

IEG CORPORATION BOARD MEETING

25 March 2025

5:00 PM - 7:15 PM

Stamford College

ATTENDANCE

MEMBERS

Suneel Appan	(Online)
Martin Ballard	(Online)
David Cashmore	
Nicholas Crippa	
Tony Keeling	
Pamela Jane Kilbey	
Angela Morris	
Rachel Nicholls	
David Pennell	(Chair)
Gemma Roger	
Steve Saffhill	
Tony Warner	
Kris Varslavs da Silva	(On-line)

ATTENDEES

Julia Bates	
David O'Garr	
Louise Perry	
Jane Spurgin	(for Governance Director)
Edward Thomas	
Sarah Young	

APOLOGIES

Gillian Beasley
Vincent Brittain
Marco Cereste
Les Ebdon
Marley Sheridan

1. WELCOME

- a. **Apologies for absence:** Apologies were received from Gillian Beasley, Vincent Brittain, Marco Cereste, Sir Les Ebdon and Marley Sheridan.
- b. **Confirmation of eligibility, quoracy and declarations of interest:** No notice had been received of any Member becoming ineligible to hold office, the meeting was quorate and no interests were declared.
- c. **Requests for urgent business:** None received

2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

- **Approve the Minutes of the last meeting (12.12.24):** The Minutes were approved for signature **(ACTION 1)**.
- **Matters arising from the minutes.** None
- **Actions from the minutes (Board tracker).** All actions either completed or underway – IEG student governor links with UCP student representative(s) to be firmed up **(ACTION 2)**

3. COMMITTEE MEETINGS UPDATE

The Board **received** and **noted** the following Committee and Council minutes:

- a. *IEG Audit Committee (05.03.25 – draft)*
- b. *UCP Audit Committee (05.03.25 – draft)*
- c. *Finance & Resources Committee (11.03.25 – draft)*
- d. *UCP Council (20.03.25 – draft)*

Any relevant matters arising were covered under the agenda.

4. CEO'S REPORT

The Board received the CEO's update report and considered the following key points:

- A deteriorating economic outlook, including potential global events, rising inflation, and increased defence spending, suggests tighter public spending in the 2025 Spending Review, particularly for 2026-2028.
- The upcoming fiscal statement is expected to reveal changes to long-term spending plans, potentially including a 2.8% pay award limit for public sector pay review bodies creating challenges for financial forecasting and stability.
- The education sector faces significant funding uncertainty due to late and complex government announcements and the key uncertainties for IEG are the lack of information around the following:

2024/25

- 16-18 in-year growth funding has been reduced but exact amount is yet to be confirmed,
- a proportion of a £50 million sector grant announced in January 2025 will be paid in a single sum later in the summer – amount to be advised;
- changes to the TPS employer contribution grant calculation may reduce payments;

- confirmation of the percentage government contribution to the National Insurance increase is awaited;

2025/26

- adult skills fund allocations are uncertain (following a 2% cut to devolved budgets);
- HE teaching grant information is pending;
- details of the 16-19 funding formula, conditions, and individual allocations for 2025/26 (although a 3.78% increase in 16-18 course funding rates has been announced);
- funding allocation information from the DfE regarding the £302 million FE College Condition Capital fund is awaited.
- The Group will raise its condition and capacity issues with the DfE at their Annual Strategic Conversation meeting. A report of the conversation will be provided to the Board (**ACTION 3**).
- The Towns Fund Board has granted IEG an additional £1.8 million for the Centre for Green Technology (subject to the completion of required additional paperwork by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)).
- The Board noted the difficulties presented in that the late information hinders prudent financial decision-making and cash flow forecasting. However, IEG intends to be financially agile, pausing some spending decision until more funding information is released.
- Members were disappointed to note that IEG was unsuccessful in securing CPCA – FE Cold Spots Capital Funding (£1m) despite a strong bid. IEG challenged the decision leading to communication with officials and politicians but the decision has not been reversed.
- The CEO has been invited to join the CPCA Skills Board strengthening IEG's influence in regional skills development, and to take on the role of Vice Chair for the new Youth Guarantee Programme Board, a new initiative part of the Get Britain Working and Trailblazer funding, aimed at supporting 18-21 year olds. The Board was pleased to note that the CEO will be working closely with the Chair, potentially the CEO of Youth Employment UK, and the Assistant Director Skills and Employment to ensure the program's effective delivery.

