

FE Corporation Minutes

Meeting held on Thursday 16th May 2024 at 5.30pm, Room 208, Stockton Riverside College

Governors: Fabienne Bailey, Rachel Beeken, Stuart Blackett (Corporation Chair), Subhash Chaudhary, Louise Davies (Chair of Finance, Capital and Resources Committee), Liz Dixon (Staff Governor), Aiden Flynn (Student Governor), Grant Glendinning (Chief Executive and Group Principal), Dot Smith (Chair of Standards Improvement Committee), David Watson (Equality and Diversity Link Governor) and Gary Wright (Chair of Remuneration Committee, Safeguarding Link Governor)

Apologies: Himeetjiua Kajau, Alfie Mearman, Relon Mfunda, Amanda Olvanhill and Hamish Rutherford

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 (Director of NETA Training), Patrick Jordan (College Principal, Bede), Erika Marshall (Group Director of Marketing), Fiona Sharp (Chief Financial Officer), Kay Taylor (Group Director of HR & People Development), Sarah Thompson (Group Director of Governance), Peter Wood (Group Director of Quality) and Sam Young (Governance Support Officer)

For agenda item 2 only: Nicola Crabb (Curriculum Manager, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)) and Kawa Wali (ESOL student)

Fabienne Bailey, Subhash Chaudhary, Aiden Flynn and Gary Wright joined the meeting via Teams.

24/41 Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and formalities

The Corporation Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting. Apologies for absence had been received from Himeetjiua Kajau, Alfie Mearman, Relon Mfunda, Amanda Olvanhill and Hamish Rutherford and were **accepted**.

No attendees declared a personal or pecuniary interest in any matters arising from the agenda of this meeting.

No additional items of urgent business were notified for consideration at the end of the agenda. A quorum was present and the required meeting notice of seven calendar days had been given.

24/42 Agenda Item 2 – Presentation – Life as a Refugee at Stockton Riverside College

Following an introduction from the Curriculum Manager, ESOL, Kawa Wali gave a presentation outlining his personal experiences as a refugee and the positive impact of his time spent studying at Stockton Riverside College (SRC). This covered the following:

- His education and work in his home country of Northeast Syria where his mother language was Kurdish Kurmanji, and educational language, Arabic
- His reasons for leaving Syria with his family and application to seek asylum in the UK at the end of 2021
- The family's move to Stockton in March 2022, his voluntary work for Refugees Future and, having been recommended SRC by other refugees, his positive first impressions of the college.

He highlighted that ESOL teachers at the college had a passion for their subject and supporting refugees and the difference that ESOL courses make to help refugees continue their lives in the UK, giving them the confidence to succeed

- Strong support from the Wellbeing Team and the friendliness of all college staff
- How his studies at SRC helped him to secure work as a research project coordinator with Durham University and Refugee Futures
- His gratitude to the college and for the opportunity to share his experiences with governors; a request that leaders of the college community continue to prioritise support for refugees and asylum seekers in Stockton
- Refugee Week 17th to 23rd June with an invitation extended to the celebratory event, *Our Home*, at Stockton Arc on Saturday 22nd June

In response to a question about whether he felt as safe in the wider community as in college, Kawa explained that there were challenges, with people influenced by the media, but that there had been no incidents in Stockton and that people were generally friendly. As part of his research work, refugees had shared some of their negative experiences in interviews and he hoped that the research would help to find some solutions.

A governor asked Kawa what aspect of a new culture had been most challenging, Kawa highlighted that he had been glad to be in the UK, a free country which supported human rights, but that it had been hard to form new communities and relationships. Language had been the main barrier so he had needed to work hard to achieve better language skills.

