

FE Corporation Minutes

Meeting held on Thursday 12th May 2022 at 5.30pm, Redcar & Cleveland College, Room H202

Governors: Fabienne Bailey, Rachel Beeken, Stuart Blackett (Corporation Vice Chair and Chair of Capital Group and Selection Panel), Subhash Chaudhary, Phil Cook (Chief Executive and Group Principal), Louise Davies (Chair of Finance and Employment Committee), Martin Gray, Katy Ludgate (Staff Governor), Rob Mitchell (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Link Governor), Dot Smith, Anne Vickers, Mark White (Corporation Chair), Mark Wilson and Gary Wright (Safeguarding Link Governor)

Apologies: Sam Beel and Paige Costello

Officials: Phil Blewitt (Managing Director NETA), Jason Faulkner (College Principal, Redcar and Cleveland College), Lesley Graham (College Principal, Stockton Riverside College), Phil Hastie (Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure), Erika Marshall (Group Director of Marketing), Gary Potts (Group Vice Principal Business, Innovation and Partnerships), Ben Robinson (College Principal Bede), Fiona Sharp (Group Executive Director Finance), Kay Taylor (Group Director of HR), Sarah Thompson (Clerk to the Corporation), Peter Wood (Interim Group Director of Quality) and Sam Young (Governance Support Officer).

For item 2 only: Lynn Dolan (Group Learning Resources Centre Manager)

Fabienne Bailey joined via Teams

22/45 **Agenda Item 1 – Appointment of Etc. Chief Executive and Group Principal**

This item was deemed confidential to governors; the Group Director of HR was in attendance for this item.

A report from the Clerk to the Corporation and the Group Director of HR had been circulated with the meeting papers. The Corporation Chair welcomed governors to the meeting and asked the Corporation Vice Chair, and Chair of the Selection Panel, to verbally update governors on the Selection Panel's recommendation on appointment to the post of Chief Executive and Group Principal.

The Corporation Vice Chair outlined the shortlisting process [REDACTED] He confirmed that, following a full evaluation of the candidates' performance during day one of the assessment centre, the Selection Panel agreed to select [REDACTED] candidates to progress through to the second day. The presentation and formal interview on day two were also attended by Sally Dicketts CBE as an independent panel member, with all governors invited to attend the candidates' presentations. He added that the two-day process had been thorough and robust [REDACTED].

The Corporation Vice Chair then confirmed that the Selection Panel unanimously recommended Grant Glendinning to the FE Corporation for appointment to the post of Chief Executive and Group Principal. He also confirmed that, subject to Corporation approval, Grant Glendinning had confirmed that he would be willing to accept the post. The Corporation Vice Chair thanked

everyone who had supported the process including the Group Director of HR, the Clerk, the Governance Support Officer, members of the Selection Panel and governors who had attended and provided feedback on the day two presentations; he added that he would also send a letter to Sally Dicketts to thank her for her valuable input. [REDACTED]

Governors **agreed** the Selection Panel's recommendation to appoint Grant Glendinning as Etc. Chief Executive and Group Principal.

The Group Director of HR then clarified that the Senior Management Team (SMT) would be informed of the Corporation's decision the following morning and that a communications plan to staff and stakeholders would be put in place; references would be taken up and checked and possible start dates discussed.

Phil Cook joined the meeting.

The Corporation Chair informed the Chief Executive of the Corporation's decision. [REDACTED]

Phil Blewitt, Jason Faulkner, Lesley Graham, Phil Hastie, Erika Marshall, Gary Potts, Ben Robinson, Fiona Sharp, Peter Wood and Lynn Dolan joined the meeting.

22/46 Agenda Item 2 – Digital Strategy

The Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure introduced the Group Learning Resources Centre Manager and highlighted her leading role in the creation of the Digital Vision, agreed by the Finance and Employment Committee in October 2021, and development of the Digital Strategy, working with staff from across the group.

The Group Learning Resources Manager explained that she had been asked to develop a digital strategy to articulate how the group would extend the digital experience, prepare students for employment in a digital world and deliver continuous improvement in staff digital capability, skills and administrative efficiencies. The strategy had been based on the digital vision, developed from an initial Senior Management Team (SMT) workshop facilitated by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC); this had provided a clear understanding of what the strategy should achieve. She explained that the approach had been very much staff-led and had also involved the Group Learning Technology Development Officer and a range of both teaching and support staff; the Digital Strategy had been designed to align with the IT, Teaching and Training, and Learning and Development strategies. Being rooted in a rapidly changing digital environment, relatively short-term goals had been set around three broad themes (digital capability, infrastructure and environment, and inclusivity and accessibility) and, using the same staff-led approach, the strategy would be updated regularly. The Group Learning Resources Manager confirmed that work had started on embedding the strategy, with staff able to access a JISC development tool which then provided guidance on their next steps; the strategy would be launched to staff through the Technology Innovation Group (TIG), with plans to establish a strategy development group.

The Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure added that internal marketing tools had already been created and the Group Learning Resources Manager explained that staff development tutorials on accessibility, including captioning, were being rolled out to staff.

A governor asked how the group kept up to date with technological changes and the Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure explained JISC's role in providing technological support, including member services such as penetration testing and Cyber Essentials accreditation. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) was also supported by the Group Learning Technology Development Officer and five digital coaches; the Group Learning Resources Manager added that staff attended technology events and networking groups to maintain currency.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Link Governor commended the equality and diversity focus of the strategy and the Corporation thanked the Group Learning Resources Manager for her work on the strategy and for her presentation to the Board.

Governors **approved** the Digital Strategy.

22/47 Agenda Item 3 – Safeguarding and Prevent Update

The College Principal Bede presented the circulated report which focused on the emotional and physical wellbeing of learners, including the impact of three wellbeing coaches, employed using the College Collaboration Fund (CCF), and partnership work supporting vulnerable learners. Data on attendance and retention for vulnerable groups of learners and the proportion of learners meeting criteria for Level 2 to 4 services by site had been included in the report, with updated data as of RO9, May 2022, showing excellent retention of vulnerable learners approaching the end of the academic year. In terms of Prevent, there were increased concerns resulting from the growth of the Incel movement, and the proactive development of tutorial and enrichment programmes reflected current emerging themes and aimed to engage students positively. Data on E-safe referrals for the previous three month period had been included [REDACTED] highlighting the importance of and responsiveness to online monitoring even during holiday periods. Compliance with mandatory staff training remained high, with any continued non-compliance escalated to the Group Director of HR.

The Safeguarding Link Governor commended the report and the work of the College Principal Bede and the student support and wellbeing team in supporting learners; he added that the use of E-safe linked to the Digital Strategy and demonstrated the importance of investing in current technology.

A governor asked if there was any benchmarking available for vulnerable learner retention and the College Principal Bede explained that there was no national data published but that the group's retention rates would be considered strong. A governor asked if the war in Ukraine had had any impact on students and the College Principal confirmed that affected students had been quickly identified and offered welfare support; this was being monitored by the safeguarding team. The Interim Group Director of Quality added that tutorial materials on Ukraine had been developed and there had been positive feedback on these during tutorial walkthroughs.

In response to a governor's request, the College Principal Bede explained that the group had employed three wellbeing coaches, contracted to the end of November 2022; two with an offer across sites and one a specific emotional and health and wellbeing coach developing tutorial materials.

Governors **noted** that the group continued to deploy effective and impactful safeguarding and welfare services to students through a dynamic and proactive strategy of student support and wellbeing.

22/48 Agenda Item 4 – Strategic Update

The Chief Executive and Group Principal gave a verbal strategic update. He explained that, under the Education Inspection Framework (EIF), the group should receive a full Ofsted inspection this academic year and thus within four years of merger but that, with many students now starting exams, the likelihood of an inspection would decrease over the coming weeks.

In response to a governor's comment, the Chief Executive explained that, by focusing on the EIF, teachers would be meeting best practice and that this was evidenced by the improved practice throughout the group. A staff governor commented that staff were keen for the Ofsted inspection to take place so inspectors could see what they do.

The Group Director of Marketing provided an update on recruitment; progression conversations were currently taking place, [REDACTED] and there would be a focus on supporting and engaging students to return. Offers were currently above 2020 levels and the recruitment target felt attainable, [REDACTED]; Higher Education (HE) recruitment was currently broadly in line with the previous year, [REDACTED].

A governor asked if the anticipated growth in student numbers could create any capacity issues and the Group Director of Marketing explained that predicted student numbers were being worked through at Business Planning (BP), including implications for staffing levels. [REDACTED] In response to a governor's question, the Group Director of Marketing highlighted the work on employer links to increase recruitment to part time HE engineering at Redcar and Cleveland College (RCC).

Governors **noted** the update.

22/49 Agenda Item 5 – Department for Education (DfE) Accountability Pilot

The Chief Executive and Group Principal gave a verbal update on the group's involvement in the DfE's pilot on proposed accountability measures; the pro-forma provided was being worked through and required concise and accurate information focused on priority sectors. He added that, as there was a governance focus, he would be contacting a selection of governors for input the following week. He stressed that more work would be needed to develop Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as proposed in the accountability framework.

Governors **noted** the update.

