

## CORPORATION BOARD

### CONFIRMED MINUTES FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 20 MAY 2025 AT 4:00PM EASTON COLLEGE, ROOM JB031

#### Present:

|                 |     |  |
|-----------------|-----|--|
| Andrew Barnes   | AB  | Chair  |
| Marcus Bailey   | MB  | Vice-Chair ( <i>remote via Teams</i> )                 |
| Jerry White     | JW  | Principal  |
| Jock Downie     | JD  | Governor   |
| Karen McCullagh | KM  | Governor ( <i>remote via Teams</i> )                   |
| Lucy Sydney     | LSy | Governor   |
| Noel Bartram    | NB  | Governor   |
| Philip Pearce   | PP  | Governor   |
| Freddie Simpson | FS  | Student Governor, SU President                         |
| Hazel Thomas    | HT  | Student Governor ( <i>from 4:23pm</i> )                |
| Laura Stewart   | LS  | Staff Governor ( <i>remote via Teams from 4:23pm</i> ) |
| Shirley Barker  | SB  | Staff Governor   |

#### Attendees:

|                  |    |  |
|------------------|----|--|
| Jen Eves         | JE | Chief Operating Officer ( <i>from 4:06pm</i> ) |
| Jodie Mitchell   | JM | Director of Governance and Legal               |
| Martin Colbourne | MC | Deputy CEO                                     |
| Seb Gasse        | SG | Vice Principal                                 |
| Claire Harber    | CH | Governance and Legal Officer                   |

#### Apologies:

|              |     |                  |
|--------------|-----|------------------|
| Jo Kershaw   | JK  | Vice Principal   |
| Joe McNeill  | JMc | Governor         |
| Josie Fryer  | JF  | Student Governor |
| Phil Gormley | PG  | Governor         |
| Sean Green   | SGn | Governor         |

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#### 1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and noted as above.

#### 2. Declaration of Conflicts

No declarations were made.

#### 3. Unconfirmed Minutes of the Board Meeting Held on 1 April 2025

The unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2025 were agreed as a true record of the meeting and will be signed by the Chair at the next available opportunity.

#### 4. Unconfirmed Confidential Minutes of the Board Meeting Held on 1 April 2025

The unconfirmed confidential minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2025 were amended slightly and agreed as a true record of the meeting and will be signed by the Chair at the next available opportunity.

#### 5. Matters Arising

Board 1 Action 2: Provide a comparison to the previous year of the top ten referral areas at the end of this academic year (HRH). *Action not due*. ACTION ONGOING (Due: July 2025)

Board 3 Action 3: Add People Strategy to next Board Agenda (JE/CH) *The People Strategy outlines a range of targets for each year and in previous updates the current work underway*

*has been shared with Governors. Key priorities for next year have been explored at both the Governor Strategy Day and Staff Culture Strategic Group. Once the new Director of People is in place, this will be developed into a bespoke action plan for the team to oversee. The Board agreed this action could be closed. ACTION CLOSED*

Board 3 Action 4: ACTION COMPLETE

Board 3 Action 9: Add 'Cyber Risk in relation to critical systems' to A&R agenda (CH/JW). *Added to Schedule of Business for next A&R agenda. It was noted that cyber risk was also discussed at the Business Committee meeting on 13 May. ACTION COMPLETE.*

Board 3 Action 11: Consider how progress metrics can be presented to the Board (JW). *A college metric dashboard will be ready to share with Governors at the July Strategy Day. ACTION ONGOING (Due: July 2025)*

Board 4 Action 1: Plan how to update the Board on the work of the Strategic Governor Groups (JW). *This will be factored into the next round of meetings. ACTION ONGOING (Due: May 2025)*

Board 4 Action 2: Arrange for an external speaker to give a talk before July 2025 on what sustainability means (JW/FS/SGn). ACTION ONGOING (Due: July 2025)

*JE joined the meeting at 4:06pm.*

Board 4 Action 3: Devise a plan to communicate the financial situation of the college to students (JW). *It was noted that the College wants to avoid causing alarm or concern to students and that the order of communication needs to be considered. It was highlighted that the financial pressures on the College have been in the news, so many students are already aware. It was agreed that JW would consult with the marketing team. ACTION ONGOING (Due: May 2025)*

Board 4 Action 4: Decide on 3-4 core themes of narrative for the financial position of the College that can be communicated (JW). *A communications plan is being devised, and further discussion can take place at the July Strategy Day. ACTION ONGOING (Due: May 2025)*

Board 4 Action 5: Prepare a formal comment on Government insurance underwriting of colleges for submission to the AoC (JW). *It was noted that this is mentioned on a regular basis to DFE colleagues. Governors were informed that the College is hosting the Education Select Committee on 23 June. In attendance will be the CEO of the AoC, AoC policy officers and civil servants. ACTION ONGOING (Due: July 2025)*

Board 4 Action 6: ACTION COMPLETE

## **6. Chairman's Remarks**

The first part of this item was confidential and is recorded in the confidential minutes.