A governor thanked Kawa for the fantastic presentation, commenting that it had been great to hear of Kawa's positive experiences at SRC, which reflected the group's tone of voice; he then asked what more the college could do for him and others from Syria. Kawa explained that students came to the college from many countries and received continuing support at SRC, including free courses and support from the Wellbeing Team, which helped refugees to build a future. These refugees then went on to give back to the country and the local area. He highlighted that evidence showed that refugees were a good investment and could bring benefits in shortage skills areas and outlined two specific barriers - government policy did not allow refugees to undertake college studies in the first six months, and, because of the popularity of ESOL courses at SRC, there was then a delay in getting a place. He encouraged the college to put on more evening courses and employ more ESOL tutors.

A governor commented that more could be done to break down barriers to employment by linking employers with those looking for jobs. Kawa agreed, explaining that he knew of qualified mechanical engineers who struggled to find jobs, and that more connections with employers were needed. His research would be looking at integration, including job fairs for refugees and asylum seekers.

The Curriculum Manager ESOL commented on how pleased the group was to have been awarded College of Sanctuary status, adding that it was very much seen as a beginning, as there was always more that could be done.

Governors **thanked** Kawa for his presentation and for reminding them that freedom was often taken for granted and highlighting his positive experience at SRC. They wished him all the best for the future.

Nicola Crabb and Kawa Wali left the meeting.

24/43 **Agenda Item 3 – Discussion – Risk Appetite**

The Chief Financial Officer outlined ongoing work to develop a high level risk appetite statement for inclusion in the Risk Management Strategy. Meeting participants then worked in five groups to discuss the appropriate risk appetite levels under five key elements: Financial / Value for Money; Compliance / regulatory; Operations (including innovation / quality / outcomes); Technology; and Reputation.

Points to note from discussions:

- Under Reputation, the Chief Financial Officer **agreed** to reflect on the appropriateness of the wording under Minimal risk level: *Senior management distance themselves from chance of exposure to attention.*
- Financial and Compliance / Regulatory – potentially Minimal / Cautious
- Operations – perhaps more Open to risk given the broad nature of this element and the devolved responsibility model of Business Planning / Performance Review (BP/PR)
- Operations and Technology – need to be slightly Open to risk in order to keep pace and not lose opportunities
- Reputation – somewhere between Cautious and Open, though would not want to be overly cautious given the need to be dynamic in certain situations; also acknowledged how easy social media made it to cause reputational damage.
- Suggestion for addition of a *New Project* risk appetite element, as a risk level could be defined for individual projects and then managed within these set parameters
- Suggestion to amend the terminology for level 2 to *Neutral* or *Ambivalent* instead of *Cautious*
- Use of heat maps to find a channel where comfortable with the risk level

Governors **noted** that outcomes from the discussions, along with their completed individual risk matrices, would be analysed for development of a risk appetite statement for incorporation into the Risk Management Strategy for 2024-25; this would be discussed at the June Audit Committee meeting, with a recommendation brought to the FE Corporation for approval at their July meeting.

24/44 **Agenda Item 4 – Minutes and notes of previous meetings**

Governors:

- i) **approved** the minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 7 March 2024 and a special Corporation meeting held on 21 March 2024 as accurate records of the meetings;
- ii) **received** notes of a Governor Workshop held on 18 April 2024;
- iii) **received** notes and feedback from the Governors' Strategic Conference held on 26 and 27 April 2024;
- iv) **noted** progress against previously agreed actions as detailed in the action log, with the following verbal updates:
 - the Chief Operating Officer confirmed that he had passed on governors' thanks to Sue Everton for the Safeguarding report presented at the March Corporation meeting

Governors **noted** that feedback on the conference had been positive and thanked the Governance Team for their work in its organisation; the Group Director of Governance encouraged governors to submit any further feedback, particularly suggestions for agenda items for the next conference.

A governor suggested a clarification that, under minute 24/35, Key Themes, the disagreement in respect of the pay award had not been amongst governors but with the University and Colleges Union (UCU).

