

## CORPORATION BOARD of UNITED COLLEGES GROUP

Wednesday 07 July 2021, 6 pm – By Zoom

**Members Present:** Nick Bell (CEO), Alex Fyfe, Tony Johnston (Chair), Laura Griffin, Derrick Betts, Jan Knight, Angela Drisdale Gordon, Ross Mackenzie, Colin Smith, Temitope Alebiosu, Max Maalimey, Nadia Babar, Elom Tay, Amish Nathwani, Grainne Brankin\*, Norman Whyte, Franklin Asante, Ofofonono Iwa, Desmond Bishop, Natalie Dweh.

**In attendance:** Zoë Lawrence, Stephen Davis, Amanda Thorneycroft, Claire Collins.

\*left the meeting at 7.40 pm

<b>1</b>	<p><b>PROCEDURAL</b></p> <p><b>Welcome and apologies for absence</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies had been received from Matthew Green, Lee Horsley, and Cathy Bird. The Chair reflected on the unprecedented year, continuing to deal with the pandemic and its restrictions, while continuing to deliver high quality provision to students face to face and online. He thanked all members for their continued support and contribution.</p> <p><b>Governor Announcements</b></p> <p>The chair made the following announcements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This was Jan Knight’s final Corporation meeting as she would be standing down as a governor from 31 July 2021. TJ thanked JK for her significant contribution to the governance of CNWL prior to merger and subsequently at UCG spanning 14 years’ service to FE. During her tenure JK had been chair of CNWL, had chaired the GSR and Audit Committees and was the Safeguarding Lead Governor. JK thanked everyone for their kindness and wished the College well for the future.</li><li>• Natalie Dweh would become a full independent member taking the vacancy left by JK. ND would become the Lead Safeguarding governor.</li><li>• Derrick Betts would become the Chair of the Audit Committee to replace JK as chair.</li><li>• Grainne Brankin would become a member of the Audit Committee to replace JK.</li><li>• Temitope Alebiosu had been elected student governor for a second term.</li><li>• Ofofonono Iwa was standing down as student governor as he was progressing to University and would be leaving the college.</li></ul>
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Declarations of Interest in the agenda items</b></p> <p>The SLT, staff and student governors declared interest in item 9iii, SPH objectives and would leave the meeting for this item.</p>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>I. Approval of Corporation minutes</b> <i>(Draft minutes were circulated in advance)</i></p> <p><b>The draft minutes of 31 March 2021 and the minutes of the Special Meeting of the Corporation held on 28 April 2021 were approved as an accurate record to be signed by the Chair.</b></p> <p><b>II. Matters arising</b></p> <p>The action to include a KPI on attrition/retention would be put in place for the beginning of the Autumn term. It was understood that a fire drill had taken place at Paddington. The remaining actions were included elsewhere on the agenda.</p>

	<p><b>III. Request to raise Grey Box items</b></p> <p>LG asked to raise the Bullying and Harassment Policy from the grey box items. She welcomed the policy and commented that the feedback from F&amp;GP Committee had been incorporated well. However, she enquired about next steps and how the policy would be implemented. CC confirmed that the policy would be sent by email to each member of staff. A series of workshops on the policy would be delivered to staff and managers at the beginning of the new term. HR business partners would support this process at team meetings to ensure that the policy was consistently applied. LG commented that feedback from the student survey on bullying and harassment was generally positive. She welcomed the role out of the policy and how it needed to link with values and behaviours. ADG asked for clarity on the Head of EDI as a person concerns could be reported to.</p>
<p><b>4</b></p>	<p><b>STRATEGIC</b></p> <p><b>I. Strategic Plan Revisions</b> <i>(Revisions circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>The proposed revisions to the strategic plan had been developed in consultation with the Corporation and wider organisation. The changes being proposed included a change to the title of one of the strategic themes for clarity. There were further elements in the paper which were being postponed due to coronavirus, some aspect that were being dropped with alternative actions being proposed. The changes were generally in response to the changing environment in FE with the FE White Paper/ Bill, and shifting priorities during the course of the year. Following agreement from the Corporation a revised summary of the strategy would be prepared and published on the website. This would also feed into SLT objectives for the following year. GB asked who the main audience for the strategy was. This was difficult to answer as there were many stakeholders for an FE college including government departments, local stakeholders, employers, and most importantly students. Some of the strategic priorities were dictated by government policy and funding, thought attempts were made to differentiate within a segmented student audience where possible. DB asked how the various elements of the strategy would be prioritised in a post-covid environment. NB said that this could be discussed at the next GSR Committee as part of the objective setting process. DBish was keen that the entrepreneurial aspects were not lost. NB agreed and said that these had been included at a lower level within the strategy. The agreement with Visionnaires had been signed that week in support of this.</p> <p>TJ welcomed the focus on developing internal talent and asked for a verbal report on the recent staff conference. SD said that the conference aimed to provide a whole systems approach to attendance and engagement for students; what made learning compelling. This was the first time an event of this nature had been attempted post-merger and the response from staff was largely positive. It demonstrated how everyone including governors had a part to play to contribute to the student experience. <b>The Corporation resolved to approve the revisions to the Strategic Plan.</b> NB said that governors would be notified once the revised version had been published.</p> <p><b>II. Environmental Strategy</b> <i>(Draft Strategy Framework circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>The Property &amp; Infrastructure Committee had reviewed this strategic framework which was being recommended to the Corporation for approval. LG welcomed the strategy but asked what measures could be taken to reduce single use plastics by the college, particularly in light of the new catering contract. AT said that the existing caterers had moved from plastics to all</p>

