

News from the FE Corporation meeting, 21 May 2019

Governor Appointments

Governors appointed Victoria Bell, Director: Trustee Accounting at RPMI (railway pension management) as a governor. Victoria brings significant financial experience and expertise to the Board. Governors also appointed Pete Moody, a Community Fundraising Manager with the Great North Air Ambulance, as a co-opted member of the Search and Development Committee.

Governors noted resignations from Val Bailey and Chris Coyle, student governor. Recruitment activity for a new student governor will commence in September.

Curriculum Department Presentation

Governors received a presentation from Mick O'Reilly, Curriculum Manager, Health, Public Services and Care. Governors were pleased to note good levels of retention, particularly for study programmes and apprenticeships, and the good improvement in maths attendance. Governors were also very pleased to note the opportunities for students to participate in a wide range of extracurricular activities, and the successes for a number of former students in gaining employment across the probation service and armed forces.

Governors expressed their appreciation for the hard work of all staff in the department.

Strategic Plan

Governors reviewed progress against the plan, and were pleased to note a positive picture in respect of the college's newly developed employability provision, particularly the opportunities to deliver a wider range of training. An update on the increasing demand for 14-16 provision was also provided and governors were pleased to note opportunities for investment, including an enhanced Students' Award evening at an external venue. However, funding pressures continued to impact.

Governors considered the college's Higher Level Skills Strategy, which aimed to increase both classroom and apprenticeship delivery. The Strategy had been considered in detail at the Quality and Standards Committee meeting held in May and governors had been pleased to note the detailed research underpinning the Strategy. Governors were advised that a detailed implementation plan would now be developed.

Governors also considered potential options in respect of replacement of the college boilers and building management system, specifically a bid for funding from the European Regional Development Fund to support development of an energy centre on the college site. Governors approved submission of a final application for grant funding, with the outcome due to be notified in October 2019. Work was ongoing to determine an alternative approach if the bid was unsuccessful.

Student-Related and Quality Matters

Governors received an update from the Student Liaison Committee and noted student feedback across a range of issues, including the need for improvements to the PPE portal (Engineering and Construction) and the e-learning package, and good support with transition to university. Governors also noted a growing need to ensure IT requirements were being managed.

Governors also received feedback from a meeting of the Quality and Standards Committee held in May. The committee had been very pleased to note that the college had maintained its high quality performance with the college's headline achievement rates once again the highest in the Tees Valley and sixth highest in England. Governors also considered the Quality Improvement Plan, Ofsted data

dashboard and school and college performance tables. Governors recognised that some poor data mainly related to reporting systems and appropriate procedures would be put in place for future years. Governors also recognised how the college was working hard for **all** students – with only a small performance gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students at the college, despite Darlington schools having a large performance gap. Governors would be in attendance at each of the curriculum SAR validation meetings in the autumn term.

Nicky Grace had undertaken a learning walk within the department for Business, Digital, Travel and Tourism and commended teaching and learning and learner engagement across the provision. Gary Hope had undertaken a learning walk in the English and maths department and commended student and teacher participation in the lessons and the trend of improvement in the department.

Governors noted high attendance at the Maths 1 GCSE exam and were pleased to note that many students were attending additional classes.

Financial Matters

Governors received the March management accounts and were pleased to note a continuing positive variance against budget, with a further reduction in the forecast budget deficit. Governors were also pleased to note the improved ratio for staff costs to turnover. Governors received information on funding allocations for 2019-20, which included, for the first time, a devolved allocation via the Tees Valley Combined Authority for adult education delivery within the Tees Valley.

Audit Matters

Governors received feedback from an Audit Committee meeting in July. In particular, governors noted a positive outcome to an ESFA funding audit in the autumn term and good progress with implementation of the new Management Information System, ProSolution. The auditors had recorded high levels of assurance that risks were being managed effectively in recent audits of the MIS Implementation Plan and Bursary.

Governance Matters

Governors reviewed their attendance at meetings and development activities and agreed a calendar of meetings and cycle of business for 2019-20.

Other items

Governors were invited to attend or support at a staff event on 28 June 2019.

Governors expressed their appreciation for the hard work and dedication of staff in maintaining high quality performance and achieving a significantly improved financial position.

Best wishes from the Board

Pat Howarth, Chair

Kate Roe, Principal