Strategic Direction

24/45 Agenda Item 5 – Chief Executive’s Report

The Chief Executive and Group Principal highlighted the following from his circulated report:

- Thanks extended to governors, Dot Smith and Gary Wright, for their attendance at the FE+ Workshop at which a collective, and succinct, statement on meeting regional skills needs for inclusion in each college’s Accountability Statement had been agreed. Full outcomes of the discussions and the notes from the meeting would be referenced in the final version of the statement.
- The Association of Colleges’ (AoC) Area Director for the North East & Yorkshire and Humber, Chris Nicholls, had facilitated the FE+ Workshop and, having recognised this as an example of good practice, had asked the Chief Executive to present at the upcoming AoC Governors’ Summit. Governors celebrated this achievement for Etc. and the Tees Valley colleges.
- Thanks were extended to members of the Senior Management Team (SMT) for their support in hosting the recent visit to SRC by the Secretary of State for Education, Gillian Keegan; the visit included a tour of the new T Level facilities, meeting bp scholars and watching a practice session by Performing Arts students.
- Congratulations were also extended to the Executive Principal Redcar & Cleveland College (RCC) and the RCC team for winning the Net Zero Award at the Northern Echo Business IQ Awards.
- Verbal update on trade union relations - the Chief Executive and Group Principal had met with the Corporation Chair and Vice Chair to draft a letter to the UCU; the industrial action due to take place at RCC on 16 May had been suspended as a result of the group’s challenge, based on legal advice, on the validity of the UCU’s ballot in April.
- Guidance on the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) had been released earlier that day, which should enable adults to access loans to fund modular and full programmes from Level 4 to Level 6; emerging financial issues in the Higher Education (HE) sector were noted.

The Chair confirmed that the draft letter was currently on hold while awaiting a response from the UCU on the group’s challenge which had resulted in this suspension of industrial action; he added that it was still unclear why the UCU had accepted other colleges’ pay awards which had been comparable or less generous than Etc.’s.

A governor gave feedback from a webinar he had attended in his role as a university governor; it was felt likely that at least one university would fail financially in the next six months which might then trigger a domino effect. It was also unlikely that the current or next government would offer any financial support so many universities were trimming expenditure.

Governors **noted** the update on strategic developments and welcomed the group’s positive position.

24/46 Agenda Item 6 – Etc. Operational Plan Progress Update

The Chief Executive and Group Principal explained that, although the update had changed little since presented at the Strategic Conference, it had been brought to this meeting in line with the Corporation's commitment to review progress on a termly basis; questions from governors were then welcomed.

Having confirmed that any concerns would be flagged in the covering report, a governor checked whether the Chief Executive and Group Principal felt that all was going to plan. The Chief Executive and Group Principal confirmed that SMT members felt comfortable with progress for this stage of the year; whilst recognising that not all actions would be 100% completed by July, this represented a strong start against the six strategic objectives in the Strategic Plan 2023-26.

Governors **noted** and gained assurance on progress against the annual objectives.

Quality and Student Issues

24/47 Agenda Item 7 – Feedback from Standards Improvement Committee and Ofsted Group

Dot Smith, Chair of the Standards Improvement Committee (SIC), presented key themes from the committee's meeting held on 14 March and highlighted the following:

- In line with the committee's practice to look at areas for either concern or celebration, the meeting had started with a presentation on the Bede Institute for Sport and Education (ISE) from Ian Hewitt, Strategic Manager of Sport & Enrichment, and two ISE students. This had highlighted how much students benefited from the support for their sport, in both cases women's rugby, alongside their academic studies and Dot reported that she had been pleased to hear that one of the students had now been selected for the Under 20 England women's rugby squad. The committee had also been pleased about the intention to expand the Bede ISE model across the group.
- Apprenticeships remained an area of focus at both Corporation and SIC level, as well as with SMT and curriculum departments. Dot highlighted changes to the Apprenticeship Accountability Framework, including the lowering of the threshold for withdrawals from 35% to 20% for a provider to be deemed 'at risk' by the Department for Education (DfE); withdrawals at Etc. were currently 17%. Improvement strategies were also focused on achievement rates, with the group keen to raise these above 60% and the committee had heard about the work to track individual apprentices and the review of and reduction in the number of Standards offered leading to quality improvements. With PR9 nearing completion, the next agenda item would give governors an updated position on apprenticeship data.

