

## 1647 PRELIMINARY PROCEDURAL MATTERS

### 1647.1 Attendance, Apologies, Welcome & Introductions

<b>Present:</b>	Nick Buckland	(Chair)	
	Paula Davis		<i>(Until Item 2.2, Part 2)</i>
	Jo Dyne		
	Patience Egbo		
	Kathryn Hardwidge		
	Sophia Howells		
	Tony Medhurst		<i>(Until Item 2.2, Part 2)</i>
	Cecilia Mutuma	<i>(By Teams)</i>	
	Mary Pooley		
	John Sills		
	Charlotte Simmonds		
	Anatoliy Strembitskyy		<i>(Until Item 2.2, Part 2)</i>

<b>In Attendance:</b>	Jayne Chaplin	(Clerk to the Corporation)	
	Andrew Clare		<i>(Until Item 2.2, Part 2)</i>
	Angela McLean		<i>(Until Item 2.2, Part 2)</i>
	Marisa Sharkey		<i>(Item 1647.3 only)</i>
	Shelley Turner		<i>(Item 1647.3 only)</i>

<b>Apologies:</b>	Gareth Dace	
	Hannah Nicholls	

### 1647.2 Declaration of Interests & Confidential Items

A Declaration of Interest was received from Tony Medhurst in his capacity as director of CK Assessment & Training Ltd (Part 2)

Recognising the commercially sensitive nature of the matters for discussion, it was **RESOLVED** for those Items in Part 2 of the Agenda to be taken as confidential business.

### 1647.3 Board Briefing: Skills Builder

An overview was provided of the framework, core skills and principles for and the College use of Skills Builder, highlighting the ways in which it helped learners develop and acquire the skills employers required, to equip and prepare them for the modern workforce and to succeed in life

Supported by video examples, case studies and student testimonials illustrating the ways in which core keys skills were integrated into teaching, learning and assessment, questioning included:

- a. The nature and stages of the skills developed, noted to include various activities on an individual and group basis, which it was confirmed included analytical and critical thinking skills
- b. The ways in which its success was measured noting regular opportunities provided for practice to reinforce learning with progress tracked, observed, and assessed

- c. How the skills remained in line with industry standards noting links and opportunities to the wider world to support skills transferability, the use of guest speakers from industry as appropriate and the linking of external stakeholders to the framework throughout the process to create a holistic approach

After confirming supporting information and links would be circulated to members, Marisa Sharkey, Head of Quality and Shelley Turner, Advanced Skills Teaching & Learning Practitioner were thanked for an engaging and informative presentation

*Marisa Sharkey and Shelley Turner left the meeting*

#### **1647.4 Minutes of the Last Meeting & Matters Arising**

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 18 December 2024 were approved as a correct record and the application of the Chair signature was authorised.

Observing those matters now implemented or scheduled for review at a later date (Minute 1630.3 refers), it was confirmed that there was nothing further upon which to report.

#### **1647.5 Chair's Update**

It was confirmed that there was nothing on which to report.

### **1648 STRATEGY & POLICY**

#### **1648.1 Principal's Report**

After observing those matters considered elsewhere on the Agenda, the report was summarised. Particularly:

- a. Highlighting the data from the most recent latest Open Evening noted to compare favourably with previous events in the same period, and the positive initial feedback following the staff Conference, providing an overview of the activities of the day, including the College's efforts towards sustainability and the positive reception toward charity initiatives
- b. Advising members that after recently published revised guidance for the Accountability Agreement maintained a 30 June submission date and with the final Board meeting of the year scheduled for 2 July 2025, the request for an extension to 4 July had been granted by the Education & Skills Funding Agency. After advising how this would allow the incorporation of any policy direction from the Post 16 Education and Skills White Paper and any announcements regarding the future of LSIP, it was then noted that as a three-yearly requirement unless College circumstances changed significantly, the next curriculum review was not due until 2027 after being undertaken in 2024 and "tested" by Ofsted and the ESFA
- c. Noting further information would be provided as details emerged, highlighting the publication of the interim report of the Curriculum and Assessment Review but the delay in the Post 16 Education and Skills White Paper and the Ofsted consultation underway and attendance at and involvement in a group looking at the social and economic impact of colleges in their local communities
- d. Welcoming and commending the College achievement of Matrix reaccreditation, noting that a briefing was to be provided at the July Board meeting.

After consideration, activity and developments were noted.

