

**Minutes of the Corporation meeting held on  
Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2023 at 9.30am  
Burslem Boardroom and via Microsoft Teams**

Present:	Jeremy Cartwright, Chair	In person
	Steve Sawbridge	Remote
	Jo Mountney	Remote
	Sue Blake	Remote
	David Rogers	In person
	Hannah Molloy	Remote
	Rob Fisher	In person
	Julie Brereton	Remote
	Tom Nadin	In person
	Kevin Hetherington	In person
	Sally Garratt	Remote
	Sibgha Amin	Remote
	Lisa Capper, Principal/CEO	In person
	Lyndsey Cherry, Staff Governor	In person
	Dave Hopley, Staff Governor	In person
	Sidra Rashid-Bhatti, Student Governor	In person
	Tom Foster, Student Governor	In person
In Attendance:	Cath Brierley, Deputy Principal	In person
	Antoinette Lythgoe, Chief Financial Officer	In person
	Nova Abela, Chief HR Officer	Remote
	Jules Bridges, Clerk to the Corporation	In person

<b>No.</b>	<b>Action</b>
<p><b>1 Declaration of Interests</b> The Chair reminded everyone present to declare any interests that they may have on agenda items to be discussed. No specific declarations, other than for paid positions, were made and standing declarations were noted.</p>	
<p><b>2 Welcome, introductions and apologies for absence</b> Apologies for absence were received from David Boughey. Non-attendance will be recorded for Harry Sajad, Student Governor.</p>	Clerk
<p><b>3 Minutes of the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022</b> The minutes of the meeting were <b>approved</b> as an accurate record.</p>	
<p><b>4 Action Progress Report</b> The actions arising from the previous meeting were summarised in the progress report and all actions reported had either been resolved or, where appropriate, an update had been provided on progress elsewhere on the agenda.</p> <p>D Rogers joined the meeting at 9.40am</p> <p>The Corporation was satisfied that all actions had been suitably resolved and could be removed from the report.</p>	
<p><b>5 Student Voice</b> <b>Student Events and Activities</b> The Board received a Learner Voice and Enrichment report from the Assistant Principal Student Experience (Staff Governor). The Learner Involvement team</p>	



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continue to promote the Enrichment offer and work with curriculum staff to provide a wide and varied range of weekly activities and one-off events.

It was reported that the team has secured funding, working in partnership with Stoke Spitfires Wheelchair Basketball Club to offer Wheelchair Basketball at the Caudon campus.

Governors were pleased to learn that enrichment student participation levels to date are high across a range of curriculum areas.

The Student Council meetings take place every month at each campus with over 20 learners in attendance. The next Learner Voice Conference is taking place today. Topics include enrichment clubs and activities, the launch of Challenge London, review of the IT strategy as well as filming the next Talking Heads production.

Students are participating in the BRIT cycling challenge today at both campuses. The 'race' is to cycle 2,023 over 5 days to support BRIT to raise money for mental health services. Students are competing across the campuses to race to the finish line first. Students are also participating in the Stoke FC Community Trust 'Big sleep out' at the end of this week.

The Learner involvement team has secured funding from Sport England to purchase new sporting equipment including a new table tennis table. Plans are also in place to use funds to deliver a range of sport coaching courses in partnership with Street Games, as well as funding activities for the Connections Club giving opportunities to learners who have low mood and/or self-esteem.

The Challenge Stoke on Trent Go Green Sustainability project is progressing well with 9 learners on programme together with volunteers from Stoke City FC Community Trust.

All visits relating to the Challenge UK Programme have been scheduled with the first visit yesterday. Dates have also been scheduled for Challenge Liverpool and Challenge Wales. Challenge South Africa is also set to be relaunched (following a break due to the pandemic) in April 2023 giving learners the opportunity to apply for a once in a lifetime trip that focuses on Equality and Diversity and Social and Personal Development visiting Cape Town in February 2024.

The Corporation received an update on the 'You Said, We Did' action plan and were satisfied that reasonable progress of the amber and red indicators are being satisfactorily actioned.

***Themes arising from Learner Conference/Learner Representative Meetings***

Included in update received above in the Learner Voice and Enrichment report.

**6 Principal/CEO's Report**

In summary, the Principal/CEO's report covered the following highlights. On performance, since the last report in October 2022, the College has achieved the Ofsted 'Good' rating. There has been significant support for the College from stakeholders and strategic partners. The College will capitalise on this through its work with colleagues on the culture of the College and positioning itself as the Technical College for the City of Stoke on Trent.

