

FE Corporation Minutes

Meeting held on Thursday 20th October 2022 at 5.30pm, The Eye, Stockton Riverside College

Governors: Fabienne Bailey (Chair of Search and Governance Committee), Rachel Beeken, Subhash Chaudhary (Chair of Audit Committee), Paige Costello, Louise Davies (Chair of Finance and Employment Committee and Vice Chair Capital Group), Grant Glendinning (Chief Executive and Group Principal), Vanessa Housley (Vice Chair of Standards Improvement Committee), Lorraine Preston (Staff Governor and Student Support & Wellbeing Manager), Dot Smith (Corporation Vice Chair and Chair of Standards Improvement Committee), Anne Vickers, Mark Wilson and Gary Wright (Safeguarding Link Governor)

Apologies: Liz Dixon, Stuart Blackett (Corporation Chair)

Officials: Lesley Graham (College Principal, Stockton Riverside College), Phil Hastie (Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure), Patrick Jordan (Interim College Principal Bede), Erika Marshall (Group Director of Marketing), 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).

In attendance: Elliot Gale (prospective student governor, from agenda item 5 onwards)

22/90 **Agenda Item 1 – Welcome, apologies for absence, declarations of interest, notification of other items of business**

The Corporation Vice Chair welcomed governors to the first Corporation meeting of the academic year; governors noted apologies for absence from Stuart Blackett, Corporation Chair. As a member of the Hartlepool Town Deal Board, Gary Wright declared an interest in agenda item 9. There were no notifications of other items of business.

Louise Davies, Vanessa Housley, Lorraine Preston and Gary Wright left the meeting.

22/91 **Agenda Item 2 – Governing body membership**

The Corporation Vice Chair presented the Corporation membership recommendations from the Search and Governance Committee as outlined in the circulated paper and updated governors on the results of the recently held staff governor elections at the Stockton sites. The Clerk confirmed that there had been two applications, with Liz Dixon successful following the election; she extended thanks to Richard Smith for his interest in the position.

Governors:

- i) **agreed** to reappoint Louise Davies and Gary Wright as independent governors for a term of four years following the end of their current terms of office;
- ii) **agreed** to appoint Vanessa Housley as an independent governor for a term of four years;
- iii) **ratified** the appointment of Lorraine Preston as staff governor (Redcar site) for a term of four years;

- iv) **noted** the results of the staff governor ballot and **ratified** the appointment of Liz Dixon as staff governor (Stockton sites) for a term of four years.

Louise Davies, Vanessa Housley, Lorraine Preston and Gary Wright re-joined the meeting.

The Corporation Vice Chair confirmed the agreed appointments and welcomed Vanessa and Lorraine to the Corporation.

The Corporation Vice Chair also confirmed that a prospective student governor, Elliot Gale, would be joining the meeting after agenda item 4 as an observer; two other students had expressed an initial interest and applications from those students wishing to formally apply to be student governors would be considered by the Students' Union. Governors **noted** the current position in relation to student governor appointments.

Agenda Item 3 – Corporation minutes and actions

22/92 3.1 – Minutes for approval

Minutes of a Corporation meeting held on 7 July 2022 were formally **approved** as an accurate record of the meeting; governors **received** notes from a Governor Workshop on cyber security held on 15 September 2022.

22/93 3.2 – Matters arising

The Group Director of Quality had provided an update on the action relating to Cleveland domestic abuse initiatives and it was **agreed** to close this action.

The Corporation Vice Chair confirmed that regular updates on the group's higher education (HE) provision were provided to the Standards Improvement Committee and that the HE Self Evaluation Document (SED) would be presented at the December Corporation meeting; it was anticipated that the group's Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provision would be inspected as part of the Teesside University Ofsted inspection the following term.

The Corporation Vice Chair reminded governors of the ongoing invitation to observe Business Planning / Performance Review (BP/PR) sessions and the Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure confirmed that the next round would begin in November; governors noted that arrangements to attend could be made via the Governance Team.

