

FE Corporation Minutes

Meeting held on Thursday 16th March 2023 at 5.30pm, H202, Redcar & Cleveland College

Governors: Fabienne Bailey (Chair of Search and Governance Committee), Rachel Beeken, Stuart Blackett (Corporation Chair, Chair of Capital Group), Louise Davies (Chair of Finance and Employment Committee; Vice Chair of Capital Group), Liz Dixon (Staff Governor), Grant Glendinning (Chief Executive and Group Principal), Vanessa Housley, Lorraine Preston (Staff Governor), Anne Vickers, Mark Wilson and Gary Wright (Safeguarding Link Governor)

Apologies: Subhash Chaudhary (Chair of Audit Committee), Elliot Gale (Student Governor), Dot Smith and Hope Ubertalli (Student Governor)

Officials: Jason Faulkner (Executive Principal, Redcar & Cleveland College and NETA), Lesley Graham (Executive Principal, Stockton Riverside College and Higher Education), Phil Hastie (Chief Operating Officer), Sean Johnston (Interim Managing Director NETA), Patrick Jordan (College Principal Bede), Kay Taylor (Group Director of HR and People Development), Peter Wood (Group Director of Quality), Sarah Thompson (Clerk to the Corporation) and Sam Young (Governance Support Officer).

Minutes of the previous meeting, an actions progress log and reports had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

23/1 **Agenda Item 1 – Welcome, apologies for absence, declarations of interest, notification of other items of business**

The Corporation Chair welcomed governors and officials to the meeting. Governors noted apologies for absence from Subhash Chaudhary, Elliot Gale, Dot Smith and Hope Ubertalli. Governors noted that Stuart Blackett would leave the meeting during consideration of his reappointment as an independent governor, agenda item 2; there were no other declarations of interest. There were no notifications of other items of business.

23/2 **Agenda Item 2 – Governing Body Membership**

Stuart Blackett left the meeting.

The Clerk reminded members that Stuart Blackett's term of office would end on 24 April 2023. Search and Governance Committee had recommended his reappointment, recognising his service as Corporation Vice Chair and more recently Corporation Chair, as well as his chairship of Capital Group and his skills and experience in finance and accountancy.

Governors **agreed** to reappoint Stuart Blackett as governor for a term of office of four years from 25.4.23.

Stuart Blackett re-joined the meeting and was notified of governors' decision.

The Clerk gave an update on independent governor recruitment; the application to the Department for Education's (DfE's) further education governor recruitment delivered by Peridot Partners had been successful and Peridot had made initial contact. An application had also been received from Amanda Olvanhill, Head of Employability at Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council, plus expressions of interest from Hamish Rutherford, director of Floe, a co-working space provider, and from Gary Bowdler, Finance Director for Venator, as a co-opted member of the Audit Committee. In response to a governor's question, the Clerk confirmed that Amanda Olvanhill had experience of Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provision.

The Chair highlighted that he had discussed succession planning for senior managers with the Chief Executive and that the Search and Governance Committee were adopting a similar approach for governors, highlighting potential future gaps in skills and experience. He encouraged governors to use their own professional networks to ensure appropriate committee membership levels and so limit the commitment required from each governor. In response to a question, the Clerk confirmed that the term of office for governors was four years, usually with reappointment to a second term, but that governors would only serve more than eight years by exception.

Governors:

- i) **agreed** to ratify the appointment of Hope Ubertalli as student governor for a term of office of no longer than four years, subject to satisfactory DBS clearance;
- ii) **noted** the current position in relation to governor recruitment and the request for support with identifying potential applicants;
- iii) **agreed** to commence consultation on amending the Instrument and Articles to permit a minimum of one student governor.

Agenda Item 3 – Etc. Strategic Statements and Strategic Plan

23/3 3.1 – Etc. Strategic Statements

The Chief Executive explained that this small group discussion activity built on the work started at the Governors' Strategic Conference and was based on feedback from sessions with the Senior Management Team (SMT) and General Management Team (GMT), also held in February 2023.

Governors had been invited to compare the current (Now) and revisited Vision, Mission and Values and come with thoughts to feed back; they had also been asked to review sets of post it comments ready to discuss them as possible areas of strategic focus.

