

Summary of Reports from: Whole Corporation Appraisal, Corporation Meeting Observations; and Corporation Meeting Pack Review

February 2022



1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document is a summary of three individual reports prepared by **the governance forum (tgf)** for the Kirklees College Corporation (the "Corporation").
- 1.2 This document will refer to those individual reports; it serves as a summary for the Corporation and provides, in Section 3, key actions required to move forward.
- 1.3 This report is embedded in **tgf's** well known and robust Governance Framework process, which focuses on Compliance and Performance Drivers. In undertaking this process, the focus has been on the Performance Drivers of, **transparency, impact, and behaviour** of the Corporation, during the execution of their duties and overall effectiveness.
- 1.4 The Corporation aims to align itself to the Association of Colleges Governors' Council: Code of Good Governance for English Schools (amended September 2021), especially in relation to being professional, prudent, and passionate about supporting the attainment of young people and adults. It will use the above-mentioned reports and the relevant actions within to drive any necessary change in its corporate structures beyond functionality, especially at a strategic level.
- 1.5 Although **tgf** did not do an in-depth Governance Code review, we were able to confirm actions against the key areas discussed below. Where an area was not covered by the external review items covered in this report, we requested information from the Corporation to satisfy ourselves in terms of compliance. This was provided and deemed satisfactory. The areas covered in our audit trail are included in Appendix 1.

2. SUMMARY OF REPORTS

2.1 Whole Corporation Appraisal Report

(a) Overview

Kirklees College is undertaking a process of reviewing and updating its governance, which includes those required for whole Corporation appraisal. This appraisal process identifies key strengths and confidence in the Corporation's performance, whilst identifying those areas that require additional development and support.

From 64 scored questions, the Corporation showed strengths in 19 areas, scoring over 85%, with six areas reaching above 90%. Seven development needs were identified where the Corporation scored less than 65%; key items are listed in Section 3 below.

(b) **Key strengths**

Strengths are highlighted when a high number of Governors indicate that the Corporation has a clear or moderate strength in a specific area.

Area	No of Areas Assessed	No. of areas scoring over 90%	Identified key strengths
Resources	19	11	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delegations• Standing Orders• Terms of Reference• Relevant, timely and accurate information for Governors• Terms of Office
Competency	22	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Triangular relationship between the Chair, Principal and Clerk to the Corporation is effective• There is a good range of skills, experience, and diversity to govern well• Governors contribute well to discussions
Execution	23	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are appropriate financial controls in place• Briefings by Executives are timely• There is collective agreement and support

(c) **Areas for development**

Development needs are highlighted when a high number of Governors indicate that the Corporation have a clear or moderate development need in a specific area.

Area	No of Areas Assessed	No. of questions scoring below 65%	Identified key developments
Resources	19	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Benchmarking practice against similar organisations• Developing rapport and building relationships
Competency	22	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contributing fully to the agenda• Annual Corporation appraisal• One-to-one feedback on individual Governor performance• Assessing the Corporation's effectiveness
Execution	23	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Opening individual networks to the organisation

(d) **Summary of specific responses from Governors**

Governors felt there could be more tools/activities to allow the Corporation to hear the 'student voice', not least as the students are recognised to be at the heart of everything that the Corporation does. It was noted that some Governors feel that the customer focus is achieved through committee meetings which allow for greater depth of understanding in key areas.

In relation to the key area of Equality Diversity and Inclusion, more than 75% of Governors believe that this is embedded throughout the organisation. Although 30% of the Governors were unsure if the Corporation could be deemed as high performing, just over 60% felt that it was.

Ultimately, it was pleasing to note that Governors have a genuine passion for the value Kirklees College can add to a student's life and there is a clear commitment and interest in the work of the College, by the corporation. This is evidenced through Governor's attendance at meetings, their involvement in college activities, their contributions to discussions and the huge amount of time they volunteer to the College without remuneration.