The Board **observed** that the overwhelming message is one of uncertainty for future funding and **welcomed** management's close scrutiny of developments and assessment of impact, particularly in terms of being able to support growth in 2025/26.

5. GOVERNOR DASHBOARD 2024/25

The Governor dashboard for 2024/25 (as at P7) was presented for scrutiny. The Board discussed the following aspects, in particular, that:

16-19

- 16-19 student numbers are positive with 5,272 retained to date which is higher than at this time last year;
- attendance is slightly down on 2024/25 but not affecting progression at the moment;
- the re-forecast growth funding position is £0.9m (down from £1.4m);
- the application numbers for 2025/26 are similar to last year;

Higher Education

- HE did not recruit in January as anticipated to the new HTQ courses which has impacted on the UCP projected budget position – much work is being done to ensure that UCP achieves a balanced end of year position;
- it was explained that there are two trigger points in the HE academic year for counting student numbers (the 42 day FE rule does not apply to HE students);
- HE applications for 2025/26 are positive;

Adult Skills

- adult student numbers are strong and the challenge is to stay within the 10% growth tolerance this year;

Apprenticeships

- apprenticeship achievement rates have been impacted by prior years; however, this year has been one of solid performance and consolidation and 68% of students are at or above their progress target. A noticeable improvement in achievement rates is expected next year;

In other areas:

- staff turnover has normalised again after a couple of tricky years of recruitment with a good recruitment campaign undertaken over the Christmas period for 53 posts. Members were pleased to hear that new staff are positive about their onboarding experience;
- there are no reported significant H&S issues;
- ten new internal audit recommendations had been added and overall, there has been good progress in completing these;
- in terms of sustainability, new metrics around total energy use were reported and it was noted that there are plans to merge all energy use into one graph. Members were pleased to see the additions and changes around the metrics and welcomed a statement around setting a baseline (and potentially including water and recycling) to be reported at the next meeting (**ACTION 4**).

The Board **welcomed** the detailed reported position and congratulated the teams on the excellent progress with estate developments.

6. STATUTORY GOVERNANCE DOCUMENT AMENDMENTS

The Board was requested to approve amendments to statutory governance documentation to support the streamlining of UCP's governance by disbanding its separate Audit and Governance & Nominations Committees. It was discussed that:

- the UCP Audit Committee's responsibilities are to transfer to the IEG Audit Committee, with three UCP Council members appointed;
- the Office for Students (OfS) has been advised of the planned changes which ensure that IEG continues to be compliant with registration conditions;
- UCP Council approved amendments to its Scheme of Delegation and recommended the revised Terms of Reference for the Audit and Search & Remuneration Committees at its meeting on 20th March 2025;
- IEG's statutory documentation (Instrument and Articles, Standing Orders, and Committee Terms of Reference) requires amendments to reflect the joint committees.

Members commented that the merging of the committees makes good governance sense and noted that the IEG Audit Committee members are keen to learn more about UCP prior to the first meeting of the joint committee (an action point from the Audit Committee minutes).

The Board approved the following documents as presented at the meeting:

- a. Revised IEG Instrument & Articles of Government
- b. Revised IEG Standing Orders
- c. Revised IEG Audit Committee and IEG Search, Governance & Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference – amended

Revised approved documents to be published on the IEG Website (**ACTION 5**).

7. GOVERNOR LINK VISITS 2024/25

The Board was provided with an update on the Governor Link visits made during 2024/25, year to date. It was noted that the new Governor Link Programme was implemented in Autumn 2024 with governors being linked to areas/departments across the Group and that, to date, 14 visits have been undertaken with further dates planned in the diary. Members received and noted the visit reports and the dates of the two planned campus visits in April and May (confirmation of attendance to be sought – **ACTION 6**).

Members **observed** that they find the visits to be insightful and useful, enabling a better understanding of the Group, its activities, students and staff.

8. STUDENT GOVERNORS REPORT

Kris Varslavs da Silva, student governor, provided a verbal report on student union activities (Peterborough College) advising that:

- delivery of the Student Union (SU) activity plan is going well;
- the SU has raised and donated £1k towards Peterborough Pride in sponsorship;
- there are continuing EDI plans to support culture awareness week – a day showing a variety of cultures expressed through clothing/food/music. Many students are participating and a successful day is expected;
- the student governor is chairing Peterborough Citizens Mayoral Assembly meeting in a few weeks' time (hosted by Peterborough College);
- an end of year student based party is planned, utilising spare budget. Any remaining funds will be donated to charity.