[REDACTED]

The feedback was **noted** and would be used to finalise updates to the vision, mission, values and Strategic Plan.

23/4 3.2 – Strategic Planning

The Chief Executive thanked governors for their input and hoped they had found it valuable as part of the strategic planning process; progress on this had been outlined in his update and he highlighted next steps, including working with New Skills Consulting on writing the strategic plan document. It was expected that the first draft would be available for review by governors at the next Corporation meeting in May 2023.

Governors **noted** progress of the Etc. Strategic Plan 2023-26 development since the February 2023 Governors' Strategic Workshop.

23/5 Agenda Item 4 – Minutes / notes of previous meeting

Governors:

- i) **approved** minutes and the confidential appendix to the minutes of a Corporation meeting held on 15 December 2022 as an accurate record of the meeting;
- ii) **received** notes of a Governor Workshop held on 12 January 2023;
- iii) **received** notes of the Governors' Strategic Conference held on 3 and 4 February 2023;
- iv) **noted** feedback from the Governors' Strategic Conference;
- v) **noted** progress against previously agreed actions as detailed in the action log.

Details of the next cycle of Business Planning (BP) / Performance Review (PR) would be circulated to governors in the next Governors' Digest. Governors **agreed** the proposed deletion of the ongoing actions relating to Higher Education (HE) student feedback and arrangements for attendance at BP/PR sessions as these were now embedded in governance processes.

23/6 Agenda Item 5 – Chief Executive's update

The Chief Executive highlighted the following:

- He extended formal thanks to those involved in the recent Ofsted T-Level Survey visit; the group had received valuable informal feedback which had confirmed that the group's practice was generally very effective [REDACTED]
- A detailed review of curriculum structures was currently taking place, with any arising reorganisation aimed at better aligning the group to deliver the Etc. Strategic Plan 2023-26, supporting local skills improvement planning, ensuring great uniformity and equality of responsibility across the colleges and netting any arising efficiencies. Proposed options would be considered by the SMT later in the month.
- Both the restriction on commercial borrowing following the reclassification of colleges to the public sector and the recent announcement that remaining FE Capital Transformation Fund (FECTF) monies would be distributed by an allocation process presented complications for NETA relocation, the key remaining priority of the Estates Strategy. A range of alternative options were being developed alongside pursuit of the complete relocation option. In response to a governor's question about possible Levelling Up funding, it was noted that, though this and new Investment Zones had been mentioned in the budget, no details were available as yet.
- Employer partnership work continued to thrive at Redcar & Cleveland College (RCC) with exciting potential for further employer engagement through the Clean Energy Education Hub (CEEH); formal thanks were extended to the Executive Principal RCC and NETA for all his work which had also been recognised by his shortlisting for the Educate North UK Education Leadership Award.
- Following a meeting of FE+ colleges that day, a consortium would be established for a bid to the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF), the successor to the Skills Development Fund (SDF); governors would be kept informed. A governor asked whether the Memorandum of Understanding with bp would preclude the group working with, for example, Shell; the Executive Principal RCC & NETA confirmed that bp had chosen to partner with RCC partly due to the college's involvement with Teesworks and that Shell had chosen to partner nationally with Institutes of Technology. It was noted that involvement with a large organisation such as bp had brought increased interest in the group at employer forums.