A governor asked about the potential positivity bias in reports as noted in the meeting's key themes. The Chair of SIC confirmed that there had been a concern that, whilst understandably celebrating the positive, governors might not hear about what was not working well as frequently. She added that positivity bias had also been raised at the Strategic Conference whilst discussing Strategic Objective 5: Real world learning environments, and the importance of governors recognising that they needed to be able to challenge in order to help and support the group.

A governor asked whether data was collected on learning walkthroughs and the Chair of SIC explained that governors who had undertaken walkthroughs sent feedback to the Governance Team which was then collated into reports to the committee; as the walkthroughs were so diverse and not operational in nature, data was not analysed. The Group Director of Quality added that these walkthroughs were primarily used to increase governors' understanding of teaching and learning; data on management walkthroughs and drop ins, however, was collected and analysed.

The Corporation Chair gave a verbal update on a positive first meeting of the Ofsted Group which had taken place on 9 May, outlining the following key themes:

- The Ofsted Group terms of reference would be brought to the next Corporation meeting for approval
- Presentation from the Executive Principal RCC on meeting skills needs
- Development of an Ofsted SharePoint site to which governors would be given access
- Recognition that Ofsted inspections should not feel daunting for governors and were not a memory test, with the leadership and management session during the last inspection seen as a positive experience by governors.

The Ofsted Group planned to meet each half term and would provide updates to Corporation.

Governors **noted** the feedback from Ofsted Group and Standards Improvement Committee, including encouragement for governors to arrange learning walks.

24/48 Agenda Item 8 – Apprenticeships Update

The Chief Operating Officer highlighted that this apprenticeship position was similar to that reported at the last Corporation meeting; the forecasted achievement rate was currently [REDACTED]. With each learner representing 0.25% due to the relatively small number of apprentices, it was important that apprentices were retained and that they achieved. It was noted that national rates (NR) were not particularly high but that Etc. achievement was just above this NR.

A governor commented that, whilst concentrating on 60% achievement, it was also important to remember that this represented 40%, or 250 apprentices, who had not achieved. The Chief Operating Officer clarified that around 100 would be withdrawals from previous years as data was historic and included apprentices from one, two or even three years ago and would have been for a variety of reasons including changes in an apprentice's employment situation. The Group Director of Quality commented that discussion at Standards Improvement Committee had also focused on the importance of the review of the apprenticeship offer to improve quality and ensure that the offer was not spread too thinly; this had resulted in 24 Standards being dropped for 2024-25. He added that NETA had completed this review process a year or so earlier and that their predicted achievement rate for this year was currently [REDACTED]; this gave some reassurance that reaching 67% achievement by 2024-25 was possible.

In response to a question about whether the group needed to provide a safety net for those 40%, the Group Director of Quality confirmed that apprentices would have received support at the time of withdrawal, including offers of alternative study programmes with the group. The Group Director of Marketing added that a process was in place for 'at risk' learners, with careers advice and an alternative apprenticeship or study programme offered where appropriate. This process was now much more robust than it had perhaps been in the past.

A governor highlighted that this was a national issue and not isolated to Etc., with employers also reporting that they were frustrated by the duration of apprenticeships and wanted shorter, sharper training. She then asked if the group could get more funding for Bootcamps. The Executive Principal RCC explained that the group had made successful growth cases to the Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) for Adult Education Budget (AEB) and Bespoke Employer Led Programmes (BELPs) and had agreed funding for Bootcamps which could potentially be increased. A bid for both AEB and Bootcamps had also been made to the North East Combined Authority (NECA) and the group was working hard to maximise funding; governors were pleased to hear that the TVCA had been supportive.

