

GOVERNING BODY

DRAFT - Minutes of the meeting of the Full Governing Body held at 17.00 on Tuesday 12 December 2023 in Cotie Boardroom and via Teams

Members – Full Governing Board

Present

Lindy Stacey	Chair of Governors
Iain Springate	External Governor
Dawn Stabb	External Governor
Richard Bevan	External Governor
Hermione Williams-Copp	External Governor
Neil Sherman	External Governor
Sean Mackney	Principal and CEO
Keira Keen	Student Governors
Lewis Willcocks	Student Governors
Jon Price	Academic Staff Governor

In Attendance

Bill Blythe	VP Finance, Resources and Regional Affairs
Jason Jones	Deputy Principal Education & Learners
Sheena Murphy-Collett	VP People, Organisational Development and Engagement
Alex Farmery	Executive Officer

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Katarina Kolyva, Pat Denham, Rob Nicholls, Andy Champion, Stephen Wells, Deborah Watson and Val Parsons

2. Declaration of Interests

No declaration of interests were made.

3. Confidential Items

It was confirmed that there were confidential items and minutes which would be covered under the confidential items on the agenda later in the meeting.

4. Matters arising

It was agreed that there were no matters arising from the minutes that were not already on the agenda.

However, it was reported that there may be a change needed to the Salix update after the meeting and if so, this would be circulated via correspondence.

5. Minutes from previous meeting

The minutes from the meeting on 26 September 2023 were approved.

23FGB06

6. Items brought forward by the Chair

There were no items brought forward by the Chair.

7. Link Governor Report

7.1 The High Needs Activity (SEND) report was noted. There was no update on Safeguarding.

23FGB07

8. Principal update

8.1 Presentation

The Board received a termly update presentation from the Principal regarding National Developments and our 2025 strategic aims and objectives.

8.1.1 National Developments

It was reported that the DfE and the government had recognised that colleges would need support since the reclassification and its financial impact it had on colleges and the announcement of the qualifications reform to the Advanced British Standard (ABS). There were also other issues such as poor attendance, bad behaviour and safeguarding issues with a rise in mental health issues.

8.1.2 Outstanding Learner Achievement

It was noted that the college had some outstanding results with some excellent achievements for the T Level students, but there are inconsistencies in curriculum delivery with compliance and quality issues as presented later in the SAR and QIP (Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan).

Other success stories were reported such as Maths students having entered a maths competition and achieving a ranking in the top two percent in the country as well as the H2O (Home to Onsite) program having been successful with the Devon County Council asking for more placements in Barnstaple and Tiverton starting in January 2024.

8.1.3 Transforming Life Chances

It was reported that a lot of projects and work are ongoing including looking at progression for each student, having secured funding for the Turing scheme that has replaced Erasmus since leaving the EU, running Bootcamps with improved numbers for January and a potential major expansion for the SEND department in the pipeline. The college had been approached by the Devon County Council with a sustainable solution on how the college could support the council in dealing with growing numbers of learners with educational needs. This was very much in its early discussion stages but would provide residential facilities and ca 400 extra learners.

8.1.4 Boost Productivity

It was reported that the new Environmental Space Living Lab and the colleges partnership with Plymouth University present new environmental learning opportunities for the college. It was noted that the college had also received funding from the Learning Skills Improvement Funds of £500,000 which would be used for 3 different projects covering Digital for All, Energising our Sustainable Future and Advanced Engineering. The college will also hold another Marine Futures event this year asking major stakeholders in the region to attend.

8.1.5 Build Community and Prosperity

It was reported that the college had been successful in creating external partnerships and working closely with others, these include Northern Devon Futures (NDF), Education Futures North Devon Partnership (EFNDP), the South West Social mobility commission, Devon County Council and Universities.

8.1.6 Tackling the Climate Emergency

It was reported that the college is working on a scheme to largely decarbonise the heating system onsite through the installation of Heat pumps and Solar panels, which is being co-funded by the Public Sector Decarbonation scheme (Salix)

The 16-18 study programme included education for sustainable development and the future.

8.1.7. Finance, Estates, People and Digital

It was acknowledged that so far, this had been the tightest financial year, but recruitment numbers were up and the college is working with the DfE on efficiency.