- [REDACTED] In response to a governor's question about the availability of T Level placements, it was confirmed that students were recruited on the basis of having placements in place.
- [REDACTED] Teesside University was currently exploring ways to transform the Teesside University College Partnership (TUCP). The Executive Principal SRC & HE was also undertaking work on rationalising provision between sites to increase cohort sizes.
- The Group Director of HR & People Development was leading on design and delivery of Etc.'s Leadership Programme; the tender process had now closed, with tender presentations to be held on 23 March and delivery expected to begin in the summer term.
- A current FE sector issue was the Level 3 reforms due to be introduced from September 2024, which stemmed from the government's focus on giving school leavers a choice of A Levels, T Levels or Apprenticeships routes; current Etc. provision had been assessed, finding that 22% of current students would not be able to access suitable Level 3 provision. The Chief Executive had communicated with the group's three MPs and participated in Association of Colleges (AoC) campaigning; governors would be kept informed of plans and any mitigations.
- The DfE's data on Apprenticeship starts up to Q1 2022-23 showed a decrease by 6.1% nationally on the previous year; there was also a continued decline in lower level, younger apprentices and increases in higher level apprenticeships. The group was cognisant of this trend and work with the Business Development Unit (BDU) and apprenticeships teams was ongoing to deliver improved apprenticeships starts next year.
- In terms of industrial relations, both recognised union members had rejected the 2022-23 pay award offer of 3%; the UCU (University and College Union) had submitted a formal declaration of a trade dispute the previous week. In line with the group's Employee Relations Combined Policy and Procedure, a resolution would be sought, with Stage 2 of the process involving a special committee of governors; there remained a possibility that the UCU would ballot members for industrial action. The College Principal Bede added that there was a possibility that some staff at Bede, as members of the NASUWT, the teacher's union, could take strike action; the Group Director of HR & People Development confirmed that, although NASUWT members were entitled to take part in such action, the NASUWT was not formally recognised by the group and therefore its representatives did not take part in formal pay negotiations. In response to a governor's questions about the risk of picket lines at group sites, the Group Director of HR & People Development confirmed that managers had received information and that the HR team were fully briefed on procedures.

A governor asked if the fall in apprenticeship sign-ups was also a result of the financial squeeze; the Chief Executive confirmed that, although there were financial challenges, incentive grants were available for employers providing placements.

Written comments and questions had been received by a governor unable to attend the meeting and were raised by the Clerk. The governor commented positively on the work being undertaken to transform the TUCP in light of changes to student demographics, numbers, curriculum and qualifications, adding that this work should inform the group's HE and Higher Level Skills Strategy. She was also pleased to note the appointment of a Children in our Care (CIOC) welfare officer, given the benefits of additional support for and the safeguarding issues experienced by this group of students.

Governors discussed the Smoothwall data included in the report; having noted that it was evident that appropriate action was being taken in response to actionable events, it was highlighted that information on repeat incidents by students and the percentage of referred searches made for

legitimate reasons would be useful for identifying areas of concern and the effectiveness of actions taken in preventing recurrences. The Group Director of Quality agreed that, although governors could be confident that effective monitoring was taking place, reporting was unclear; he added that the data included 'false alarms' and that it would be useful if data was broken down to show legitimate searches and repeat offences. To provide governors with assurance that alerts were followed up effectively, the Executive Principal RCC & NETA gave the example of a student's recent search for information on steroids which had been flagged by Smoothwall; following discussion it was found that the search related to their course content. Other examples of legitimate flagged searches could include research on the position of Baby P's injuries or for criminology courses. A governor highlighted that, as over 4.3 million events had been captured in this period, this put the 287 actionable events into perspective.

On behalf of the Board, the Chair passed on congratulations to award winners and nominees and to Bede Institute of Sport & Education (ISE) students and staff for their sporting league successes; he added that it was positive to see that the One Etc. ethos was being embraced across the group.

Governors **noted** the update.

23/7 Agenda Item 6 – Finance update

In the absence of the Chief Financial Officer, the Chief Operating Officer highlighted that PR6 had just concluded, with the group forecast to remain in a positive financial position though slightly below the original budget target set. Work with departments to drive maximising income and efficiencies in both the current financial year and planning in advance for 2023-24 would continue; with income reduction and the pressure of rising costs, both pay and non-pay, impacting the staff cost to income ratio.

A governor asked about any contingency monies; the Chief Operating Officer explained that, although the group did have cash reserves, most had been reserved for major capital investment projects. Careful monitoring of the income and expenditure account ensured that cash levels were maintained. It was noted that the Capital Group monitored cashflow forecasts, based on a comfort level [REDACTED], and that cashflow forecasts were updated daily; the Chair noted that this was a crucial measure as businesses often failed due to running out of cash. Monthly management accounts were presented to the Finance and Employment Committee and were also available on the Etc. Governors' SharePoint. The Chair of the Finance and Employment Committee asked if the Chief Financial Officer was comfortable that the projected surplus was less than half the original budget target set and whether it would be necessary to use any of the cash reserves to provide resources in the facilities funded by capital expenditure, which could cause additional pressures. In the Chief Financial Officer's absence, a response would be sought outside the meeting.