## **1649 PERFORMANCE MONITORING & COMPLIANCE**

### **1649.1 From Committees**

Following review by the respective committees, reports and recommendations were presented from:

#### **1649.1.1 Search Committee, 26/03/25**

Providing an oral report of the business considered:

- Members noted the student member vacancy and proposals for commencing recruitment to secure candidates ahead of the new academic year with four Business member vacancies occurring during 2025, three members of which departing after completing the maximum number of terms permissible
- In the context of forthcoming vacancies, summarising recruitment and succession planning developments, members were advised of potential candidates identified to replace departing members with meetings to be scheduled. The Committee's recommendations then were presented for the reappointment of Business member, Nick Buckland, and the appointment of John McNamara as a Co-opted member of the Quality, Standards & Business Planning Committee
- Members were updated on current progress with arrangements for 2025/26, noting discussions with members to be underway along with review of the meeting calendar, to be circulated once available. Of the roles becoming available as members departed, members were advised that Kathryn Hardwidge would succeed John Sills as Chair of Audit Committee. Then specifically highlighting the forthcoming vacancy in the position of Vice of the Corporation, members were invited to contact the Chair of the Corporation to discuss any interest
- Progress in implementing the governance improvement priorities for 2024/25 was reported to be largely on schedule with proposals forthcoming upon completion of the review of the external governance review recommendations, particularly regarding the use of nominated members and meeting practice

Following consideration and on the recommendation of the Search Committee, it was **RESOLVED**:

- To **APPROVE** the **APPOINTMENT** of John McNamara as Co-opted member of the Quality, Standards & Business Planning Committee for a term of office of four years with immediate effect
- To **APPROVE** the **RE-APPOINTMENT** of Nick Buckland as Business member and Chair of the Corporation for a term of office of four years from 1 August 2025

#### **1649.1.2 Resources Committee, 19/03/25**

An overview was provided of the business considered. Particularly highlighting discussion of the External Governance review suggestion for the Year-End Financial Statements and External Audit findings to be reviewed by presentations to joint representatives of the Resources and Audit Committees, noting how the Committee concurred with the conclusion of the Audit Committee, for the retention of existing practice, considering any duplication of activity to be minimal.

### **(a) 2024/25 Year-to-Date**

Confirming year-to-date performance and summarising plans to date for the forthcoming year, reports were presented comprising:

#### **(i) Financial Report (February 2025)**

In the context of the Group Budget approved in July 2024, setting a target operating surplus for the College of £393k, the position to the end of February 2025 was reported to be £394k ahead of budgeted expectation.

Highlighting the key changes in the Quarter 3 Forecast, review and questioning included:

- 16-19 income noting the release of the provision held back due to uncertainty around T Level recruitment and potential clawback following subsequent clarification that it would be less than anticipated
- Expenditure, particularly increased staff cost, noting the combined impact of vacancies and new roles being placed across the College to support increased student numbers, in parallel with NI changes with confirmation of the support to be provided still awaited and the Pay award, both effective from April 2025
- The potential for additional in-year funding noting that the position had only very recently been confirmed, highlighting the announcement of the introduction of a new affordability factor with funding now at two thirds of the eligible amount and with the College allocation of £400k now expected rather than the c.£600k - £650k originally anticipated. Reflecting further on the likelihood of future growth, members were advised that whilst forecast, it represented a greater risk going forward, highlighting the impact on planning of the uncertainty resulting from the lack of detailed information, noting that this was not now expected until June

After then providing clarification to some further points of details, the year-to-date position was noted.

#### **(ii) Subcontracted Activity**

Reporting on the year-to-date position for College Sub-contracted activity, progress was reviewed with Apprenticeships, AEB and Programmes of Study and partnership activity. Performance was confirmed to be in line with profile with no contract variations proposed. Activity was summarised and reviewed. Members then considered the updated Supply Chain/ Subcontractor Fees & Charges Policy presented for approval, noting confirmation of amendments mainly to changes in dates and titles and minor rewording of text to ensure practice remained compliant with current requirements.

After discussion and on the recommendation of the Resources Committee, it was **RESOLVED**:

- To **APPROVE** the updated Supply Chain/ Subcontractor Fees & Charges Policy

#### **(iii) 2025/26 Planning: 2027/28 Financial Plan & 2025/26 Budget Assumptions**

In the context of the Financial Plan approved in July 2024 and those Funding Allocations known for 2025/26, the updated Plan and the Budget assumptions for the forthcoming year were summarised.

After acknowledging the approach taken overall to achieve sustainability through growth delivered over the Plan, to maintain a financial health rating of “outstanding” and the need to achieve a Group profit to reinvest into facilities, the Budget Assumptions were summarised and discussed:

- Recognising, ahead of confirming the final position for the Plan and the 2025/26 Budget, the potential for the options presented to be revisited and adjusted to reflect any outcomes from the curriculum planning process and the impact of the continued and significant market changes and challenges
- Acknowledging, despite total funding and allocations for Education for 25/26 increasing, the impact on planning following the change of government and priorities and delays in key capital and revenue funding announcements, noting whilst now received, the impact for the College of its allocation was still being analysed
- Reflecting further on the key assumptions, members particularly noted the potential for the provision for Capital investment and Pay to change with confirmation of grant funding and NI support awaited

Following review and on the recommendation of the Resources Committee, it was **RESOLVED**:

- To **APPROVE** the 2025/26–2027/28 Financial Plan and the 2025/26 Budget Assumptions.

