

**FE Corporation Minutes**

Meeting held on Thursday 7th November 2024 at 5.30pm, H202, Redcar & Cleveland College

*Governors:*Fabienne Bailey (Chair of People Committee), Rachel Beeken, Stuart Blackett (Corporation Chair), Gareth Davies (Staff Governor), Liz Dixon (Staff Governor), Aiden Flynn (Student Governor), Grant Glendinning (Chief Executive and Group Principal), Relon Mfunda (Student Governor), Amanda Olvanhill, Hamish Rutherford, Dot Smith (Chair of Standards Improvement Committee), David Watson (Chair of Audit Committee; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Link Governor) and Gary Wright (Safeguarding Link Governor)

*Apologies:*Louise Davies (Chair of Finance, Capital and Resources Committee)

*Officials:* Jason Faulkner (Deputy Chief Executive Officer), Phil Hastie (Chief Operating Officer), Sean Johnston (Director NETA Training), Patrick Jordan (College Principal, Bede), Erika Marshall (Group Director of Marketing and Business Engagement), Fiona Sharp (Chief Financial Officer), Sarah Thompson (Group Director of Governance), Peter Wood (Group Director of Quality) and Sam Young (Governance Support Officer)

*In attendance:* Coreen Bone (prospective governor); for agenda item 7 only: Alys Tregear (Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing)

*Rachel Beeken, Hamish Rutherford, Sean Johnston and Patrick Jordan joined the meeting via Teams.*

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| **24/98** | **Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and formalities** |
|  | The Corporation Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting. Apologies for absence had been received from Louise Davies and were **accepted.**  A summary of governors’ registers of interest had been circulated with one amendment to Amanda Olvanhill’s interests noted. 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. |
| **24/99** | **Agenda Item 2 – Governing Body Membership** |
|  | *Coreen Bone left the meeting.*  The Group Director of Governance clarified that, following a recruitment exercise supported by Peridot Partners, focused on increasing board diversity and addressing the gender imbalance, the Selection Panel had recommended the appointment of four candidates as independent governors. This recommendation had been supported by the People Committee. The committee had also recommended the appointment of Jane Spence as a co-opted member of Standards Improvement Committee and Ofsted Group; skills and experience in education remained a recruitment priority. The Group Director of Governance added that inductions were currently taking place.  Governors **agreed** to:   1. appoint Coreen Bone, Sohaib Khalid, Shiraz Rana-Rahman and Kirsty Wharton as independent governors for a term of office of four years, subject to completion of pre-appointment checks (with terms of office commencing from the date of completion of checks); 2. appoint Coreen Bone as a member of People Committee with effect from commencement of her term of office as a governor; 3. appoint Jane Spence as a co-opted member of Standards Improvement Committee and the Ofsted Group for a term of office of four years, subject to completion of pre-appointment checks (term of office commencing from the date of completion of checks); 4. appoint the current student governors to serve as co-opted members of the Board for the remainder of their period of study with the group.   *Coreen Bone rejoined the meeting.* |
| **24/100** | **Agenda Item 3 – Corporation minutes and actions** |
|  | Governors:   1. **approved** the minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 4 July 2024 and a Special meeting held on 23 September 2024 as accurate records of the meetings; 2. **received** notes of a Governor Workshop held on 12 September 2024 and thanked the Governance Team for running an extremely valuable session; 3. **noted** progress against previously agreed actions as detailed in the action log and progress updates against relevant actions arising from the Strategic Conference.   A governor highlighted his suggestion from the Special meeting to seek to de-risk the NETA purchase transaction in the short to medium term; senior managers confirmed that the request was being kept under consideration during discussions with the group’s legal advisers, Stone King, and the vendors. The Chief Financial Officer confirmed that the deposit had been paid and that the remaining funds were readily available for payment of the balance. |
| **24/101** | **Agenda Item 4 – Managing Risks** |