Governors **noted** the update.

23/8 Agenda Item 7 – Innersummit opportunity

The Chief Executive highlighted that a small group of committee chairs had provided oversight to test the initial concept and development of the Heads of Terms. Innersummit was a relatively small, Gateshead-based training provider offering a range of professional services training; its portfolio included areas in which the Etc. currently had relatively limited provision but which were featured as priorities in the Tees Valley Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and in areas where it would be good to increase provision at Bede. The acquisition of Innersummit therefore presented

a strategic fit for the group. It was currently run by the owner managing director, Chris Andreou, with about 12 employees, a mixture of directly employed and associate staff. FE Associates had also undertaken an initial interview with Chris Andreou for the possible role of Director of Business Engagement at Etc. and due diligence was in progress; Stone King, the group's new legal advisors, were undertaking a legal review and TIG Corporate Finance, recommended by RSM, a financial review. It was proposed that the same group of committee chairs would review due diligence once completed later that month and the board was being asked if, subject to due diligence and approval by the oversight group, it would agree the acquisition of Innersummit Ltd, according to the terms detailed in the appendix. Innersummit would be a wholly-owned subsidiary of Etc., with existing staffing, order book and branding retained and the current owner would be tied into employment with Etc. for a period of two years; the Heads of Terms allowed for acquisition of the company at a value of up to £[REDACTED].

A governor asked about the owner's motivation for selling and the Chief Executive explained that Chris Andreou believed he had taken the company as far as he could and had other interests he would like to pursue; the owner also felt that there was alignment between Innersummit's and Etc.'s values and mission.

A governor asked about the level of confidence in the company's growth; the Chief Executive noted that professional higher level qualifications was a growth sector and that there was significant synergy with Innersummit's existing client base, though, as income could not be guaranteed, the opportunity would come with some risks.

A governor asked if this would meet government aspirations to get older people back into work and the Chief Executive agreed that some of the provision could be targeted at the over 50s.

A governor asked if partner organisations would be contacted as part of the due diligence process; the Chief Operating Officer explained that the due diligence process would identify risks and that the client base would be contacted at the next stage. It was noted that, in order for Innersummit to remain on the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers (RoATP), consent would be needed from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) for the transfer of ownership.

A governor agreed that the acquisition would enable the group to fill skills gaps and asked if there was an opportunity for enhancing Etc. staff professional development. The Chief Executive confirmed that the primary intent was to engage with new markets but that there would be no reason for Etc. staff not to access, for example, the Level 7 qualifications offered. The Group Director of HR & People Development agreed that organisational development was important, with the leadership programme currently out to tender, and that she felt positive about the synergy with Innersummit's offer.

A governor asked whether, with the group's financial position, this was the right time for the acquisition. The Chief Executive explained that the acquisition had been planned on a three year payback trajectory but would require a short term cash injection from reserves. He also confirmed that the Chief Financial Officer was developing financial forecasts and that the acquisition also provided learning opportunities for Etc.'s apprenticeship delivery. A governor asked whether the reasons for the loss in 2019 were known; it was confirmed that this would be tested through the due diligence process.

Governors **agreed** (subject to the satisfactory conclusion of the due diligence process and the final agreement of the member oversight group) to the acquisition of Innersummit Ltd.

23/9 Agenda Item 8 – Meeting Local Needs

The Chief Executive explained that the report pulled together measures in relation to meeting skills needs introduced by the Skills and Post-16 Education Act 2022 and a range of new powers for the Secretary of State. The group would be required to submit an Accountability Agreement to the DfE, informed by the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP); a first draft of the LSIP was expected to be published by the North East England Chamber of Commerce from the end of March with the Accountability Agreement expected to be available for the Corporation meeting in May for approval by governors. The group had already produced an Accountability Agreement as part of the pilot the previous year; a draft of the 2023-24 agreement had been provided as a reference document and would be updated following receipt of the draft LSIP. In line with the new duty for governors to review their college's provision every three years or on publication of a new LSIP, a plan would be considered by the Corporation in the autumn term.

