**Minute Meeting of the Board**

**Face to Face Cumbernauld Campus Boardroom and Via Zoom 5.30 pm 17th March 2025**

**Present: Ronnie Smith, Keith Fulton, Yvonne Finlayson, Elaine Loudon, Stella McManus, Barbara Philliben, Catherine Pollock, Joanne Rosie, Julie Webster.**

**Via Zoom: Catriona Blacker, Fraser Hainey, Eileen Imlah, Kellyann McGraith, Christopher Moore, Douglas Morrison and Alastair Rennie.**

**In attendance: Ann Baxter, Ronnie Gilmour, Lynn McKenzie, Elaine Turkington, Penny Neish and Diane McGill.**

**1.** **Chair’s welcome**: Ronnie Smith welcomed Board Members to the meeting and thanked them for attending. He also introduced Candy Munro from CDN who is carrying out the external evaluation of the Lanarkshire Board. Board Members introduced themselves to her and Candy will be interviewing a number of them during the external evaluation process.

**2.** **Apologies for Absence**: There were apologies from David Alves, Elizabeth Arogbofa, Paula Blackadder, Ann Doherty, Moira Jarvie, Elaine McKechnie, Tarryn Robertson and Dave Winning.

**3. Declarations of Interest**: Ronnie Smith and Ann Baxter declared that they were members of the AMCOL Board.

**4. NCL Committee Minutes**

**4.1 CSAO 17 February 2025:** Barbara Philliben had chaired the meeting in Dave Winning’s absence and drew the Board’s attention to the CLIC project as summarized in the Minutes and suggested that Board Members have a look at this.

**4.2 ARC 17th February 2025:** Alastair Rennie had chaired the ARC in Yvonne Finlayson’s absence and drew the board’s attention to the external audit process for next year and the increased fee. He also noted that Stella McManus had informed the Lanarkshire Board ARC that **t**he SLC Committee was provided with an update regarding the review of payroll and pensions management as conducted by Henderson Loggie. The report culminated in 12 recommendations of which 8 have already been implemented. The report is confidential but SLC has committed to liaising with the Regional Chair to share relevant details of the report of which the Regional Body should have awareness.

**4.3 RGP Committee 24th February 2025:** Keith Fulton drew the Boards attention to the AMCOL report and to the update on BTO.

**4.3.1 BTO update:** The RGP minute notes that Keith Fulton reminded the Committee that, as it stands, Galliford Try’s offer to the College was that NCL would receive £225k, with each party taking care of their own legal costs. KF added that the £225k offered was less than 50% of the sum spent by the College - excluding legal costs - to help protect staff, learners and visitors and to help keep the building secure. Additionally, the sum offered would not touch the estimated cost of repair in 2021 of c. £3m which by now will have increased significantly. The College had requested a meeting with Galliford Try which had not yet materialized and, in the meantime, the current sist expired on Friday 28 February and Keith Fulton has instructed BTO to seek a further 3- month extension.

**4.3.2** There was an in- depth discussion by the Board about the next steps. There was a consensus that this was very poor treatment from builders who had built a building that had parts of cladding falling off it and then left the college to made it safe and who, so far, would not remedy the problem. There was also a view that there was a deliberate tactic of attrition through drawing out time and, therefore, money and costs. It was also noted that there will be large public build contracts in Lanarkshire in the near future and that there may be reputational sensitivities. Christopher Moore said that the college should, therefore, now look at utilizing reputational management to apply additional tactical pressure on the builders. Douglas Morrison also mentioned the possibility of the college approaching the Scottish Futures Trust for financial support towards the remedial works.

***Action: (1) The Board agreed that a letter should be sent by BTO to Burness Paul requesting the meeting that had not yet taken place. (2) Christopher Moore would now look at reputational management strategies with the communications team.***

**4.4 Finance Committee 24th February:** Paula Blackadder drew the Board’s attention to Item 8.3.3 of the minute which states that Christopher Moore informed the Committee that he wanted to get to a break-even position at the end of the year if at all possible. He raised the issue of preparing for a sale of the Coatbridge College nursery land and looking at the value of the land with and without planning permission and entering into discussion with East Dunbartonshire Council about the best use of space and income generation at the Kirkintilloch Campus.The Finance Committee agreed to recommend the nursery land sale and space utilisation discussions to the Board for approval.