R Fisher joined the meeting at 9.55am. J Mountney left the meeting at 9.55am



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Enrolment on Study Programmes are strong, with increased numbers at the top bands. The additional 40 hours of study is being delivered, as well as the tuition fund, and the College continues to recruit to new NEETs programmes to further boost future lagged funding.

It was reported that Apprenticeship income is performing better than last year at this point. OOFs and withdrawals have dropped which is resulting in a good and positive reporting performance position. Gaps on Apprenticeships are closing and the team are working hard on upselling Apprenticeships in the community. DP will outline final 21/22 performance data but positive trajectory and good results on GCSE high grades for Adult and SP.

Adult provision is continuing to be challenging as per last year and previous few years and in particular for some of the funding streams such as adult loans and free level 3 offer due to lack of take up and cost of living issues impacting with employment being preferred option for adults. This College is not alone in this. However, we are determined to make best use of the funding allocated and ensure we are using all delivery opportunities and effective management of this programme through the new VP role. The College has revised its strategy and plans to ensure the threshold minimum is met of 97% - 94.7% was achieved last year and this year the plan was started earlier although interrupted by Ofsted and change of leadership.

S Rashid-Bhatti and T Foster joined the meeting at 10.00am

Governors recognised the significant increased number of learners with EHCPs and High Needs growth. These have risen from 56 last year to 90 this year, surpassing the 65-growth target. Careful planning on resource and support is needed to secure the elements of funding from the authorities.

Governors were pleased to learn that the preparation for the introduction of the 3 T Levels is going well and applications are achieving or are close to target of 12 per course.

A meeting with the PMO to agree KPIs for 2023-25 and to discuss cash capital-match and subsequent cash sweep implications has taken place; this is an issue the College is seeking to resolve imminently with the support of the Bank.

Financial pressures remain on income due to the volatility of Adult and Apprenticeship performance, and rising costs. Study Programme is at 103% of allocation which is a great result for this year. However, adult pressures remain and apprenticeships although better than at this time last year still have just under £200k to close.

The Capital Projects Committee is reconvened and meets this month. The College Project Manager starts on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023. They have oversight of the two Transformation builds, Strategic Development Fund, T Level Construction and the Savoy sponsored patisserie kitchen. It was noted that two further bids for T Levels have been submitted on Health and Science and in Broadcast Media (reported below under item 10).

Apprenticeships continue to be the focus area for improvement with specific action plans in place and revised following inspection including a focus on end-point



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assessment. There is a waiting list of ESOL learners for both Adult and Foundation and this is a rapid development area for the College. Adult curriculum has been stepped up with new engagement approaches deployed, new adult provision brochure and the College has achieved accreditation of first higher technical for Construction and Building Services which will be recruited to in 2023.

Strategic partnerships: these are growing and now some established connections and relations across civic, education, community and employers can be seen and are being utilised well. The College has raised its profile with good feedback from partners and employers e.g., letter from Keele about their interest in joint working, meeting with UHNM this week was very fruitful, and a renewed sense of engagement as per the list in the report. The College continues to work strategically with partners of the 16-18 free school initiative for a 'University School of Digital Design and Creative Industries' and will watch this space, re: if this is chosen and how this will unfold to support and not compete with the College.

The CEO/Principal reported that the College has a meeting to discuss work in partnership with the Newcastle and Stafford Colleges Group IoT (Institute of Technology) on Level 5+ but reaching down to Level 3 upwards.

The Capital and Centric Regeneration Brainery event invited 20 learners to take part in the careers property development initiative linked to the Good's Yard Development Levelling Up bid. This was a high profile and unique careers and work experience event for students to work alongside and network with household name industry leads which gave them a real insight into a range of different workplace activities and potential career progression routes that they had not necessarily associated with their chosen trade.

Media coverage is extensive as shown in the pack e.g. newspaper column, social media from others about the college, a 15-minute radio coverage of the work and offer of the College and the College continues to be involved in supporting and responding to the 'powering up Stoke on Trent', levelling up ambitions for the education and skills priority with technical skills provision.

The CEO/Principal mentioned that the College is up on applications by c. 20% on last year which is a really positive position. L Cherry, Staff Governor, was invited by the CEO/Principal to provide a verbal update on the staff wellbeing activities of the week.

The Chair commented that the College seems to finally be benefiting from an increased external awareness of the College and commended the work of the Executive team and staff to get the College on the map. The CEO/Principal recognised that there is work still to be done to catch up but Ofsted 'good' gives the College new opportunities that haven't been available in the past; T Levels for example. Relationships, networking, partnership working and collaboration is key and the College is now holding its own and finally being recognised as a serious competitor in the area and for the region.