The Chief Executive and Group Principal highlighted that the NETA achievement rates and the clear improvement plan for apprenticeships would demonstrate good practice to Ofsted inspectors, with historic achievement outcomes then less concerning; Bootcamp and Belp provision was also now included in the Ofsted inspection framework.

Governors **noted** the update and that, whilst challenges remained, they had gained assurance on the support given to learners withdrawing from apprenticeships.

24/49 Agenda Item 9 - Quality Update

The circulated quality update had provided governors with in-year retention and attendance data, with attendance remaining a key priority. The Group Director of Quality highlighted that Ofsted inspection preparation work centred on the theme of Leading Exceptionality, with a strong focus on preparing colleagues in the right way and celebrating great things in the curriculum. The half termly Leading Exceptionality meetings had explored enhanced inspections, the golden thread that inspectors looked for in apprenticeships, the group's Strong contribution to skills and the vision for exceptional student experience and wellbeing. High Needs had been a priority since the last inspection including a focus on communication between teachers and learning support assistants.

Governors **noted** the update, adding that the report had been well written and helpful.

24/50 Agenda Item 10 - Safeguarding Update

The Corporation Chair reminded governors of their statutory duty for Safeguarding. The Chief Operating Officer thanked Nick Barnes, Interim Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing, for putting together the report and highlighted data on mandatory staff training completion and the number of learners who had been and were currently receiving support from the Safeguarding and Welfare team.

A governor asked whether there were any concerns as a result of staffing issues in the Safeguarding and Wellbeing team; the Chief Operating Officer confirmed that the team's core work was now covered to the end of this term and that capacity and workload had been considered as part of business planning. The increased level of student wellbeing concerns, with a 300% increase in comments logged on the portal, had resulted in increased workload in the team. The two interim appointments to the posts of Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing and Safeguarding and Welfare Management had been positive additions to the team.

A governor commented on the breadth of enrichment activities, particularly on knife crime in which 800 students had participated, and asked whether these would continue; the Chief Operating Officer confirmed that further sessions with the Chris Cave Foundation were planned.

A governor asked whether the Grooming category in the Smoothwall data referred to students being groomers or groomed; the Chief Operating Officer explained that these events usually related to words or part words typed in by students which would be flagged and categorised by the system. As an example, typing in Skills would get flagged as 'kill' was included in the word; all actionable events would be followed up by staff and any relevant intervention and support put in place.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Link Governor commented that mandatory staff training data looked strong except in EDI, where 50 staff had not completed the training. The Group Director of HR & People Development explained that there had been some issues with the ACAS platform and that the group was migrating to a new platform for mandatory training for 2024-25; she added that completion of training was monitored through the PR process and issues raised with individual departments.

In response to a governor's request, the Chief Operating Officer agreed to include the percentage of learners per college in the table showing learners currently open to Safeguarding.

Governors **noted** the update, gaining assurance on the high levels of support provided to learners.

24/51 Agenda Item 11 – Business Engagement Update

The update provided governors with a summary of current market intelligence in key sectors and details of the transition to sectorisation in the Business Development Team to allow better focus on these key sectors and systematic targeting of employers. Governors **noted** the report.

There was a short break in the meeting.

Governance and Staffing issues

24/52 Agenda Item 12 – Feedback from Remuneration Committee and Chairs' Group

Gary Wright, Chair of Remuneration Committee, reported on key themes from the meeting held on 2 May:

- Mid year performance review of Senior Post Holders (SPH) and Group Director of Governance; positive reviews and areas for development identified and discussed
- Assurance gained around succession planning for senior posts and emergency cover
- Approval of SPH Disciplinary and Grievance policies
- A confidential item and recommendation would be discussed under agenda item 22.