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

22/94 Agenda Item 4 – Chief Executive's report

A Chief Executive's report had been circulated and provided an overview of the buildings programme, curriculum developments, HR and people data, marketing and communications, recruitment and learner numbers, and related updates from the further education (FE) sector. The Chief Executive welcomed feedback from governors on any suggested additional content.

He highlighted that the Senior Management Team's (SMT) recent Away Day had been hosted by the Corporation Chair at Railpen's offices in Darlington. Strong developments in the clean energy curriculum and skills training offer at Redcar and Cleveland College (RCC) continued, with good progress on the building of the Clean Energy Education Hub (CEEH) and a new employer forum

established as part of the Strategic Development Fund (SDF) 2 project. The group was delivering T Levels for the first time in 2022-23, with plans for nine pathways across four routes, though recruitment to some pathways had been disappointing and these would not run.

[REDACTED] National Student Survey (NSS) results and achievement outcomes for 2021-22 had both been strong.

Staff sickness rates were relatively stable, with Covid-related absence at moderately low levels. A new People Skills Programme was in development; this aimed to upskill line managers across the group, with a focus on leadership and management behaviours. Industrial relations remained an issue across the sector and Etc. pay award negotiations would commence on 17 November, with the hope of reaching agreement by Christmas.

16 – 18 recruitment had been strong, with the RO4 position secure, but it was still early in the year to assess adult learner numbers; planned Adult Education Budget (AEB) provision was being reviewed through an action plan led by the College Principal RCC and remedial actions were being put in place. Apprenticeship provision was also an area of focus [REDACTED]; an Apprenticeship Council had been created to focus on apprenticeship delivery across the group and governors would be kept updated on impact.

The group had responded to the Department for Education (DfE) consultation on proposals for the reform of FE funding and had also taken part in the Accountability Agreement pilot in 2021-22. Guidance on these was expected to be issued in late October and providers would be required to submit their Agreements in May 2023. In response to a governor's question, the Chief Executive explained that the current grant funding agreement letter would be replaced by an accountability framework, with the Accountability Agreement approved and signed by the Corporation; the measures included would then be monitored by the Board.

A governor highlighted an upcoming event organised by Stockton Borough Council's Head of Education to raise learners' awareness of the Stockton post-16 offer; the College Principal Stockton Riverside College (SRC) confirmed that she and the Interim College Principal Bede had both received information on this and it had been shared with the marketing team.

A governor asked if data on the number of interim and temporary posts in relation to permanent staff numbers was available given that this could be a measure of organisational vulnerability and higher staff costs; the Group Director of HR confirmed that HR monitored the situation and that data would be included in future Chief Executive's reports.

A governor commented that Middlesbrough College offered HE through the Open University rather than Teesside University and asked whether the Etc. position was kept under review. The Chief Executive confirmed that he represented the group on the partnership board and that the franchise arrangement was kept under strategic review at SMT level. The benefits of the group's membership of the TUCP were discussed, including the strength of this local relationship, and the high percentage of both Bede and SRC students progressing to Teesside University. The College Principal SRC, also strategic lead for HE and Skills, commented on the open and receptive relationship with Teesside University and the strength of the partnership.

A governor suggested the addition of sections on Safeguarding and student wellbeing, and on risk in future Chief Executive updates.

A governor asked if staff recruitment and retention in business engagement had impacted on apprenticeship recruitment. The Chief Executive outlined the difficulties in retaining business development colleagues due to higher pay offered elsewhere but confirmed that there had been interest in the Group Director of Business Engagement post, with an interim currently in post. He added that trainers and assessors in technical apprenticeship areas, for example construction, were moving back to work in their industries due to higher pay and that this was a sector-wide challenge.

Governors **noted** the update.

Elliot Gale joined as an observer and the Corporation Vice Chair welcomed him to the meeting.

