

**FE Corporation Minutes**

Meeting held on Thursday 4th July 2024 at 5.30pm, H202, Redcar & Cleveland College

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

*Apologies:*Fabienne Bailey, Himeetjiua Kajau, Alfie Mearman and Relon Mfunda

*Officials:* Jason Faulkner (Deputy Chief Executive Officer), Phil Hastie (Chief Operating Officer), Patrick Jordan (College Principal, Bede), Erika Marshall (Group Director of Marketing and Business Engagement), 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)

*In attendance:* For agenda item 5 only: Judith Myers (Deputy Head of Sixth Form, Bede)

*Rachel Beeken and Erika Marshall joined the meeting via Teams.*

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| **24/69** | **Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and formalities** |
|  | The Corporation Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting. Apologies for absence had been received from Fabienne Bailey, Himeetjiua Kajau, Alfie Mearman and Relon Mfunda and were **accepted**; Subhash Chaudhary had given notification that he would be joining the meeting slightly late.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.  |
| **24/70** | **Agenda Item 2 – Governing Body Membership** |
|  | *Gareth Davies left the meeting.*The Group Director of Governance explained that Gareth Davies had been the sole applicant for the Staff Governor position and therefore governors were asked to ratify his appointment; she added that Gareth had been a member of the first cohort of the Etc. Leadership Programme and that an extensive induction would be put in place. Governors **agreed** to ratify the appointment of Gareth Davies as a staff governor with immediate effect for a term of office of four years and to appoint Gareth to the Finance, Capital and Resources Committee.*Gareth Davies rejoined the meeting.*The Group Director of Governance then gave an update on the governor recruitment process funded by the Department for Education (DfE); an initial meeting had been held with Peridot earlier that afternoon at which it had been agreed that selection would focus on diversity. Peridot would be setting up a recruitment microsite and details would be circulated for governors to share with their networks; interviews would be taking place in late September.An initial, and very positive, meeting had taken place with Jane Spence, Chief Executive of the Galileo Trust, a prospective co-opted member of the Standards Improvement Committee; a formal appointment process would now take place. The Corporation Chair highlighted that this introduction demonstrated the power of governor networks, confirming that he felt Jane would be a valuable addition to the committee.The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) link governor then spoke about the importance of increasing the board’s diversity, both in terms of different views and attitudes to life as well as physical characteristics; he added that recent resignations from the board had shifted the gender balance towards males making the recruitment of more female governors a priority. He also highlighted that [REDACTED] it was important to show diversity when educating young people as “they can’t be what they can’t see”. He stressed that championing ethnic and gender diversity had to be weighed against the skills needs of the board and that a possible solution could be greater use of co-option as a route into full board membership. The Corporation Chair thanked the EDI link governor for raising this and stressed that it was particularly important to address the gender balance; whilst recognising the importance of attending the annual Strategic Conference, relaxing the in-person attendance requirements for meetings could be helpful in restoring the gender balance. Consideration of the timing of meetings could also help to make board membership as inclusive as possible.Governors **noted** the governor membership and recruitment update and **supported** the governor recruitment activity, with reference to the specific recruitment priorities of education experience / quality and standards expertise; diversity of Board membership; and Audit Committee membership. |
| **24/71** | **Agenda Item 3 – Minutes of previous meetings** |
|  | Governors:1. **approved** the minutes of the Corporation meeting held on 16 May 2024 and a Special Corporation meeting held on 11 June 2024 as accurate records of the meetings;
2. **noted** progress against previously agreed actions as detailed in the action log and progress updates against relevant actions arising from the Strategic Conference.
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| **Careers Strategy** |
| **24/72** | **Agenda Item 4 – Careers Strategy** |
|  | The Group Director of Marketing & Business Engagement confirmed that there had been minimal changes to the strategy and that the Careers team had had another positive year. The team now included two Level 6 qualified Careers Advisers and an additional staff member was aiming to qualify in the near future. Areas for enhancement had been identified [REDACTED]. The Annual Operational plan target [REDACTED] of learners agreeing that they had received a good level of Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) at Learner Survey 2 (LS2) had been met. [REDACTED] Commenting on the [REDACTED] drop on the previous year in potential NETA students, a governor asked whether this was a cause for concern; the Group Director of Marketing & Business Engagement confirmed that [REDACTED] she was confident that NETA would achieve their 16-18 target.Governors **agreed** the proposed amendments to the [Careers Education Information Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) Strategy](https://stocktoncollege.sharepoint.com/%3Aw%3A/r/sites/ETCGovernors/Shared%20Documents/FE%20Corporation/2024-07-04/Reference%20documents/Item%2004%20Appendix%20CEIAG%20Strategy.docx?d=w91932014eab84597bd430c9e3f32bf15&csf=1&web=1&e=my93ia) in line with the contextual changes outlined in the circulated report and **approved** it for the academic year 2024-25.*Erika Marshall left the meeting.* |
| **Presentation** |
| **24/73** | **Agenda Item 5 – Presentation – Innersummit Integration and development of Professional Services** |
|  | The Deputy Head of Sixth Form, Bede, also Innersummit Strategic Lead, gave a presentation on the integration and development of Professional Services since the acquisition of Innersummit which highlighted the following:* The TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)) process of Innersummit staff to Etc. had been completed at the start of February 2024
* Immediate issues to address had been identified alongside wider strategic changes and future developments, recognising that Innersummit had some innovative ideas, delivery models and employer interaction methods [REDACTED]
* Concerns:
	+ [REDACTED]
* Initial priorities and changes:
	+ [REDACTED]
* Wider strategic changes:
	+ Bringing Innersummit on board helped Etc. to brand professional services provision and incorporate Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) priorities on softer skills more rapidly
	+ Innersummit to be developed as an arm underneath Etc. for Business
	+ Strategic planning day held, bringing together Innersummit and Bede staff
* Vision: importance of the word ‘revolutionising’; bespoke and fit for purpose provision
* Mission statement and strategic aims
* Impact – five months on:
	+ [REDACTED]
	+ Focus on engaging new employers in 2024-25
* Other developments outlined and branding examples shared
* Future direction:
	+ Capitalise on Innersummit being one of only 10 providers in the country offering legal apprenticeships and the only Level 7 provider in the country
	+ Showcase the brand to Tees Valley employers, using case studies to highlight bespoke delivery
	+ Upsell to established Etc. customers