It was noted that some major estates projects are well underway. Brannams had been closed and all staff and learners had been relocated to the Sticklepath campus, the Tiverton field sale was progressing and the RAAC was being dealt with and a plan for A block to include a new Digital Learning centre had been approved.

There had been a drive to improve the quality of teaching, staff recruitment and staff satisfaction. Working towards that, all staff had received a 6.5 % pay rise in the autumn and two gifted days before Christmas. The Leadership team were also looking at a staff satisfaction action plan and releasing a new wellbeing programme in January 2024.

Some questions were raised in regard to performance management and how to improve staff recruitment.

The Board was assured that the college was not tolerating poor performance, but at the same time it was a struggle to find good staff to recruit. There was also an issue with workload and not being able to carry out lesson observations.

It was agreed that the college would need to look at improving and changing its processes.

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1BNrVLtXeBhKJU3vzdWEgT3IvaVBkOYMC/edit#slide=id.p105>

***Action** – process improvements in regard to staff performance management and staff recruitment*

8.2 Brand Proposal

23FGFB08

The paper was noted and taken as read.

The Principal briefly introduced the idea of focusing on the different customer segments and the different kind of learners at the college and clarity of what is on offer for each and every learner. The college would benefit from a rebrand in both, reputation and recruitment.

The proposal was to begin a consultation process with staff, learners, parents, carers and other stakeholders in January 2024 with a decision to be presented to the Board by June 2024.

There were mixed views and opinions amongst the Board and some concerns were raised over:

- Structural changes internally
- Distraction from the current ongoing financial challenges and management actions
- Potential cost increases, not part of the current budget
- Cost benefit analysis
- Why now and not in 6 months' time?

The Principal assured the Board that this proposal and brand change would not include any structural changes, would support to continue improvement of recruitment and the benefits outweigh the risks in a very competitive environment.. It was noted that 3 of the proposed 7 changes had already happened and the Sub Brands of Cotie, University Centre of Northern Devon and Petroc Energy Services limited were already established.

When asked, the Student Governors confirmed that the college currently had a reputation of being “the place where the naughty kids go” and both agreed that a rebrand would benefit the college and its reputation, but at the same time the staffing issues and quality of teaching would need to improve.

It was agreed that the Board would be provided with some more information and an extraordinary Board meeting (online) would be held in late January (questions to be asked before the meeting). This information should include:

- Benefits in improved recruitment
- Assurance that time will be managed, and other management actions will not suffer
- Cost on all necessary materials etc.

- Cost benefit analysis vs the bottom line
- Impact analysis on the 3 already established Sub Brands

Action – schedule Extraordinary Board meeting in late January

Action – provide all requested information before the meeting

9. Curriculum and Quality

The Board received a brief summary on the last committee meeting from the Deputy Principal in absence of the committee chair.

It was noted that the last meeting had covered attendance, retention, safeguarding and monitoring the apprenticeship provision.

It was confirmed that the apprenticeship provision had achieved significant process improvements through a data cleansing exercise.

9.1 Minutes of the Curriculum and Quality committee held on 24 May 2023

23FGB09

The minutes from the meeting on 24 May 2023 were approved.

9.2 To receive the College Self-Assessment Report 22/23 (SAR) and to discuss the Quality Improvement Plan 23/24 (QIP)

23FGB10

The Deputy Principal presented the SAR and the QIP to the Board and recommended both for approval. However, the college had only just received feedback from an external review and needed some more time to scrutinise the SAR before its final submission for approval.

The discussion on both documents was brief, noting that the college had been too kind in its rating for 2020/21 and the QIP was missing a RAG rating. It was also noted that English & Maths was a great area of concern.

It was agreed that the Deputy Principal would email the SAR to the Chair and Vice Chair early in the new year for Chair approval.

Action – change heading of SAR to 2022/23 instead of 2023

Action – RAG rate the QIP ready for C&Q committee in February 2024

Recommendations from the Curriculum and Quality committee

Non-discussion:

- To note the Deputy Principal Curriculum and Quality Report*

23FGB11

The report was noted.

10. Finance and General Purposes

10.1 minutes of the Finance and General purposes committee held on 20 June 2023

23FGB12

The minutes from the meeting on 20 June 2023 were approved.

A brief summary from the committee chair was received and it was reported that the accounts had been discussed and scrutinised in detail. The Month 3 Management accounts were described as looking tight, a question was raised over the bad debt approval though that was resolved and the committee had requested a new up to date version of the digital strategy for the next committee meeting.