|  | The Chief Executive and Group Principal explained that the risks assigned to the Corporation would be touched on in the majority of meeting papers and requested that governors reflect on the assurances they received on risk controls.  STR0010: Sustainability The Group Director of Marketing & Business Engagement highlighted that the risk had been the subject of a deep dive at the Risk Management Group (RMG) meeting held earlier that day. Changes had been made to reflect discussions including addition of the group’s carbon neutral status as a line of assurance, the embedding of sustainability in the curriculum and enrichment, and Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting.  STR0007: Safeguarding A governor suggested that the group was doing more than was listed in the risk controls and the Deputy Chief Executive Officer **agreed** to reflect on the measures reported in the Corporation Safeguarding report.  STR0012: Digital Technology A governor suggested that, in order to rationalise Corporation agendas and reflecting the expertise of a co-opted committee member, this risk should be delegated to the Audit and Risk Committee. The Chief Operating Officer highlighted that there had been a similar discussion at RMG and governors **agreed** that this risk should be assigned to the Audit and Risk Committee.  A governor then remarked on the potential risks of the changing policy landscape due to the change of government and, in particular, the impact of increased university tuition fees on the group’s higher education (HE) provision. The Chief Executive and Group Principal agreed that horizon scanning at RMG had also touched on this issue and that risk owners would be reflecting on this when reviewing risks.  Governors **noted** the review of risks and acknowledged the progress made on discussions around risk over the past year, including development of a feedback mechanism between the Board and committees, RMG and the Audit and Risk Committee. |
| **24/102** | **Agenda Item 5 – Chief Executive’s Report** |
|  | The Chief Executive and Group Principal highlighted the following from his circulated report, intended to provide context setting for the meeting:   * There had been an excellent start to the year with both positive student recruitment numbers for 2024-25 and learner outcomes for 2023-24; the Self Assessment Report (SAR) reflected this positive position. * The group was awaiting an Ofsted inspection and preparations had continued from the start of the year; Leading Exceptionality sessions were taking place aimed at manager level to allow teaching colleagues to concentrate on their day to day work. * The University and College Union’s (UCU) dispute with the group on the 2022-23 pay award had been resolved and pay awards for 2023-24 and 2024-25 also agreed; Unison would now ballot their members on the proposed 2024-25 award. The NASUWT had recently requested formal recognition and the formal process would be picked up by the recently appointed Group Director of HR & People Development, Adele Currie. * The implications of the October budget were outlined. It was possible, though not yet certain, that Etc. would be exempt from the increased employers’ National Insurance (NI) contributions; budgets currently reflected the worst case scenario. The National Living Wage increase had been accurately predicted and had already been reflected in the budget. To date, there were no further details on the £300m additional revenue funding announced for further education (FE) which would be received in April 2025. Additional income for in-year growth in 16 to 18 numbers and from Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) for additional Adult Skills Fund (ASF) provision were expected. * The Net Zero curriculum continued to be strengthened, with the Deputy Chief Executive Officer and the Director NETA Training currently in talks with the Engineering Construction Industry Training Board (ECITB) to develop and co-invest in a centre of excellence for the Tees Valley within the new NETA building. Peter Aldous had been invited to speak at the next Governors’ Strategic Conference. * In line with the government’s commitment to rebadge the apprenticeship levy to become the Growth and Skills Levy, upcoming reforms included the development of Foundation apprenticeships at Level 1 and piloting shorter apprenticeships of less than 12 months.   A governor commented that the introduction of Foundation apprenticeships was a welcome development given that some learners were leaving school clearly not ready for Level 2 study; she felt these could make a good stepping stone.  A governor then raised the issue that FE was seen as a ‘Cinderella’ sector, delivering the crucial skills needed but not funded to the same level as schools and HE, and asked what further lobbying could be done to raise the sector’s profile. Both senior managers and governors agreed that FE colleges had been lobbying government for many years but the sector was still not regarded as a vote catcher. A governor highlighted colleges’ crucial role in inclusion and raising aspirations, delivering skills not provided by schools or universities, but warned against making FE synonymous with disadvantage and the ‘bottom third’. She added that it was hard to see how lobbying by, for example, the Association of Colleges (AoC), could be made more impactful and influential. Governors recognised significant challenges to the sector including Level 3 curriculum reform and universities encroaching on the FE market due to their recruitment and financial difficulties; however, the FE and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) funding announcements in the October budget were both seen as positives for the sector. The change of government was also seen as an opportunity, with a chance for the sector to influence changing policy over the next four to five years. The Corporation Chair confirmed that he and the Chief Executive and Group Principal had sent a joint letter to Bridget Philipson, the Secretary of State for Education, [REDACTED].  