*Subhash Chaudhary joined the meeting.*[REDACTED] The Chief Executive and Group Principal confirmed that due diligence had specifically focused on financial and legal issues and that it would be hard to undertake due diligence on organisational culture due to sensitivities towards staff. He added that there were parallels with the NETA acquisition and [REDACTED] there had been strategic advantages to both acquisitions.A governor asked whether the group should keep the Innersummit name. The Deputy Head of Sixth Form explained that the name was useful as a hook, for example, Reach your Innersummit at Etc.; the addition of the wording ‘Professional Services’ to branding had been useful as further explanation. Hamish Rutherford explained that, as he was based in Newcastle with strong business connections, he would be pleased to offer any assistance with networking; it was **agreed** that Hamish and Judith would meet to discuss potential links.A governor asked about the balance between assimilating Innersummit whilst maintaining its uniqueness. The Deputy Head of Sixth Form highlighted that different delivery models, such as Lunch & Learn and Sprint Days, were an essential part of Innersummit delivery and needed to be retained. [REDACTED]The College Principal Bede added that early discussions had centred on where Innersummit would sit within the group and [REDACTED] the advantages of packaging these under the Innersummit brand had been recognised and would also work for cross-group delivery. As an example, the Deputy Head of Sixth Form explained that delivery of law qualifications had previously been classroom based but was now blended, allowing recruitment of apprentices from across the country.A governor confirmed the assurance gained on the Deputy Head of Sixth Form’s leadership of Innersummit [REDACTED] The Chief Executive and Group Principal added that the Deputy Head of Sixth Form had also given a presentation on Innersummit at the recent Etc. Leadership Conference; the presentation demonstrated how issues had been dealt with and strongly evidenced systematic and methodical leadership. David Watson commented that he had attended the Conference presentation and had felt inspired and optimistic that the group was delivering something of real value. [REDACTED] Governors confirmed that they had received assurance from the Deputy Head of Sixth Form’s leadership of Innersummit and thanked her for the presentation. [REDACTED] At governors’ request, the Chief Executive and Group Principal **agreed** that a further Innersummit review would be provided to the Corporation in six months’ time.*Judith Myers left the meeting.* |
| **Strategic Direction** |
| **24/74** | **Agenda Item 6 – Chief Executive’s Report**  |
|  | The Chief Executive and Group Principal highlighted the following from his circulated report:* Recent appointments: Jason Faulkner appointed as Deputy Chief Executive Officer as of Monday 1 July; two Vice Principal Curriculum appointments made from Monday 8 July; Erika Marshall to become Group Director of Marketing & Business Engagement; and interviews for the Group Director of Student Experience & Support post had been held that day, with a preferred candidate identified.
* The inaugural Leadership Conference had been very successful, with positive feedback; thanks were extended to David Watson for his presentation
* With one day’s notice and under strict secrecy, a visit to Redcar & Cleveland College (RCC) by the Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak, had coincided with the conference; thanks were extended to the Chief Operating Officer and the Group Director of Marketing & Business Engagement for hosting
* A recommendation paper on Adult Education Budget (AEB) arrangements had been developed by FE+ and submitted to the Tees Valley Mayor, Tees Valley Combined Authority (TVCA) Directors and the Chair of the Business Board
* Industrial relations update: the Chief Executive and Group Principal and the Corporation Chair and Vice Chair had invited the University and College Union (UCU) to a ‘without prejudice’ meeting; it was noted that UCU staff were themselves on strike that week
* A summary of the potential policy changes for the sector from a Labour government, with the outcome of that day’s General election awaited