2.2 **Summary of Corporation Meeting Observation**

The hybrid (a mix of virtual and in-person attendance) Corporation meeting was observed by a **tgf** Consultant on 12th November 2021.

- (a) As detailed in the individual report, the meeting of the Corporation was both professional and engaging with a good balance of appropriate challenge from Governors to the Principal and the Executives. Governors were also able to demonstrate the good balance of skills, experience, and abilities they hold collectively, in understanding the challenges and opportunities facing Kirklees College, and the wider education sector.
- (b) The meeting was scheduled for three hours which is longer than standard practice outside the sector but quite usual for colleges and although the agenda did not itemise a comfort break, the Chair allowed for one at an appropriate time. The agenda was well structured and contained a mix of strategic, operational and compliance matters. Future agendas may benefit from the grouping of similar items together, for more focused discussions and efficiency.
- (c) Although the meeting started on time, it finished later than scheduled by 13 minutes. It was evident that all Governors were well prepared for the meeting. Governors engaged actively in discussions and in scrutinising the executives and it was pleasing to note that those attending virtually kept their cameras on and enjoyed good internet connectivity at all times.
- (d) The Chair of the Corporation executed his duties effectively and efficiently with confidence and the required flexibility, where needed. There was not always sufficient time for those presenting papers to be questioned prior to decisions being made, so a review of timings would be advisable. In particular,

at the observed meeting, one presenter was only able to be in attendance for a limited time and although the relevant item was taken early to accommodate this, there was still insufficient time for questions before she had to leave. It is also recommended that the Chair ensures that the Corporation meetings adhere more strictly to the timings of the agenda by emphasising that reports submitted prior to meetings are summarised with key highlights during the actual meeting.

- (e) The **tgf** consultant noted an item on the agenda as, papers for assurance or information purposes only, and as there was no time allocated, it was assumed that these papers had been distributed in advance of the meeting. There was no clarity on if there would be a separate opportunity for these matters to be discussed or any specific actions made clear. As there is a danger that these documents could be viewed as unimportant or nonurgent, and therefore are not read and digested with the same level of importance as others, more clarity is recommended.
- (f) It was recommended in the individual report that meeting papers be further improved by including a standard cover page for all reports, although it should be noted that most reports were clearly marked and related to agenda items, with some having a consistent cover page in line with best practice. All items on the agenda were discussed properly with Governors participating in the discussion and questions and bouncing thoughts and opinions off each other's contributions. Those attending virtually also made good use of the online chat facility, especially in relation to one item being Digital and Tech.
- (g) Again, for recommendation, Governors should consider limiting the amount and/or the volume of reports and papers tabled at the meeting, to ensure that there is sufficient time to read, digest, and contribute to key items as necessary. A good rapport was clearly present and evidenced between the Chair and the Principal, and between the Governors generally and the Executive team. When challenged, the tone remained professional and constructive, with Governors displaying genuine interest and preparedness to find solutions and make the necessary decisions.

2.3 Summary of Corporation Meeting Pack Review

- (a) **tgf** uses a maturity rating system to assess corporate meeting packs and based on this process, it is concluded that Kirklees College have a rating of **Good/Very Good**. The structure of the agenda was found to be excellent and in line with good governance practice with standard housekeeping items at the beginning, strategic and other items for approval in the middle, and general items for noting towards the end. With the Principal's report itemised early in the agenda, it allowed for the rest of the meeting to flow well, as discussions and other reports stem from this item.
- (b) Areas of good practice included a consistent format and style for reports which was also explicit in terms of risk management. Overall, **tgf** found reports to be good with scope for further improvements. The areas for improvement included reviewing the structure of agendas and reports to ensure related items were together; linking specific responsibilities for the Corporation; and highlighting key issues for consideration. Where members of the Corporation are unable to attend meetings (for whatever reason), their

input can still be contributed to the meeting through the submission of comments/questions and decisions fed through the Chair prior to the meeting. Unfortunately, **tgf** were unable to benchmark the meeting length due to meeting end times not being included in the minutes, and a key area of good governance is to include the end time in the minutes of each meeting as part of the Corporation's audit trail. The Clerk did have a record of the end times of meetings, which were used for benchmarking.