paper products for recycling purposes, and to reduce plastic waste, and she would take up the point with new contractors. It was anticipated that the new Sustainability Committee would hold its first meeting in the Autumn term. Governor membership was invited. **The Corporation resolved to approve the Sustainability Strategic Framework.**

### **III. Marketing Strategy**

*(Draft Marketing Strategy circulated in advance)*

CC presented the Marketing Strategy which was the first that the organisation had had for some time. It was based on research conducted with existing students by Chalkstream which would be repeated next year. Research was also being done with potential students who showed an interest in applying but did not enrol. The next phase was to ensure that the organisation had the right skills to deliver the strategy so the marketing team was being developed and new appointments made. The strategy covered 8 themes working closely with curriculum to ensure that courses were correctly described to support the applicant journey and recruitment. The impact of the marketing effort was being measured to generate evidence for effectiveness and return on marketing spend/investment. An operational plan to support the strategy would be provided to the TLS Committee in due course.

DB welcomed the strategy and the approach on measuring the impact. He considered it of value to track conversion rates from application to enrolment in detail to target areas of most benefit. TJ was in agreement as there had been deficiencies in this area previously, and appreciated the analytics to address this. FA had been in the Paddington Campus the previous day when enrolment was taking place, and said how well the building was presented and the positive feel. TJ asked how the enrolment testing had progressed the previous day. SD reported that over a 1000 students were already enrolled. A few technical glitches had been experienced, but work was ongoing to resolve these ahead of the main enrolment period in August. **The Corporation resolved to approve the Marketing Strategy**

### **IV. CEO Report & KPIs**

*(Report circulated in advance)*

NB provided a summary of the key points set out in his report, many of which were covered in more detail elsewhere on the agenda. The KPIs were provisional as the data was not available for final outturn figures at the current time. ET suggested that a KPI be included on tuition fees as this was included as an area of financial risk on the risk register. He also asked at what stage the IT investment needed to move from capital to operational expenditure to account for cloud storage. AT said that the issue with the tuition fees was monitored through the management accounts, but she would consider a KPI to track it if necessary. The cloud transfer was not expected for a further year or so. TJ asked what contingencies were in place if there were staff shortages as a result of self-isolation from covid over the Summer as cases were continuing to increase. SD said that the hybrid approach was suitably flexible to accommodate changes either to be totally online or face to face as needed. AF noted that the attendance KPI was below target and asked for clarity on the difference between attendance and engagement. SD explained that attendance concerned actual attendance at classes face-to-face and virtual. Engagement concerned general contact with tutors and the completion and submission of work. Attendance and engagement were affected by age and course level. Lower level 16-19 year old learners preferred face to face teaching where as adults were more able to deal with online provision. The UCG Method had been launched to provide a framework for good quality teaching and learning to encourage attendance. DBish reported that engagement of students via the online chat facility had been successful. ET commented on the low completion rate for the staff survey. SD said that this had increased from the previous year, though it was still low. MM suggested involvement of curriculum managers to