D Rogers left the meeting at 10.25am

Governors asked if there were learner voice opportunities that could be drawn from the College's work. The CEO/Principal confirmed that this is being captured across all curriculum areas.



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**Chairs Reports  
Governance Committee**

The Chair of the Committee reported that the Governor Link visits undertaken are now stored in a central governance repository for Governor access and an annual report in a 'you said, we did' format/approach will be completed.

The Committee has considered the outcome of the Governor 1:1s process and the Clerk will be reviewing this to ensure that an evaluative assessment of a Governors' view of the College is captured and conducted. It was noted that all Committee and Corporation meetings will review their effectiveness at the end of each meeting.

The Clerk will also review the process for evaluating the effectiveness of the Chair and potentially roll this out to measure Committee Chair effectiveness.

The Board was informed that the terms of office of Mark Palmer, co-opted member, and independent member, Andy McKay, have been terminated. We will be working with the AoC/Peridot to consult on new member appointments.

Governor's attendance is slightly below target at the mid-year point but it is expected to improve by the year-end.

The Clerk has been tasked by the Committee to refresh the skills audit as this will be used as the basis to develop a Governor training/development plan. In addition, together with the SLT, the Clerk is completing the assessment against the revised Code of Good Governance. A recommendation to adopt the code will be presented to the Corporation at the meeting to be held in July 2023.

It was noted that Governors have been briefed about the accountability statement at the 3<sup>rd</sup> February Strategy Day, so the Corporation is already aware that this has to be signed off at the meeting to be held in May ahead of the submission date of 31<sup>st</sup> May 2023. Work continues on the draft as we await the priorities of the LSIP.

The Chair asked Governors if they were content to lose the presentation slides usually included with the pack of papers for the meetings and receive a verbal update from the Committee Chair. It was agreed that the Corporation, for future meetings, will receive the minutes of Committee meetings together with an overview set of presentation slides.

Clerk

**Transformation, Finance and Resources Committee**

In the absence of the Chair of the Committee, the Chair of the Corporation confirmed that items discussed by the Committee at their last meeting are dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.

**8**

**Management Accounts – December 2022**

The Chief Financial Officer reported, as at 31st December 2022, the accounts show a surplus before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (ITDA) of £1,164K. The deficit after depreciation, interest, and other finance costs is £132K.

It was noted that, following the award of the FECTF capital projects (reported above) and subsequent demolition of buildings at both College campuses, the College is recognising accelerated depreciation on these buildings and this was



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reflected in the December accounts reported to the Transformation, Finance and Resources Committee. The Transformation, Finance and Resources Committee acknowledged the £576K cost impact that was not factored into the budget due to timing and that the College intends to release £262K of the College's revaluation reserve resulting £315K impact. Again, it was noted that these are non-cash transactions.

The Chief Financial Officer reported that the changes in staff costs and also interest show an increase. This is not due to increased staff costs (increased head count) but about pension cost changes and the assumptions made from the actuaries so they are non-cash and do not impact KPIs or bank covenants but do make the forecast outturn look slightly different, so the forecast variance to the original budget is an increase of £902K, all of which relate to pension and accelerated depreciation.

The College is c£200K short of its Apprenticeship target income at the moment. The December Management Accounts assume that the target will be achieved and it also assumes that there will be no adult education income claw back next year due to underperformance this year and that all income lines are on track. The January position is showing the January enrolments and thus predicting, in the main, that income lines will be achieved at the year-end. The cash position at £3.9m and 80 days cash is very healthy and assumes that all KPIs will be hit and bank covenants.

The AEB income line potentially is at a shortfall; however, the proposal to subcontract in the next agenda item will help secure the 97% allocation target and prevent any claw back next year. Adult Learner Loan income is down and tuition fee income is down. There are challenges with adult recruitment but each income line is being managed very closely.

The Chair asked for assurance that there is confidence that the year-end outturn would be more positive than the previous year. The Chief Financial Officer confirmed that there are pockets of some increased income but nothing of any significance. Bank covenants will not be broken but income lines are unlikely to be any more favourable. The College is further ahead on Apprenticeships at the same point compared to last year, and the Commercial team, in conjunction with the Marketing team, are making every effort to not just sell Apprenticeships and adult learning but to sell the whole offer of the College and age-appropriate target our provision.

