



Chair of the Board

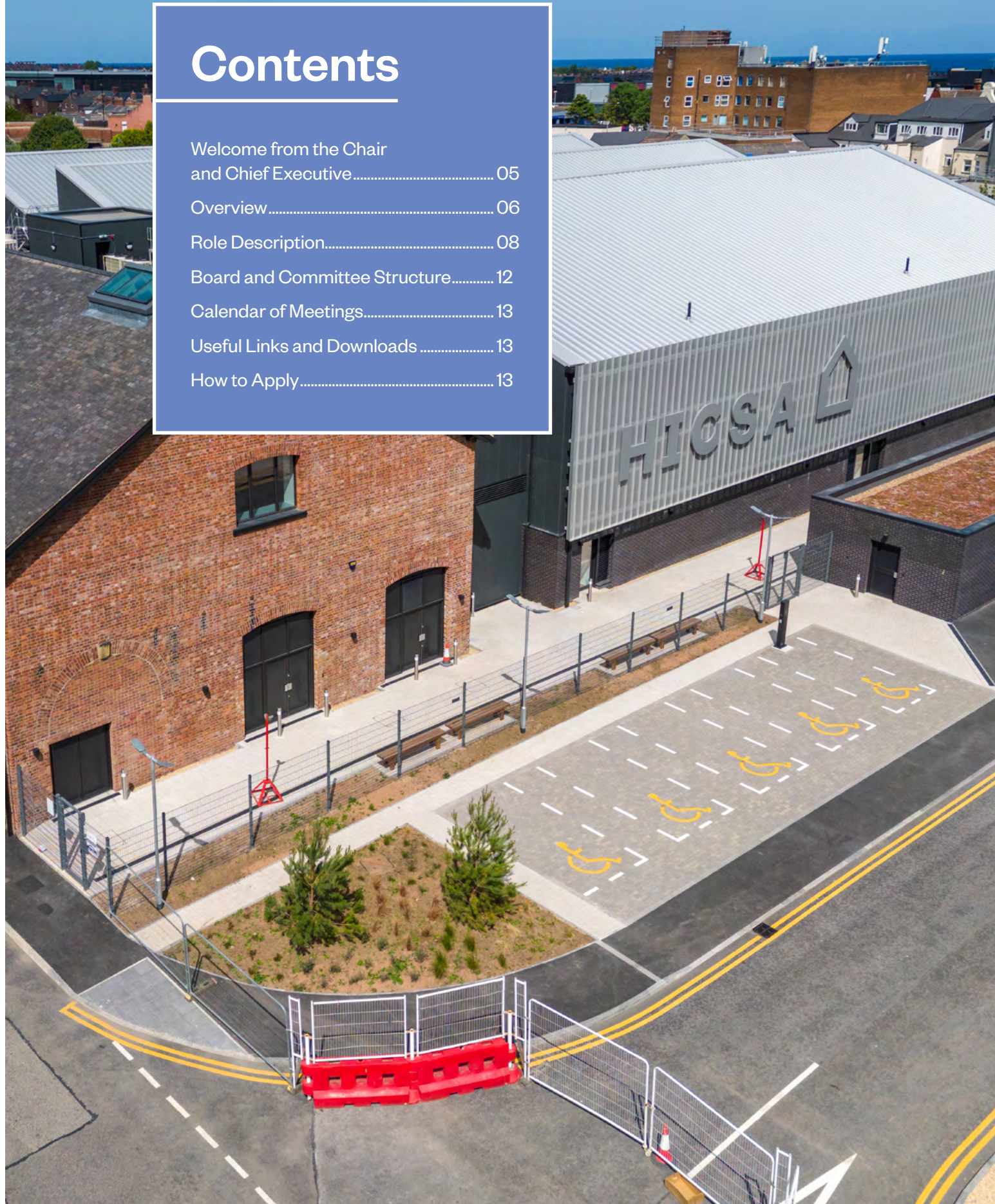
Candidate pack

April 2026

www.educationpartnershipne.ac.uk

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HARTLEPOOL SIXTH FORM COLLEGE





Welcome from the Chair and Chief Executive



We are delighted that you are interested in joining our team as Chair of the Board of EPNE.

We want to maintain and deepen our roots in the region, working hard to evolve to meet the needs of our communities and the rapidly changing and increasingly volatile world. Governance is no exception to this. It demands foresight; strategic wisdom; an understanding of the need for innovation; and a deep commitment to the prospering and wellbeing of the places and communities we serve. The recruitment of our new Chair is critical to our being able to achieve the ambitions laid out in our new Strategic Plan.