	<p>encourage completion of the survey. <b>The Corporation resolved to receive the CEO’s report and KPIs.</b></p> <p><b>V. Risk Register</b>  <i>(Risk Register circulated in advance)</i>  AT presented the risk register which showed the highest risks. Full risk registers were considered at committee level. AF noted that the purchase of the Olympic Office Centre was increasing financial risk overall to which the Corporation needed to be mindful. She also noted that some of the mitigating actions were not reducing some risks and whether alternative mitigations should be considered. AT explained that the increasing financial risk was not in isolation and was as a direct result of the potential purchase of the OOC. NB mentioned the risk of not progressing the purchase. <b>The Corporation resolved to receive the risk register</b></p> <p><b>VI. EDI Action plan</b>  <i>(Action Plan circulated in advance)</i>  CC presented the EDI Action Plan which was comprehensive, ambitious and included lead officials accountable for delivery. CC highlighted some of the man achievements and activities to date including the awarding of NCD Bronze and Educate and Celebrate accreditation. DBish asked to what the degree the plan was actual or projected particularly in term of measures. CC said that some aspects were cultural so were more difficult to measure, but there were some distinct areas of change including the proportion of BME managers, availability of resources, and EDI being a standing item at team meetings. Success criteria were possible were included in the Action Plan. MM and NBab were supportive of the plan and the changes it could bring. Time was needed to see it embed, and to make sure it could achieve the right outcomes. TJ was pleased to see that there was a focus on student achievement data as this had been slow in coming previously. AN welcomed the comprehensive plan and suggested that there be KPIs developed to support it. Some were included in the CEO dashboard but these would be developed further as part of the iterative process. <b>The Corporation resolved to approve the EDI Action Plan</b></p>
5	<p><b>COMMITTEE MATTERS</b>  <b>Teaching Learning and Skills</b></p> <p><b>I. Link Governors</b>  TJ invited link governors to update the Corporation on their engagement with their career cluster. TJ reported two positive meetings he had had with staff and students of the Life Long Learning Career cluster. There would be a renewed focus on link governors in the Autumn term.</p> <p><b>II. Predicted Achievement</b>  <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i>  SD provided a summary of the position on predicted achievement which was largely the same as the previous year. There was a 1% increase in 16-19 year-old achievement, with adult achievement at the same level. Retention of adult learners under the AEB was at a better level than other parts of the country incurring minimal claw back. <b>The Corporation resolved to receive the report.</b></p> <p><b>III. SU Constitution</b>  <i>(Draft Constitution circulated in advance)</i></p>

	<p>The SU constitution was a regulatory requirement. This draft had been reviewed by the TLS Committee and was recommended to the Corporation for approval.  <b>The Corporation resolved to approve the SU Constitution</b></p> <p><b>IV. Safeguarding Update</b>  <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>The significant effect of coronavirus on college students was noted in terms of mental health support needed and the massive undertaking on the organisation of the safeguarding function overall. The definitions for suicide in the report were clarified. Members were saddened to hear of the two student deaths during the Easter break and that one of these was unknown to safeguarding with no previous indication of concern. <b>The Corporation resolved to receive the report.</b></p> <p><b>V. QDP Student Survey</b>  <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>Members welcomed the increased response rate and the general shift from the D to the C quartile overall as benchmarked against other colleges. The differences between campuses was noted and other than English and Maths there was a correlation between achievement and positive survey outcomes. This would be investigated further for improved understanding. AN asked if it was understood why students from BME backgrounds were less positive about the college. SD confirmed that this was being looked into and further detail would be reported to the TLS Committee. <b>The Corporation resolved to receive the report.</b></p> <p><b>VI. HE Admissions Policy</b>  <i>(Draft policy circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>This policy had been de-coupled from the FE admissions policy and amended in response to OfS/QSR requirements. The policy had been reviewed by the HE Oversight Committee and was being recommended to the Corporation for approval. <b>The Corporation approved the HE Admissions Policy.</b></p>
6	<p><b>Property &amp; Infrastructure Committee</b></p> <p><b>I. Wembley Project - Update Report</b></p> <p>NB provided a brief update on the position concerning the FE Capital Grant application, the purchase of the Olympic Office Centre and the financing arrangements for this, and the sale of the Wembley and Willesden sites to Pinnacle. Detailed discussions had taken place at Finance and General Purposes and Property &amp; Infrastructure Committees within the previous week. The Project was not in a position for any decisions to be made at the current time and this update was for information. <b>The Corporation noted the update.</b></p>
7	<p><b>Finance and General Purposes</b></p> <p><b>I. 2021/22 Budget</b>  <i>(Draft budget circulated in advance)</i></p> <p>AT explained that the budget had been based on last year's budget and the reforecast, plus the budget scenarios which had been reviewed by the F&amp;GP Committee in May. The main change was the inclusion of £2.1m of in-year ESFA funding pending an increase in student numbers which would be received in April 2022. A letter to confirm this agreement was expected from the ESFA in the coming days. This additional funding would support liquidity and assist in the appeal to Barclays for the RCF. The other income in the budget was based on allocations or reasonable estimates. A further payment of the tuition fund to support small group learning as a result of coronavirus was included in the budget, but costs were shown</p>