22/95 Agenda Item 5 – Quality Update

An update on 2021–22 performance had been circulated. This included education and training achievement rates and attendance; apprenticeship achievement rates; achievement rate analysis; progress against 2021-22 Group Improvement Plans (GIPs); 2021-22 self-assessment and themes for the 2022-23 GIPs.

The Group Director of Quality highlighted that apprenticeship achievement rates had fallen since the start of the pandemic, though the predicted, worst case scenario, achievement rate [REDACTED] was expected to improve to [REDACTED] just below the national rate (NR) of 57.7%. [REDACTED] apprenticeships would remain an area for improvement in 2022-23, driven through an Apprenticeship GIP and the establishment of an Apprenticeship Council. The council would meet monthly and challenge and support colleagues to manage each stage of the apprenticeship journey, including standards approval, smart assessor compliance, in year progress and end point assessment (EPA).

The Group Director of Quality explained that the Group Self Assessment Report (SAR) had been considered in detail at the last Standards Improvement Committee meeting and highlighted the importance of accurate and rigorous self-assessment. He thanked governors for their attendance at SAR validation panels and added that the Ofsted judgement of Outstanding for Leadership and Management also reflected the strength of self-assessment at the group.

The six GIP titles, likely themes and leads had also been outlined in the report; these would be Managing People, Quality of Education in the Level 3 Vocational Curriculum, Apprenticeships, Maintaining Learning, Cost of Living and Teaching and Learning. He added that this year's GIPs had taken a more collaborative approach, drawing ideas from a wider range of colleagues, and were more concise documents than the previous year.

A member of the Standards Improvement Committee expressed their delight at the inclusion of a Cost of Living GIP and the strategic approach to an issue which had the potential to adversely impact attendance.

A governor commented on the Apprenticeships Funding Assurance audit considered at the last Audit Committee meeting [REDACTED]; the first meeting of the Apprenticeship Council had been

held the previous day and the first step would be to modify systems to ensure that apprenticeship processes were robust and deliverable with the aim of addressing the recommendations made in the internal audit report.

In response to a governor's question about timely achievement rates, the Group Director of Quality confirmed that these were close to national rates though had been impacted by late bookings. Following a governor's suggestion, it was agreed that there would be a progress update on apprenticeships at each Corporation meeting.

The Clerk confirmed that, following approval by the Corporation, the Group SAR for 2021-22 would be submitted to Ofsted; governors thanked the Group Director of Quality and SMT colleagues for a positive and valuable self-assessment process.

Governors:

- i) **noted** the update on 2021-22 performance, including performance against 2021-22 quality targets and final update against 2021-22 Group Improvement Plans;
- ii) **approved** the Group Self Assessment Report 2021-22;
- iii) **agreed** the proposed themes for Group Improvement Plans 2022-23.

22/96 Agenda Item 6 – Learner Voice

A report summarising the outcomes of the NSS 2022 and FE Enrolment Survey September 2022, and outlining Learner Voice plans for 2022-23 had been circulated. The College Principal SRC highlighted that, in addition to the headlines given by the Chief Executive, the overall satisfaction rate of 90% was 13% above NR and significantly higher than the previous year. NSS outcomes were published by the Office for Students and had confirmed the positive impact of the Improvement Plan led by the Group Head of HE and Skills. However, the 61% response rate had been disappointing and would be an area of focus in 2023.

The Group Director of Quality explained that learner voice was collected through both formal and informal mechanisms; the combination had worked well in 2021-22, with Ofsted recognising that managers and leaders had a clear understanding of the student experience. Spontaneous opportunities allowed staff to celebrate success and intervene before smaller issues could escalate into larger concerns. A student governor confirmed that students enjoyed these open conversations and the more informal approach to learner voice.