It was noted by the Board that it is the last Board meeting for Freddie Simpson as Student Governor due to the end of his Students' Union President appointment. The Board thanked Freddie for his input and expressed that he has been an exceptional Students' Union President.

## **7. Students' Union Update**

The Students' Union Update was circulated prior to the meeting and taken as read.

The Board were informed that a new Students' Union President, Lacey Ross, has been elected with 34% share of votes. It was noted that the election turnout was more than the previous four years combined. Governors highlighted that although the number of votes show a significant improvement compared to previous years, still only 6% of the student community voted. There was a discussion around what has improved the voting statistics this year and how numbers can be strengthened going forward. Governors asked how the turnout compares to other colleges.

**ACTION 1: Report benchmark data in relation to Students' Union President voting (SG).**

**ACTION 2: Facilitate introduction of Students' Union President at UEA with CCN (JD).**

*HT and LS joined the meeting at 4:23pm.*

Further points were highlighted as follows:

- The Students' Union ran a sustainability festival during the week commencing 28 April 2025.
- Activities that took place as part of the festival included a litter pick, 'bring your own cup' and a clothes swap.
- Clubs and societies fairs were held across campuses as part of Mental Health Awareness Week which resulted in increased sign-up to clubs and societies.
- The summer Student Survey is underway.
- Deaf Connexions visited the College to run a deaf awareness session.

## **8. Strategic Target Monitoring**

The Strategic Target Monitoring paper was circulated prior to the meeting and taken as read.

The Board were informed that the Curriculum and Quality Committee have scrutinised the targets relating to the work of that Committee, but that the Business Committee have not had opportunity to consider the targets in relation to its work and the information is instead presented here for Governor scrutiny.

The two targets with a red rating, financial recovery and Level 4+ destinations, were highlighted.

The Board asked how the College encourages Level 4+ courses among students and were informed that, as well as going out to local sixth forms and attending HE fairs, outreach work is carried out within the Level 3 groups at the College where progression is most likely. It was noted that the balance between being impartial and ensuring students are informed about what the College offers needs to be considered.

The Board asked why there was no narrative in relation to Strategic Target 10 and a verbal update was subsequently provided.

The Board were informed that the Principal and the Vice Principal Student and College Services are attending a local government reorganisation meeting next week, and that the Principal is due to speak at the event. Specific points to be raised include ensuring any new system is less and not more bureaucratic, the need to recognise that Norwich is different to other parts of Norfolk and that practical problems may arise with safeguarding reporting and transport as a result of some proposed models. The Chair asked whether Governors were comfortable with the Principal speaking at the event. It was agreed that this would be reflected on later in the meeting.

## 9. **Accountability Agreement and Targets 2025/26**

The proposed Accountability Agreement and Targets 2025/26 were circulated prior to the meeting and taken as read. The Board were informed that the version presented has been amended slightly from the version presented to the Curriculum and Quality Committee and that the Business Committee has not had the opportunity to consider the proposed targets as presented. The Board were asked to agree the target areas and were informed that further work will be carried out before the agreement is ready for submission.

The following points were highlighted:

- KPIs will be strengthened to ensure they are SMART
- Targets are aligned to the five strategic themes
- The financial impact of retention will be reflected within the measures

The Board asked how targets outstanding from this year will be tracked and it was confirmed that data dashboard metrics will align to the strategic targets for this year. It was agreed that a closing report on targets from the current year would be presented to Governors detailing whether targets are complete, continuing or demoted, along with narrative for each.

**ACTION 3: Prepare a report on Accountability Agreement and Targets 2024/25 with narrative against each target (JW).**

The Board agreed that the themes for each target are appropriate and noted that further work will be carried out.

It was noted that the deadline for the Accountability Agreement and Targets submission is prior to the next Board meeting. The Board agreed that the final Accountability Agreement and Targets 2025/26 can be presented to both the Curriculum and Quality and Business Committees for approval and presented to the next Board for information.

## 10. **Key Updates and Approvals from Committee Meetings**

### 10.1 **Curriculum and Quality Committee**

The Curriculum and Quality Committee Update along with minutes from the last meeting were circulated prior to the meeting.

The contribution of the current Students' Union President was acknowledged and the importance of the information presented to the Committee in relation to the student voice was noted.