Governors congratulated Jason Faulkner and Erika Marshall on their appointments.A governor asked how many staff had been identified as aspiring leaders; it was confirmed that these included the first cohort of the Etc. Leadership Programme, completed successfully by 20 staff, and others identified through appraisal and talent management who had also been invited to the recent Leadership Conference. Talent conversations were now taking place and it was expected that the second cohort of the leadership programme, starting this September, would also be full. Succession planning, including critical posts, and talent management had been the topic for a shallow dive at the most recent Audit Committee meeting.In response to a governor’s question, it was confirmed that the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) funding assurance audit planned for the week commencing 2 September would include checks on learner hours recorded on Individual Learner Records (ILRs) and cover all funding streams. It was also confirmed that the group had not had an ESFA audit for several years and that it was part of the ESFA’s standard work cycle across the sector.Governors **noted** the update on strategic developments and **agreed** the proposal to defer review of the Business Strategy to November 2024; governors also welcomed the positive update on strategic developments. |
| **Financial Issues** |
| **24/75** | **Agenda Item 7 – Finance, Capital and Resources Committee feedback**  |
|  | Louise Davies, Chair of the Finance, Capital and Resources Committee, presented key themes from the committee’s meeting held on 20 June and highlighted the following:* Discussion of the Chair’s action taken regarding energy contracts and confirmation that the Corporation Chair had taken advice, including from the group’s legal representatives, before acting. The Group Director of Governance confirmed that it was a requirement to formally report any Chair’s Action to the Corporation.
* Recommendations from the committee for the Corporation to approve Financial Regulations and changes to subcontracting levels.