We firmly believe that it is our responsibility to work collaboratively in partnership with all our direct stakeholders and

with policy-makers and politicians to ensure that we make the most of every potential new opportunity for our communities. This means that we must take time to build strategic relationships; work to influence reform and change where we can; and invest organisational resource in anticipating opportunity, planning ahead and being prepared to try new ways of working. The Board plays a pivotal role in this work: we believe governance to be a serious commitment and, equally, that it is dynamic, productive and highly rewarding work.

This recruitment of our new Chair comes as we are embedding our new Strategic Plan. We have refreshed our values and

developed our plans for change and continuous improvement to respond to what is and will be needed as the world changes. EPNE is one of few colleges in the country to have been judged Outstanding in all areas by Ofsted and we believe that this carries with it a responsibility to continue to be sector leading as well as to go on learning and developing as an organisation.

This is an exciting time for our organisation and we are keen to recruit a great Chair to join us, a Chair who is committed to the North East and who can bring skills, vision and energy to lead the Board. We hope you will decide to apply for the role, and we look forward to hearing more about you.

Alison Shaw
Chair

Toni Rhodes
Chief Executive Officer

Overview



Education Partnership North East (EPNE) is a multi-award winning organisation with a track record of supporting communities and changing the lives of those who live and work across the North East.

We are the largest college group situated entirely in the North East of England; we are a dynamic partnership of three colleges – Sunderland College, Hartlepool Sixth Form and Northumberland College – and collectively we are one of the largest colleges in the country. Through our broad curriculum delivered over our six campuses (and multiple satellite delivery centres), we offer academic and technical

programmes for young people, adult learning programmes, apprenticeships, higher education and provision for students with high needs.

Since 2017, we have invested over £100million in world-class facilities and we continue to be led by pioneering experts who develop and deliver curricula that ensure our students are prepared for their next step, whatever that

may be. This investment in our facilities and our staff has been achieved in a way that ensures our financial health remains positive (DfE confirmed Good financial health in the financial year of 2025).

We are an organisation that strives to be a changemaker for the FE sector and to ensure that our local communities are given every possible opportunity to engage in the education and training they need to improve their life chances and live healthy, prosperous lives. Our success here is demonstrated through continual high achievement rates, which place us first in the North East and in the top three nationally for 16 - 18 provision (2025).

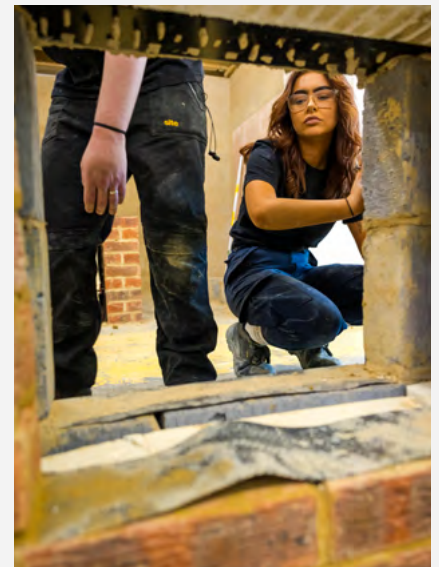
We are able to achieve this through the hard work and efforts of our determined and talented staff team, led by a group of individuals who each share in our collective vision that by 2030 we will be known nationally, regionally and locally as 'Changemakers', shaping futures for a better tomorrow. Our governors are no different: they have high ambition for our students, staff and themselves.

This clear vision ensures that we embrace both culture and quality in equal measure, driven by our ethos of our courage is our

strength'. It is this philosophy that drives our collective success to be bold and brave. Our staff are experts in their individual fields, and these fields are aligned to the needs of the labour markets of the North East, from Berwick-upon-Tweed to the Tees Valley. Our relationships with key stakeholders – employers, local authorities, and, most importantly, our students, ensure that our colleges are able to deliver engaging, high-quality provision which has positive impacts and outcomes in the towns and cities that we serve.

Since the success of our Ofsted inspection in 2024 – where we were rated Outstanding across all areas - we have continued to take bold and exciting steps towards the future, recognising that in a world facing unprecedented change and growing issues of social justice, a deep understanding of our purpose matters. It is why our Purpose Statement, set out in our Strategic Plan (2025-2030), will remain the cornerstone of our work, clearly defining what we stand for and communicating our purpose with pride.