Governors **noted** the positive strategic update and the Corporation Chair pledged his support in helping to raise the profile of Etc. and FE more generally. |
| **24/103** | **Agenda Item 6 – Operational Plan 2024-25** |
|  | The Chief Executive and Group Principal explained that the Annual Operational Plan had been provided for information and comment, setting out the Senior Management Team’s (SMT) targets for the next 12 months. He added that the plan would be developed and refined over the year though the targets would remain substantially unchanged; some were currently showing with no progress as work had only just begun on the plan. As last year, a dashboard would be set up and progress reported to the Corporation termly.  At governors’ request, it was **agreed** that updates should focus on exceptions and areas of concern. In response, the Chief Executive and Group Principal reported that, with large numbers of 16 to 18 students, delivery of Essential Employment Skills would be a challenge and that meeting curriculum development targets would be dependent on the market and stakeholders.  Governors **noted** and **supported** the operational targets for the academic year and that, as requested, updates would focus on exceptions and areas of concern. |
| **Learners and Stakeholders**  *Alys Tregear joined the meeting.* | |
| **24/104** | **Agenda Item 7 – Safeguarding** |
|  | The Corporation Chair reminded governors of their non-delegable, statutory responsibility for Safeguarding. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer explained that the report provided both an update since the July Corporation meeting and a summary of 2023-24 activity. Additional information requested by governors in July had been provided with the actions log; of note, past students continued to have their activity monitored by Smoothwall if they kept their college laptops.  A governor asked if there were any concerns about non-return of college devices; the Deputy Chief Executive Officer explained that the college could take debt recovery action but tended not to as these were allocated to students from deprived families and, after two years, devices had little residual value.  In response to a governor’s question about action taken for non-completion of staff mandatory training, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer explained that non-completion was RAG rated according to time interval and once rated red would be referred to the appropriate manager. Any continuing non-compliance could result in suspension without pay. He added that new starters were given two weeks to complete mandatory training.  A governor asked about all the recent staff changes in the Student Experience and Wellbeing Team. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer explained that the presentation would include full details of the new team structure and that the new Director, Alys Tregear, was highly experienced and, having previously worked for the group before Kirklees College, had a good knowledge of Etc.’s working practices. He added that two of the three managers were existing employees and that the manager new to Etc. had experience with the Prince’s Trust and with a local authority; as the safeguarding officers were also experienced he confirmed that he had no concerns and hoped that this agenda item would provide governors with assurance  In response to a governor’s question about sexual harassment training, the Chief Executive and Group Principal confirmed that the group was working with Irwin Mitchell to put a comprehensive training package in place. The Safeguarding Link Governor also noted that a risk assessment was also a requirement of the new legislation. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer added that sexual harassment was included in mandatory tutorials for students.  In response to a governor’s question about the definition of ‘students open to safeguarding’, the Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing explained that students identified as vulnerable could be escalated or de-escalated for additional support on the safeguarding caseload and that this was a purely internal classification. She confirmed that vulnerable students, including young carers, were well managed by the group. It was **agreed** that this term would be further clarified in future updates.  