Any papers recommended to the Board had been approved by the committee.

Non-discussion items

To note and approve a Salix Update

23FGB13

To note the Bank Mandates and approve account closure*	23FGB14
To approve Bad Debts*	23FGB15
To note the Month 12 Management Accounts for 2021/22 *	23FGB16
To note the Month 3 Management Accounts*	23FGB17
To note the ESFA College Financial Health *	23FGB18
To note the Strategy progress updates *	
Digital*	23FGB19
Estates*	23FGB20
Finance*	23FGB21

All above papers 23FGB13 – 23FGB21 had been noted, taken as read and were approved by the Board.

11. Audit Committee

11.1 minutes of the Audit Committee held on 13 July 2023 **23FGB22**

The minutes from the meeting on 13 July 2023 were approved.

11.2 The committee chair updated the Board on the last Audit committee meeting and reported that there were concerns re the college process for completing any audit actions in particular on cyber security. The Management Team had been asked to present a mitigation report to the Board.

11.3 It was reported that the latest internal audit on Estates Management Framework had only received a partial assurance, however, the critical actions had been resolved and implemented by the November meeting.

11.4 Mitigations for Audit Monitoring Report **23FGB23**

The report was noted and the Board were assured that the college had different mitigations in place against a cyber-attack, such as IBOS to filter traffic, antivirus software and secure backups. Staff Training on cyber security was also part of the CPD day in December 2023.

Recommendations from Audit Committee

Non-discussion items

- To note the Audit Completion Report * **23FGB24**
- To note the Petroc Engagement Letter and Limited Assurance Engagement on Regularity letter * **23FGB25/26**
- To note Annual Internal Audit Report * **23FGB27**
- To receive the Annual Report of the Audit Committee * **23FGB28**
- To note the Risk Management Update* **23FGB29**
- To Note KPI update (appendices available upon request) * **23FGB30**

All above papers 23FGB24 – 23FGB30 had been noted and received by the Board.

12. Joint Finance and General Purposes and Audit Committee

To approve and sign the audited annual financial accounts **23FGB31**

It was confirmed that the joint committee had approved the accounts during the committee meeting asking for a change to 2 paragraphs on pages 5 and 8. These changes had now been made.

The Board received and approved the audited annual financial accounts.

13. People and Remuneration

Non-discussion item

- To note the Vice Principal People, Organisational Development and Engagement report*

23FGB32

The report was noted, and it was summarised by the committee chair that the report included the HR annual Report, the EDI Staff report, the new Mental Health and Wellbeing strategy and a sickness absence review for September 2023.

14. Search and Governance

14.1 Minutes of the Search and Governance committee held on 6 July 2023

23FGB33

The minutes from the meeting on 6 July 2023 were approved.

The Chair thanked the Deputy Principal for spending the time with all the Committee Chairs and the Chair prior to the meeting to give an oversight on Ofsted and an impending inspection and noted that the Chairs felt more prepared for an inspection.

14.2 To note Termly Student Governor update

14.2.1 The Student governors presented the report to the Board.

It was reported that the student-run Zero shop at the college was going very well with a great turnover of items. Some items would need to be purchased such as mirrors and clothing rails and the Board suggested to use Facebook marketplace or appeal to staff in the In The Know to find these items.

14.2.2 It was reported that one of the student governors had attended the AoC conference in November and found it useful to build their confidence meeting and networking other student governors.

14.2.3 It was discussed and agreed that the PSU needed to be promoted and it was suggested for Keira K. to attend the next staff forum group.

14.2.4 It was reported that the student votes had a very impressive turnout with over 600 student votes and resulted in the election of the President, Vice President, Welfare Officer, Media and Communications Officer, Disability Officer and Entertainments Officer.

14.2.5. Future plans of the PSU to raise funds and increase student engagement and the balance sheet were noted by the Board.

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Hf8HV8Fgg_vEqwo2ljNMT6OvkXYauTK3/edit#slide=id.p1

Action – Invite Student Governors to the Staff Forum group to promote PSU

Action – EO to join next PSU meeting

Recommendations from Search and Governance Committee:

To note the Annual General Data Protection Regulations and Freedom of Information Request report

23FGB34

The report was noted by Board.

Staff and Student Governors withdrew from the meeting at 19.28