The following points were highlighted by the Chair of the Curriculum and Quality Committee from the discussions of the Committee:

- Work has been carried out by the College to raise awareness of sexual harassment, partly due to new OfS requirements. There has been some increase in reporting as a result. The majority of reports are historic and do not relate to activity within the College. The Committee are monitoring and seeking assurance in this area.
- Timeframes for reporting low level concerns to LADO have been clarified.
- Quality review mechanisms led by the Vice Principal for Curriculum and Quality are being monitored and continual improvement is being demonstrated.
- The new Director of NTTC has carried out a review of the teacher training provision and there has been constructive discussions around observations and feedback from that work.

- Complaints and appeals reports have been received by the Committee. These show an increase in complaints levels, but most complaints relate to areas with known issues. Monitoring by the Committee will continue.

A discussion ensued around complaints and a question was asked around the policy in relation to vexatious complaints. It was noted that there has been an increase in vexatious complaints across the sector which has led the College to formulate a definition of vexatious complaints and implement a revised procedure to deal with such complaints. It was confirmed that the Senior Management Team have reviewed and approved the policy. The Board asked to see the policy. Governors also requested that a field be added to the Complaints Report to show whether the complaint has been categorised as vexatious.

**ACTION 4: Circulate the updated Complaints Policy to Governors (JW).**

**ACTION 5: Include field on the Complaints Report to show whether complaints have been categorised as vexatious (JW).**

It was noted that that many complaints relate to staffing shortages that have arisen due the inability to recruit replacements for leavers. Governors asked whether complaints are leading to staff sickness and were informed that most complaints are dealt with at managerial level, so this is unlikely.

*The meeting took a break at 5:06pm and reconvened at 5:15pm.*

## **10.2 Business Committee**

A verbal update was provided by the Chair of the Business Committee on discussions at the recent Business Committee meeting as follows:

- The Committee has acknowledged that to effectively deliver the People Strategy, staffing levels in Human Resources need to be reviewed.
- The College have been unable to recruit to the Director of People position and the Committee have recognised that the salary level needs to be strengthened to attract the right person.
- The ongoing issue of sickness levels was discussed.
- The Committee received and considered the finance update and tender results which will be discussed in more detail under the items that follow.

The rest of the conversation under this item was confidential and is recorded in the confidential minutes.

### **10.2.1 CONFIDENTIAL – Finance Update**

The discussion was confidential and is recorded within the confidential minutes.

### **10.2.2 CONFIDENTIAL – Cleaning Tender**

The discussion was confidential and is recorded within the confidential minutes.

### **10.2.3 CONFIDENTIAL – Minibus Procurement**

The discussion was confidential and is recorded within the confidential minutes.

## **10.3 Remuneration and Governance Committee**

The Remuneration and Governance Committee update was circulated prior to the meeting along with the minutes (set 1) of the last meeting. The following points were highlighted:

- The Governance Improvement Plan brings together outstanding actions from various sources into one document. The Committee have agreed the format, and progress will be monitored by the Committee.
- Some new Governors have met with the Director of Governance and Legal and given feedback on their induction which will be reflected in the process going forward.
- A paper will be presented to the July Board in respect of potential changes to the recruitment process for Student Governors following feedback from the Students' Union and the HE team.
- Further work has been undertaken on the Skills Audit which has now been approved by the Committee. The Skills Audit will be circulated to all Governors to complete. This will feed into Governor 1:1s with the Chair.
- Governors were asked to check their emails in relation to outstanding items.
- Governor site tours are taking place over the next month and Governors were reminded to contact the Governance and Legal team if interested in joining.

The Board were asked to approve the Governor Recruitment Procedure as recommended by the Remuneration and Governance Committee. One Governor expressed that they had some minor comments for discussion outside the meeting. The Board approved the Governor Recruitment Procedure subject to those comments.

#### **10.3.1 CONFIDENTIAL – Chair of the Corporation Recruitment Update**

The discussion was confidential and is recorded within the confidential minutes.

#### **11. Risk Register Review**

The Risk Register Review paper was circulated by email prior to the meeting.

The eight strategic risks were highlighted and noted. The Board were informed that, at the request of the Business Committee, future reports will show the movement in risk between meetings.

#### **12. Other Urgent Business**

The Board returned to the conversation regarding the local government reorganisation event from item 8. The Board asked to see an outline of what the Principal intends to say in his presentation. It was noted that the Chair of the Corporation will also be present at the event.

**ACTION 9: Send Governors an outline of points to be raised at the local government reorganisation event w/c 27 May 2025 (JW).**

#### **13. CONFIDENTIAL – Meeting Review and Summary**

The discussion was confidential and is recorded within the confidential minutes.

#### **14. Date of Next Meeting**

The next Corporation Board Meeting is scheduled to take place on 1 July 2025 at 4:00pm.

All formal business having been concluded; the meeting closed at 5:57pm.

Signed ..... Date .....  
(Chair)