Stuart Blackett, Corporation Chair, gave a verbal update on the first meeting of the Chairs' Group held on 9 May and explained that it had been established as a learning ground for chairs and potential vice chairs. The first session had been useful but, being conscious that meetings should not significantly add to chairs' workload, it had been agreed to meet twice a year, tying in with existing meetings. Key themes included:

- Chairs confirmed they would be open to honest feedback from committee members
- The value of team building activities as used by Audit Committee
- Support for staff governors due to the challenging nature of the role; as part of onboarding, for example, the Corporation Chair could discuss the role with prospective staff governors
- Possible use of *Insights* to increase understanding of the different ways in which governors work

24/53 Agenda Item 13 – Governance update

13.1 – Governance Calendar 2024-25

The Group Director of Governance explained that, due to a clash, the date of the Strategic Conference would need to be changed; she would be liaising with committee chairs to find a resolution.

A governor asked if it would be possible to hold some meetings during the daytime as she was struggling with attending evening meetings in person, having to join some meetings remotely. In response, other governors felt that they would struggle to attend daytime meetings; there was, however, support for some Corporation meetings to start slightly earlier in the afternoon which the Group Director of Governance agreed to investigate.

Governors **noted** the draft calendar of Corporation and committee meetings for 2024-25, acknowledging the intention to change the date of the Strategic Conference and that they should inform the Group Director of Governance if they identified any other clashes.

13.2 – Governance update

The Group Director of Governance outlined recommendations covered in the circulated report, including governor appointments and recruitment priorities identified by the People Committee, updates on national governance issues and use of the College Seal and Chair's Action. Comments from governors on events and development activities were welcomed and the Corporation Chair reported on a Chairs' session at a recent AoC network event he had attended with the Chief Executive and Group Principal. He had been reassured that the Etc. Corporation's experiences and approach to such issues as changes to Chief Executive and Corporation Chair, external board review and strategic plan development was mirrored at other colleges.

Governors **agreed**:

- to appoint John Robson (JR) as a co-opted member of the Audit Committee, subject to pre appointment checks;
- the request for Liz Dixon to transfer from the Finance, Capital and Resources Committee and appoint her to the People Committee with immediate effect
- to continue to support governor recruitment, with priorities of skills / experience in education / quality and improving Board diversity, as identified by the People Committee.

Governors **noted**:

- the governance update;
- use of the college seal on the Town Deal offer letter for the NETA project and Chair's action in relation to signature of a Letter of Intent to Britcon relating to the All Access Academy project.

Financial and other issues

24/54 Agenda Item 14 – Finance, Capital and Resources Committee feedback

Louise Davies, the Chair of the Finance, Capital and Resources Committee, highlighted that the meeting held on 21 March had been the first since responsibility for human resources had been transferred to the newly constituted People Committee. She added that some strengthening of committee membership could be helpful and presented some key themes from the meeting:

- Excellent presentation from Phill Iverson, Group Procurement Manager, on the One Etc. approach to procurement, which had brought significant savings
- Financial update following PR6 with the end of year surplus slightly below budget and plans in place to review expenditure and make savings
- Student recruitment, with challenges with recruitment at NETA being addressed; the committee was also assured that there was enough capacity at Bede for the increased student recruitment levels
- A further update on development of the 2024-25 budget would be considered in the next agenda item
- Progress with capital projects was positive, with a possible Billingham Sports Hub at a very early stage and options for relocation of services and staff as a result of the NETA relocation to SRC under consideration.

Governors **noted** the feedback from the Finance, Capital and Resources Committee.

24/55 Agenda Item 15 – Finance update

The Chief Financial Officer presented the circulated update and confirmed that PR9 and BP3 were currently in progress, adding that, with around four curriculum departments to review, PR9 remained tight, with some departmental positions having declined from PR6. There had been early recognition that apprenticeships had been forecasted wrongly. The additional 5% employer contribution on the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) had not been completely covered by the government grant and, from April, there would be some additional financial pressures from the increase in the National Living Wage (NLW) rate. The Finance, Capital and Resources Committee would consider a further update at their meeting in June and an update on finances would be delivered to staff in the next round of Town Halls. She confirmed that current forecasts indicated there would be a surplus of [REDACTED] but that she was confident that the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) financial health grade would remain as Good and there were no cash concerns. Interest earned on the capital grants received but not yet spent had provided a short-term win though cash balances would decrease as capital projects were completed. [REDACTED] An internal audit review would be taking place to give assurance that the group had systems in place to ensure compliance with Managing Public Money (MPM).