***Decision: The Board approved the recommendation from the Finance Committee. The Board noted that estates was within the remit of the RGP Committee. This had gone to the Finance Committee because of the focus on the financial position. The Chair of the Board and the Board Secretary would continue to carefully consider the treatment of crossover items between committees.***

**5. NCL Strategy 2030 Update:** Christopher Moore updated the Board saying that, following the Board Strategy Day, there had been consultation with the Trades Unions’ and it had been warmly received. The strategy had then been sent out to all members of staff for consultation. Christopher Moore had presented the strategy at each campus and there had been strong engagement from staff. This had been followed up by focus groups across the campuses.There had also been consultation with external stakeholders – MP’s MSP’s LA’s, the NHS and Voluntary Groups.There would be a further update at the next meeting of the Board.

**6. SLC Committee and Board Reports**

**6.1 SLC Committees Update.** Stella McManus highlighted the following:

**6.1.1 Learning, Teaching and Mid-Year Review Updates*:***

* The College credit level currently sits at 42,919 and is on track to meet the target of 43,600 credits;
* The mid-year review provides an update on benchmarked retention, Curriculum Progress Reviews with associated outputs/actions; and Operational Planning Reviews with associated outputs/actions;
* The Education Scotland Modern Apprenticeship (MA) Inspection of SNIPEF activity took place on 6 February 2025;
* There remains significant good practice and good news stories in relation to student achievement and success already in 2024 – 2025.
* The SFC Outcome Agreement Self Evaluation and Case Studies were brought for discussions as were the QAA SEAP (Self Evaluation and Action Plan) and the Hybrid Working Procedure;
* The Replacement Corporate Parenting Plan 2024-28 with Action Plan and the Supporting Care Experienced Students Infographic were brought to the Committee for awareness;

**6.1.2 SLC Human Resources Committee**

* A discussion around the findings from a College-initiated internal audit into payroll and pensions matters, which was also discussed at the Audit & Risk Committee. All audit recommendations were accepted and many actions are already implemented. Mitigations implemented prevent any ongoing risk.

• The Committee reviewed and approved a proposed Hybrid Working Procedure.

• The Committee reviewed reports prepared in accordance with the Public Sector Equality Duty, which are in a new, more accessible format. These were approved for publication.

**6.1.3 SLC ARC:** The Committee noted the outcome from the Consultancy Review of Payroll and Pensions Management and the progress update of the Pension issue, noting no concerns at this stage of meeting the completion date of February 2025.

**6.1.4. The SLC Finance Committee.**

There had been a number of quarterly updates to the Committee as follows:

* Cashflow and Quarter 2 Accounts, noting the potential for large £1m payouts in the form of Voluntary Severance settlements and employment tribunals; the Quarterly update from Procurement; the Quarterly update from Facilities; the Quarterly update from the Climate Change Action Team (CCAT) with successful partnership linkages; the Quarterly Update from CLIC Innovate UK confirming that the College remains on track to meet the conditions of funding.
* A Voluntary Severance Progress update was provided to the Committee.
* The Committee considered the capital expenditure plan

• The Committee was advised of the legal expenditure to date for the employment tribunal.