In response to a governor’s question about the [REDACTED] % of students in the Summer 2024 learner survey who declared that they were not aware of how to access support, the Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing explained that this would be followed up in tutorials and ten-minute takeovers to check knowledge and any gaps and would also be tested in the imminent learner survey.  A student governor was supportive of the links with the Cleveland Police Prevent team but asked whether the group was considering working with the police on safe use of social media [REDACTED]. The Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing confirmed that tutorials would be refocused on social media trends, using both the local and national context and the team aimed to respond quickly to emerging themes to ensure and encourage healthy debate. Safeguarding newsletters, which were also sent to parents and carers, also focused on current issues. Governors acknowledged the value of student voice on safeguarding and the Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing added that staff’s knowledge of platforms such as Tiktok and Snapchat, with their heightened risk of sexual harassment and grooming, often did not keep up with students.  The Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing then gave a presentation prepared by the Student Experience and Wellbeing Manager: Safeguarding and Welfare which outlined:   * Student Experience and Wellbeing Team structure and experience, with strength provided by Advanced Safeguarding Practitioners based at each site and the team’s cross-group work * Team responsibilities, noting that, while they did not have direct responsibility for behaviour management, they would be involved in upskilling staff in trauma informed practice and high challenge, high support training for managers * Journey of a concern flowchart introduced by the Safeguarding and Welfare Manager to ensure that all staff were confident of next steps; already seeing examples of best practice * Operation Encompass overview – proactive approach from Cleveland Police and crucial for keeping colleges informed of domestic abuse, with posters prominently displayed at each site * Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSiE) – robust annual updates and monitoring of staff awareness, with high levels of compliance noted; changes highlighted including an increased emphasis on young people as victims of exploitation and not just offenders and an increased focus on contextualised safeguarding * Importance of information sharing, early recognition and early help; with student absence often a result of other concerns, staff were encouraged to discuss reasons for absence * Gender questioning – reviewing group systems to ensure they were fit for purpose * Links with the Halo Project charity and their training for staff * The introduction of Student Wellbeing Ambassadors * Refocused tutorial and enrichment programme, with fortnightly workshops delivered by internal trainers and external specialists aimed at upskilling staff in tutorial delivery   A governor asked about the data security arrangements for sensitive date and the Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing **agreed** to confirm data warehousing arrangements with the Group Director of Digital Transformation. She added that the group used CPOMs, a nationally used and secure Child Protection Online Monitoring System; this was currently only accessible to the Safeguarding team but was being extended to heads of department after they had received training.  Governors then considered four safeguarding and welfare scenarios in small groups which allowed them to contextualise the team’s work. Following feedback from each group, the Safeguarding Link Governor highlighted that the exercise had demonstrated the complexities of situations handled by the team and added that throughout staffing changes the level of dedication to keep children safe had never fallen. He also felt that the time given to Safeguarding during this meeting reflected its importance.  Governors thanked the Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing for the update, presentation and discussion activity and confirmed that, recognising the wealth of experience within the team and the Substantial assurance from the recent Safeguarding audit, they had received assurance that the Etc. was fulfilling its safeguarding duties. Governors **approved** the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy 2024-25. |
|  | **Agenda Item 8 – Stakeholder Voice** |
