

<b>Chair</b>	Rob Hull
<b>Corporation Members</b>	Marilyn Hawkins, Steve Hedges, Gerry McDonald, Cynthia Griffin, Neil Yeomans, Stephen Critoph, Sue Williams QPM, Lily Sims, Labib Aminullah
<b>Officers</b>	Deputy CEO: Suri Araniyasundaran Principal Tower Hamlets and Hackney: Alison Arnaud Principal Havering Colleges: Janet Smith Principal Redbridge and Epping Forest: Narzny Khan
<b>Director of Governance</b>	Elsa Wright
<b>Apologies</b>	Vivien Bailey OBE, Jai Bhakar
<b>Item No</b>	<b>Item of business</b>
	<b>PRELIMINARY PROCEDURAL MATTERS</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Chair's Welcome &amp; Opening Remarks</b> The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting
<b>2</b>	<b>Apologies for Absences</b> Apologies had been received from Vivien Bailey and Jai Bhakar. The Board accepted their apologies.
<b>3</b>	<b>Declaration of Interests</b> Members were reminded of the need to declare any interest in any items on the agenda. No declarations were made.
<b>4</b>	<b>Minutes of the Last Meeting Held on 17 December 2021</b>  The minutes were <b>APPROVED</b> with a change of date and would be signed as an accurate record of the meeting online.  <b>ACTION – Minutes to be signed online</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Matters Arising and Action Points from the Meeting</b>  The Corporation noted the action points. There were no additional matters arising.
<b>STRATEGIC MATTERS</b>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Group Principal &amp; CEO's report and KPIs</b>  The CEO updated the Corporation on policy changes which did not always translate into actual changes on the ground. For example, the implementation of the Skills Bill required the production of a local skills improvement plan driven by chambers of commerce. This was an approach which had failed in the past. The College was involved with partners in developing the plans with Central London Forward and London Skills. Ofsted would also review this in any future inspection.

The College had a good working relationship with the GLA and 90% of adult funding came from them. There had been no uplift for 9 years in the national rates which were still funded at 2013 prices, but the GLA had uplifted funding by 10% for courses up to L2, which was an increase of £0.5m. There were discussions in the sector about the impact of levelling up and whether the rebalancing of funding for adult skills would take money away from London.

The increase in 16-18 funding was welcome at 8% but this included the requirement to deliver 40 more hours for students and it wasn't clear what the impact would be where the College already delivered over the prescribed hours. Around 7% of the increase was absorbed by a combination of the extra hours, pay inflation, energy cost rises, employer contributions for National Insurance and this was would continue to increase with inflation.

Recruitment was difficult and SMT reviewed critical vacancies regularly. The Principal of Tower Hamlets and Hackney explained that there were vacancies across the construction trades and the payment of market supplements was having limited impact. Carpentry, brick laying and painting and decorating were particularly difficult. Both Health and Early Years were also finding it hard to recruit staff. Governors asked whether the College had considered not offering the provision because of these difficulties. The College had reduced the Health and Social Care offer by 10% for 2022-23 even though there was demand from students.

The CEO explained that the National Skills Fund which was a L3 entitlement was displacing existing AEB provision. The review of provision at L2 and below could have a negative impact. It assumed that students knew what want they want to do at age 16. It was proposing a 2 year thinner level 2 qualification and the sector was concerned that students would not want to study for two years and would look for work instead. The College would respond formally to the consultation. There had been chronic underfunding of adult provision and classes needed to be full for them to be viable. The additional hours for 16-18 provision was positive for the students but the headline funding increase of 8% was needed to fund the additional hours. The sector was not involved in the discussion and the presentation was unhelpful. Governors discussed whether there would be pressure on the Treasury to support the skills agenda with additional funding.

The College was already working with employers and horizon scanning to identify the skills and training they needed. Work continued with large employers but there had been a clear shift with employees not coming on site every day and this was making it hard to deliver work experience. Governors asked about the future strategic direction. The College was offering short courses and was developing a meaningful offer. There were ongoing discussions about developing a brand and offering more courses with hybrid and online provision. There were opportunities to offer a range of short courses at Rainham for those working in construction and related industries. There would be a leadership and management offer as well as certification courses, PAT testing and other commercial work. Governors commented that it was important to establish where a brand would add value in the longer term. The College was in a strong position with the centre at Rainham and this should be maximised through relationships with Local Authorities, the GLA and industry bodies such as the CITB who could champion the provision. The College could offer secondments, deliver training or run hybrid training with employers.