**6.2.1 SLC Chairs Board Update. Douglas Morrison updated the Lanarkshire Board as follows:**

* The planned dissolution of the Lanarkshire Regional Strategic Body (LRSB), to create two independent and stand-alone colleges, South Lanarkshire College and New College Lanarkshire, represents an opportunity to have greater autonomy over the strategic direction of SLC in the years ahead. He was keen to emphasise his appreciation of the support and guidance offered by colleagues within the LRSB, including the support with the Employment Tribunal and looked forward to maintaining a collegiate and collaborative relationship in the future.
* The Employment Tribunal had not upheld the claimant’s cases. There was a four- week period for an appeal to be lodged but this could only be on points of law in the conduct of the tribunal.
* The education reform agenda, led by Scottish Government, continues to generate wider change within the sector, with the Tertiary Education and Training Bill published in February 2025. The Bill sets out government plans to transfer responsibility for funding apprenticeships and work-based learning programmes from Skills Development Scotland to the Scottish Funding Council. When considered alongside the ongoing reform of the Scottish Qualifications Authority to become Qualifications Scotland, the tertiary educational landscape in Scotland will have a very different feel to it post August 2026. The SLC Board will maintain close attention on the challenges and opportunities arising from the reform process.
* SLC continues to perform well, and there has been a successful launch of the CECA Academy and the continued success of the CLIC programme. These initiatives exemplify the characteristics of a more responsive, flexible, and agile College ready to meet the needs our learners and local communities. As SLC plan the formal launch of its 2025 Strategy Plan, it will remain cognisant of the ever-evolving needs and expectations of those it serves.
* He has been delighted to welcome three new board members, Kirsty Pinell, Jaqueline Morrison, and Heather Meighan to the board committees over the last few weeks. He also thanked Fiona Whittaker for her contribution to the board as both a member and Senior Independent Member. Fiona has noted her intention to step down to focus on professional and family commitments.

**6.2.**2 Ronnie Smith thanked him for his comments on the support given by the Lanarkshire Board and on collegiate approaches.

**7. Minute of the Lanarkshire Board 10th December 2024:** The minute of the meeting was approved.

**8. Chair’s Report**

**8.1 Chair’s Regional Overview:** Ronnie Smithinformed the Board that the Scottish Government was confident that it would make its deadline of the 31st July 2025 to dissolve both the Lanarkshire Board and the Glasgow Colleges Regional Boards. He commented again on the good relationships between SLC and NCL and that this should continue into the future.

**8.2 National Committees:** Ronnie Smith updated the Board on the restructure at College Scotland to try to make it a more responsive member organization. There was a new strategy and this would go to the Colleges’ Scotland Board on Thursday. Keith Fulton asked if this would have any impact on College Employers Scotland and Ronnie Smith did not know at this time if there would be an impact.

**8.3 Lanarkshire Region Update: As above at Item 8.1.**

**9. Update from College Employers Scotland: CES (College Employers Scotland):** Keith Fulton informed the Board that a joint communication has been issued by CES, UNISON and UNITE, essentially indicating that the job evaluation will be reinitiated. A revised workplan is in development. Elaine Turkington said that the data would now be very much out of date and of varying quality and there would need to be a reset to update all of this.

**10. Regional Outcome Agreement/ SEAP:** The CSAO minute at Item 6 gives an update on this. This minute is published with other Board papers. There will be a report at the next meeting of the Board.The Board noted the update.

**11. Regional Risk Register**

**11.1** Ronnie Gilmour updated the Board as follows:

* There are a total of 20 Strategic Risks logged as at Regional Strategic Risk Management Group (RSRMG) on 19 November 2024.
* There are no changes to 18 risks.
Risk G - "Failure of adherence to the Financial Memorandum and associated legislative requirements as Regional Strategic Body with Regional Fundable Status." moves DOWN to a risk score of 6 (from 9). There is no change to the residual risk.
Risk J - "Failure to establish and implement an effective regional governance model." moves DOWN to a risk score of 8 (from 12). There is no change to the residual risk.
All other risks remain the same as per December 2024.
Whilst there is no change to risk score or residual risk, risks C, P and S have had updates to Risk Definitions and/or Risk Treatments.
* Two risks are above the committee's threshold level and therefore are subject to Control Action Planning. These are:
* Financial: "A" Unable to maintain operating budget while delivering high quality, relevant and responsive education - very high (Above Amber [high] threshold
* Financial: "D" Inability to secure appropriate levels of funding to respond to operational and strategic priorities - very high (Above Amber [high] threshold)

**11.2 SLC Risk Register:** There are a total of 15 risks logged - the same as December 2024. All risks remain the same as at December 2024.

**12. Lanarkshire Colleges finances update:**

**12.1 NCL Update: Lynn McKenzie reported the following to January 2025:**

* The NCL college group is showing a breakeven at this stage
* The UOP to date shows £1,070k surplus, which is £-113k (-9.6%) unfavourable to Budget.
* Income is £-814k (-2.7%) unfavourable to Budget.
* Expenditure is £1,292k (4.4%) favourable to Budget.
* There are costs to be checked e.g. temporary staffing, operating ICT costs but the Finance

Team is on schedule for reporting.