Whilst supporting the Chair’s action, an Audit Committee member suggested that there could be a lessons learned review from this and whether, for this magnitude of financial decision, it would be prudent to convene an appropriate expert panel of governors, as was the practice at the university at which he served as a council member. The Chief Executive and Group Principal agreed that, on reflection, this would have been better approach; he confirmed that the Chair had been given comprehensive information and the action had resulted in substantial savings [REDACTED]. A governor asked whether any consideration had been given to whether Etc. could access savings through NEPIC (North East of England Process Industry Cluster); the Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that Etc. was a member of NEPIC and the Chief Operating Officer agreed to highlight this suggestion to the Group Procurement Manager.In response to a governor’s question about the North East Combined Authority’s (NECA) decision to decline the funding bid for bootcamps, the Deputy Chief Executive explained that Etc. had been accepted on both the Adult Skills Budget (ASB) and Bootcamps frameworks but, at the allocation stage, NECA had declined the Level 3 Bootcamps funding bid. The governor then asked whether this might limit Innersummit growth in the Newcastle area and the Chief Executive and Group Principal explained that Innersummit provision would not be affected as it was delivered through apprenticeships, which had national funding streams, or full cost delivery rather than Bootcamps. The Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that he would be working with the Chief Financial Officer on finances and budgets and added that TVCA had increased Etc.’s funding but that NECA seemed to be focusing on funding providers located in their combined authority area. Hamish Rutherford added that Floe had some involvement with a NECA project researching the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in education.Governors **noted** the feedback from the Finance, Capital and Resources Committee and **approved** the changes to subcontracting levels and amendments to the Financial Regulations. Governors also **noted** the action taken by the Corporation Chair under Chair’s action to agree energy contract arrangements, recognising the savings achieved and the potential costs and reputational impact arising from breach of contract. It was **agreed** that, in future, a panel of governors should be convened for decisions of this financial magnitude. |
|  | **Agenda Item 8 – Finance** |
| **24/76** | **8.1 – Finance update**The Chief Financial Officer explained that the College Financial Forecasts Return (CFFR) was due for submission to the ESFA by 31 July 2024 and that governors’ approval was requested on the basis of the financial forecasts provided at agenda item 8.2. She then gave an update on the [REDACTED] VAT claim; Governors confirmed that they were satisfied with the Chief Financial Officer’s approach.A governor commented that the amount due [REDACTED] was large in relation to the group’s net surplus and that governors would therefore need a clear understanding of how it would be accounted for. It was **agreed** that a technical paper from the external auditors, Beever & Struthers, would be useful to support a final decision by governors and that this would be considered by the Finance, Capital and Resources and Audit committees.Governors: 1. **noted** the report;
2. **approved** the submission of the CFFR on the basis of the financial forecasts provided at Agenda Item 7.2; and
3. **noted** the update on the VAT reclaim.
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| **24/77** | **8.2 – Financial forecasts and 2024-25 budget**The Chief Financial Officer presented the circulated report and explained that the changes in NECA and Bootcamps funding discussed during the previous agenda item had been included in the budget; a summary of changes since the draft was considered by the Finance, Capital and Resources Committee had been provided, with no net change to the budget forecast. As in previous years, there was a degree of risk in some areas [REDACTED] A governor commented that, with cash forecasts higher than normal due to capital grants received in advance of projects, it would be valuable to develop a narrative on the levels of committed cash; governors noted that there had been a similar discussion at Audit Committee. The Chief Financial Officer **agreed** to reflect this, explaining that this, for example, would result in the [REDACTED] cash balance at the end of the 2023-24 financial year reducing by the [REDACTED] dedicated to capital schemes to an available balance of between £3m and £4m.In response to a governor’s question, the Chief Financial Officer confirmed that the assumption of a [REDACTED]% pay award was for the 2025-26 financial year and was a forecast developed specifically for the CFFR and would be refined during the Business Planning (BP) process. A governor asked whether there had been any indications through finance director networks of the percentage pay award assumptions in other colleges; the Chief Financial Officer confirmed there had been few discussions about forecasting beyond 2024-25. The Chief Executive and Group Principal added that the Association of Colleges (AoC) made pay recommendations for each coming year which was useful for colleges to either follow or explain why they were unable to but there had been no recommendation for 2024-25 as yet as the AoC was awaiting the School Teachers’ Review Body recommendation.A staff governor asked about funding rate assumptions and it was confirmed that no increase in the 16-18 funding rate had been assumed as there were no indications of an increase.A governor commented on the 65% staff cost to income ratio benchmark set by the FE Commissioner and monitored by the ESFA and asked at what level they might get concerned; the Chief Financial Officer confirmed that most college finance directors felt that around 70% was an acceptable level and the Chair of the Finance, Capital and Resources Committee added that the ratio was likely to remain high due to this year’s [REDACTED] pay award and higher pension contributions.At a governor’s request, the Chief Financial Officer **agreed** that a short form 10-line budget could be helpful in future and thanked the governor for his useful suggestion.Governors **approved** the revenue budget, capital budget and financial forecasts. |
| **24/78** | **Agenda Item 9 – Health and Safety Policy** |
|  | The Chief Operating Officer confirmed that proposed amendments to the Health and Safety Policy had been shown via tracked changes. A governor, whilst expressing confidence in the robustness of the process, asked whether site plans for each campus showing safety features, as used in his own industry alongside key safety messages, were available and could be included. Noting that the Group’s Emergency Plan did include site maps, the Chief Operating Officer **agreed** that he would flag this with the Group Health & Safety Manager for consideration.A governor suggested that, under section 2.1.1, the second bullet stating a main function of the governing body was ‘to include health and safety on its meeting agenda’ would benefit from further clarification, including frequency and what was reported; the Chief Operating Officer confirmed that health and safety was reported to governors twice each year and **agreed** to liaise with the Group Director of Governance on amended wording.Governors **approved** the Health and Safety Policy and appendices. |
| *There was a short break in the meeting.* |
| **Quality and Student Issues** |
| **24/79** | **Agenda Item 10 – 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 11 June and highlighted the following:* Presentation from the Interim Director of Student Experience and Wellbeing on future plans for the tutorials and enrichment offer emphasising the importance of developing the whole student and not just achieving qualifications
* Apprenticeships: root cause analysis and line by line review had resulted in a change in tone and focus, positive impact of improvements
* Self Assessment Report (SAR) process changes with programme area, rather than college SARs, to feed into the Group SAR this year. Governors were encouraged to attend the Group SAR validation, held on Teams, and details would be shared.

