

News from the FE Corporation meeting, 23 June 2020

COVID-19 Update

Governors noted that the college had successfully re-opened to a limited number of students, in line with COVID-19 guidance. This had primarily been students needing to undertake practical assessments to complete their course. Governors also recognised the significant work undertaken by staff to meet deadlines in relation to calculated grades.

Preparations for enrolment were in progress, with introduction of online enrolment, and would be reviewed as appropriate in line with emerging guidance.

Strategic Update

Governors considered a report including Local Enterprise Partnership data and information relating to the North Yorkshire and Tees Valley economies. Governors noted initiatives to support local economies. A Post-16 White Paper was anticipated in the near future.

Work on the Energy Centre project had commenced on site. Governors approved a drawdown from Barclays Bank (green asset fund facility) to support cashflow for the Energy Centre project if required.

Quality Matters

Governors received feedback from a meeting of the Quality and Standards Committee and received the Quality and Performance Report. Governors recognised the significant work undertaken by staff in producing Teacher Assessed Grades. Governors were also pleased to note the high level of responses received in respect of student destinations and recognised the impact of COVID-19 on enrichment activities.

Financial, Estates and Staffing Matters

Governors considered and approved the 2020-21 college budget and the 2021-22 financial plan, including the capital programme and subcontracting allocations. Across the sector, there were predictions of a possible significant drop in income and the budget for income had been set on a prudent basis. Expenditure would be very carefully monitored. Growth was expected in some curriculum areas, although the impact of COVID-19 on areas such as construction was not yet clear. A capital budget had been set with planned investments including upgrading of IT servers, investment in hardware to support online learning, maintenance of the college building and upgrading equipment in curriculum areas.

Governors received feedback from a meeting of the Finance, Employment and Estates Committee in June. A health and safety update had indicated an increase in accidents and the committee had challenged the college on action to manage this. Governors recognised the work of the Estates and IT teams to support the college during closures arising from COVID-19 impact.

Governors received the monthly management accounts to April 2020 and noted a small operational surplus, reflecting the effectiveness of measures to mitigate the impact of COVID-19, including furloughing of staff. The college was carefully monitoring compliance with the bank covenants through daily cashflow monitoring.

Governors approved the College Fees and Charges Framework and the Subcontracting Supply Chain and Fees Policy.

Audit Matters

Governors received feedback from an Audit Committee meeting in June and were pleased to note that auditors had commended the positive relationships with college management and a reducing number of outstanding and overdue audit actions. The committee had received an internal audit report relating to apprenticeships funding, which had given an audit opinion of reasonable assurance, and had reviewed the updated Board Assurance Framework which included coronavirus as an additional risk. The committee had also reviewed the tender process for the Energy Centre and procurement processes within the college.

On the recommendation of the Audit Committee, the Corporation approved the reappointment of AuditOne as internal auditors, the internal audit plan for 2020-21 and the risk management strategy for 2020-21.

Governance Matters

Governors appointed Emma Wright as Corporation Chair and Calvin Kipling as Corporation Vice Chair for the 2020-21 academic year.

Governors appointed Sandra Glaister as governor and noted Hollie Ball's resignation as a governor but that she would continue to serve as a co-opted member of the Remuneration Committee.

Governors received feedback from a meeting of the Search and Governance Committee and noted the committee's recommendation that it would be helpful to strengthen the Board's knowledge and understanding of minority communities and, on the retirement of Pat Howarth, education skills and background. There remained a vacancy for a student governor and one student governor appointment was on hold.

Governors considered governor attendance at meetings and training events and noted use of the college seal in relation to the Energy Centre project. Governors also reaffirmed their acceptance of the Code of Conduct for Governors and agreed an updated meeting calendar.

Other items

This was Pat Howarth's last meeting as Corporation Chair and governors thanked him for his diligent and tenacious leadership during a turbulent period, which had included recovery against Ofsted, Area Based Review, potential mergers, financial recovery and pandemic management. He had ensured the Board was more reflective and skilled, and that the college was unequivocally in a much better position.

Best wishes from the Board

Kate Roe, Principal
Sarah Thompson, Clerk