

Special FE Corporation Minutes

Meeting held on Tuesday 11th June 2024 at 5.30pm, via Teams

- Governors:** Rachel Beeken, Stuart Blackett (Corporation Chair), Subhash Chaudhary, Louise Davies, Grant Glendinning (Chief Executive and Group Principal), Amanda Olvanhill, Hamish Rutherford, Dot Smith, David Watson and Gary Wright
- Apologies:** Fabienne Bailey, Liz Dixon (Staff Governor) and Himeetjuia Kajau (student governor)
- Officials:** Jason Faulkner (Executive Principal, Redcar & Cleveland College and NETA), Phil Hastie (Chief Operating Officer), Sean Johnston (Director of NETA Training), Patrick Jordan (College Principal, Bede Sixth Form College), 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) and Peter Wood (Group Director of Quality)

24/63 Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and formalities

The Corporation Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting.

Apologies for absence from Fabienne Bailey, Liz Dixon (staff governor) and Himeetjuia Kajau (student governor) had been received and were **accepted**. It was noted that no apologies had been received from Aiden Flynn, Relon Mfunda (student governors) and Alfie Mearman (co-opted student member of the Board).

There were no declarations of interest in items on the agenda.

A quorum was present and seven calendar days' notice of the meeting had been given.

The Group Director of Governance notified one item for consideration under Agenda Item 4, Any Other Business – English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) Awards event.

24/64 Agenda Item 2 – Accountability Statement

The Chief Executive presented his circulated report and the attached draft Accountability Statement and reminded governors that approval and submission of an Annual Accountability Statement had been a statutory requirement since 2023. The Accountability Statement was a college-developed document in which colleges should set out their plans and objectives for the coming year and sat alongside the Accountability Agreement (Part A), which outlined the contractual funding conditions as stipulated by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

No formal feedback had been received from the Department for Education following submission of the group's first Accountability Statement in May 2023 but, during the recent Annual Strategic Conversation, representatives of the Education and Skills Funding Agency and the FE Commissioner's Office had commented that the 2023 Statement was well written and clear.

The document followed the format outlined in the 'Guidance on annual Accountability Agreements 2024/25 and the Local Needs Duty', published by the Department for Education, and took account of the extended requirement to indicate how well the education and training provided by the Etc. was meeting local needs and what actions could be taken by the Etc. and other providers to meet those needs better. Etc. had undertaken a local needs review with other FE+ colleges and this approach had been commended as pioneering by the Association of Colleges. A collective statement agreed by all the FE+ colleges involved in the review was included in Accountability Statement. The Accountability Statement also included a summary of achievements against the previous objectives and seven challenging but achievable objectives for 2024-25, which were well-aligned with the Local Skills Improvement Plan.

Corrections and amendments proposed by governors in advance of the meeting had been incorporated into an updated draft and the group's graphic design team was working to finalise the public-facing document version, in Etc. house style. Governors were therefore asked to approve the draft content of the Accountability Statement, subject to circulation of the final document and any final comments from governors.

Governors asked whether the group would be held accountable against the strategic goals and targets for 2024-25 set out in the document. The Chief Executive confirmed that the group would not be held to account in a formal sense. The Accountability Statement guidance was clear that the Accountability Statement was owned by the college and objectives should be realistic but challenging. It was likely that Ofsted would take the Statement into account when judging the group's progress on meeting local skills needs and ESFA contacts could wish to discuss objectives. At the request of a governor, the Chief Executive agreed to provide progress updates against the Accountability Statement to the Governors' Ofsted Group.

Governors commended the logical content of the document and the ambition demonstrated. It was suggested that additional context in respect of the declining numbers in Health and Social care could be helpful, recognising that Health and Social care was a priority focus. Governors further queried whether the group would set more stretching internal targets; the Chief Executive clarified that the group's annual Operational Plan was an internal, management document supporting achievement of the Accountability Statement objectives and progress against the group's Strategic Plan. It was agreed that further consideration would be given to incorporating stretched targets within the Annual Operational Plan.

Governors noted that there was no reference to risk or risk mitigation in the document. The Chief Executive clarified that this was not covered in the Accountability Statement guidance, which the Etc. document followed. He further clarified that the original FE+ statement on the duty to review local needs had outlined colleges' concerns regarding the impact of de-funding of courses and staff pay rates but the Department for Education had strongly advised that this should be removed and the focus of the document should be on how colleges were meeting local needs and how they would improve further.

Governors **agreed**:

- i) to approve the draft content of the Accountability Statement subject to circulation of the final version and consideration of any final comments from governors;
- ii) to submission of the Accountability Agreement by the deadline of 30 June 2024.

Jason Faulkner, Phil Hastie, Sean Johnston, Patrick Jordan, Erika Marshall, Fiona Sharp and Peter Wood left the meeting.

24/65 Agenda Item 3 – Senior Post Holder appointment

This item was deemed confidential to governors.

The Corporation Chair reminded members that, at the FE Corporation meeting held on 16 May 2024, governors had agreed to establish a new senior post of Deputy Chief Executive (Curriculum). Applications for this post had been ring-fenced to existing Executive Principals in the first instance and one application had been received, from Jason Faulkner, Executive Principal, Redcar and Cleveland College and NETA.

The Selection Panel, comprising the Chair of Governors (Stu Blackett), the Corporation Vice Chair (Dot Smith), the Chief Executive (Grant Glendinning), the Chair of the Finance, Capital and Resources Committee (Louise Davies) and the Chair of the Audit Committee (Subhash Chaudhary), had undertaken an interview with Jason Faulkner on 6 June 2024. Kay Taylor, Group Director of HR and People Development, had been in attendance to support the panel.

All members of the Panel commended the performance of Jason during the interview [REDACTED].

In response to queries, it was confirmed that the Executive Principal, Stockton Riverside College and Bede had opted not to apply for the new role and would be working on specific projects up to her final working day of 31 July.

Governors **agreed** the recommendation of the Selection Panel to appoint Jason Faulkner to the senior post of Deputy Chief Executive (Curriculum) with effect from 1 July 2024. As previously agreed, the salary level was set at [REDACTED] and terms and conditions would be in line with Senior Post Holder contracts [REDACTED].

Governors were reminded that the restructuring remained strictly confidential pending an announcement to staff.

24/66 Agenda Item 4 – Any Other Business

The Group Director of Governance extended an invitation on behalf of the English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) team to governors to attend the ESOL Awards event on Wednesday 19 June from 11 am. Any governors interested in attending were asked to contact the Group Director of Governance to confirm this.

There were no further items of additional business.

24/67 Agenda Item 5 – Dates, times and venues of upcoming meetings

The next meeting of the FE Corporation was scheduled to take place on Thursday 4 July from 5.30 pm in Redcar and Cleveland College.

24/68 Agenda Item 6 – Approval of Documents for Public Inspection

It was **agreed** that the agenda for the current meeting be made available for public inspection. The Accountability Agreement would be published in final form on the Etc. website. All documents associated with Item 3 were deemed confidential as they related to an individual staff member. Minutes of the meeting would be made available following approval and consideration at the next meeting.

(The meeting ended at 6.15 pm)

Approved at an FE Corporation meeting held on 4 July 2024