| **24/105** | **8.1 – Summary of compliments and complaints for 2023-24 and Complaints Policy**  The Group Director of Quality confirmed that, as requested by governors the previous year, the annual summary now included compliments though, due to the informal way in which these were received, they could not be reported in the same format as complaints.  At governors’ request, the Group Director of Quality **agreed** to reflect on the balance between compliments and complaints in next year’s report and to consider if the compliment process could be more formalised. The College Principal Bede suggested a Compliments tile could be added to the Gateway and / or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Senior managers confirmed that department heads and named staff were formally congratulated on compliments collected through the Quarterly Review (QR) process and at learner forums; positive feedback was also shared through One Etc., at termly Town Halls and at the Winter Review.  Highlighting that complaints were an important part of assurance processes, a governor suggested it would be useful to report on any themes and patterns identified. The Group Director of Quality **agreed** to reflect on this in the next annual complaints report. In response to a governor’s question about how complaints were followed up and resolved, the Group Director of Quality confirmed that a complaints tracker was in place.  Governors **noted** the summary of compliments and complaints and the importance of both identifying complaint themes and recognising staff achievements. |
| **24/106** | **8.2 – Stakeholder feedback**  The Group Director of Quality highlighted that as well as formal feedback mechanisms, there had been less formal meet and greet interactions with over 340 students up to October half term. Themes for these conversations were changed according to the time of year, with the first conversations of the year focused on how students had settled in and whether they were feeling safe. They also incorporated the types of questions students would be asked during an Ofsted inspection.  [REDACTED]  Governors **noted** the positive stakeholder feedback and the importance of interrogating the data presented. |
| **Quality** | |
| **24/107** | **Agenda Item 9 – Standards Improvement Committee and Ofsted Group feedback** |
|  | Dot Smith, Chair of the Standards Improvement Committee, presented key themes from the committee’s meeting held on 24 October and highlighted the following:   * The committee had recommended the Group SAR to the Corporation for approval and this would be considered under agenda item 10. * Dot confirmed that she and Rachel Beeken had attended the two-hour SAR validation meeting and that a second, refined, draft had been presented to Standards Improvement Committee. Rachel provided feedback that the process had been robust and detailed with substantial challenge; she added that the Group Director of Quality had responded to all the revisions suggested and that the second draft was much more cohesive. * With apprenticeship achievement having improved to around [REDACTED] %, the committee had gained assurance that the actions taken had had a positive impact and had noted that apprenticeships would be included in the Group Development Plans (GDPs) where appropriate but would no longer need distinct plans * The HE Self Evaluation Document (SED) had also been recommended to the Corporation for approval and comprised an expanded version of the Partner’s Report submitted to Teesside University * Prompted by discussions at People Committee, the committee had agreed to rename Governor Walkthroughs as Governor Visits * Dot had also reported on a governor visit to Stockton Riverside College (SRC) by her and David Watson; both had noted the professional respectful relationships between tutors and students and the obvious pride that students had in their work. David also explained that this visit had prompted his earlier question on why the FE sector did not get the recognition it deserved.   As recommended by the Standards Improvement Committee, governors:   1. **approved** the Higher Education Self Evaluation Document (HE SED); 2. **approved** the Attendance Policy and Engagement Strategy 2024-25 and **agreed** that future approval would be delegated to the Standards Improvement Committee; 3. **noted** the committee’s encouragement for all governors to participate in governor visits.   Governors **noted** key themes from the Ofsted Group meeting held on 19 September 2024 as presented in the circulated report and that there were no recommendations arising from the meeting. |
| **24/108** | **Agenda Item 10 – Self Assessment Report** |
|  | The Group Director of Quality confirmed that, as mentioned under the previous agenda item, the SAR validation panel had provided a high level of challenge but that he was pleased with the final draft and felt that it provided a robust foundation for the anticipated Ofsted inspection. It was important that the SAR was an accurate reflection of the group’s position and there had been detailed discussions at both the validation panel and Standards Improvement Committee on the appropriateness of self-assessment grades. Following external verification from the FE Commissioner visit, he confirmed that the [REDACTED] grading for apprenticeships accurately reflected that apprenticeship provision was much improved. Quality of Education and Education Programmes for Young People had both been graded [REDACTED]  The Chair of Standards Improvement Committee noted that contribution to meeting skills needs was graded [REDACTED] and well evidenced.  The Group Director of Quality highlighted that, as discussed at Standards Improvement Committee, the group would be working towards evidencing [REDACTED] during the year [REDACTED]. Governors agreed that the SAR was based on the impressive 2023-24 achievement rates [REDACTED].  Governors **approved** the Group SAR 2023-24, noting that it was a fair and honest assessment and reflected the group’s Tone of Voice; whilst Etc. was considered to be in a positive position, managers and governors recognised areas for development. |