A governor asked how the group intended to improve clarity of information about course fees and the process regarding payment of course fees, areas with the lowest levels of satisfaction in the FE enrolment survey. The Group Director of Marketing explained that this was not entirely unexpected due to the complexities of part-time course fees but, in response to the survey results, work had started on making fees clearer and easier to understand and this would be embedded in the enrolment process.

Governors **noted** the update.

22/97 Agenda Item 7 – Annual Safeguarding Report

The circulated Annual Safeguarding Report included information on safeguarding named leads, staff training, recruitment checks, Single Central Record audit arrangements, data records, student disciplinary data, emerging issues and actions taken, and network monitoring.

The Safeguarding Link Governor confirmed that he and Anne Vickers had attended the most recent RCC Principal's forum at which students had confirmed that they felt safe in college and comfortable raising concerns. He added, however, that new students' knowledge of Prevent and safeguarding had been less strong and suggested consideration could be given to introducing this at an earlier stage in the year. It was also acknowledged that students did not always understand terminology such as Prevent. A student governor added that second year students could also fail to remember about Prevent and commented that, when students were required to prepare their own presentations, this helped ensure students understood information and cemented their knowledge. It was also noted that students sometimes treated enrichment sessions less seriously than other lessons. The Group Director of Quality thanked the students for their useful feedback.

The Safeguarding Link Governor referred to the network monitoring data included in the report and highlighted that, at the Principal's forum, a student had flagged that they had a legitimate need to search self-harm and other flagged topics for their course; he asked if the network monitoring systems could be adapted to account for this. The Group Director of Quality explained that, in terms of electronic monitoring, staff could review Smoothwall alerts against curriculum and enrichment topics. The Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure added that there were two different aspects to website monitoring - active monitoring through Smoothwall and filtering to block access to certain websites, with curriculum staff able to actively identify legitimate and useful websites.

A governor asked for further detail on the bursary policy review mentioned in the report. The Group Director of Quality explained that the policy had been reviewed by Lorraine Preston, Student Support & Wellbeing Manager: Curriculum & Student Support and newly appointed staff governor. The Student Support & Wellbeing Manager highlighted that allowances, such as the Free College Meal allowance, had been increased in line with cost of living increases; the uniform allowance now covered 100% of costs and the daily limit towards childcare costs had been increased to £50. The review had focused on financial support that would have a positive impact on students and the bursary policy would be kept under review throughout the year.

In response to a governor's question about student awareness of the support available during the year, the Group Director of Quality noted that this would be reviewed and monitored through the Cost of Living GIP. A governor commented that, on a recent college visit, they had observed a student asking for information on bursary support and that the student had received high quality information. The Student Support and Wellbeing Manager agreed that bursary staff were located in visible locations in colleges; students also received information on the support available during induction and through leaflets.

Governors **noted** the annual Safeguarding update and that the group's safeguarding duty was being discharged in line with statutory and other guidance, with effective safeguarding policy and practice across the group.

22/98 Agenda Item 8 – Health and Safety Annual Report

The Health and Safety Annual Report had been prepared by the Group Head of Health and Safety and circulated with the meeting pack; the Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure

noted that the group's good track record in relation to health and safety had continued in 2021-22.

A governor asked if data included the major capital projects and the Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure confirmed that the report did not capture accidents and injuries on subcontractor-controlled sites. It was agreed that health and safety information for current major capital projects should be presented to the Governors' Capital Group and that this could be useful information for future tender processes. The Interim College Principal Bede confirmed that he received weekly progress report on the Bede expansion project and that there had been no reportable accidents to date.

Governors **noted** the report, in particular that there had been no RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) reportable incidents in 2021-22, and extended their thanks to the Group Head of Health and Safety for the annual report.

22/99 Agenda Item 9 – Finance update

A finance report had been circulated which had included updates relating to the College Financial Forecasting Return (CFFR), Restructuring Facility (RF) monitoring, pension assumptions for year end 31 July 2022 and accounting treatment of the Redcar Town Deal grant.

