

## **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CORPORATION HELD AT 5:30 PM ON WEDNESDAY 9 APRIL 2025 IN THE BOARDROOM AT NEWCASTLE COLLEGE**

Present: Alan Aston, Rebecca Bagguley, Helen Blaikie, Sarah Burns, Martin Earnshaw, Craig Hodgson, Gareth Jones, Simon Leech (Chair), Bernard Lovatt, Irene Mortimer, Jeremy Pert, Nathan Roberts, David Styche, Kevin Simpson, Steve Jones

In attendance: Andy Bailey (Head of Compliance and Governance), Shelley Brown (Deputy Principal), Ian Hookway (Vice Principal – HR, Staff and Student Services), Carl Riding (Vice Principal – Employer Partnerships and Adult Provision), Debbie Torjussen (Chief Finance and Operations Officer), Lisa Saville (Group Head of Finance), Joy Smith (Deputy Clerk)

### **PART 1**

#### **25.3.1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Mark Ormerod, Georgina Barnard, Diana Zaoui and Sam Barber. Members noted that Shelley Brown had indicated she would be late for the meeting.

#### **25.3.2 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.

#### **25.3.3 Minutes of the Meeting held on 11 December 2024**

Approved as a true record of the meeting.

#### **25.3.4 Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

#### **25.3.5 Minutes of the Committee Meetings**

- Education & Standards – 31 March 2025

Alan provided feedback on the meeting at which a presentation had been given following the recent publication of the DfE performance data which highlights the College's outstanding position in relation to achievement and performance across the board. Members had been delighted to note the information shared and had noted that in areas where there are no national figures available, we are very strong lying either first or second against local competition.

Maths and English performance is well above the national average but, as always, the College has identified that improvements can be made and will further focus on these two important areas.

The January BTEC results were the best on record for the College, especially at Level 3. One or two curriculum areas at Level 2 have been identified as needing some focus and support and this will be implemented without delay.

Shelley Brown joined the meeting at this stage.

The Learner Data Report was considered in detail and the overarching message coming from the report was that there is never any complacency at NSCG and the team, led from the top, continually strives to do better across the whole organisation at all levels.

Members had noted the difficulties around apprenticeship placements and it had been agreed that a presentation would be given at a future meeting from members of the Placement Team.

The information in the latest Safeguarding Report had included the positive impact of financial support on students' learning and attendance which members had been pleased to note. The increase in demands on the team had been considered alongside the latest safeguarding concerns.

The QIP and the Risk Register had also been considered.

Alan was thanked for his detailed feedback.

### **25.3.6 Principal's Report - Part 1**

Craig drew members' attention to Part One of the Principal's Report.

#### **1.1 – Latest Results Information**

Craig confirmed that we are delighted with the results which underpin our very strong position (in the top 5 or 6) against every measure and every provision type. He added his thanks to the incredibly talented and dedicated staff who work so hard to support our students.

#### **1.2 - Covid Day of Reflection**

Members were pleased to note that the College had so appropriately remembered the amazing work of the NHS and other public services during the Covid Day of Reflection.

#### **1.3 – MPs' and Principals' Dinner in the House of Commons**

Craig advised that a dinner had taken place in the House of Commons for Staffordshire Principals and their respective MPs in order to brief them on the

key challenges that the Colleges are facing. Capacity and capital funding had been main areas of focus, along with some discussion over general funding and curriculum reforms.

#### 1.4 – Pizza and Prosecco

Members congratulated Jane Tunnicliff and her team on another successful charity event which had raised just over £7,000 for the Macari Foundation.

#### 1.5 – Elliott Lancaster

Members were pleased to hear about Elliott Lancaster's achievements and wished him the best of luck in the forthcoming Excellent in Training Delivery awards.

#### 2.1 – Enrichment Week

Members noted the various activities and presentations that had taken place over the week.

#### 2.2 – Student Trips

Craig outlined the recent trips undertaken by students, particularly the fantastic Boston trip which had been organised through the Government's Turing Scheme.

#### 2.3 – Primary School Engineering and Construction Activities

Members were very pleased to hear about the visit from The Willows primary school when young children had taken part in engineering activities to challenge stereotypes in the industry.

#### 2.4 – Move Over Gordon Ramsay

Congratulations were extended to Slava Maryncenko on his fantastic achievement in the CombiGuru culinary challenge.

#### 2.5 – NHS Trust Simulation Day

Members noted the recent fabulous opportunity for the T Level Midwifery students who had participated in an NHS Trust Simulation Day.

#### 2.6 – Sporting Successes

Congratulations were extended to the College's men's volleyball team who recently won the AoC National Volleyball Championships in a hard fought match against Exeter College.

### 3.0 – Curriculum News

Members noted the contents of the 2024/25 QIP which had been considered in detail at the recent Education and Standards Committee meeting.

Shelley updated members on the latest retention and attendance data and then went on to explain the current challenges in accommodating and invigilating the summer exams and dealing with applications and the resulting capacity issues. Carl confirmed that the Keele in Town provision is progressing well and we remain hopeful that we will secure an appropriate venue in order to replicate that in Stafford town centre which will enable us to grow our adult participation, particularly those who are hard to reach and find the main college environment daunting.

Shelley advised on the latest curriculum reform information and members noted that there has been a reprieve for some of the AGQs. However, Shelley stressed that this is only a reprieve and we still anticipate losing the Health and Social Care qualification resulting in high numbers of our students being unable to access the T Level as they will not have the required GCSE grades in maths and Science. The reforms also will create difficulties for some of our disadvantaged learners. Members noted that cycle 2 has been postponed until 2027 but we have no certainty after that. Shelley confirmed the removal of some of the restrictive rules of combination which does provide us with some flexibility.

Shelley summarised by advising that at NSCG we are not anti-T Level and we recognise that they are a fantastic qualification, however, they are not for everyone and at NSCG we are very much pro-BTEC.

Members also noted the information provided relating to those courses who have been through the performance monitoring process this year.

#### **25.3.7 Quality Improvement Plan**

Members considered the plan along with the headline data sheet and in the context of the update that Shelley had just provided. They were pleased to note the positive picture across the board and that actions are being taken in areas where further focus is necessary.

#### **25.3.8 Learner Data Headline Summary Information**

Members considered this information alongside agenda item 25.3.7.