

News from the FE Corporation meeting, 8 December 2020

Governor appointment

Governors appointed Jan Richardson-Wilde, CEO at Occupational Awards Limited, as a governor for a term of office of four years.

Strategic Update

A governor Strategy Event had taken place on 10 November 2019. Input had been provided by the Tees Valley Combined Authority and North Yorkshire County Council in relation to economic developments and governors had considered the impact on the college's Strategic Plan. Governors recognised that some Key Performance Indicators were now outdated and were pleased to note that staff development was a priority area for the revised Strategic Plan. Governors had also considered equality and diversity, recognising the impact of 'Black Lives Matter', and the potential implications of a post-16 White Paper.

Governors noted the publication of the 'independent Commission for the College of the Future' and its possible impact on a future government White Paper; recent government initiatives launched in response to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; and regional and local developments.

Student-Related and Quality Matters

Governors considered and agreed the college's 2019-20 Self Assessment Report and the 2020-21 Quality Improvement Plan, noting the impact of COVID-19 on college performance and progress against areas of improvement. The college graded overall effectiveness as 'good' (Grade 2) and all other judgements also 2 with the exception of provision for students with high needs, which was graded 'outstanding' (Grade 1) and some specific curriculum areas. Governors commended three curriculum areas on improving their gradings and discussed the reason for a decline in one area.

Governors also recognised the impact of COVID-19 on Darlington and surrounding areas, with a disproportionate impact on young people in terms of unemployment rates, as well as digital poverty, exposure to domestic violence and impact on resilience.

Governors recognised that English and maths remained an area of focus for the college but the position was improving.

Governors received feedback from a Quality and Standards Committee meeting and approved the very positive Collaborative Provision Continuous Monitoring and Enhancement Report (CPCMER) submitted to Teesside University in relation to the college's Higher Education provision. The committee had been pleased to note improvements in Engineering and the positive variation from target in respect of 16-19 enrolment.

Governors also received feedback from a meeting of the Student Liaison Committee. In light of social distancing requirements, only a small number of students had attended. Students were clear about their targets and felt supported by college but were being impacted by restrictions on extra-curricular activities and limited catering options. An issue raised in respect of lighting in stairwells would be resolved through motion-sensor lighting.

Financial Matters

Governors considered and agreed the 2019-20 Annual Reports and Financial Statements for the college and Quadrant, the college's dormant subsidiary. Governors noted an exceptionally positive

year end surplus position excluding pension charges. Governors also received the external auditors' audit completion report and were pleased to note only minor recommendations. Governors recognised that timing in terms of the college loan repayment term had a technical impact on the college's financial health rating.

Governors also received an update from a meeting of the Finance, Employment and Estates Committee held in November and received the management accounts for October 2020, which showed a positive position following confirmation that Teachers' Pension Scheme contributions would continue to be funded. Enrolment for 16-19 year old students was in line with target, although COVID-19 was impacting on Higher Education, apprenticeship and adult education numbers.

Governors agreed a pay award of 2% (or £250, whichever was the most beneficial to individual staff). Governors agreed that a message of thanks and appreciation should be issued to all staff and the Principal would draft this in liaison with the Chair and Vice Chair.

Governors also received feedback from an Audit Committee meeting and noted discussions in respect of risk management and fraud.

Recommendations from a joint meeting of the Audit and Finance and Employment Committees in relation to amendment to the Financial Regulations and reappointment of Mazars as external auditors were agreed.

Governance Matters

Governors considered governor attendance at meetings and development activities, and national governance issues, and agreed amendments to committee membership and terms of reference.

Other items

Governors received feedback from a Remuneration Committee meeting and received the Annual Remuneration Report, agreeing the Annual Remuneration Statement for publication. Governors also considered interim performance reviews for the Principal, Deputy Principal, Director of Finance and Corporate Resources and Clerk.

An update on the Energy Centre project was also received and it was noted that this was now due for completion at the end of February 2021.

Best wishes from the Board

Emma Wright, Chair

Kate Roe, Principal

Sarah Thompson, Clerk