**12.2 SLC Update.** Stella McManus updated the Board as follows:

* There is a draft operating deficit of £115k.
* While the College remains vigilant to minimise expenditure where possible, imposing a recruitment freeze and continually engaging in procurement activity to ensure best value in all major contracts, the results have been negatively impacted by a £311k overspend in salaries primarily due to under provision of curriculum pay awards that were concluded in the first quarter of 2024/25.
* There has been £146k underpayment of VAT.
* Following circa £1M in expected severance payouts and a potential £1M in employment tribunal settlements, the College cashflow will track between £300K - £1M each month from now until July 2026.
* The Committee was assured that the College will continually monitor cash flow. No reinvestment of the £750k of funds previously held in a special reserve account has been made at this time.

**13. Student Association Reports:** The SA reports are published on the NCL website.

**13.1 NCL Student Association Report:**

Julie Webster presented her report to be Board highlighting the following:

* International Men’s Day
* Food and Clothing Banks
* The use of social media
* The well being academies are very popular
* International Students’ Week

**13.2 SLC Student Association Report. Catriona Blacker highlighted the following:**

* The Food Larder which is a great initiative but there are challenges keeping it stocked.
* Mental Health and health space drop in
* Student Engagement
* Graduation
* Breakfasts
* Gender based violence – drop in sessions and social media campaign

**14. Principals’ College Update Reports**

**14.1 SLC Update. Stella McManus updated the Board as follows:**

* The Voluntary Severance Scheme and Consultation closed on 28 February, and work is now ongoing to finalise VS applications and produce the final consultation document which will consider feedback received.
* The SFC have visited the College in preparation for dissolution. It has also been announced that all funding will now be consolidated into the SFC, this includes apprenticeship funding.
* Colleges Scotland are seeking to change governance arrangements at their organisation.
* It is expected that the increase in National Insurance Contributions may be partially funded.
* The national job evaluation for support staff has progressed with agreement between Trade Unions and employers that the 2018 data is no longer accurate.
* Staff views are being considered on the new strategic aims for 2030.
* Teams have led on the creation of two new partnerships, the launch of the Civil Engineering Academy and Skillsminer.

**14.2 NCL Update.** Christopher Moore highlighted the following:

* The formal launching of the Learning Well.
* There had been the death of colleagues who would be sadly missed: Angela McKee, Ciaran O’Neill and Kevin Conlan.
* He had been informed just before Christmas that Ann Baxter would be retiring in 2025. She would step aside as Deputy Principal for Students and the Curriculum in June and she would help to mentor the new appointee until Christmas 2025. The search for a new Deputy would commence this month and would be internal in the first instance. The Chair and Board Members congratulated Ann on her news.

**15. External Evaluation**

**15.1 Evaluation Context:** The Board Secretary informed the Board that this year there would be an external evaluation of the Board which would be undertaken by Candy Munro of CDN.An external evaluation was required every 5 years under the Code of Good Governance. It had been confirmed that there was no need to have a self- evaluation in the same year as an external evaluation. Penny Neish would send out the Committee and Board questionnaires and Board Members were asked to complete these so that they could inform the evaluation. There would also be one-one interviews with Candy and those who were not interviewed by her would have a one to one with Ronnie Smith.

**15.2 Evaluation of the Chair:** Keith Fulton would send a questionnaire to Board Membersto complete which would form the basis for the SIM evaluation of the Chair.

**15.3 CDN Evaluation:** Candy Munro said that she would conduct the evaluation through a process of desk research, one to one interviews, observation of the Board through attending this meeting and a feedback workshop before bringing the report to the June meeting of the Board. She was looking forward to working with the Lanarkshire Board.

**16. Approval of Publication of Papers from the Board:** The Board approved the publication of the agenda, the minute of the 12th December 2024, the registrars reportand the student association reports.

**17. AOB:** There was no other business.

**18. Date of Next Meeting:** The scheduled date of the next meeting of the Lanarkshire Board is Monday 9th June 2025 at the Motherwell Campus.