Members asked whether the student governor was enjoying his role and were advised that he enjoys it, as it makes college more interesting, though meetings can be challenging in terms of timings. He finds it insightful to see the other side of the business.

The Board **thanked** Kris for his great work in getting the student union involved and for both his and Marley's useful comments at Curriculum & Quality Committee meetings. It **welcomed** the update report from the student governor and **noted** developments.

9. 2025/26 CURRICULUM PLANNING – OVERVIEW

The Board received a report providing a strategic overview of the 2025/26 Curriculum Planning process and noted that planning is going well, despite the financial uncertainty and lack of complete clarity around funded qualifications. The detailed plans have been considered in depth by the Curriculum & Quality Committee.

It was noted that a more integrated approach across departments and faculties has been adopted to manage growth and capacity challenges, whilst planning is based (against that background) on what courses are right for students/meeting needs and what choices can be managed. The new Level 2 technical qualifications are being introduced, leading students straight into the workplace as progression (publicised locally through assessors talking to employers about them, spreading the word) and there is positivity around the new HTQs for HE, despite the brand being slow to come on board nationally.

The change in OFSTED focus has been embedded in all curriculum planning and there has been a move towards a three year plan which will help IEG navigate the challenges ahead, remaining agile and flexible. The plan will now go through a finance assessment which may, in turn, lead to the selection or cutting courses where numbers are low or where growth cannot be funded.

Discussing the NEET challenge across the city, governors wanted to know who we are not helping/able to help and were reassured to hear about the reshaped entry level and level 1 programmes (single courses with different pathways within areas) which are designed to support NEET student engagement. Confidence/resilience/positive attitudes are what is worked on with the aim being for students to start enjoying education again. It was noted that the Group works closely with Peterborough City Council's targeted NEET support team so the offer is known but that there is still work to do in addressing rural NEETs around the Stamford area.

Members welcomed the focus and offer of new provision and challenged management to ensure that there is an appropriate student support network available to support this cohort. It was noted that SU students are to be trained to be part of the wellbeing team with the potential to widen the role to involve more students - providing student champions and a student peer support programme. Additionally, it was recognised that this group needs to be measured differently – attendance nationally remains a key issue. Management will respond in strength to governors about this type of learner and will devise a new metric which will enable engagement and success to be better understood (**ACTION 7**).

Members noted that there remain challenges in accommodating the demand for construction courses which cannot be fully met due to space and staffing challenges. However, the team are maximising specialist spaces wherever possible and looking at room utilisation analysis to identify space (e.g. a mapping exercise has enabled the introduction of another low level Motor Vehicle course which did not formerly exist)

The Board was **heartened** by all the work being done and **noted** the focus for future planning.

10. QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (QIP) – SUMMARY OF MOVEMENTS

The Board received the IEG QIP together with a summary of progress year to date. It noted the good progress being made to address the improvement actions identified, in particular around attendance strategies.

Progress Highlights included:

- Quality of Education – Red-rated actions reduced from 26% (Dec) to 8% (Feb); stronger lesson planning and student engagement.
- Adult Learning – Functional Skills performance exceeding targets, with improved attendance and retention
- High Needs – EHCP curriculum input at 90.4% in Peterborough and 77.9% in Stamford; lesson challenge and attendance tracking remain priorities.

The priorities for the next term include strengthening attendance strategies, deepening employer engagement, and reviewing personal development to ensure sustained improvements.

Members **thanked** management for the comprehensive report and were **pleased** with the reported progress.

11. FINANCE REPORT - PERIOD 7

Members were provided with an update report on the IEG financial position as at Period 7 (some of which had been covered under Agenda item 4) which had been subject to rigorous discussion at the recent Finance & Resources Committee meeting. It further noted that:

- it is a very uncertain financial environment at the moment, with confirmation of funding coming late in the year;
- the position has improved since the report was written (e.g. there has been a really good outcome on pensions contributions (£50k a month reduction from April for one year)
- the budget includes 65% grant to cover the additional NI costs but confirmation of the actual level of support has yet to be announced;
- the UCP position has become more fragile due to lower than planned recruitment in January but work is underway to reduce costs to balance the budget;
- TPS contribution levels have no impact on staff and communications are going out to staff to relieve any anxiety around announcements.

The Board **commented** that, whilst the uncertain financial position is volatile, it is under strong stewardship from management and it thanked management for the significant amount of work being undertaken to closely monitor and respond to the situation.