A Governor commented that adult learning in higher education is in decline and market analysis shows a continuing decline over the next decade. There is hope and expectation that once the government decide around LLE (Lifelong Loan Entitlement) and where those Lifelong learning accounts go and what adult learners can then do in terms of skills uptake throughout their careers, this may result in a shifting position and a change in dynamics. What is not known is whether the decline in higher education amongst adult learners is having any positive benefit for further education or whether it is in decline across the board. The cost-of-living crisis is an impacting factor and the College is seeing this through lower uptake of adult loans for example.

It was agreed the College is being imaginative and creative with its course planning to reach out to as many adult learners as possible to achieve the 97%



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allocation target and evade any potential clawback of AEB funding into next year. The mid-year funding claim prepared by the teams was put on the screen for expected outturn at this stage.

Governors asked if analysis of the age range of adult learners could be explored to see if there are any trends on uptake. This analysis has been undertaken by MIS and the Marketing team and the College will use this data to target specific groups of adult learners; by demographic, audience reach, unemployed, number of 19 years without a Level 3 for example. The Marketing team are focused on this and we will encourage the team to revisit the statistics to see if there are other target audiences the College can reach/attract. What appears to be in decline seems to be the missing 50+ adults who are choosing retirement over returning to learning for career change or career development and there are other groups of adult learners who are not actively seeking work but are able to work (i.e., those on benefits) and the College works closely with the DWP and JCP to grow this area through short courses and distance learning packages for example.

### **8.1 Subcontracting Report**

The Corporation received the report requesting approval to introduce subcontracting arrangements for 2022/23. Governors noted that due diligence checks of the proposals will be completed prior to any contract being awarded and scrutiny of Safeguarding and Prevent arrangements. In addition to the due diligence checks, the Quality team also undertake quality assurance and improvement checks/monitoring.

D Rogers re-joined the meeting at 11.05am

The Corporation was asked to consider the proposal to subcontract the sum as detailed in the report to the Learning Curve Group. Governors challenged the relationship on contracts with Learning Curve in the past. The Chief Financial Officer confirmed that they have always performed 100% of the contract value, so there is no suggestion that they would not perform well again. Governors were further assured that staff would not be displaced as a consequence of subcontracting provision. The strategic reason to subcontract with Learning Curve is to get further reach of our adult provision and to make the best use of public money for the people of Stoke on Trent and the Staffordshire area. After due consideration and assurance, the Corporation **approved** the proposal to subcontract as outlined. Furthermore, the proposal to subcontract Apprenticeship activity to NSEG over a 4-year duration starting April 2023, replacing previous activity reported, was also **approved**. The logistics of this relationship were questioned by Governors and assurance was provided to the satisfaction of the Corporation. In essence, NSEG introduce the learners to the College, we provide the apprenticeship programme for them but that programme requires some workplace delivery which the College will pay NSEG to deliver.

S Rashid-Bhatti and J Brereton left the meeting at 11.10am

### **9 Curriculum Update – Data Dashboard Report**

The report received by the Corporation provided an overview of the data as of the 30<sup>th</sup> January 2023. Overall, in year retention remains above target, particularly for high needs students, above national rates and demonstrates improvement from 2021/22.

Whilst attendance for 16-18s is improved from 2021/22 and now shows no significant gaps between attendance at vocational versus English/maths classes,



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further work is still required to improve attendance up to KPI targets, including for English and maths where these are below vocational attendance.

Governors were pleased that achievement at this early stage of the year in Apprenticeships is promising and above last year at this point (36%/47%). The Deputy Principal provided Governors with the highlight statistics from the report as follows:

#### 16-18s

- Retention is high at 98%, above the 2018/19 national average of 90.9%, and above target of 91%.
- The count in ESOL and Adult has dipped to 89% but this is still above the 2021/22 outturn of 81% for that area.
- Attendance is 84%; whilst below the College target of 88%, it is above the 2021/22 outturn of 83%. Work continues to improve attendance.
- Vocational attendance is on par with attendance at maths and English classes, with no difference to GCSE and a small gap of 1-3% for functional skills. This is a strong improvement to 2020/21 and 2021/22 where attendance rates for maths and English were significantly lower than for vocational classes.
- Attendance for GCSE maths and English resit exams in November 2022 were consistently high at around 90%.

#### 19+

- Retention is generally high at 96% (national rate 95%)
- Overall attendance is 85% which is higher than the 2021/22 outturn of 84% but below target of 88%
- Adult attendance for maths and English is 82% (85% 2021/22) and 80% (83% 2021/22) respectively

#### High Needs

- As reported above, the College has greater numbers of high needs students this year, with a consistent proportion taking part in vocational provision.
- All high needs students have excellent retention at 100%.
- High needs attendance is 84%, essentially due to lower attendance in Foundation.