[REDACTED]

A governor asked if the forecast surplus for 2024-25 was an in year position or if there was any carry forward; the Chief Financial Officer confirmed that this was an in year surplus and that the position in her report had been improving during BP3, which was two thirds completed.

Governors **noted** the financial update [REDACTED].

24/56 Agenda Item 16 – Capital update

The Chief Operating Officer presented the circulated report and confirmed that the planning application for the car park at SRC had now been submitted and that submission of the application for the NETA main build was imminent. Time lines were currently being met and the work on the new SRC car park would take place over the summer and early part of the next academic year; existing car parking would remain until the new one was ready. Work on the NETA build was scheduled to start around October half term and, having put a letter of intent in place, Britcon had

started work on the All Access Academy. There was no progress to report on the Sports Hub at Bede.

A governor noted that the group would be working with the Football Foundation at Bede and recalled that their caveats on the all weather pitch at RCC had seemed quite onerous. The Chief Operating Officer explained that the conditions and caveats put in place at RCC had been quite standard but that the Bede project would be much more complicated; there were a number of issues to work through given that the project involved Etc. and Stockton Borough Council land and the group would be taking legal advice throughout. He added that there was always the possibility that the project would not go ahead and that it would depend on the level of risk appetite.

A staff governor asked whether there would be enough space in SRC1 when SRC2 became unavailable and commented that there were some staff concerns about capacity. The Executive Principal SRC explained that work on space utilisation had taken place involving the Assistant Principal SRC and heads of department with a focus on the best use of rooms for smaller groups and utilising the full timetable to spread out demand. Ian Davies, the Capital Development Director, had also undertaken forecasting and it was felt that there would be ample capacity. In response to a follow up question about spaces for specialist courses, the Chief Operating Officer acknowledged that the start of the current academic year had been tough for some curriculum areas but confirmed that specialist rooms would be ready for the start of the next academic year.

Governors **noted** the update and acknowledged the importance of appropriate communications to allay any staff concerns at SRC.

24/57 Agenda Item 17 – Health and Safety

The Chief Operating Officer highlighted that an interim report on health and safety had been produced in addition to the existing annual report to give the Corporation more regular updates. The group performance against Health and Safety Executive (HSE) benchmarks remained positive, though the Group Health and Safety Manager would be further analysing the slight increase in accidents on the previous year. Following a review of ionising radiation sources, unneeded sources had recently been disposed of via a licensed waste contractor.

In response to a governor's request, the Chief Operating Officer gave more detail about the positive legionella results at SRC. He confirmed that regular testing was carried out by an external contractor and that the four areas with positive results had been as a result of reconfiguration of areas temporarily under the control of contractors. The affected areas had been taken out of use until testing returned a zero level of legionella bacteria.

In response to a governor's question on accident reporting by site, the Chief Operating Officer confirmed that incidents by site were provided in the full interim report included in the Reference Documents folder and that this information would also be included in the annual report.

Governors **noted** the report and the Interim Health and Safety Report.

Closing Items

24/58 **Agenda Item 18 – Any Other Business**

The Group Director of Governance reminded governors of upcoming events including the official opening of the T Level facilities, the VIP performance of We Will Rock You, the Art and Design Summer Show and the RCC Celebration of Achievement; as always, governors were welcome to attend.

24/59 **Agenda Item 19 – Dates, times and venues of upcoming meetings**

Future meetings would take place as previously agreed:

- Special FE Corporation – Tuesday 11 June 2024, 5.30 pm, via Teams
- FE Corporation – Thursday 16 May 2024, 5.30 pm, Stockton Riverside College

Governors were advised to see the calendar (agenda item 13) for proposed meeting dates in 2024-25.