| **24/109** | **Agenda Item 11 – Quality update and quality targets 2024-25** |
|  | The Group Director of Quality highlighted that, following circulation of the report with the quality targets for 2024-25, further review had identified some amendments including a target for overall High Needs achievement; the addition of vocational high grades; and removing AS Level high grade targets, though these would remain as a specific Bede target. Amended quality targets would be circulated to governors.  In response to a governor query about whether the [REDACTED]% attendance target was too challenging, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer explained that the target had been fully considered and that, although aspirational, it was based on a positive start to the year and reflected the RAG rating for recent attendance on ProMonitor. The current 16 to 18 attendance rate of [REDACTED] % was seen as evidence that the newly implemented strategies were working; the position against the target, both overall and for individual students, would be measured each half term in order to demonstrate progress or actions to be taken if there was a decline.  A governor asked about the disparity between English and maths achievement targets and the Deputy Chief Executive Officer explained that targets had been based on historical trends. [REDACTED]. Governors were assured that Etc. performance in English and maths was well above national rates. It was **agreed** that future presentation of quality targets would benefit from some accompanying narrative or interpretation.  Governors **noted** the quality update and **agreed** the quality targets for 2024-25. |
| **24/110** | **Agenda Item 12 – Group Development Plans** |
|  | As previously discussed under agenda item 9, the Group Director of Quality confirmed that apprenticeships would be included where relevant in the GDPs for 2024-25 which would be monitored through Standards Improvement Committee. The Chair of the Standards Committee commented that when the GDP themes were discussed by the committee, the synergy and alignment between internal curriculum and quality and external reports from FE Associates and the FE Commissioner had been evident and gave confidence that what staff saw as areas for development aligned with external feedback.  Governors **agreed** the Group Development Plan themes for 2024-25 and supported the decision not to have a separate development plan for apprenticeships. |
| **Finance** | |
|  | **Agenda Item 13 – Finance update** |
| **24/111** | **13.1 – Finance, Capital and Resources Committee feedback**  In the absence of the Chair of the Finance, Capital and Resources Committee, the Chief Financial Officer confirmed that key items discussed at the meeting held on 3 October 2024 would be covered under agenda item 13.2; she highlighted that the new Reserves Policy was a requirement of the Colleges’ Financial Handbook. The policies approved by the committee had been listed in the key themes.  Governors **noted** the feedback from the Finance, Capital and Resources Committee and, as recommended by the committee, **approved** the Reserves Policy. |
| **24/112** | **13.2 – Financial update**  The Chief Financial Officer presented the circulated report and explained that the FE Corporation would be asked to agree the FRS102 pensions assumptions and the asset ceiling proposal to include a nil value asset / liability on the balance sheet. [REDACTED]  The Chief Financial Officer **agreed** to bring a proposal to the Corporation in early 2025 for [Restructuring Fund] presentation in the 2025-26 financial statements.  [REDACTED]  The Chief Financial Officer then reported that there had been four applications to the Chaudhary Scholarship to date; three had been approved with one requiring further clarification against the criteria. The fund currently totalled £[REDACTED] k, with applications received for laptops and funding towards university visits. A student governor commented that the advertising at Bede had been well positioned in the science area and gave concise, effective information; governors were pleased that the scholarship fund was being well publicised and were happy to support with its governance and oversight.  Governors **noted** the report and:   1. **agreed** the FRS102 pensions assumptions for the year ended 31 July 2024, including the asset ceiling proposal of reducing the value to nil in the Etc. balance sheet; 2. **noted** the current position in relation to the RF monitoring and agreement in place to July 2025; 3. **noted** the update regarding the claim to HMRC [REDACTED]; 4. **agreed** the support of the Corporation for the governance and oversight of the Chaudhary Scholarship. |
