

News from the FE Corporation meeting, 15 October 2019

Manager presentation

Governors received a presentation from Julie Davison, Student Services Manager, outlining the services and functions covered within the team, including careers support and work to meet the Gatsby benchmarks. Members recognised the significant challenges faced by a high number of students supported by the team and recognised that the College's services were held in very high regard by external agencies. Governors thanked the team for their support to students and their important contribution to the college's success.

Governor Appointments

Garry Toulouse, former Director of Student Services at Teesside University, was appointed as an independent member of the Corporation for a term of four years. Governors also appointed Daniela Ramejkis-Grant as student governor, subject to further discussion regarding the role with the Clerk. The Board was at target composition but would continue to encourage applications from prospective members with financial, business or education expertise to further enhance skills and experience.

Strategic Plan

Governors reviewed progress against the plan and noted, in particular, a positive picture for achievement rates and a much improved budget position, with a small operational surplus in 2018-19. Curriculum development was impacted by uncertainty in relation to central government policy changes and in response to local economic developments. At national level, there is an increasing focus on 'employer-led' education, and the college would be exploring ways to further embed work with employers in teaching and learning. Apprenticeship reforms continued to create challenges, particularly with End Point Assessment and off the job training. The cap on funding for delivery of non levy apprenticeships would also impact on future recruitment and delivery. Destinations would become increasingly important. Recent spending review announcements would provide some additional funding in 2020/21 but potentially on a very short term basis (one year), creating planning difficulties. Across other areas, introduction of a new Management Information System had transformed management information across the college, and staff engagement and development remained a priority, with a particular focus on staff workload and capacity.

There would be further discussion regarding development of the Strategic Plan at the Governor Strategy Event scheduled for 5 November 2019. During this event, governors would also be participating in learning walks around the college.

Governors also received an update on development of the in-house Employability Team and were pleased to note that a number of courses had been delivered. Governors congratulated the team on their work in ensuring a significant proportion of Working Links students gained their certificates, and that provision received funding and was included in college data, following Working Links being placed into insolvency.

Quality

Governors considered the range of issues highlighted by students at the Student Liaison Committee meeting, including issues with green screens in media, timetable clashes for the gym and lack of space for lunch in the atrium. All students had commended teaching and learning and given special mention

to tutors across a range of subject areas. Students were also very positive about the added value of external speakers.

A number of governors had attended the Student Awards Evening and commended this fantastic event.

Governors also received an update from the Quality and Standards Committee and were very pleased to note a positive picture in relation to emerging achievement rates, with a further year above the national average. The committee had been impressed at the fantastic range of enrichment activities. The committee had considered destination information and recognised the efforts of the Student Services team in collating this. Targets for achievement, progress and student and employer satisfaction in 2019-20 were agreed.

The annual Safeguarding report was also considered by the Corporation and governors recognised the high number of safeguarding issues dealt with in the college, as well as the very good relationships with external agencies.

Financial Matters

Governors received an update from the Finance, Estates and Employment Committee meeting and considered the latest 2018-19 year end update, which was a positive position against budget. Governors also considered annual Health and Safety and HR reports and approved three days' discretionary holiday over the Christmas break. Members were pleased to note an increasing staff headcount, evidencing the growth of college activity. Governors were also advised of ongoing progress in respect of a bid for European Regional Development Fund support for creation of an Energy Centre, as well as a bid to Sport England for refurbishment of the gym.

Governors considered the 2019-20 financial position and recognised pressures, particularly in relation to the non Tees Valley Adult Education Budget allocation. As almost all this allocation would be required for delivery of the Ministry of Defence contract, adult education provision was being focussed in the Tees Valley. The college was continuing to lobby for an increase to the allocation. It would also be important to maximise in year income in order to ensure a secure budget position.

Annual reports and Policies

Governors considered annual reports from the Remuneration and Audit Committees, providing assurance that the committees were fulfilling their responsibilities in line with the Association of Colleges' Remuneration Code and the Post 16 Audit Code of Practice respectively.

Governors also approved an updated College Fees and Charges Policy.

Audit and risk management issues

Governors received feedback from an Audit Committee meeting and approved the external audit self assessment regularity questionnaire. Governors also considered the content of a letter to colleges from the Education and Skills Funding Agency Chief Executive, Eileen Milner, and were satisfied that the college was fulfilling all probity requirements.

Governance Matters

Governors reviewed their attendance at meetings and development activities in 2018-19 and refreshed the membership and terms of reference of committees. Governors also agreed a new link governor structure.

Principal's and Chair's Announcements

Governors were looking forward to attending the college graduation in November and a visit by local councillors, including the Council leader, Heather Scott, to the college. Governors also congratulated the Marketing Team on their nomination at the Marketing Awards.

Best wishes from the Board

Pat Howarth, Chair

Kate Roe, Principal