Grant Glendinning, the Chief Executive and Group Principal, gave a verbal update on the second meeting of the Ofsted Group held on 27 June 2024, outlining the following key themes:* The presentation on Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and High Needs was a helpful review and highlighted the extent of this provision and the work with learners to ensure best outcomes
* Ofsted key headlines and emerging themes from inspection reports and governors’ feedback from recent inspections in their own sectors
* A summary of skills mapping had been developed by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Governance Support Officer and governors had been provided with a link to the Ofsted resources SharePoint.

Governors **noted** the feedback from the Standards Improvement Committee and Ofsted Group, including encouragement for governors to arrange learning walks and attend the Group SAR validation. |
| **24/80** | **Agenda Item 11 – Apprenticeship Update** |
|  | The Chief Operating Officer confirmed that, as discussed at the last Standards Improvement Committee meeting, the apprenticeship achievement rate was expected to be above national rate (NR) [REDACTED] This data included Innersummit apprenticeship outcomes [REDACTED]; work would continue right to the end of the year to drive achievement. The report also set out the comprehensive actions taken to improve, with their impact evidenced. Having attended the most recent Apprenticeship Council, a governor felt that the changes had been effective and confirmed that he had been strongly assured, both by the work and the level of detail, that the group was on the right track.A staff governor asked how much confidence there was in the [REDACTED] % achievement [REDACTED]; the Chief Operating Officer confirmed that there was a level of risk assumed in the predicted achievement rate. An apprentice-by-apprentice assessment of predicted achievement had been carried out and staffing issues had also been factored into whether learners would be able to achieve in the timeframe. [REDACTED]Governors **noted** the update and recognised the [REDACTED] improvements made in apprenticeship delivery and outcomes. |
| **24/81** | **Agenda Item 12 - Quality Update** |
|  | The Group Director of Quality introduced the circulated report detailing quality key performance indicators (KPIs).A governor commented positively on the focus on attendance and the additional data supplied on authorised absence. The Group Director of Quality assured governors that attendance was recorded and monitored; very few students withdrew without intervention work having taken place. He added that student absence and withdrawals were often connected to wellbeing and mental health issues outside college. Amanda Olvanhill highlighted Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council’s bid alongside Durham University to fund research into links between non-attendance and ill health; if successful, she confirmed she would be keen to involve the group.Governors **noted** the update and supported the focus on driving improvements in attendance. |
| **24/82** | **Agenda Item 13 – Stakeholder Feedback** |
|  | The Group Director of Quality highlighted that there had been many positives to take from the LS2 outcomes and the distance travelled from LS1; he added that all questions with less positive outcomes had been detailed.Referencing an AoC blog, a staff governor commented that Hartlepool College had gathered better feedback by using single focused questions rather than long surveys like QDP; she commented that many students felt over faced by the 30-question survey. The Group Director of Quality agreed that there were too many questions and that the survey timings were not appropriate, highlighting that the task and finish group referenced in the report would look at surveys and how to improve completion rates. He gave the example that asking learners about careers advice at LS1 was not particularly logical and added that the group tended to gather more useful feedback in dialogue with students. The staff governor agreed that LS2 came quite late in the year and a student governor commented that there were lots of questions and sometimes students just clicked on random responses.A governor asked whether there was normally such a low response rate from the employer survey; the Group Director of Quality advised that this year’s response rate had been lower than the previous year’s. He added that Business Development colleagues did struggle to get employers to complete and that some of this had been due to the lack of a Group Director of Business Engagement in post; the email survey was also not as sophisticated a method as it could be. The importance of employer feedback was flagged and a governor raised the concern that, if [REDACTED] employers were not engaging with a survey, they might also not be engaging well with our students and wondered whether targeted checks should be focused on these employers. It was felt that the non-completion was more likely to be the result of co-ordination issues on the group’s part but recognised that this was a valid observation.David Watson reported that an organisation with which he was also involved as a governor had moved to pulse type surveys and the Group Director of Quality welcomed David’s offer of an introduction.In response to a governor’s question about whether incentives were offered to students for completion, the Group Director of Quality confirmed that these were not currently offered but that he would flag this through the task and finish group.A governor suggested that, as there was lots of interaction with T Level employers, it would be worth looking at the methods through which data was collected from them; the Chief Executive and Group Principal agreed that this could be explored.A governor commented that it was positive that less positive feedback was followed up and asked if there was a similar mechanism with parents; the Group Director of Quality that this had not been done as yet but would get underway. He added that feedback was also scrutinised through the self-assessment process.Governors **noted** the report and the formation of the task and finish group to improve response rates. |