- (c) The Corporation wished to review its quality of governance material and **tgf** therefore used 3 checklists (agenda, reports, and minutes) based on good practice across several sectors. Documents from 3 different meetings (July, September, and November 2021) were reviewed and the outcome of this review is detailed in the individual report which includes nine recommendations for the Corporation's consideration.
- (d) When benchmarked against other similar sized organisations, Kirklees College are operating below or slightly below in some areas, the averages outlined in terms of the proportion of planned time for decisions, discussions and monitoring and again, in terms of more general housekeeping items and those for information.

3. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND KEY ACTIONS

It is evident across the three reports that Kirklees College is demonstrating a good level of governance and where there are areas for development, in the main these are not insurmountable and will serve to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of Governors individually and collectively.

A summary of key actions detailed in the individual reports are provided below.

Report	Recommendations/Action Required	By Whom	RAG Status
Whole Corporation Appraisal	<input type="checkbox"/> Developing rapport and building relationships between Governors where necessary.		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Creating an appraisal process that includes one-to-one feedback on individual Governor performance.		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Consider how Governors might open up their professional networks to the organisation.		
Corporation Meeting Observation	<input type="checkbox"/> Itemise comfort breaks within the agenda for any meetings exceeding 2 hours especially where several meetings are scheduled for the same day with similar attendees.		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Ensure presenters of papers/reports highlight key area of their respective reports.		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Review timings, to ensure that there is always sufficient time for those presenting papers to be questioned, prior to decisions being made i.e. policies etc. Where late changes are made to the Agenda running order, consider the risk of overrun and the impact on time for questions.		

- Corporation Meeting Pack Review
- Be clear regarding papers for assurance/ information in terms of what Governors should do with them and by when.
 - Have a clear purpose for papers which link to Meeting-specific responsibilities of the Corporation.
 - Consider separate risk sections with recommendations or information on how risks are managed/monitored.
 - Consider expanding the reports 'information' to include, for example, student experience, value for money, corporate objectives etc.



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the governance forum
26th January 2022

Appendix 1

- 10.1. The Corporation must regularly review its effectiveness, ensuring continuous improvement, thereby not only enhancing its own performance but providing an example to the College. The review should include an assessment of performance against the values and principle responsibilities set out in this Code.
- 10.2. The Corporation should define in writing and regularly review, the respective responsibilities of the Chair, the Principal, the Clerk and individual Governors.
- 10.3. The Corporation should annually reflect on the extent to which its committees have met their terms of reference and remain fit for purpose.
- 10.4. In addition, the Corporation must conduct a regular, full and robust review of its effectiveness and that of its committees, the starting point for which should be an assessment against this Code.
- 10.5. The Corporation should set out in writing and regularly review agreed governance procedures, often described as Standing Orders. These should include levels of delegated authority and of any sub-delegations.
- 10.6. In reviewing its effectiveness, the Corporation should reflect on the success of the College as a whole, in meeting strategic objectives and associated performance measures and the contribution the Corporation has made to that success.
- 10.7. The Corporation should, where possible, benchmark its performance and processes against other comparable Colleges and relevant institutions outside the FE sector.
- 10.8. Account should be taken of the views of the executive and relevant bodies and of staff, parents, trustees, employers and student communities. Any review should include an external perspective, for example by using a suitable external facilitator or a suitably experienced governor and/or clerk from another college. The timing should be in line with the production of the College's annual self-assessment.
- 10.9. Acting on the outcomes of effectiveness reviews is as important as undertaking them. The outcomes and associated actions should be published widely, including in the annual report.