The Group Executive Director Finance confirmed that the CFFR had been submitted to the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) as agreed by the Corporation at their July meeting, with the return and supporting commentary provided for information. The external audit of the financial statements for 2021-22 was currently underway and, though final accounts were not yet finalised, the end of year outcomes looked positive against the budget set. The suite of outcomes and milestones data required as part of the RF grant agreement had been submitted in September with an updated CFFR with July 2022 actuals and, to date, no queries had been raised by the ESFA's Provider Market Oversight (PMO) Team. As previously reported to governors, the PMO Team had been given prior notice of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) adversely impacted by Covid-19.

A briefing note on the default assumptions proposed by the actuary in relation to the FRS102 pension figures to be disclosed in the 2021-22 accounts had also been circulated; the Group Executive Director Finance confirmed that, having reviewed the assumptions and in line with past practice, her recommendation would be not to request any tailored amendments. She added that, whilst this figure would be reflected in the financial statements, both the ESFA and Barclays discounted the impact of FRS102 when monitoring the group's financial health and the narrative to the accounts would describe the operating position of the group excluding FRS102 assumptions. Governors would agree these assumptions as part of the acceptance of the accounts.

A condition within the Redcar Town Deal funding agreement relating to the CEEH required the grant to be shown in the Etc. accounts as a restricted fund and the Group Executive Director Finance proposed that this would be shown as a disclosure in the notes; governors were requested to consider approving this inclusion in the accounts.

The Chair of the Finance and Employment Committee noted that pensions assumptions had been discussed in detail in previous years with no changes sought and that the Town Deal disclosure was similar to that agreed for treatment of the Football Foundation grant requirements.

In response to a governor's question about treatment of Town Deal funding, the Group Executive Director Finance explained that the grants awarded were drawn down as funding was spent by the group; this would be held on the balance sheet and declared separately.

A governor asked if there was any impact should staff draw their pensions before statutory pension age and the Group Executive Director Finance confirmed that this would have no impact on the group's pension assumptions, just on the individual's pension. There would, however, be a requirement for Etc. to make up any shortfall in pension if a member of staff aged over 55 was made redundant, a scenario which often occurred during mergers.

A governor noted reference in the CFFR commentary to increased long term sickness absence and asked whether senior managers were confident that this was being robustly challenged and a consistent approach taken. The Group Director of HR explained that sick pay rates had been reviewed in November 2021 in order to reduce costs but that there had been a period of volatility including cases of long Covid. She stressed the importance of early intervention and explained that HR advisers worked with managers to ensure that the approach was robust and consistent; however, long term sickness absences were currently higher than in the past with more complex reasons, particularly related to mental health. The data had been benchmarked and was comparable with other organisations. Resilience training was offered to those on long term absence and new managers received training on absence management, with HR advisers available to support managers through the process, including when and how to intervene.

Governors **noted**:

- i) submission of the College Financial Forecasting Return to the Education and Skills Funding Agency at 31 July 2022;
 - ii) submission of the Restructuring Facility monitoring at 14 September 2022;
 - iii) FRS102 pension assumptions for the year ended 31 July 2022;
- and **approved** the accounting treatment for the Redcar Town Deal grant in the year end statutory accounts.

Agenda Item 10 – Committees and subsidiary boards

22/100 10.1 – Committee feedback

Key themes and formal recommendations from the following meetings had been included in the circulated report:

10.1.1 – Search and Governance Committee, 22 September 2022

The Chair of the Search and Governance Committee highlighted that succession planning had been a key focus of the meeting, particularly in relation to committee membership. The committee had also recommended that Corporation and committee meetings should end with a review of their effectiveness, including the challenge offered by governors. Support for student governors had also been discussed.