In response to a governor's question about the requirement for collaboration on reviewing provision with other local colleges, the Chief Operating Officer confirmed that no formal mechanism for this had been specified in the guidance. As part of the LSIP, an independent company, Rocket Science, was undertaking local provision mapping of the Tees Valley, which could meet the requirement for local collaboration.

Governors noted that, having reviewed the curriculum, the group felt that employers' needs were well met and that, as part of the BP process, every department focused on how their provision met skills needs and that this was being pulled into a single document to inform the review process.

The Chief Executive also highlighted the links with development of the Etc. Strategic Plan for 2023-26 and the assessment of how colleges met skills needs in the enhanced Ofsted Education Inspection Framework; he added that the Group Director of Quality had already led on an enhanced inspection at another college.

A governor asked if meeting skills needs would help with capital funding opportunities and the Chief Executive agreed that evidence of meeting needs would be needed for planning a successful bid to the new LSIF.

A governor had submitted a written comment highlighting that the emphasis in agenda item 3 was on One Etc. whereas the emphasis in the draft Accountability Agreement seemed to be 'local colleges for local people' and that the right balance needed to be achieved; she also noted that the SMT's work on alignment of curriculum structures and colleges emphasised the singularity rather than plurality of the group's delivery campuses.

Also, in written comments, the governor asked if the group had a plan in place to meet both student aspirations and progression as well as Etc.'s financial viability if the defunding of Level 3 vocational qualifications took place as planned; the Chief Executive admitted that this was an issue that every college was currently wrestling with and that governors would be kept updated.

Governors:

- i) **noted** the arrangements, now statutory, to ensure provision took into account and aligned to local needs and **agreed** the proposed approach;
- ii) **noted** the process for drafting the Etc.'s Accountability Agreement;
- iii) **noted** the related activity associated with meeting local needs (i.e. LSIP, LSIF, Strategic Plan) in the timeline.

23/10 Agenda Item 9 – Apprenticeships update

The Chief Operating Officer highlighted that the monitoring of apprenticeship provision through the Apprenticeship Council had resulted in a range of actions being taken, some of which would have an impact in the current year and some in the longer term. He added that the group had been selected for a new ESFA Apprenticeship Compliance Testing audit; various elements of evidence for a sample of ten apprentices had been requested and was currently being collated for submission by the end of March.

[REDACTED]

Governors **noted** the update.

23/11 Agenda Item 10 – Student feedback

The Group Director of Quality highlighted the range of tactics used to gather student feedback which included a mix of formal surveys and forums and more naturally occurring activities. An additional tactic, SMT curriculum visits, was being introduced this academic year and would enable senior managers to engage with students and staff and provide opportunities to celebrate success. It would also allow them to understand the culture within curriculum departments and to find immediate or more long-term solutions for areas for improvement identified.

A governor asked if student voice activities involved the full range of learner cohorts, particularly disadvantaged groups; the Group Director of Quality agreed to consider incorporating information on key student cohorts in future.

The Clerk communicated some comments from student governors who had been unable to attend the meeting; they had commented that Meet and Greet activities at Bede were not always obvious to students and that it would be useful to have methods for gathering student feedback outside the Learner Survey periods, such as a feedback 'box' on Teams. They had also highlighted that learner feedback could be used more in promotional activities.

A governor commented on the impressive student survey results but expressed concern that 25% of students did not take part in additional activities. The Group Director of Quality explained that it had been difficult to increase participation since the COVID-19 pandemic; the Student Support and Wellbeing and curriculum teams offered a range of activities, including organised visits, but student take-up was still lower than the group would like. The College Principal Bede added that this had been tracked at Bede over ten years; Bede students reported that they did not take part in additional activities though registers indicated that they did. There seemed to be a disconnect between students' understanding of the question and what they actually participated in. A governor suggested including example activities with the question as a prompt and another governor commented on a student suggestion at the Bede Principal's Forum that the college day could finish 30 minutes later once a week to allow time for additional activities.

A governor asked if there had been an issue with SRC data and the Executive Principal SRC & HE confirmed that many students, e. g. GCSE and main programme, had been double counted and that it had been impossible to track back afterwards. The Group Director of Quality confirmed that the issue had already been addressed for the next academic year.