22/50 Agenda Item 6 – Learner Voice Outcomes

The Interim Group Director of Quality presented the circulated report on learner voice, including formal learner surveys, learner forums and more spontaneous manager drop ins and meet and greets. Some examples of student feedback from learner forums, alongside actions taken, had been included in the report.

A governor commented on the valuable feedback gathered through learner forums and the speed of the group's response to this feedback. The Interim Group Director of Quality highlighted the use of learner forum and meet and greet spreadsheets to close down concerns in a timely way. The Chief Executive commented on the value to students when college principals could act quickly in response to often straightforward requests brought to their attention.

Two governors who had attended an RCC learner forum earlier that day commented on how well managed the forum had been, with the 30 students attending all being given the opportunity to speak; the college principal had noted their feedback and provided assurance. A governor added that the Interim Group Director of Quality had confirmed that action was already being taken on two of the issues raised.

Governors **noted** the update.

22/51 Agenda Item 7 – Quality Update

The Interim Group Director of Quality presented a circulated report providing information on 16-18 and 19+ in year attendance, attendance analysis, in year retention data, best and worst case apprenticeship achievement rates, an update on teaching and learning, including feedback from tutorial walkthroughs across the group, and professional development. He highlighted the quality of the feedback from peer observations which aimed to further embed professional conversations and the language of teaching and learning within staffrooms; a sample of comments had been included in his report.

A governor commented on a conversation they had had with a member of new teaching staff at the Staff Seminar held in April; the staff member had reported how well supported they had been during their first year in teaching.

Governors **noted** that: KPIs across the group were in line with the last two years' in year data and above national rates; support was being provided for students with little formal exam experience in preparation for their final exams; and strategies to develop teaching colleagues and share best practice were maintaining momentum.

22/52 Agenda Item 8 – Capital Projects Update

The Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure presented the circulated report giving an overview of and update on major capital projects in line with the group's Estates Strategy and confirmed that progress was in line with agreed timescales. He added that, in order to mitigate against the increasing costs of steel, Letters of Intent had been requested by Britcon, the agreed contractor for the RCC projects, ahead of formal contract agreement. Due to the level of expenditure, Capital Group members had been consulted by email and had been content for the group to proceed and the Corporation were asked to formally agree the issue of Letters of Intent.

Governors **noted** the report and **agreed** to issuing of Letters of Intent to the main contractor in relation to the Clean Energy Education Hub and Wave 3 T Level projects at RCC.

22/53 Agenda Item 9 – Finance Update

The Group Executive Director Finance presented the circulated finance update confirming the Health Grade by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) as Good and the latest Restructuring (RF) monitoring submission to the ESFA as at 29 April 2022. She highlighted that the covering letter from the ESFA, included as an appendix, confirmed that an error in the financial plan template had resulted in the financial health under the proposed systems being overstated in some cases; the grade for Etc. had been showing as Outstanding but had now been confirmed as Good, in line with expectations. The latest ESFA college governing body finance dashboard for Etc. had also been included as an appendix and an initial review had confirmed there were no concerns to raise.

The most recent suite of outcomes and milestones data as submitted to the ESFA Provider Market Oversight (PMO) team as part of the RF grant agreement had also been included as an appendix with areas to note summarised in the covering report. The Group Executive Director Finance explained that, as the outcomes in the agreement were measured against original targets up to July 2021, monitoring was provided to the ESFA for information only and were no longer measured against targets. Some areas, showing amber, had been impacted by COVID-19 but were not of concern.

A governor asked how many colleges would have been affected by the error in the ESFA's model and the Group Executive Director Finance explained that it would have affected every college but that there was no way of establishing those whose financial health grades had been downgraded. She added that the College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR) submitted the previous week still showed the group's financial health as Outstanding. A governor commented that the ESFA dashboard, circulated with the papers, had been clear and understandable and the Group Executive Director Finance highlighted that governors could request their own IDAMS account (Identity and Access Management System, an ESFA system) to access the online interactive dashboards.

A governor noted that there was a FE Commissioner benchmark of over 25 cash days in hand and asked whether there was a target set for an upper limit. The Group Executive Director Finance explained that between 45 and 50 days felt comfortable and that if the level were any higher this would suggest the group was holding too much money in the bank. She added that the level of 25 days allowed enough cash to cover the monthly pay costs.

Governors **noted** the update.

22/54 Agenda Item 10 – Strategic Risk Register

The Group Executive Director Finance presented the updated Strategic Risk Register, circulated with the papers, alongside a report detailing the mechanisms for reviewing and monitoring strategic and operational risk registers. She added that the Strategic Risk Register was considered at every meeting of the Audit Committee and would next be considered at their meeting on 19th May alongside the proposed Risk Management Strategy for 2022-23.

Governors **noted** the updated Strategic Risk Register for 2021-22.