10.1.2 – Capital Group, 22 September 2022

The Vice Chair of the Capital Group explained that progress on capital projects was moving at pace and that projects were on target; issues with cabling at Bede had been well managed but had resulted in tight timeframes. The Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure added that government instability brought some uncertainty about future capital funding and that this posed a raised level of risk to the capital funding required for NETA relocation.

10.1.3 – Audit Committee, 29 September 2022

The Chair of Audit Committee reported that there had been robust discussion; four internal audit reports had been considered, three with substantial assurance and one with reasonable assurance. The Funding Assurance audit of Apprenticeships had resulted in 12 recommendations which had been considered by the committee. The Strategic Risk Register had been reviewed and risks relating to staff recruitment and retention had been identified as of particular concern, with a request for review by the Finance and Employment Committee. Auditors had been very positive about the committee's performance and the level of debate and challenge in meetings.

Governors discussed the use of contingency days in the internal audit plan for 2022-23 with suggestions for their use including a governance review and apprenticeships; it was agreed that this would be considered at the Audit Committee's next meeting.

10.1.4 – Standards Improvement Committee, 6 October 2022

The Vice Chair of the Standards Improvement Committee explained that the meeting had focused on the SARs, both at college and Group level, and the identified areas for improvement. Governors had also discussed learning walkthroughs undertaken by governors and the committee encouraged all governors to arrange walkthroughs and attend learner forums.

Governors **noted** feedback from meetings of committees and task and finish groups.

22/101 10.2 – Recommendations

As recommended by the Audit Committee at their meeting held on 29 September 2022, governors:

- i) **approved** the Regularity Self Assessment Questionnaire;
- ii) **approved** the Internal Audit Strategy 2022-23.

Lesley Graham left the meeting.

Agenda Item 11 – Governance Issues

22/102 11.1 – Committees, Task and Finish Groups and Link Governors

The Clerk outlined the recommendations in the circulated report, including one proposed change to committee membership, and amendments to committee terms of reference and link governor roles. She highlighted that there was capacity for more than one governor to hold each link role and that this would support succession planning. The Search and Governance Committee had also proposed the establishment of a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) link governor role and this would be an area considered during governor recruitment. Following the resignation of Steve Cossins from the Tees Valley Catering (TVC) Board, it was proposed to recommend appointment of Louise Davies, Chair of the Finance and Employment Committee, to the TVC Board. To demonstrate support for the newly formed Students' Union, it was also proposed that Sarah Thompson, Clerk to the Corporation, should be appointed as the governing body's representative on the Board of Trustees in the first instance, subject to regular review.

Governors:

- i) **approved** committee membership for 2022-23, including the appointment of Gary Wright to the Remuneration Committee;
- ii) **approved** the proposed changes to committee terms of reference;

- iii) **agreed** the proposed Link Governor role descriptions, including the separation of Careers and Employer Engagement Link Governors;
- iv) **re-appointed** Gary Wright as Safeguarding Governor and as Careers Link Governor; and Anne Vickers and Mark Wilson as T Level Link Governors;
- v) **appointed** Vanessa Housley as Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Link Governor and Mark Wilson as Employer Engagement Link Governor; and noted that further expressions of interest in Link Governor positions would be welcomed;
- vi) **agreed** to establish a position of Special Educational Needs Link Governor and that this should be a priority area for governor recruitment;
- vii) **noted** the recommendation to appoint Louise Davies as a director of Tees Valley Catering;
- viii) **appointed** Sarah Thompson, Clerk to the Corporation, as the Corporation's representative on the Student Union's Board of Trustees.