| **People and Governance** | |
| **24/113** | **Agenda Item 14 – People Committee feedback** |
|  | Fabienne Bailey, the Chair of People Committee, presented key themes from the committee’s meeting held on 26 September 2024:   * the comprehensive review of and challenge on the strategic risks assigned to the committee with a request to RMG to review them; * Gender Pay Gap data approved for publication with the need for further analysis of the headline data acknowledged; * Kay Taylor’s last governors’ meeting as Group Director of HR & People Development; * suggestion to rename Governor Walkthroughs; Fabienne extended thanks to the Standards Improvement Committee for taking the committee’s comments on board; * the importance of raising governors’ profile with staff; * recommendations on governor appointments covered under agenda items 2 and 15.2.   Governors **noted** the committee feedback and, at the committee’s recommendation, **approved** the Local Government Pension Scheme Discretionary Policy for application of the college seal and signature by the Chief Executive and Group Principal and Corporation Chair. The Chief Financial Officer confirmed that the policy would be made available on the Etc. website. |
|  | **Agenda Item 15 – Governance** |
| **24/114** | **15.1 - Governance Self Assessment** |
|  | The Group Director of Governance thanked governors for their participation in self-assessment activities, including one to ones and the Governor Workshop; this had all been fed into the Governance Action Plan for 2024-25 which would be monitored through the People Committee.  The Corporation Chair thanked governors for the time they committed to one to ones and governance in general which contributed to the board’s strength. He then emphasised that succession planning, particularly for Vice Chair and Chair, would be crucial and this had been discussed at the Chairs’ Group held prior to this Corporation meeting. He had been pleased that recent governor recruitment had focused on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and was confident that the EDI Link Governor would continue to highlight issues to the board. The EDI Link Governor highlighted that the recent meeting of the newly expanded and reconstituted Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Group had been extremely positive.  Governors **noted** feedback from governance self-assessment activity and **agreed** the Governance Action Plan and Governor Development Plan for 2024-25. The Group Director of Governance highlighted that governors were welcome to provide any further suggestions and comments. |
| **24/115** | **15.2 – Committees and Link Governors** |
|  | Hamish Rutherford confirmed that he would be happy to be appointed as Business Engagement Link Governor. Governors **noted** the report and **agreed**:   1. to re-name the Audit Committee as Audit and Risk Committee and to the updated committee terms of reference; 2. proposed committee membership for 2024-25, specifically the appointment of David Watson as a member of People Committee (and, as detailed under agenda item 2, the appointment of Coreen Bone to People Committee and Jane Spence to Standards Improvement Committee); 3. link governor role descriptions and proposed link governor appointments. |
| **24/116** | **15.3 – Governance update** |
|  | The Group Director of Governance presented the governance update and highlighted the three decisions taken under Chair’s action for noting by the Corporation. She added that, based on feedback from governors and the timing in relation to the current Strategic Plan, it was proposed that the April 2025 Strategic Conference would be a one-day conference.  Governors:   1. **noted** Chair’s action taken; 2. **agreed** the one-day format for the April 2025 Strategic Conference; 3. **agreed** the proposed Corporation cycle of business for 2024-25; 4. **noted** governors’ involvement in a range of training and development opportunities, and college group events, and the request to notify the Group Director of Governance of any specific training needs; 5. **noted** the update on national governance matters.   *(Aiden Flynn, Relon Mfunda and Gary Wright left the meeting.)* |
| **24/117** | **Agenda Item 16 – Employee Relations Policy** |
|  | The Chief Executive presented the circulated Employee Relations Policy which had been updated to reflect changes to the membership of the Joint Consultation and Negotiation Committee.  The Policy was **approved** by members. It was noted that approval of this Policy was usually delegated to the People Committee but, as this Policy had been updated ahead of schedule, was presented to the FE Corporation on this occasion. |
