

**ACCESS TO GOVERNORS' MEETINGS
AND PUBLICATION OF MINUTES AND PAPERS OF THE
CORPORATION AND COMMITTEES POLICY**

The Governing Body of Northumberland College endorses the principles laid down by the Nolan Committee for those holding public office, two of which refer to accountability and openness.

Accountability Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

1.0 PUBLIC ACCESS TO MEETINGS:

1.1 Agendas for all meetings shall be divided as detailed below:-

- All agendas at Committee and Governing Body level shall distinguish between Approval, Information and/or Confidential items.
- Items classified as Confidential shall be treated as such prior to the agenda being sent out and at the end of the meeting and agreed by the Principal and the Chairman of Governors.

The agenda and corresponding report(s) will indicate confidential and the Clerk to the Corporation will request when circulating the papers to Governors and the Senior Management Team (SMT), that the item(s) are kept confidential.

- Remuneration minutes shall be classified as confidential at all times.
- Matters relating to paragraph 14 of the Instrument of Government where it may be appropriate for staff members to withdraw for items which solely relate to that staff member, the appointment of a successor and, if required by a resolution of other members, matters relating to a member of staff holding a post senior to a staff member present, shall also be highlighted.
- Matters relating to the declaration of interests by Governors shall also be highlighted.

1.2 The full Governing Body meeting is open to any member of the College or member of the public, the capacity of the meeting room permitting who shall attend as an observer and has no right to speak unless invited to do so.

1.3 At any committee meeting the attendance of non members, other than designated officers, must be determined by that committee prior to the consideration of the committee's business.

- 1.4 Senior Management Team members will normally be in attendance at Governing Body and Committee meetings as determined by the Principal and Clerk to the Corporation. Those in attendance may be invited by the Chairman of Governors and/or the Chairman of the respective Committees to take a full part in discussion, but are not entitled to vote.
- 1.5 The Governing Body may invite others to be in attendance at a meeting to act in an advisory capacity or to make a presentation.

2.0 CRITERIA FOR CLASSIFYING ITEMS AS CONFIDENTIAL:-

2.1 Designation of Items as Confidential if Required/Criteria for confidential matters

The Chairman of the meeting, after discussions with the Proposer, will recommend whether it is considered that a matter is confidential or not.

Matters falling within the following categories but not limited to will be classed as Permanently Confidential and as such will remain confidential for a lifetime. **Note:** The following are examples only and it is for the Chairman to decide on evidence given whether a matter is to remain permanently or temporarily confidential, for example:-

Permanently confidential

Tenders received

Claims made against staff of a criminal nature

Claims made against students of a criminal nature

Remuneration of governors and/or staff

Disciplinaries

For the term of office

- Matters falling within the following categories but not limited to will be classed as Temporarily Confidential and as such will remain confidential for either a 6 month or 12 month period as recommended by the Chairman of that meeting.

Temporarily confidential

6months

12months

For the term of office

Budgets

Spending

Scrutiny of reappointment of Governors

3.0 PROCEDURE FOR CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Agenda

- The Agenda should specify which matters are of a confidential nature.

3.2 Meeting of Corporation/Committee

- The Chairman should immediately inform the Clerk at the Meeting of a confidential matter arising, before the matter is actually discussed.
- A record of confidential minutes is to be maintained and kept by the Clerk.
- Confidential matters should be kept for a period of either 6 months or 12 months or for the term of office or indefinitely. Such period to be determined by the Chairman of the meeting.
- At the end of such period, the Clerk will place the confidential matter on the relevant Corporation/Committee agenda for consideration at the next available meeting. The confidential matter is then to be either recommended for publication or is to remain confidential for a further period as identified above.
- The minutes of the meeting should specifically state what is the recommendation made by the Chairman and if the matter is to be made public, it should be placed within the minutes of the meeting, recommending publication.
- The Clerk is to update the record of confidential matters accordingly.

4.0 PROCEDURE FOR PREVIOUS CONFIDENTIAL MATTERS

- The Clerk should ascertain which matters have been classed as previously confidential. The matters should be raised at the next Corporation/Committee meeting and placed within the relevant category as outlined above.

5.0 PUBLIC ACCESS TO AGENDAS AND MINUTES:

5.1 Publication of Minutes and Papers – Clause 17 of the Instrument of Government.

- (1) *Subject to paragraph (2), the Corporation shall ensure that a copy of:-*
- (a) *the agenda for every meeting of the Corporation;*
 - (b) *the draft minutes of every such meeting, if they have been approved by the Chair of the meeting;*
 - (c) *the signed minutes of every such meeting; and*
 - (d) *any report, document or other paper considered at any such meeting;*

shall, in each case as soon as may be, be made available during the normal office hours at the institution to any person wishing to inspect them.

(2) *There shall be excluded from any item required to be made available in pursuance of paragraph (1), any materials relating to:-*

- (a) a named person employed at or proposed to be employed at the institution;*
- (b) a named student at, or candidate for admission to, the institution;*
- (c) Clerk to the Corporation; or*
- (d) any matter which, by reason of its nature, the Corporation is satisfied should be dealt with on a confidential basis.*

5.2 The agenda of each Governing Body meeting will be made available for public inspection in the Library at Ashington College and agendas will be made available after it has been forwarded to Governing Body members, but before the meeting, if deemed appropriate.

Agenda papers of the Governing Body will not be made public until a meeting of the Governing Body has taken place. Agenda papers for committees will not be made public unless agreed by the Governing Body.

5.3 Non confidential papers considered by the Governing Body will be made available in the Library.

5.4 Non confidential minutes of the Governing Body and Committees will be made available in Library after approval by the Chairman and circulation to members of the Governing Body.

5.5 Full Governing Body meeting papers are lodged for reference in the Principal's office.

5.6 Signed copies of the minutes of all Board and Committee meetings, together with supporting papers, and the Register of Members' Interests are available for public scrutiny in the Library after approval by the Principal.

5.7 Requests to see, or acquire, copies of any Governing Body or College document should be addressed to:-

Sara Allanson
Clerk to the Corporation
Northumberland College
Ashington Campus
College Road
Ashington
Northumberland
NE63 9RG

Telephone: 01670 841200 x 417
Email: sara.allanson@northland.ac.uk

5.8 The College will aim to provide information requested within 10 working days and documents will, wherever possible, be provided free of charge. However, the College reserves the right to charge for documents if significant staff time is involved in providing information, or to cover copying costs.