

EXETER AND NORTH DEVON COLLEGES GROUP FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

CORPORATION BOARD

Public Minutes of the meeting held on 4pm on Wednesday 25 February 2026, North Devon Campus, Old Sticklepath Hill, Barnstaple, Devon, EX31 2BQ

Present

Adam Watt	Corporation Chair
John Laramy CBE	Principal/CEO
Sue Clarke OBE	Via Teams
Gaynor Castle	Via Teams
Pat Denham OBE	Via Teams
Antony Hart	
Neil Hitchings	
Wilf Hudson	Via Teams
Rob Hutchins	
Harrison Littler	Via Teams
Carol McCormack OBE	Via Teams
Julie McLeod	
Damian Norcombe	Via Teams
Tim Quine	Via Teams
Cynthia Sedgman	Via Teams
Sally Wolkowski	Via Teams
Pamela Degregorio	
Phebe Corney	
Ayomide Okesola	
Chelsy Ingram	
Robyn La Tragna	
Leanne Macey-Withey	
Albertina Mihaila	
Victoria Roberts	
Aimee Taylor	
Jo Boardman	Head of Governance
Abbie Sawyer	Executive Officer Governance and Compliance (Minutes)
Alex Farmery	Executive Officer (Observer)

Apologies

Graham Atkins
Phebe Corney
Stephen Wiltshire
Stewart Noakes

In Attendance

Jade Otty
Richard Church

Deputy CEO
Chief Operating Officer

1. **Welcome and Apologies** **Action**

The Chair welcomed the Board to a momentous Board meeting, confirming that this was the first as a merged Board, as well as the first venture into a hybrid meeting as a Board. The Chair led introductions of all Board members.

This is an extraordinary Board Meeting, therefore no previous minutes were discussed and there were no papers to work through.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **Matters Arising**

3. Today marks the fifty-first day of ENDC Group, the tour pre-Board was incredibly useful, in terms of getting to understand the campus provision and thinking about how spaces can be made to work better.

The Chair noted that this meeting would be Sue Clarke's last as a governor. Sue has been Chair of Quality and Standards and the Safeguarding Lead Governor. The Chair shared that Sue has been a vital part of Board, and expressed his grateful thanks to her on behalf of the Board, noting her commitment and valued contributions.

3.1 **Vice-Chair Appointment**

A new Vice Chair has been appointed. There was a 92% turnout for voting, of which all votes were supportive of the candidate. The Board were delighted to congratulate Neil Hitchings on his appointment as Vice-Chair.

4. **Strategic Matters for discussion**

4.1 **The Story so Far for North Devon College (NDC)**

The Board were updated on several key changes, and ways of implementing a consistent approach across both College sites. This has led to creation of group roles for key areas such as apprenticeships, teaching and learning. Post merger there have been some notable resignations at NDC, which ELT are looking to replace.

The Deputy CEO informed Board of NDC priorities over the next 18 months. The core focus remains on 'right student, right course, right

location' and being ambitious in terms of entrance criteria and curriculum offering.

North Devon College is one of the oldest tertiary colleges in the country, which comes with massive curriculum opportunities. In relation to feedback around pride and reputation, the group is looking to restore credibility, pride, and line of sight alongside 'North Devon College Magic'. To enable this, there will be work with key stakeholders, in terms of reputation, and challenges such as improving pay, conditions, culture of trust and, ambition.

NDC have adopted various 'Exeter' practices, including limiting work from home, providing clarity on term dates and a simplified approach to observations. There has been an establishment of a Senior Curriculum Group to make decisions about curriculum, with the intention to provide a clear curriculum strategy with line of sight, allowing leaders to feel proud of their curriculum.

Clear expectations have been established around college values, learners and training for all staff. The plan is for NDC to create empowered Faculty structures to match those already established in Exeter.

Changes have been received positively by local schools, especially around entrance requirements, NDC now has really clear criteria for each of those different levels.

Since merger, various estate upgrades have been planned / started to take place including the Sports Hall, Gym and changing rooms. As a result of staff feedback a new performing arts space is being provided. There are plans to make use of the health facilities ('SIM suite') already in place at NDC, with the view to expanding course offer in this field.

The Board were informed that although there was a lot of due diligence work pre-merger, there have been some unexpected challenges around safeguarding, estate challenges and hearsay.

The feedback received from students has been positive, especially around general improvement to the site, however social space and a way for the student union to feedback to management have been noted as areas to improve by the students themselves.

The Board noted that there has been a lot of change in a short space of time, and this is an achievement.

The Staff Governors discussed the feeling amongst staff, informing Board of a degree of anxiousness about next steps. The Committee had assurance that staff voice meetings are scheduled, and all feedback

from this will be listened to. Regular updates provided to staff will continue.

The slides will be shared with the Board post-meeting.

4.2 **The Chair thanked the Deputy CEO.**

Merger Implementation Update (RC)

The Board were informed of plans post-merger, including progress around certain leases / contracts.

Assurance was provided that plans are in place to ensure as smooth a transition as possible, across all business functions. This includes extending the pre-merger workstreams to post-merger groups for each business area. The Deputy CEO is working closely with the groups, to ensure we have a comprehensive plan moving forward. The groups will continue until early July. The transition process extends to ensuring a shared culture is in place across both sites.

There have been some immediate changes which have provided noticeable differences such as improving areas of the estate that are not up to standard, reopening up the side gate and changes to the duty manager process. Various data transfer exercises are taking place to ensure data is protected. MIS Systems, finance and payroll will all be aligned over the next few months.

From a business engagement viewpoint there has been feedback around a lack of trust and engagement. Working closely with stakeholders to ensure engagement and build trust will be a key priority.

The Chair thanked the Chief Operating Officer.

4.3 The Strategy Journey moving forward

The Principal shared his working vision for the group with the Board; 'To create the best place-based college group in England, which works for students, staff, the community, and businesses to support the ambition of Devon'.

The Centre for Progression (Tiverton) will now Fall under the Exeter remit (Foundation, Learning, Inclusion).

NDC is a proud college in its own right, the desire is to keep and strengthen this. Exeter College strategy will stay the same for a period. ,When the new strategy is due in 2028, this will be discussed and

developed as a group strategy. The Board challenged if there would be a group strategy between now and 2028, and assurance was provided regarding strategies per college, and this will be further discussed at Board Level.

An Executive Leadership team (ELT) and ELT+ have been formed to ensure the Colleges are both well represented. Staffing-wise, plans will be created to ensure that there are outstanding business functions, which adds to the student experience.

** Albertina Mihaila left the meeting.*

The Board discussed the focus on NDC and if Exeter College was still getting the attention it had previously, and were assured that changes in responsibilities of staff have ensured Exeter still have the right amount of leadership and management oversight. It was noted that there has been an increased workload for many members of staff underneath ELT, this has provided some challenge and uncertainty.

**Wilf Hudson left the meeting.*

The Chair thanked the Principal for his update.

The Chair noted how useful the tour of NDC pre-Board Meeting has been- and thanked all staff for their hard work, and extra responsibilities post-merger.