24/60 **Agenda Item 20 – 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 reports to Items 5, Chief Executive's Report; 6, Operational Plan Progress Update; 8, Apprenticeships update; 9, Quality update; 11, Business Engagement Update; 15, Finance Update; 16, Capital update and 22, Remuneration Committee proposal, which all included business sensitive information. Minutes would be made available following approval and consideration at the next meeting.

24/61 **Agenda Item 21 – Meeting Effectiveness and Key Themes**

Meeting participants considered the effectiveness and impact of the meeting, particularly whether there had been any examples of exceptionality, and highlighted the following:

- Consensus that the meeting had been effective
- Example of exceptionality – the inspiring presentation by Kawa Wali and the support and help he had received from ESOL and other staff at SRC.

Key themes to highlight to absent governors:

- Some remaining anxieties about apprenticeships but assurance that actions were in progress and having some positive impact
- Positive progress on strategic objectives, also supported by Strategic Conference discussions
- Frustrations at continuing industrial action but hopeful that some progress had been made
- Tighter financial position than ideal

Fabienne Bailey, Liz Dixon, Aiden Flynn, Jason Faulkner, Lesley Graham, Phil Hastie, Sean Johnston, Patrick Jordan, Erika Marshall, Fiona Sharp, Peter Wood and Sam Young left the meeting.

24/62 **Agenda Item 22 – ITEM CONFIDENTIAL TO INDEPENDENT GOVERNORS – Remuneration Committee proposal**

The following agenda item was deemed confidential to independent governors only.

The Chief Executive highlighted that a new Senior Management Team structure, incorporating two Executive Principal roles, had been introduced in 2022 to support 'Phase 1' implementation of the

group's Strategic Plan, including development of the One Etc. approach. In order to continue progress against the Strategic Plan, it was now proposed to delete the two Executive Principal roles and create a new senior post holder role of Deputy Chief Executive, which would take on responsibility for quality of education and curriculum development. A single senior post would facilitate smoother decision-making in respect of curriculum and quality, enhance accountability across the group, provide more visible leadership of apprenticeships and support the focus on driving exceptional quality. Savings achieved would allow enhancement of the leadership responsibilities of the Assistant Principals at Stockton Riverside College and Redcar and Cleveland College, and also allow the creation of an additional post of Director of Student Experience. The Chair of Remuneration Committee confirmed that the proposal had been discussed in detail by the Remuneration Committee and recommended for approval by the FE Corporation.

[REDACTED]

(Gary Wright left the meeting.)

In respect of the Selection Panel membership, all governors present confirmed their willingness to be considered for appointment to the Panel. It was agreed that the Panel should comprise the Corporation Chair and Vice Chair, the Chief Executive, and a further two independent governors to be selected by the Corporation Chair dependent on availability and experience. Proposed interview dates would be shared as soon as possible.

Governors:

- i) **agreed** the Remuneration Committee's recommendation to progress a restructure of the Senior Management Team to create an additional Senior Post Holder role, namely a Deputy Chief Executive Officer (Curriculum) post, and that this new position should be ring-fenced to existing Executive Principals at the Etc. in the first instance;
- ii) **agreed** to appoint a Selection Panel comprising the Chief Executive, the Corporation Chair (Stu Blackett), the Corporation Vice Chair and Chair of Standards Improvement Committee (Dot Smith) and a further two independent governors, to be selected by the Corporation Chair dependent on availability to undertake selection of a Deputy Chief Executive.

(Subsequently agreed as Chair of Finance, Capital and Resources Committee (Louise Davies) and Chair of Audit Committee (Subhash Chaudhary).)

Members were reminded that the process remained highly confidential.

(The meeting ended at 8.35 pm)

Approved at an FE Corporation meeting held on 4 July 2024