12. RISK MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Board received a report summarising the March review of the risk environment for 2024/25, as presented to the Audit Committee on 5 March 2025 who considered the details. It was discussed that, whilst the residual risk for HE has increased, everything else risk wise is stable and it was good to see safeguarding risk going down

In respect of the Risk Management Policy the Internal Auditors requested the inclusion of a statement on risk appetite, which has been added and the details considered by the Audit Committee and the Board. The residual risk target scores will be amended to align with the new statements.

The Board **welcomed** the report, **noted** the risk information provided and **approved** the addition of the risk appetite statement, as proposed, into the Risk Management Policy (**ACTION 8**).

13. CAPITAL/ESTATES DEVELOPMENT UPDATE (INCLUDING STAMFORD NORTH)

(The Chair declared an interest in his role as Burghley House Estates Director and CEO of the Burghley House Preservation Trust).

The Board received a report providing an overview of IEG Capital and Estates Developments including the Centre for Green Technology (CGT) and also the Stamford North Development, its benefit and impact on IEG and included the following:

- a review of the completed CGT project;
- an overview of Estates projects and Developments – now halfway through;
- an overview of the Stamford North project inclusive of:
 - key features and planning
 - impact of the project on IEG
 - benefits of the project for IEG;
 - sequencing of project delivery, which has now been clarified.

Members discussed the formal opening of the CGT, planned for 9th May 2025, and noted that the CEO is working to secure ministerial attendance at this significant event (**ACTION 9**).

The Stamford North Project was heavily discussed at the Finance & Resources Committee meeting and, in light of the Chair's interest, it was **agreed** that the F&R Committee chair will lead all conversations and recommendations relating to the project with the Chair recusing himself from any conversations. (**ACTION 10**).

It was also **noted** that Governors will be required to sign a new lease, when received, to enable the Stamford North Project to go ahead (**ACTION 11**).

The Board **received** the report and **congratulated** those involved for the significant progress being made in strategic and impactful construction developments.

14. STATUTORY DOCUMENTS FOR APPROVAL

The Board received and was requested to approve the following:

(a) IEG Streamlined Energy and Carbon Report (SECR) 2023/24

The fourth IEG SECR, detailing carbon emissions performance against the baseline year of 2021/22 and the previous year 2023/24, was presented. It was noted that publication of the SECR is a legal requirement, and as such the emissions are calculated using published methodologies. The key points noted whilst reviewing the report were the 2021/22 figures (for comparison and a new baseline) and that the report includes a number of Net Zero initiatives which have reduced emissions during the year.

There has been an overall reduction of 4.7% in total gross emissions since the 2021-22 baseline year, with 6.6% reduction in scope 1 and 3.5% reduction in Scope 2, but a 34% increase in emissions relating to scope 3 business travel which is due to the increase in group roles where staff are based over multiple sites. Three intensity ratios are reported showing emissions (tCO₂e) per staff member, per student body and per square meter floor area – all three metrics have reduced in comparison to 2021/22.

The Board:

- was **pleased** to receive the detailed report and very encouraged to note the excellent progress being made in terms of reducing the IEG carbon footprint;
- **recommended** that this huge success and the resultant benefits to students and staff be widely celebrated (**ACTION 12**);
- **suggested** that the UCP carbon credentials are more prominently displayed on the UCP website (**ACTION 13**);
- **approved** that the SECR 2023/24 be signed and published on the IEG website (**ACTION 14**).

Further details of SALEX funding to be shared with Martin Ballard outside of the meeting (**ACTION 15**).

(b) EDI Annual Report & Action Plan 2023/24 and the IEG Pledge

The *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2023/24 and Action Plan* provides assurance to the Board that the Group is meeting its statutory duty in relation to the Equality Act 2010. The Board also received the *IEG Pledge: Embracing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion* (the concept proposed and supported by the Association of Colleges) setting out IEG's commitment.

The Board:

- **congratulated** the team on the excellent report and endorsed the signing of the Pledge;
- **noted** the good practice demonstrated collectively across the Group, demonstrating great work and commitment;
- **approved** the EDI Annual Report & Action Plan 2023/24;
- **approved** that both documents be published on the IEG website (**ACTION 16**).

15. URGENT BUSINESS: (RE ITEM 1C)

None received.

16. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

- Governor Development Event – Thu 8th May at 4.00pm (Peterborough)
- Board Meeting – Thu 3rd July 2025 (Peterborough)

Staff and student governors were requested to leave the meeting at this point.

