

External Governance Review

An external review of governance was undertaken between May and July 2023 by Rachel Robson, Governance Consultant, on behalf of Stone King LLP. The review found that governance at Etc. is committed and structured, and demonstrates highly effective processes and practice. Further, that governors value the Group and its place in their local community and undertake their roles diligently; that there is a positive culture within the members of the Governing Board and in their relationships with staff enabling and supporting balanced and well received challenge and support; and that discussion and questioning are open and inclusive. A number of recommendations and suggestions to further develop and strengthen the effectiveness of governance at the Etc. were identified during the course of the review. These were accepted by the Governing Body and, together with improvement areas identified by governors during self-assessment activity, form the basis of a Governance Action Plan for 2023-24.

The Governance Action Plan was approved by the Governing Body at its meeting on 19 October 2023 and the key actions are as follows:

Risk Management	Strategic Risk Register is streamlined and supports good governance
Agenda formation and meeting management	Governing Body agendas reflect core importance of Chief Executive report and work of committees
	All meeting attendees clearly understand agenda item resolution
Board documentation	Governance responsibilities are clearly documented
	Impact of link governor roles is evidenced
	Governor recruitment process is clearly documented, providing transparency to current and potential future governors
	Continuing effectiveness of Governing Body at all levels is ensured
Governance Professional	Reflect current role and responsibilities of Governance Team
Governance effectiveness reviews	Governance improvements are identified and actioned
Report writing and meeting packs	Reports and meeting packs support effective governance
Recruitment, retention and succession planning for Board and committee members	Continuing effectiveness of Standards Improvement Committee
	Continuing effectiveness of Audit Committee leadership
Governor training and development	Corporation Chair competent and confident around responsibilities; has access to external support and advice
	Audit Committee competent and confident around responsibilities
	New governors receive appropriate and effective induction and are able to quickly contribute to effective governance

	All governors have clear understanding of expectations in relation to training and development
	Governors have deepened understanding of staff and/or student experience
Maintaining and developing relationships between governors and senior managers	Senior staff fully understand role and responsibilities of governors at early stage in appointment; senior staff are able to provide high quality reports and advice and guidance to governors

The external governance review findings also reflect outcomes of an Ofsted inspection undertaken in May 2022, in which 'Leadership and Management' was judged to be 'Outstanding' and it was acknowledged that 'a rigorous governance model' was in place and that 'governors are extremely knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses of the Group and provide highly effective challenge to leaders'.