A governor commented that the question, 'I find it easy to talk to my teachers', had been scored in Quartile D and that this did not triangulate with his knowledge of the group. The Group Director of Quality confirmed that this had been followed up through questions at principals' forums and that it had been found to be linked to students' perception of staff availability; students had reported that when they did talk to their teachers they found them very helpful. The College Principal Bede added that, at Bede, the timetable did not allow much opportunity to approach teachers; he also highlighted that the question had scored 93%, though in Quartile D, and that this was perhaps an example of why colleges were moving away from QDP for benchmarking. A staff governor commented that staff were busy and it was possible that quiet students did not want to bother them; she added that she always emphasised to her students that she was always available. A governor wondered whether the layout at Bede affected the perception of staff availability. The Group Director of Quality suggested that a specific question on teacher availability could be included in the SMT curriculum visits.

Governors **noted** the report.

Agenda Item 11 – Quality update

23/12 11.1 – In year progress against key performance indicators and Group Improvement Plans

The Group Director of Quality highlighted that Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were expected to be broadly in line with the previous year; however, expected achievement for apprenticeships, [REDACTED], was slightly above the previous year. He reminded governors of the national apprentice achievement rate target set by the DfE of 67% by 2025. He added that there were no concerns with the apprenticeship data at Bede; these apprentices had been transferred from the Business Development Unit (BDU) and, with a small cohort size, each withdrawal had a large impact on the retention and therefore achievement data. Attendance concerns at RCC centred on two curriculum areas; these had been prioritised with Rapid Improvement Plans and the introduction of resilience classes to tackle the issue of lower attendance amongst female students.

Governors **noted** the report.

23/13 11.2 – NETA Commercial Training – quality update

The Interim Managing Director NETA presented an update on NETA's commercial quality activity; this had previously been reported to the NETA Board and would now be regularly reported to the FE Corporation, though not at every meeting. The industry specific ISO 9001 and ISO 45001 were subject to re-accreditation audits each year and, in total, NETA worked with 16 awarding bodies, with seven successful audits having taken place since January 2023. NETA had also been nominated for Lifting and Rigging Training Organisation and Trainer of the Year. Improvements were driven by NETA's quality department and this was evidenced by the 99.6% of commercial delegates willing to recommend NETA and the fact that there had been over one million hours worked without a Lost Time Injury (LTI). He thanked Anne Vickers for her visit to NETA the previous day during which she had observed commercial activity and the quality assurance process; Anne commented that she had been impressed by what she had had seen on her visit.

The Chair thanked the NETA team on behalf of the Board for their quality successes and governors **noted** the update.

23/14 Agenda Item 12 – Health and Safety Mid-Year update

The Chief Operating Officer reminded governors that, in addition to the annual health and safety report, a mid-year update would now be presented to the Corporation. The group continued to have a good track record in health and safety performance, which was consistent across all sites; the group's reportable accident frequency rate for the year was currently zero against the Health and Safety Executive's benchmark of 12.2 for education.

Governors **noted** the update.

22/15 Agenda Item 13 – Committees

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

13.1 – Search and Governance Committee – meeting held on 15 February 2023

The Chair of Search and Governance Committee highlighted that the meeting had included a useful discussion session with the student governors; the committee had also agreed to appoint Stone King to undertake the external governance review following consideration of proposals from three providers and to recommend Stuart Blackett's reappointment for a second term of office.

13.2 – Capital Group – meetings held on 18 January and 8 March 2023

The Vice Chair of Capital Group confirmed that she had chaired the January meeting at which the timing of funding claims and cashflow modelling had been discussed. The Chair of the Capital Group highlighted that, at the meeting held the previous week, the main topic had been consideration of NETA relocation options, with agreement that doing nothing was not an option if NETA was to deliver quality provision. He added that the Chief Financial Officer closely monitored the group's cashflow and that all other projects were progressing comfortably; he also highlighted the value of the governors' tour of the Clean Energy Education Hub prior to this meeting.

Vanessa Housley expressed an interest in observing other committees, as recommended by the Search and Governance Committee, and the Clerk agreed to send her committee meeting dates for the remainder of the year.

Recommendations from the Search and Governance Committee were covered at agenda items 2 and 14.1 and no other recommendations had arisen.

Governors **noted** feedback and recommendations.