#### Apprentices

- 63 apprentices have successfully completed their Apprenticeships in the year to date.
- There have been 18 withdrawals, 2 with OOF and 16 within planned end dates. A further 11 are within 3 months of their planned end date.
- For 2022/23, achievement is currently 44.5%, with a remaining best case based on internal expectations of completions this year of 71.8%, well above the prudent KPI target of 55%
- Achievement is now at 48% (30% previous year)

#### Care Leavers/In Care and Vulnerable Learners

- Retention for 16-18 care leavers is 98% (86% 2021/22)
- Retention across vulnerable 16-18s is 97% (88% 2021/22)
- Retention for 19+ care leavers is 90% (94% 2021/22)
- Retention for vulnerable 19+ learners is high at 95%
- Attendance for 16-18 care leavers is 86%



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- Vulnerable 16-18s attend overall as well as their peers (both at 84%), but have slightly lower attendance at maths/English at 80% (peers 83/84%)

English GCSE resits performed well with around 68 achieving grade 4. GCSE maths performed comparable with November 2021 with 36 achieving grade 4 but a larger cohort of students enrolled returning a lower overall achievement rate percentage. Compared with national rates, both maths and English are exceeding national average. Adult GCSE English results were 38% and for maths 13%.

Governors were interested to know how this positive impact has been achieved. The Deputy Principal identified that this was a whole College approach to drive attendance; enhanced monitoring of learner attendance, timetabling, learning mentors, Heads of Learning target driven, utilising the disciplinary process, block maths and English sessions, among other initiatives. It was noted that high retention is also making a positive impact.

It was highlighted that a significant proportion (a third) are categorised as vulnerable (16-18 and 19+) students however progress for these learners is particularly positive.

T Foster and K Hetherington left the meeting at 11.35am

## **10 Capital Projects Update**

Progress has been made with the FECTF project at the Cauldon campus. It was noted that the Burslem campus and T Level projects are running slightly behind schedule. The new Project Manager starts on the 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023.

The scope of the digital hub is under review. The adaptation proposed is to remove the mezzanine floor proposal as there is a need to value engineer the project due to inflationary increases and cost of materials that need to be rationalised to still achieve project success. It was questioned how the Quantity Surveyor could have assessed the cost so out of kilter. It is believed that there is a 70% inflationary increase impacting most capital projects and design and build scopes are only now being entertained by the College if they are affordable.

As mentioned by the Principal/CEO, the College has submitted two T Level capital bids. One for Construction in F Block at the Burslem campus, the other for a Health and Science at the Cauldon campus.

K Hetherington re-joined the meeting at 11.40am

The Construction T Level bid was successful and must be delivered by September this year. Contractors are being contacted for costs under a variation of the Financial Regulations but from an approved suppliers list. A variation to the Financial Regulations to secure a competitive quotation for the Savoy Trust project has been approved by the Transformation, Finance and Resources Committee. The variation was necessary due to a time limited quotation because of fluctuating market processes and inflationary pressure. This funding also needs to be allocated/used by Easter.

The Corporation noted the submission of the two wave 5 T Level bids for Health and Science (resubmitted unsuccessful bid from last year) and Broadcast Media and the proposed submission of the LEP bid ('Getting Building Fund') this month. It was noted that the SDF project is working well.



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The Corporation **agreed** the **approval** of the Transformation, Finance and Resources Committee for a variation to the Financial Regulations in order to secure a competitive quotation for the Savoy Project.

It was noted that the College is also bidding for additional funding from the Stoke and Staffordshire LEP 'Getting building fund'.

J Brereton re-joined the meeting at 11.50am

**11 Risk Register and BAF 2022/23**

An informal meeting of the Audit Committee has endorsed the work of the Clerk to undertake a thorough review and refresh of the Corporate Risk Register, heat map and Board Assurance Framework. There is the proposal to also introduce a risk appetite framework as part of this review. Work will commence over half term and will be presented to the Audit Committee for consideration at the meeting to be held in March 2023 prior to consideration of the Corporation.

**12 Any other items of urgent business**

There were no other items of urgent business.

**13 Review of meeting**

Virtual attendees of the meeting confirmed that attendees could hear the meeting well but typing of the Clerk was particularly distracting for some remote participants.

**Date and time of next meeting**

Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 9.30am

The meeting ended at 11.55am



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