Agenda Item 11 – Corporation minutes and actions

22/55 11.1 – Previous minutes

Minutes of a Corporation meeting held on 10 March 2022, including the confidential appendix to the minutes, were formally **approved** as accurate records of the meeting.

22/56 11.2 – Matters arising

Progress against actions was **noted**, with all actions due completed.

22/57 Agenda Item 12 – Committee / subsidiary board minutes and recommendations

12.1 – Finance and Employment Committee

12.2 – Capital Group

Key themes from the meetings had been included in the circulated report and the chairs of the Finance and Employment Committee and Capital Group both confirmed that they had no additional comments. Governors **agreed** the recommendation from the Finance and Employment Committee with respect to revised subcontracting levels for 2021-22.

Agenda Item 13 – Governance Issues

22/58 13.1 – Governance documentation

The Clerk presented the circulated report which included the calendar of meetings for 2022-23 and a summary of key changes to the Association of Colleges' Code of Good Governance for English Colleges. Updates to the code included reviewed wording of the provisions in each principle, the introduction of an Environmental Sustainability principle, an updated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) principle, the combination of the Governance Review and Governance Structure principles and the full integration of the Senior Post Holder Remuneration Code. A review of current practice and an action plan in relation to compliance with all provisions would be presented to a future meeting of the Board for agreement.

The Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure provided governors with assurance that they were well-progressed in meeting the requirements of the additional section 8: Environmental Sustainability.

Governors **agreed**:

- i) the calendar of Corporation and committee meetings 2022-23;
- ii) to adopt the updated Code of Good Governance for English Colleges with effect from 1 August 2022.

22/59 13.2 – Governance update

The Clerk presented the circulated report detailing governor attendance at meetings and involvement in a range of training and development, college group events and learning walkthroughs; information on national governance issues, as circulated through the Governors' Digest, was also highlighted.

Governors:

- i) **noted** governor attendance at meetings of the Corporation and its committees in 2021-22 to date;

- ii) **noted** governors' involvement in a range of training and development opportunities, and college group events, and agreed to notify the Clerk of any specific training needs;
- iii) **noted** the update in respect of national governance matters.

Agenda Item 14 – Policies

22/60 14.1 – Health and Safety Policy

The Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure presented the updated Health and Safety Policy and explained that any of the supporting appendices outlining detailed processes could be supplied to governors on request. In response to a governor's question, he confirmed that a process was in place for legionella testing, with details included in the Safety Inspections appendix. In response to a governor's question about Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) training, the Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure explained that, with the exception of NETA, there were few requirements for the use of PPE across the group. The Managing Director NETA added that staff undertook mandatory health and safety training with compliance monitored through HR; the Clerk also confirmed that the Corporation received an annual health and safety report.

Governors **approved** the revised Health and Safety Policy.

22/61 14.2 – Single Equality Scheme

The College Principal Bede confirmed that the Single Equality Scheme had been reviewed and amended to reflect updates to language and terminology, with the revised version included with the meeting papers. He highlighted that the Single Equality Scheme reflected the group's values and demonstrated a commitment to responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010; it would be used to inform EDI activity across the group.

Governors **agreed** the amendments and **approved** the Single Equality Scheme.

22/62 Agenda Item 15 – Any Other Business

There were no items of other business.

22/63 Agenda Item 16 – Approval of Documents for Public Inspection

It was **agreed** that the agenda and supporting documents of the current meeting be made available for public inspection with the exception of the reports for Agenda Items 3, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. Minutes, with the exception of any confidential appendices, would be made available following approval and consideration at the next meeting.

22/64 Agenda Item 17 – Date and time of next meeting

Thursday 7th July 2022, 5.30 pm, Redcar and Cleveland College Board Room

The venue for this meeting was subsequently changed to The Eye, Stockton Riverside College.

22/65 Agenda Item 18 - Key Themes

- Agreed a recommendation from the Selection Panel to appoint Grant Glendinning to the post of Chief Executive and Group Principal

- Approved the Digital Strategy and thanked the Group Learning Resources Centre Manager for her work in its development
- Considered a Safeguarding Update, confirming that the group continued to deploy effective and impactful safeguarding and welfare services to students
- Considered a range of learner voice outcomes, including a sample of actions taken in response to learner feedback, and received feedback from governors who had attended a recent learner forum
- ESFA Financial Health Grade confirmed as Good
- Noted the progress of risk monitoring for 2021-22 and key updates to the Strategic Risk Register
- Agreed to adopt the updated Code of Good Governance for English Colleges with effect from 1 August 2022-
- Approved the Health & Safety Policy and the Single Equality Scheme

(The meeting ended at 6.50 pm)

Approved at a meeting held on 7th July 2022