	<p>against this. AT explained the process from this point was to submit the reforecast for the current year, the budget for 2021/22 and one further year based on the scenario agreed with F&amp;GP Committee to the ESFA by the end of July 2021. TJ thanked the SLT for the work that had gone into the business case for the additional ESFA funding. <b>The Corporation agreed the process and approved the budget for submission to the ESFA.</b></p> <p><b>II. Fees and Charges Policy</b> <i>(Draft policy circulated in advance)</i> The Finance and General Purposes Committee had reviewed this policy and were recommending it to the Corporation for approval. <b>The Corporation resolved to approve the Fees and Charges Policy</b></p> <p><b>III. Contract Approvals – Security and Catering</b> <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i> AT reported that the Finance and General Purposes Committee had reviewed the contract tender process in detail the previous week and had approved the preferred bidder status for both contracts. The process was now in the required standstill period, and the contracts would be awarded following receipt of Corporation approval. <b>The Corporation resolved to approve the contracts for Security and Catering.</b></p>
8	<p><b>Audit Committee</b></p> <p><b>I. Risk Appetite</b> <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i> JK reported on the discussion held at the June Audit Committee on proposals for developing a risk appetite. In particular it was felt that a single risk appetite was not meaningful enough and different ones for different areas of risk would be more useful. It was proposed that a workshop on risk appetite be arranged for September to which all members would be invited to contribute. <b>Members agreed to this approach.</b></p>
9	<p><b>Governance, Search and Remuneration Committee</b></p> <p><b>I. Election of Vice Chair</b> <i>(Paper circulated in advance)</i> Franklin Asante had been nominated for Vice Chair by Jan Knight and the proposal was seconded by Grainne Brankin. No other members had been nominated. TJ thanked FA for fulfilling the role of Vice Chair during 2020/21. This appointment for Vice Chair was for two years from 01 Aug 2021 to 31 July 2023. <b>The Corporation resolved to approve the appointment of Franklin Asante as Vice Chair to the Corporation.</b></p> <p><b>II. SPH Policies</b> <i>(Draft policies circulated in advance)</i> Some minor changes had been made to the SPH policies. These mostly concerned updates to job titles. The Disciplinary Policy also included amendments to the appeals process to not reserve the chair, but to reserve three other members. This was because it was considered to be impractical to be able to reserve the chair in such matters. LG also commented that it would be the aim for there to be a single harmonised policy for all staff and not a separate policy for SPHs. The GSR Committee had reviewed the policies and were recommending them to the Corporation for approval. <b>The Corporation resolved to approve the policies.</b></p> <p><b>III. SPH Objectives</b> <i>(Objectives circulated to Independent members only)</i> See confidential minutes.</p>

	<p><b>IV. Committee date and membership 2021/22</b>  <i>(Papers circulated in advance)</i>  The Committee dates for 2021/22 and Committee membership were provided to members to note for their diaries. Calendar invites would follow for each term.</p>
<b>10</b>	<p><b>AoB</b></p> <p>The date of the next meeting 13 October 2021</p> <p>The meeting closed at 8.25 pm</p>

Minutes taken by Zoë Lawrence 08/07/2021

**SIGNED:** ..... **Date:**

**Tony Johnston, Chair**

**ACTIONS**

Ref	Action	Owner	Status
<b>16/12 04i</b>	To include attrition/ retention rates in the KPIs	NB	