22/103 11.2 - Governance Self Assessment

A report giving feedback to date from the governance self-assessment for 2021-22 had been circulated; the Clerk explained that governance self-assessment was a well-established process for the board and now a requirement of the ESFA's Conditions of Funding document. She thanked governors for completing the self assessment questionnaire and attending one to ones with the Corporation Chair; committees had also undertaken annual reviews of performance against their terms of reference and good governor attendance in 2021-22 was noted. An outline of improvement areas identified in the 2020-21 self assessment and actions taken had been included as an appendix and key themes from 2021-22 would be pulled together into a governance action plan for the coming year. The timing of the external governance review had been discussed at the last Search and Governance Committee meeting and a proposal made for this to be arranged in the current academic year, rather than 2023-24 as previously agreed. In response to a governor's question, the Clerk confirmed that the committee had agreed that initial quotes would be obtained from the Association of Colleges (AoC), the Education and Training Foundation and Stone King.

Governors:

- i) **noted** feedback to date from the governance self-assessment 2021-22 and noted key themes for inclusion in the Governance Action Plan;
- ii) **agreed** that the External Board Review should be scheduled for the 2022-23 academic year.

22/104 11.3 – Governance update

The circulated update included governor attendance data for the year to date; governance development activities and learning walk feedback; governor involvement in college group events; and national governance issues.

The Corporation Vice Chair highlighted that the Clerk had prepared a possible Board response to the consultation on the Association of Colleges' (AoC) Governors' Council for discussion. She added that the exact implications of the proposed changes for governor representation and links with the AoC were unclear and she and the Chief Executive had arranged a meeting with Sarah Stewart, the AoC Governors' Council Regional member for the North East, the following week to discuss the proposals in more depth. Noting that the consultation deadline was 31 October, the Corporation Vice Chair requested that governors delegate preparation of a final draft to herself, the Chief Executive and the Clerk; amendments would be circulated to governors for comment before submission. The Chief Executive supported the Vice Chair's summary of the position and

agreed that the proposals had the potential to dilute the influence of the AoC if governor representation was split from the main organisation.

Governors added verbal feedback on recent student voice and learning walkthrough engagement. Gary Wright confirmed that he and Anne Vickers had attended the RCC Principal's Forum as reported earlier in the meeting and Vanessa Housley commented on her recent learning walk with Kim Cutler, Head of Department Construction and Professional Services, SRC. She confirmed that the Head of Department acknowledged the challenges in the department but felt supported in her work and that what she had observed triangulated with what had been reported to the Standards Improvement Committee. She added that she had arranged a follow up walkthrough visiting the same classes in March 2023 to see the impact of leadership and management and was confident that she would see progress on areas for improvement.

Governors:

- i) **noted** involvement in a range of training and development opportunities and college group events and the request to notify the Clerk of any specific training needs;
- ii) **noted** the update in respect of national governance matters;
- iii) **agreed** to delegate any amendments to the proposed response to the Association of Colleges Governors' Council consultation to the Corporation Vice Chair, Chief Executive and Clerk and noted that changes would be circulated for comment before submission by 31 October 2022.

22/105 11.4 – Funding and Accountability consultation

Information on the 'Skills for Jobs: implementing a new further education funding and accountability system' consultation, together with the group's response and the draft AoC response had been circulated. The Group Executive Director Planning and Infrastructure explained that, although the consultation set out a direction of travel for government policy, there was little detail on how the many proposals would be delivered. Etc.'s response highlighted the need to ensure that sufficient thought went into the unexpected consequences in devolved areas, such as the Tees Valley, and questioned the proposed timelines for implementation.

Governors supported the group's response noting the benefit of input from experienced staff and colleges in Department for Education consultations.

Governors **noted** the report and the group's response to the Funding and Accountability consultation.

Agenda Item 12 – Policy and Strategy approval

The Corporation Vice Chair explained that policy and strategy owners had been requested to include track changes in future policy updates.

22/106 12.1 – Complaints Policy

The circulated covering report confirmed that there were no significant changes to the policy for 2022-23; governors were specifically requested to note Section 3 outlining the process for responding to any complaints against the Corporation or members of the Corporation.

Governors **approved** the Complaints Policy.