Agenda Item 14 – Governance Issues

23/16 14.1 – Governance Review

The Clerk highlighted arrangements for the external board review which would be undertaken by Stone King in the summer term 2023; she added that the reviewer, Rachel Robson, might wish to

have discussions with a range of governors and would be observing some committee meetings as well as the July Corporation meeting. The Search and Governance Committee had therefore proposed that the annual governance self-assessment process should be paused for 2022-23, though governor one to ones and reviews by individual committees would still take place; the primary route for reviewing the Corporation Chair's performance would be through the external review. The Chair stressed the value of the external board review process and that the review would judge overall board performance, not individual governors.

Governors:

- i) **noted** arrangements for external board review by Stone King in summer 2023;
- ii) **agreed** the proposals in relation to the review of performance of the Corporation Chair 2022-23;
- iii) **agreed** proposals in relation to the governance self-assessment 2022-23 (self assessment questionnaire to be paused due to external board review but governor one to ones to continue);
- iv) **agreed** to include a standing agenda item to review meeting effectiveness and impact at Board and committee meetings.

23/17 14.2 - Governance Update

The Clerk thanked governors for their strong attendance at meetings and involvement in events, learner forums and learning walks and confirmed that photos from the CEEH tour would be included in the next Governors' Digest. She also asked governors for views and comments on the Code of Good Governance Consultation for inclusion in the suggested Corporation response or, alternatively, submit individual responses.

The Chair of the Finance and Employment Committee gave verbal feedback on the AoC Audit and Finance Chairs' Network meeting and highlighted that she had been able to pass some new information shared with the network to the Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer. Audit Committee best practice had also been covered and the information would be shared with the Chair of the Audit Committee, who had been unable to attend. She added that she had been pleased that themes such as curriculum planning and the importance of cashflow and financial sustainability were already a focus at Etc.; the Chief Operating Officer commented that the information shared had proved useful.

Governors:

- i) **noted** that the group's annual Strategic Conversation with the Education and Skills Funding Agency would take place on 25 April 2023;
- ii) **noted** governors' involvement in a range of training and development opportunities, and college group events, and that any specific training needs should be raised with the Clerk;
- iii) **noted** progress against the Governance Action Plan;
- iv) **noted** the update in respect of national governance matters including the publication of 'bite size guides' to reclassification and consultation on the revised AoC Code of Good Governance.

23/18 Agenda Item 15 – Any Other Business

An item of Any Other Business, confidential to independent governors, had been circulated and was discussed at the end of the meeting (see minute 23/22); there were no other items of additional business.

23/19 Agenda Item 16 – Dates, times and venues of upcoming meetings

The Clerk confirmed dates for upcoming meetings:

Governor Workshop – Thursday 4 May 2023, 5.30 pm, Teams

FE Corporation – Thursday 18 May 2023, 5.30pm, Redcar & Cleveland College H202

23/20 Agenda Item 17 – 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, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 19. Minutes, with the exception of confidential appendices, would be made available following approval and consideration at the next meeting.

23/21 Agenda Item 18 - Key Themes and Meeting Review

Meeting participants discussed the effectiveness of the meeting and highlighted the following:

- Participants felt that it had been a positive and useful meeting
- A governor commented that they felt assured that governors had fulfilled their duty; however, with a full agenda some items had felt rushed, though this could have been due to the time spent on discussion at the start of the meeting
- A governor commented that, at 121 pages, the meeting pack had been quite long. The Clerk explained that the Governance Team was implementing techniques to reduce the size of meeting packs and governors agreed that the length was better than it had been. The Chair noted that meeting pack length was a challenge for every board.

Key themes:

- Input to the ongoing development of the Strategic Plan 2023-26
- Work to address apprenticeship issues and links with the Innersummit opportunity
- Pulling together the strands on meeting local, regional and national skills needs
- Discussion of student survey results and follow up activities undertaken and planned

23/22 Agenda Item 15 - Any Other Business (continued)

This item was deemed confidential to independent governors and is included in a confidential appendix. Liz Dixon, Lorraine Preston, Lesley Graham, Jason Faulkner, Phil Hastie, Sean Johnston, Patrick Jordan and Peter Wood left the meeting.

(The meeting ended at 7.50 pm)

Approved at a meeting held on 18 May 2023