The Principal of Epping and Redbridge confirmed that the College did work with several employers in this way and used their staff as tutor assessors and demonstrators. NCC paid well in the FE sector and the Group Executive Director for Human Resources was developing additional incentives. The College could not compete with industry where pay was high but did offer a good salary, pension, holiday and other benefits. In Redbridge, the College worked with a consortium of companies in East London in social care.

	<p>Governors asked about the apprenticeship levy and whether there was work with employers to maximise its use. The CEO confirmed that there was work with companies in the City and Canary Wharf to assess need. There were qualifications for leadership and exchange programmes with different companies which the College facilitated. Governors noted that employers were looking for aptitude and personal characteristics including leadership skills. This was a competitive commercial market but there were opportunities for the College. Small businesses and start ups were a destination for many young people and this was an area which the College could look to develop further.</p> <p>Governors discussed the further development of provision at Hackney and opportunities to work with other providers. IT provision was good and there was the opportunity to leverage this. Coding had been very successful with adults and if staff could be recruited, this could be expanded. The College was also looking to upskill existing staff.</p> <p>The CEO updated the Board on the KPIs in his report. The risk register gave a realistic assessment of the current position. Staffing was a key issue and nationally, the picture was probably the worst ever seen in the sector. There was a shortage of Learning Support Assistants in numbers never seen before. There was lots of work to ensure teaching was supported but there would be some course decisions made because of acute staffing issues. People were making life changes and taking early retirement from many different careers. The College was working hard to show that teaching in FE could be an alternative career, perhaps for two days a week. The CEO confirmed that vacancies for IT staff and support staff across the college were becoming increasingly hard to fill.</p> <p>The Board thanked the CEO for his report and for the hard work of the team in another busy term.</p>
<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>Committee Recommendations</b></p> <p><b>7.1 Search</b></p> <p>The Committee Chair reminded members that the Board had up to 4 vacancies if it were to stay at the same size. An additional accountant was needed for F&amp;GP committee. The Committee recommended Nazia Faiz, who was currently a co-optee on Audit, as a full member. She was an effective member and the Corporation agreed to her appointment. Jai Bhakar was a Corporation member but had now moved overseas and the committee recommended to retain his expertise as a co-optee on Property committee. This was agreed. It would be key to recruit an accountant and a member with teaching and learning experience. For the committees to do the detailed work, it made sense to fill the other two vacancies to ensure there was sufficient breadth and that all committees were quorate. The committee recommended the change to the Instruments and Articles with the removal of Article 4A which had been inserted at merger. The Corporation agreed to this change and also agreed the Scheme of Delegation which had been updated to reflect changes in responsibility and titles.</p> <p><b>Action – The Board agreed to appoint Nazia Faiz as a Corporation Member. The Board agreed to appoint Jai Bhakar as a Co-optee to the Property committee (7.1.1)</b></p> <p><b>Action - The Board agreed the revised Instruments and Articles and the Scheme of Delegation (7.1.2)</b></p> <p><b>7.2. Audit</b></p> <p>The Chair of Audit updated the Board. The committee had reviewed three internal audit reports on debtors, distance learning and payments.</p>

The College had used a framework for the procurement of an Internal Auditor. There had been five responses and four had been interviewed last week and earlier that day. The proposal was to appoint TIAA. They audited around 50 colleges and they were clear about the role and their expertise. This would be subject to references and the agreements of the contractual amount. It would be a daily rate with the hours and days negotiated as part of an annual cycle. The College was clear that they were appointing the team they met along with the people under them and the expectation was the work would be led by them as other, larger providers were auditing more than 20 colleges with one partner leading the work. The Corporation agreed to delegate authority to the CEO to appoint, subject to satisfactory references.

**Action – The Board agreed to delegate authority to the CEO to appoint the recommended firm, subject to satisfactory references (7.2.1)**

### **7.3 Finance and General Purposes Committee**

The Chair of the committee updated the Board. The committee had discussed the termly HR report and subcontracting report. It had reviewed the January Management accounts and cash flow as well as the termly Health and Safety report and Capital plans. The Corporation was asked to agree the Fee policy as recommended by the Committee. The changes were highlighted in the document.

**Action – The Board agreed the fee policy with the revisions as noted (7.3.1)**

The Director of Governance reported that the written resolution for the Epping Wellness Centre had been agreed as follows:

Approval of the amended budget for the Project to £8 million

To appoint Neilcott as the preferred contractor for the Epping Wellness Project at a contract cost of £6.052m, with delegated authority to the CEO and Chair of Corporation to sign the contract

**7 responses had been received and the written resolution was agreed (7.3.3)**

The committee had reviewed the January management accounts and the Deputy CEO confirmed that the February accounts were complete. There were some risks with AEB and SMT were monitoring this closely. Both distance learning and work-based programmes were being promoted to ensure tolerance was reached.