| **Audit and Compliance Issues** | |
| **24/118** | **Agenda Item 17 – Audit Update** |
|  | David Watson, Chair of the Audit Committee, reported on an Audit Committee meeting held on 10 October 2024. He highlighted that the committee’s self review had evidenced that the committee membership was strong with relevant skills and expertise. However, following the end of Subhash Chaudhary’s term of office on 20 October, there was currently an imbalance of Corporation members and co-opted members; it was intended to address this by appointing a further governor to the committee. The reports received by the committee had been of a high quality and he encouraged all governors to view the ‘deep dive’ report considered by the committee providing background information in relation to the ’apprenticeship journey’. Good progress was being achieved in implementing the Risk Management system, 4Risk, and further refinements were planned. The performance of the internal audit service was being monitored [REDACTED] and would be reviewed in early 2025.  The update was **noted** and as recommended by the Audit and Risk Committee, governors:   1. **agreed** to confirm the effectiveness of risk management in 2023-24; 2. **agreed** delegation of risk monitoring to committees, specifically Strategic Risk 2, Business Resilience, to be monitored by the Audit and Risk Committee and **noted** the encouragement to all committees to ensure adequate time for risk review; 3. **approved** the Regularity Audit Self-Assessment questionnaire for signature by the Chief Executive and Group Principal, as Accounting Officer, and the Corporation Chair; 4. **approved** the Internal Audit Plan for 2024-25; 5. **approved** the Conflicts of Interest Policy. |
| **24/119** | **Agenda Item 18 – Health and Safety Annual Report**  The Chief Operating Officer presented the circulated Health and Safety Annual Report and updated Health and Safety Policy. He highlighted good health and safety performance with a reduction in accidents compared to the previous year and significant work undertaken to improve compliance training.  [REDACTED]  Governors **noted** health and safety performance for 2023-24 and **approved** the Health and Safety Policy for signature by the Chief Executive and Group Principal. |
| **Policies and Strategies** | |
|  | **Agenda Item 19 – Policies and Strategies** |
| **24/120** | **19.1 – Marketing Strategy**  The Group Director of Marketing & Business Engagement confirmed that the Marketing Strategy had been approved by the Corporation the previous year and was re-presented for annual review with minor contextual changes. Generally, the Strategy had been successful in its first year. The group had not achieved HE targets in 2023-24, reflecting the national trend of challenging HE recruitment; however, this remained a key area of provision for the group and alternative approaches were being trialled.  The Marketing Strategy was **approved**. |
| **24/121** | **19.2 – Business Engagement Strategy** |
|  | The Group Director of Marketing & Business Engagement presented the new Business Engagement Strategy. [REDACTED].  Members [REDACTED] **approved** the Business Engagement Strategy. |
| **Closing Items** | |
| **24/122** | **Agenda Item 20 – Any Other Business** |
|  | There were no items of additional business. |
| **24/123** | **Agenda Item 21 – Date, time and venue of next meeting** |
|  | Thursday 12 December 2024, **4.00 pm**, Stockton Riverside College |
| **24/124** | **Agenda Item 22 – 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 4, Strategic risks allocated to the FE Corporation; 5, Chief Executive’s Report; 6, Operational Plan; 7, Safeguarding; 8, Stakeholder Feedback; 10, Self Assessment Report; 11, Quality Update and Quality Targets 2024-25; 12, Group Development Plans; 13, Finance Update; 19, Marketing and Business Engagement Strategies, which included business sensitive and personal information. Minutes would be made available following approval and consideration at the next meeting. |
| **24/125** | **Agenda Item 23 – Meeting Effectiveness and Key Themes** |
|  | i) Meeting participants considered the effectiveness and impact of the meeting and highlighted the following:   * Effective use made of prior scrutiny of policies by committees demonstrating their value in streamlining Corporation business * The meeting had considered a huge amount of information efficiently * The high quality of scrutiny from governors * The assurance received on the group’s safeguarding arrangements.   iii) Key themes to highlight to absent governors:   * Horizon scanning on the impact of the new government * The risks to FE as a result of universities’ recruitment and financial challenges * Safeguarding annual update and presentation * Approval of the Group Self Assessment Report 2023-24 |

(*The meeting ended at 8.05 pm*)

**Approved at a meeting held on 12 December 2024**