

News from the FE Corporation meeting, 24 April 2018

Staff Governor Appointment

Governors appointed Julie Davison, Student Services Manager, to the staff governor vacancy arising from the end of Wayne Hall's term of office. She joins Eric Walsh, who was appointed to the Corporation in December. Julie had applied to become staff governor in the recruitment process held in the autumn term.

Strategic Plan

Governors agreed a new college vision and mission and college values, based on Executive Team discussions with staff. This will be shared with staff as part of the next round of Executive Team briefings during May. Governors also received an update on progress against the strategic plan, including five year targets, and were pleased to note progress in many areas.

Student Feedback

The Chair of the Student Liaison Committee provided an overview of issues raised by students at Student Liaison Committee meetings. Choice of food and parking continued to be issues. Students continued to speak very positively about teaching and learning within the college.

Quality

Governors received an update on quality and were pleased to note that, for the second consecutive year, Darlington College's overall achievement rates were the highest in the Tees Valley and fifth highest nationally. Governors thanked and congratulated all staff and students on this excellent outcome. Governors were also pleased to note that work experience placements continued at a similarly high level. Student feedback received via the mid-year QDP survey had been poorer than in some previous years and this would be an area requiring improvement.

Governors also received information on school and college performance comparisons and noted that both achievement and progress were good for Level 3 students. However, the progress made by Level 2 students required improvement, although achievement was good. The Quality and Standards Committee would look further at the detailed figures and at any correlation with levels of deprivation.

Curriculum Planning

Governors received an update and recognised that the college was planning for stable numbers of full-time 16-19 year olds but seeking larger class sizes where possible. Higher Education numbers were planned to be slightly down but more adult education budget training would be brought in house. There would also be a higher number of apprenticeship carry-ins.

Higher Education Update

Governors congratulated staff and students involved in the QAA (higher education) review on the judgement of 'confidence' across the areas of inspection. Particular thanks were given to Gary Potts, Assistant Principal, for leading the preparation and to Marguerite Kelly, student representative.

Governors also received an overview of developments in higher education, including the launch of the Teesside University College partnership – a re-launch of the collaborative higher education arrangements between Teesside University and Darlington, Hartlepool FE, Redcar & Cleveland and Stockton Riverside Colleges.

Financial Matters

Governors received a very helpful presentation detailing the range of income streams contributing to overall college income, as well as the varying rules and requirements applicable to each income stream and clawback arrangements. This included 16-19, 19+, high needs, adult learning loans, apprenticeships and higher education. Members recognised the complexity of this area and commended all staff involved in managing income targets and student data.

Governors also received an update from the Finance, Estates and Employment Committee meeting and thanked the Head of Registry for her presentation in relation to implementation of a new Management Information System. Governors were pleased to note that rapid progress was being achieved and implementation was expected to be complete by July 2018.

Governors considered the latest monthly management accounts and year end forecasts and were pleased to note an improving picture in respect of apprenticeship income. Although the college continues to face financial challenges, a range of initiatives were in place to improve income levels and ensure a stable end of year position. Governors also commended the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources and the Finance Team on the timely production of monthly management accounts, close to month end.

Funding allocations for 2018-19 in respect of 16 to 19 year old provision were also considered and members were pleased to note the successful award of funding to support a T level pilot project on extended work placements. 16-19 funding had reduced in real terms but this was to a lesser extent than initially anticipated.

Audit and risk management issues

Governors received feedback from an Audit Committee and noted, in particular, a very good outcome for the ESFA funding audit, with no funding adjustments required. Governors

congratulated the Head of Registry Services and Registry Team on this excellent result. Governors also noted that a tendering process was in place to identify both external and internal audit services from September 2018 onwards. The latest college risk register was also received. The Audit Committee had discussed the central importance of the college website, particularly in terms of allowing online applications, and governors stressed the importance of ensuring a new website was in place as soon as possible.

Governance Matters

Governors considered their own performance in terms of attendance at meetings and training and agreed a schedule of meetings and cycle of business for 2018-19. Governors also proposed to make some amendments to the Instrument and Articles, specifically in relation to ceasing publication of Corporation minutes on the college website for reasons of business confidentiality. Minutes would still be available on request from the Clerk and the News from the FE Corporation Board Briefing to staff after every meeting would continue. Governors would like to know more about staff views on this and have launched a consultation. Responses are requested by 1 June and comments should be made to the Clerk, Sarah Thompson. Governors are keen to attend college events and received information about forthcoming events for the summer term.

Principal's and Chair's Announcements

Governors received information about a number of strategic developments including: the changing role of the FE Commissioner, for example, in monitoring and diagnosing college performance; the introduction of the insolvency regime for colleges; initial information on the post 18 review; launch of the Tees Valley Combined Authority's Skills Strategy; consultation on the merger of Redcar & Cleveland College and Stockton Riverside College; change of name for Cleveland College of Art and Design (to Northern School of Art); and outcomes of the North Yorkshire Area review.

Best wishes from the Board

Pat Howarth, Chair

Kate Roe, Principal