

News from the FE Corporation meeting, 29 June 2021

COVID-19 Update

Governors noted college action in response to the latest COVID-19 guidance and discussed, in detail, the impact on quality of COVID-19 and measures taken to control the pandemic, including the impact on student attendance, work experience and destinations. Governors recognised how hard teaching staff had worked throughout the pandemic and commended their commitment and efforts in providing fair and robust teacher assessed grades.

Strategic Update

A Governor Strategy Event had taken place on 22 June to consider and review the Strategic Plan. Governors' suggestions and proposals would be used to develop an updated Strategic Plan, which would be considered by the Corporation in the autumn term.

Governors considered the wide range of funding bid opportunities that the college was currently pursuing, including a number of bids for capital funding, and endorsed an application to the Post-16 Capacity Fund, in order to expand facilities to provide for increased student numbers as a result of the upcoming demographic bulge. Governors recognised the hard work of the college in meeting some very tight deadlines.

Quality Matters

Governors received feedback from a meeting of the Quality and Standards Committee and were pleased to note that the college was continuing to offer a range of enrichment activities and had also achieved well in terms of collecting destinations information, with an increase in the number of positive destinations. All governors were asked to try to attend a curriculum Self Assessment Report validation meeting, to further support governors' understanding of the college's quality position and raise governors' visibility in college. Governors recognised that remote meetings had made it more difficult for some governors to gain an understanding of the college and were looking forward to returning to face-to-face meetings when possible.

Financial Matters

Governors considered the May 2021 monthly management accounts and were pleased to note a small operational surplus forecast at year end, although there continued to be a risk as the Tees Valley Combined Authority had not yet announced its level of clawback against unused allocation. The college's financial health rating was 'good', following repayment of the college loan.

Governors also considered and approved the 2021-22 college budget and the 2022-23 financial plan, including capital and subcontracting allocations. Governors recognised that the budget was set on a prudent basis with a very small projected surplus, assuming some growth in devolved and non-devolved allocations and a prudent apprenticeships budget. The College Financial Forecasting Return would be submitted by the deadline of 30 July 2021. Governors noted a communication from the unions in relation to the staff pay award and agreed to consider this further as part of discussions in relation to the staff pay award in the autumn term.

Governors received feedback from a meeting of the Finance, Employment and Estates Committee in June and agreed recommendations from the committee in relation to updates to the Financial Regulations, including the college's Reserves Policy, arrangements for approving drawdown from the college's Revolving Credit Facility and the updated College Fees and Charges Framework.

Audit Matters

Governors received feedback from an Audit Committee meeting in June and were pleased to note a 'good' level of assurance awarded in a recent internal audit of Procurement and Purchase Ledger. A headline internal audit plan had been considered but would be further reviewed by the incoming Director of Finance and Corporate Resources. Governors agreed the committee's recommendation to reappoint Audit One as internal audit service for the 2021-22 academic year. Governors also noted that a revised Post 16 Audit Code of Practice had been issued and that this would impact on the external audit of the 2020-21 accounts. Further discussions with the external auditors, Mazars, were planned. Governors also approved the Risk Management Strategy for 2021-22 and noted the development of risk appetite as a core measure.

Governance Matters

Governors noted use of the college seal and Chair's action, specifically in relation to the Revolving Credit Facility and funding bid applications. Governors also discussed ways to raise the profile of the Board, internally within the college and externally, and agreed to re-establish the Link Governor scheme in 2021-22.

Governors noted Nicola Wemyss' resignation as a student governor and agreed a proposal to establish a student governor recruitment task and finish group to find ways to improve student governor recruitment processes. Governors also noted feedback from meeting evaluation questionnaires and action taken in response to governors' suggestions.

Other items

Governors approved the updated Safeguarding and Equality and Diversity policies.

Governors considered feedback from the Chair's annual appraisal and reappointed Emma Wright as Corporation Chair and Calvin Kipling as Corporation Vice Chair for a term of office of two years.

Governors thanked Andrew Hayday for his work during his tenure as Director of Finance and Corporate Resources, commending his success in improving the college's financial position and his leadership of a number of successful projects, including the Energy Centre project

Best wishes from the Board

Emma Wright, Chair

Kate Roe, Principal

Sarah Thompson, Clerk