#### **1649.1.3 Audit Committee, 12/03/25**

After observing those items on the Agenda (Minutes 1649.1.2, 1649.2.1b and 1649.2.2 refer), an overview was provided of the business considered. Highlighting members’ discussion of the External Governance Review suggestion for the Year-End Financial Statements and External Audit findings to be reviewed by presentations to joint representatives of the Resources and Audit Committees, the Committee’s conclusion was confirmed, proposing for existing practice to be maintained, regarding any duplication of activity as minimal in contrast with what ultimately would be an increased demand on members’ time.

The report was noted.

#### **1649.1.4 Quality Standards & Business Planning (QSBP) Committee, 05/03/25**

After observing discussions elsewhere on the agenda (Minute 1648.1 refers), the Committee Chair provided an overview of the business considered, particularly drawing members’ attention to the Committee’s discussion of:

- The Briefing session explaining changes to the Internal Quality Review process
- Good progress reported in the implementation of the objectives in the Quality Improvement Plan, except in attendance and the further development of enrichment opportunities, all the subject of previous Board discussion and remaining the focus of attention

- The year to date 96% retention rate and the overall attendance of 84.8%, explaining that whilst below the 95% aspirational target, attendance was in-line with the equivalent point in 2023/24. The significance of improved attendance in Construction and Business was particularly highlighted, noting it to reflect the impact of the measures put in place
- The 85% positive destinations for 23/24, an 8% decline on 22/23, confirming analysis was underway to better ascertain possible reasons for the decline

## **1649.2 Statutory & Compliance**

### **1649.2.1 Spring Term Updates**

#### **(a) Health, Safety & Welfare (Safeguarding & Prevent)**

In the context of the Corporation's overall responsibility for ensuring the sufficiency of the measures in place for the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, the Nominated Governor for Safeguarding presented the first report of the Autumn Term.

After expressing confidence in and providing assurance about the arrangements and the review and monitoring of activity, an overview of developments was provided, particularly highlighting in respect of the year-to-date:

- An 18% increase in referrals and a 27% increase in welfare referrals with mental health accounting for 42% of all referrals. Noting to be higher in Health & Social Care, the impact was explained of a number concerning one individual, and the SEND department, acknowledged as an area with the most vulnerable learners in the College. The below average referral rate in Construction was observed to be attributed to the predominance of males in the area and the tendency to avoid reporting. In all instances, monitoring and action was confirmed to be ongoing
- Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment referrals, confirming appropriate action to be taken in all instances, explaining in response to questioning, the rise to be attributed to raised awareness of and greater confidence in reporting. Observing the expectation for numbers to increase in an environment of greater awareness, members then reflected on the use of current topical issues in illustrating and highlighting particular subjects, confirming the use of such opportunities as appropriate and where sensitive in nature, the support available for staff
- The increasing numbers of Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) learners and the challenges presented by increasingly complex needs and mental health difficulties presented and the increased demand on staffing and recruitment

Following review and discussion, the report was noted.

#### **(b) Risk Management**

The termly risk management update was presented following consideration by the Audit Committee, noting newly identified risks and confirmation that the in-depth review of the Risk Register that had taken place. In the context of previous comments about the risk identification processes and reporting and the findings of and suggestion in the external governance review, for an internal audit review to be undertaken, members then were advised that the Audit Committee proposed to seek the advice of the Internal Audit Service, based on its experience of sector practices, processes and reporting.

The report was noted.

### **1649.2.2 Policies (updated): Health & Safety**

In the context of the Corporation's overall responsibility for health and safety, the updated Health & Safety Policy was reviewed. Confirming the College commitment to and arrangements and processes for safeguarding and promoting health, safety, and welfare the amendments, minor in nature, were summarised, noted to clarify and/or amplify existing provisions and responsibilities

Members then were advised of the conclusions and findings of the recent Internal Audit Health & Safety Check undertaken as part of the Internal Audit Plan for 24/25 to confirm that there were sufficient health and safety practices in place, noting the Reasonable Assurance and confirmation of sufficient health and safety practices in place. The observations of and feedback from the Audit and Resources Committees were shared regarding the approach to and rationale for the Assurance provided in the context of such a limited focus and the nature of the points raised, which it was noted would be shared with the Internal Audit Service.

In the context of the current arrangements for reporting, the need for an enhanced focus was observed and it was agreed that going forward, the minutes from the termly Health and Safety Committee meetings would form an integral part of the Corporation agenda.

Following discussion and on the recommendation of the Resources Committee, it was **RESOLVED:**

- To **APPROVE** the updated Health & Safety Policy.

### **1650 OTHER BUSINESS & DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

#### **1650.1 Any Other Business**

None advised.

#### **1650.2 Dates of Next Meetings**

**Wednesday 2 July 2025**

*With the business forming Part 1 concluded, the meeting moved to the Part 2 confidential agenda at this point.*

Signed:



Dated: 2 July 2025

Nick Buckland OBE, Chair of the Corporation