

News from the FE Corporation meeting, 24 March 2020

This meeting was held remotely using Zoom (video and audio conferencing) in light of government requirements in respect of social distancing and avoidance of all non-essential travel.

Governing Body Membership

Governors appointed Elisha Farey as student governor and reappointed Calvin Kipling as a governor.

COVID-19 Update

Governors considered a report providing information about college action in response to the government restrictions linked to the COVID-19 global pandemic. All students were now undertaking learning online via Google classroom, following final face-to-face teaching sessions on Thursday 19 March. Chromebooks and laptops had been issued to the most vulnerable students and staff were able to work from home. The college was ensuring access to the college was available for any vulnerable students or children of key workers that required this, although no students had attended in the current week.

The college expected funding for 16 to 18 and adult education budget provision to continue but there was uncertainty about apprenticeship income and other demand-led income.

No GCSE or A Level examinations would take place but there was not yet clarity about arrangements for other examinations and end of year assessments. Curriculum teams were retaining evidence of engagement in order to support as many students as possible to pass their qualifications, although difficulties with practical assessments were recognised.

The college was considering whether to make use of the government 'furlough scheme' in areas where staff would be unable to deliver their role, for example, catering staff.

Energy Centre Update

Governors were notified that the bid for funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) had been successful and agreed to accept this funding, subject to further consideration following receipt of the funding agreement.

Three bidders for the work had been shortlisted and this shortlist was approved by governors. Governors agreed to defer the final selection of the contractor to 28 April in light of restrictions relating to COVID-19, as well as delays in procurement and ERDF approvals.

Governors discussed the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on delivery of the contract, as well as the possible financial implications of COVID-19 measures. As the funding agreement was yet to be received and further discussions with the shortlisted contractors were needed to identify implications, a special meeting would take place on 28 April.

Governors thanked the Director of Finance and Corporate Resources and staff for their work on this project.

Staffing

Governors agreed amended Business Support pay scales and the statutory requirement to move relevant staff to the new National Minimum Wage.

Governors also approved the Gender Pay Gap Report 2019 for publication.

Quality and Student-related Matters

Governors received feedback from a meeting of the Quality and Standards Committee and the Quality and Performance Report. Governors were pleased to note good student performance. Curriculum planning processes had been delayed and the impact of COVID-19 measures on student recruitment was not yet clear.

Governors also received feedback from a Student Liaison Committee meeting in March. Some issues raised by students included: inadequate space for eating; poor student behaviour; impact of the smoking area location; and difficulties finding industrial placements. Students had also reported on extracurricular activities.

Financial and Estates Matters

Governors received feedback from a meeting of the Finance, Employment and Estates Committee. The committee had considered the initial position in relation to refinancing of the college's principal loan.

Governors received the monthly management accounts to February 2020 and noted that the financial position at that time had been positive.

Audit Matters

Governors received feedback from an Audit Committee meeting in February and considered the Board Assurance Framework / college risk register. COVID-19 risks would be added to the register.

Governance Matters

Governors received feedback from a meeting of the Search and Governance Committee.

Governors also reviewed governor attendance at meetings and development activities and considered national governance issues, including the issue of the 'Further Education bodies: insolvency guidance' in January 2020. Governors approved updates to the Instrument and Articles of Government and Standing Orders to ensure effective governance in light of restrictions on physical attendance at meetings.

Governors agreed a calendar of Corporation and committee meetings for 2020-21.

Other items

Governors approved the updated Safeguarding Policy.

Best wishes from the Board

Kate Roe, Principal

Sarah Thompson, Clerk