22/107 12.2 – Safeguarding Policy

As noted in the circulated report, the policy had been updated to reflect changes to Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) guidance for 2022-23; in light of governors' specific responsibilities in relation to safeguarding, the Group Director of Quality encouraged governors to familiarise themselves with the policy. Changes to the policy and accompanying appendices had been summarised in the covering report.

Governors **approved** the Safeguarding Policy.

22/108 12.3 – Marketing Strategy

The proposed changes had been set out in the circulated report and highlighted in the strategy; these related to contextual changes following a review of the data included within the strategy. A new strand focusing on 19+ recruitment had also been added to reflect changes to the marketplace, increased funding streams and wider public knowledge; this also reflected a decline in applications and missed targets for adult education.

Governors noted that the strategy was intended to be delivered over a three-year period, with annual reviews during that period. The Marketing Strategy was **approved** for its final year.

22/109 12.4 – Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) Strategy

The Group Director of Marketing explained that the strategy was working well and that CEIAG had been referenced several times in the Ofsted report and graded, as part of personal development, as outstanding provision. Matrix accreditation had been reviewed in October 2022 and found to be compliant with exemplary performance acknowledged. A successful careers question and answer session with RWE had taken place on Teams with 100 attendees from across the group.

A governor commented on the great opportunities in the Tees Valley area, such as in the marine and maritime industry, which were not widely known to our young people; the Group Director of Marketing outlined the work of Tees Valley Careers and the careers education task group, of which she was a member, and agreed to follow this up with the governor.

The difficulties of reaching students from across the group's colleges, including timetable clashes, were highlighted and the Group Director of Marketing explained that, by offering careers sessions through Teams, students from all college sites could access the sessions, either live or recorded, and that initiatives such as The Girls' Network were offered to female learners at every site. The focus for the coming year would be on less well-known careers. A student governor commented on the positive impact of her own involvement in The Girls' Network and the work experience opportunities and support offered to students.

A governor noted that, at the recent RCC Principal's Forum, students had expressed a wish for more careers sessions and employer links but highlighted that sessions often clashed with other commitments. The Group Director of Marketing confirmed that the team was responsive, outlining an example in which the timing of a NETA careers session had been changed in response to demand and had been recorded to increase accessibility. The Chief Executive also commented on the group's use of SDF funding to raise the profile of opportunities in clean energy.

Vanessa Housley commented on the lack of summer schools in the area, with Stockton Borough Council funding students to attend these in London instead; she offered to share information on summer school models with the Group Director of Marketing and the Chief Executive.

Governors **approved** the updated Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance Strategy for the academic year 2022-23.

22/110 Agenda Item 13 – Any Other Business

There were no items of additional business.

22/111 Agenda Item 14 – Date, time and venue of next meeting

Thursday 15 December 2022, 5.30 pm, The Eye, SRC2

22/112 Agenda Item 15 – 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 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 12 and appendices to Agenda Item 2 and 11.4. The Safeguarding and Complaints policies would be published on the Etc. website and minutes made available following approval and consideration at the next meeting.

22/113 Agenda Item 16 - Key Themes

- Reappointment of Louise Davies and Gary Wright and appointment of Vanessa Housley as independent governors and ratification of Lorraine Preston and Liz Dixon as staff governors
- Approval of Group Self Assessment Report 2021-22 and agreement of themes for Group Improvement Plans 2022-23
- Presentation of Safeguarding and Health & Safety annual reports
- Noted FRS102 pension assumptions for the year ended 31 July 2022 and approved the accounting treatment for the Redcar Town Deal grant in the year end statutory accounts
- Approved the Regularity Self Assessment Questionnaire and Internal Audit Strategy 2022-23, as recommended by the Audit Committee, with suggestions made to the Audit Committee on the use of contingency days
- Noted feedback from the governance self assessment 2021-22 and agreed the recommendation from the Search and Governance Committee to commission an external governance review in 2022-23

(The meeting ended at 7.30 pm)

Approved at a meeting held on 15 December 2022