The Deputy CEO confirmed that the AEB allocation was £18m in two parts: 1.7m from the ESFA; the rest from the GLA with both contracts subject to 97% tolerance. Provision was funded based on the post code of the applicant with non-London post codes, mainly at Epping, funded by the ESFA. There was a small increase in subcontracting to minimise any shortfall which was a risk. The CEO confirmed that this would be done in a controlled way through existing subcontractors where quality was known. Adults were not returning in the volumes that were needed and the College was keen to avoid any clawback which would affect a break-even budget position. If no action were taken there could be a clawback up to 100% and a decrease in the allocation for 2022-23. It was a whole college effort to reach tolerance.

The biggest variable was staffing with an underspend of £2.5m staffing. Classes were being covered by hourly paid staff, where needed. Adults were still enrolling, which was reassuring. The College had achieved 94% in second year of COVID. There was a discussion about the provision for 2022-23. The CEO confirmed that planning had begun early and that both structures and the offer were being reviewed. The key focus was the curriculum plan with a focus on the adult offer after Easter. There were supplementary pay demands this year across 2 years with both UNISON and NEU raising

	<p>the issue of rising inflation. Pay rates in schools were higher and there was the potential for strike action.</p> <p>The Deputy CEO confirmed that the RCF had not been used and the next payment from the ESFA was due on 18 April. The Capital Grant for the following year had been received early. There was the potential for clawback in two further areas: the capacity delivery fund which placed students on web placements; and some historic AEB delivery at Epping pre-merger which had been reported previously with provision included in the forecast.</p> <p><b>7.4 Curriculum, Quality and Students committee</b></p> <p>The Vice Chair explained that the committee had congratulated SMT and all staff and students for the Ofsted outcome. It offered a huge reassurance that the SAR was accurate. The QIP flowed from this assessment and there had been some small changes to reflect the inspection comments. The comments about the quality processes for subcontracting at the Jewish schools were very reassuring. The committee had received an update on the development of the partnership with Bath Spa which looked positive. Looks optimistic. The committee had reviewed the Curriculum KPIs. Retention was good but attendance was an issue with too much variation and low levels at some campuses. The QIP was already showing some impact from the actions taken and there was a focus on attendance in English and Maths. The committee had a brief discussion about the curriculum review and this had been picked up at the strategy day. Members had congratulated the safeguarding team for the extremely positive outcome from the inspection. There had been a huge increase in the challenges they were dealing with. It had been a very positive meeting with no specific recommendations. Questions about the nurseries would be dealt with in Part 2.</p> <p><b>7.5 Property Committee</b></p> <p>The Committee Chair updated the Board. There were a number of options for developing the Hackney campus and they were being reviewed by the professional team. Epping was moving forward with work planned to begin in the Summer. The new premises in Ilford were working well and there would be about 7 weeks of work over the summer to get all the classrooms ready for September. Staff were keen for it to be ready sooner, but it was not possible to complete the work while teaching was taking place. The CEO would be meeting staff after Easter to review this.</p> <p>There would be a joint Property and Finance Committee meeting at Ardleigh Green on 24 May to look at the development and master plan. Governors were reassured that there was a clear link between the curriculum review and property decisions. The Property strategy had been developed to ensure the current and future needs of the curriculum were met with flexibility to accommodate future changes.</p> <p><b>8.1 NCC Green Strategy</b></p> <p>Work on the Green Strategy continued with the mapping of the current carbon footprint complete, and a number of steps were in place to continue to reduce emissions.</p>
<p><b>9</b></p>	<p><b>Feedback from Strategic Planning Day</b></p> <p>There was no additional feedback from what had been a useful event for Board members. Governors agreed that it would be helpful to have a second event, perhaps with each following the Autumn Statements and the Budget. The Director of Governance would add this to the meeting schedule for 2022-23. There would be a further update on the Curriculum at the summer meeting of the Curriculum, Quality and Students Committee.</p> <p><b>Action – The Director of Governance to add an additional Strategic Planning Day in 2022-23</b></p>

<b>10</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>  The CEO informed members that there had been an evacuation on Tuesday due to a power outage at Arbour square with a limited impact at Poplar. There had been a delay in communication from the Borough but otherwise communication. Three staff had been stuck in a lift for a short time. There was an issue with mobile phones to resolve but the uninterruptable power supply to protect server had worked well.
<b>11</b>	<b>Date of next meeting</b> The next Corporation meeting would be on 14 July 2022

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