Most recently, these steps have included the opening of our Housing Innovation and Construction Skills Academy (HICSA); being awarded the North East Construction Technical Excellence College; Outstanding Residential provision; becoming a SEND Centre of Excellence; and our continued partnership with the Crown Works Studios development; and the transformational new build at Ashington.



Role Description

The role of the Chair of Corporation is fundamental to the success of the governing body and the Group. The Chair is responsible for providing effective leadership of the Board of Corporation in the discharge of its duties, acting as an ambassador for the Group and line managing the Chief Executive and Head of Corporate Governance and Policy. This is a non-operational role, focused on the long-term stewardship of the College.

The Chair helps provide external credibility to support the College in being a Changemaker within the complex policy and funding environment in which it works; and ensuring that it remains rooted in its Place.

Appointment and Term

The members of the Board formally appoint the Chair from within their number.

The Chair of Governors is elected for a number of years as determined by the Corporation upon appointment. At the expiry of their term of Office, the Chair is eligible for re-appointment providing that their term of office as Chair does not exceed their term of office on the Board.

Responsibilities

The Chair is responsible for providing effective and inclusive leadership of the Governing Body and, in association with the Head of Corporate Governance and Policy, its strong and efficient operation, in accordance with the Instrument and Articles of Government, and the regulatory landscape within which the College operates.

The Chair is responsible for:

- ensuring that the Board maintains a strategic focus and that only appropriate issues are brought to the Board, in liaison with the Chief Executive and Head of Corporate Governance and Policy;
- ensuring that the business of Board meetings is conducted inclusively, efficiently and effectively, enabling all matters to be fully debated, and providing all governors with the opportunity to engage and contribute;
- ensuring that the views of all governors are sought and that governors work together effectively and collectively as a team;
- building a team of governors with the right skills and experience for successful oversight of the Group;

- being satisfied that the Nolan Principles of Public Life and the Group's values are observed in all Board business;
- taking care that the business of the Board and its Committees is summarised and reported appropriately as well as following up on actions to be taken; and
- developing a productive working relationship between the Chair, the Chief Executive, the Head of Corporate Governance, and the Senior Post-holders, based on a full understanding of the role of the Board in the success of the Group and being mindful and respectful of the difference between governance and management.

In discharging their duties, the Chair:

- will have a shared responsibility to develop effective working relationships with the Chief Executive and the Head of Corporate Governance, in order to promote and enhance the strong governance of the Group;
- shall call, agree the agenda for, and preside at meetings of the Board;
- may call a special meeting of the Board (if necessary with fewer than seven days' notice) when urgent and significant matters need to be considered before the next ordinary Board meeting;

- shall have a second or casting vote at meetings of the Board where there is an equal division of votes on an issue; and
- may act on behalf of the Board between meetings on matters delegated by it; on routine matters such as the signing or sealing of documents; or in response to approaches from external organisations on issues which do not require approval by the Board.

Performance of the Governing Body and Individual Governors

The Chair will ensure that:

- the Board has established performance indicators against which to measure its performance;
- each Governor has the opportunity to review their contribution and development needs at least annually and that a formal review is conducted to discuss matters relating to training needs, attendance, performance or conduct;
- there is critical self-assessment of Board performance and processes and that all Governors and the Chair make an active contribution to the annual self-assessment of the governance of the Group;

- the Board considers issues of diversity and that there is a process to review regularly the balance of membership of the Board with respect to equality of opportunity.

Group Ambassador

- The Chair will serve as a principal ambassador for the College, bringing enthusiasm and energy in promoting the Group's best interests and reputation, by representing the Group at external meetings, presentations, conferences in local, regional and national settings.
- The Chair will promote good working relations between governors and staff through regular dialogue and engagement in specific College activities such as Student or Staff Awards events.

Responsibilities in respect of the Chief Executive and Head of Corporate Governance and Policy

- The Chair will act as critical friend to the Chief Executive, promoting a constructive and supportive working relationship, to assist them in matters upon which they wish to confer including strategic, major or contentious issues.
- The Chair will act as line manager to the Chief Executive; and to the Head of Corporate

Governance and Policy with respect to the aspects of their role relating to corporate governance.

