications for next year are already very buoyant and the College will continue to monitor the situation as it develops to avoid becoming over-subscribed. No QoERs have been undertaken since the Ofsted Inspection, however, there are plans in place to recommence the reviews and Governors were invited to participate in these and/or the Learning Walks. Members had also considered the Quality Improvement Plan and the excerpt from the Risk Register pertinent to the activities of the Committee. These will be monitored as progress is reported throughout the year.

Alan was thanked for his feedback and the minutes were approved.

24.4.9 Principal's Report - Part 1

Craig took members through Part One of his report and drew particular attention to the following:

- Ofsted celebrations have recently taken place with staff and students. Craig drew attention to the brochure tabled outlining our Ofsted achievements which has been shared with those employers who brilliantly stepped up to the mark to help us.
- Student applications are being carefully monitored with the position currently about 1000 ahead of the same period last year. Members noted that this could be due to a change in application patterns or demographic growth, and we will carefully monitor this in light of the physical capacity that we can accommodate.
- A T Level Week was held in November. Craig was delighted to confirm that we are in the top 5 colleges in the country for T Level performance.
- Members noted that all of our MPs are new, with three new ones in Stoke, one in Newcastle and one in Stafford. Craig advised that they have all visited us and it is now important that we ensure they have a good knowledge of what colleges are and the challenges we are faced with. We have had excellent responses from Adam Jogee, MP for Newcastle and Leigh Ingham, MP for Stafford who are working hard to support us, particularly over the pay issue.

- Craig advised that Jim Rowley has completed his move to the south of England to be closer to family and he has, therefore, resigned from the Corporation. Having served for over 30 years and making such a strong contribution, Jim will be sadly missed and everyone recorded their grateful thanks to him for his sterling service to the organisation. Craig confirmed that a letter and a gift of thanks have been sent to him along with very best wishes from everyone.

Jeremy Pert joined the meeting at this stage.

- Remembrance Events have been held on both sites and we were all very proud to note the impeccable behaviour exhibited by the students at both sites.
- Members were invited to come along to one or both of the forthcoming Carol Services to mark the end of what has been such a busy term.
- Student of the Month presentations have commenced with VIP guests coming in to present the awards.
- We have been delighted to be able to place T Level students with the MOD at Stafford Barracks with students and staff who attended the launch being welcomed very warmly to the site. The students who are working with the MOD already feel very much part of the team.
- Emily Rizk was successful in the Student of the Year awards at the AoC Conference and everyone joined in extending their heartfelt congratulations to her.
- Members also congratulated Ashley Terry, who has had a really tough time with health issues and has bravely overcome her challenges to achieve second place in the Young Builder of the Year awards presented at the House of Commons.
- The new cohort of Honours Students held their team building event at Gradbach and had a fantastic day.
- Shelley provided a number of curriculum updates including the latest retention and attendance figures, planned new provision, T Level updates and the actions that the College takes in terms of performance monitoring. Members noted the contents of the Quality Improvement Plan which contains a significant level of detail in terms of actions and provides 3 key progress points throughout the year for tracking purposes. Shelley confirmed that this document will evolve as we move through the year and later versions will be presented to the Corporation in addition to further skills information.