- In discharging their duties the Chair shall:
 - undertake the annual appraisal of the Chief Executive and ensure that the Chief Executive has access to appropriate opportunities for development and training, reporting the outcomes of the appraisal process to the Board via the Remuneration Committee;
 - undertake the annual appraisal of the Head of Corporate Governance and Policy and ensure that they have access to appropriate opportunities for development and training, reporting the outcomes of the appraisal process to the Board via the Remuneration Committee;
 - have responsibility for instigating any disciplinary action against the holders of posts designated as senior posts, should the need arise;
 - be responsible for leading on the recruitment of the Chief Executive, the Head of Corporate Governance and Policy and Senior Postholders which will include assisting with job descriptions and personnel specifications and supervising arrangements for the selection and appointment process.

Personal Qualities

The qualities required of the Chair of Governors are:

- a strong personal commitment to Further and Higher Education and the values, mission and strategic objectives of the Group
- a clear and demonstrable commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging
- political awareness and an understanding of the economic, social and political dynamics of the region and nationally, including skills needs
- sharp strategic vision and strong, independent judgement
- the willingness and confidence to challenge and engage others in debate
- being a strong communicator and leader of collective decision making
- a commitment to sharing and embodying the Group's values
- demonstrable skill in networking, influencing and advocacy
- respect for confidentiality
- being financially astute
- a willingness and ability to devote the necessary time and effort to their duties as Chair and member of the Board



It is important that the Chair has:

- A strong, diverse and established network in the North East and nationally
- A history of leading organisations to a high level of success

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement

The Group values diversity and inclusion and is committed to promoting equal opportunities and eliminating discrimination. The Corporation will exercise its responsibilities in the recruitment and appointment of the Chair of Governors, as far as practicable, in a manner which promotes equality and diversity.

Expectations and commitment

If selected, the term of office for governors at EPNE is four years, with the ability to be appointed for one additional term. Under exceptional circumstances

necessary to ensure continuity, a second term may be extended for one year.

Our Board currently meets five times a year with meetings held in person starting at 6:00pm on a Tuesday and two half-day in person strategy sessions which are agreed within the academic year. These meetings may be held at one of our campuses.

Committees meet between 4-5 times per year starting at 5:30pm via Teams.

We endeavour to ensure that meetings last no longer than two hours

Development and review

As an education and skills organisation, professional development of our governors is important to us. As a new Chair, you can expect to have a robust and rich induction to the College, the role and FE and HE. Beyond induction, we offer regular learning opportunities and take part in sector wide activities to support development.



Board and Committee Structure

Board of Corporation

(meets 5x/year plus 2 strategy afternoons)



Calendar of Meetings

Body	Provisional Meeting dates 2026 -2027	
Corporation (in person)	Tuesday 13 October 6:00pm Tuesday 15 December 6:00pm Tuesday 16 March 5:30pm	Tuesday 18 May 6:00pm Tuesday 29 June 6:00pm
Audit Committee (via Teams)	Thursday 05 November 5:30pm Tuesday 01 December 6:00pm	Thursday 04 March 5:30pm Thursday 06 May 5:30pm
Finance, Resources and Projects Committee (via Teams)	Thursday 10 November 5:30pm Thursday 01 December 6:00pm Tuesday 09 February 5:30pm	Monday 27 April 5:30pm Tuesday 15 June 5:30pm
Curriculum, Quality & Student Experience Committee (via Teams)	Thursday 19 November 5:30pm Thursday 28 January 5:30pm	Thursday 11 March 5:30pm Thursday 10 June 5:30pm
Governance & Remuneration* Committees (via Teams)	Monday 5 October 12:00pm *Monday 01 February 12:00pm Monday 10 May 12:00pm	
Strategic Conversations with the CE (Via Teams)	To be Confirmed	

Useful Links and Downloads

Meet Our Governors / Our External Board Review Summary / Strategic Plan 2025 -2030 / Our Strategic Plan 2025-2030 Education Partnership North East / Ofsted Report / EPNE Accountability Statement / Members Report and Financial Statements

How to apply

At Education Partnership North East, we are inclusive, supporting different perspectives to drive innovation. We are constantly looking to improve the diversity of our organisation and invite applications which reflect the diversity and demographics of our student cohort including applications from BAME, LGBTQ communities and those with a disability.

Castle Peak Group is acting as our retained consultancy for Education Partnership North East on this appointment. Candidates should apply using the Micro-site ([link](#)) Click on the 'apply now' button and follow the instructions by uploading a CV and short cover letter, or by emailing James Carss at james.carss@castlepeak-group.com

The closing date for the application is: **Friday 22nd May.**



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