| **24/83** | **Agenda Item 14 - Safeguarding Update** |
|  | The Chief Operating Officer presented the update which now included some additional information; following changes to the senior management structure, it was expected that Safeguarding would become the responsibility of the Deputy Chief Executive Officer. Governors were also asked to consider approval of a new Appendix Q to the Safeguarding Policy, a Low Level Concern Policy; it was felt that this would be particularly helpful to new staff.A governor highlighted that it was notable that [REDACTED] learners had disagreed that they were prepared for their next steps and asked whether these were a diverse group or whether there were any themes or triangulation of responses; the Group Director of Quality confirmed that the data could be drilled down by course or college, for example, and further analysis provided.A governor also asked whether there was any external benchmarking available to ascertain how the percentage of learners receiving Safeguarding support compared with other colleges; the Chief Operating Officer confirmed that the group was not aware of any external benchmarking data available.A governor commented that the level of actionable events flagged through Smoothwall for ‘bullying’ and ‘vulnerable person’ was quite high and asked how these events were defined. The Chief Operating Officer **agreed** that the components making up the ‘vulnerable person’ category would be confirmed and explained that ‘bullying’ would be followed up whenever flagged but could relate to legitimate searches for study reasons. He added that the data illustrated that incidents were actively monitored, flagged and followed up; with over 8m captures and 419 actionable events governors could gain assurance that appropriate monitoring was in place. It was **agreed** that trend data over time would be useful for governors.A governor asked whether themes identified at local authority Safeguarding Children boards, for example harmful sexual behaviour, would feedback into training. It was confirmed that the Interim Safeguarding and Welfare Manager attended all networks and, as well as informing internal staff training, a newsletter for parents on current key Safeguarding themes and risks had been sent out to cover the summer period.Amanda Olvanhill offered to share details of Naloxone, overdose antidote kit, training with the Deputy Chief Executive Officer.A governor asked if Smoothwall monitored mobile phones and the Chief Operating Officer confirmed that it would only if the phone was connected to college WiFi networks. The governor commented that, due to privacy issues, monitoring phones not connected to the college networks would be problematic but it was worth being aware that Smoothwall data was only giving a partial picture. The Chief Operating Officer added that Smoothwall monitoring was part of a wider suite of interventions and staff would be looking at behavioural changes and other indicators.Governors **noted** the update and **approved** the Low Level Concern Policy, a new appendix, Appendix Q, to the Safeguarding Policy, providing a clear set of guidelines which enabled staff to share any concerns about their own or another member of staff’s behaviour. |
| **Staffing, Governance and Audit Issues** |
| **24/84** | **Agenda Item 15 – Feedback from People Committee** |
|  | In the committee chair’s absence, the Group Director of Governance presented feedback from the People Committee’s second meeting held on 18 June:* The committee had discussed the Corporation self-assessment questionnaire, including whether the number of questions was appropriate, and other possible methods for evaluating the board’s effectiveness
* The proposed governance KPIs recommended for approval by the committee had been included in the report; governors were asked to consider how these would be recorded and monitored

Governors **noted** feedback from the People Committee meeting and: 1. **agreed** the proposed process for governance self assessment and collation of governor data;
2. **agreed** the proposed Governance Key Performance Indicators;
3. **noted** the Governance Action Plan update and areas to carry forward to 2024-25.
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|  | **Agenda Item 16 – Governance update**  |
| **24/85** | **16.1 – Governance documentation**The Group Director of Governance presented the circulated report which included a range of updated and new governance documentation for approval; she confirmed that there had been no changes to the Code of Conduct for Corporation Members and no concerns had been raised during the year. All governors were asked to accept the code when appointed and to reaffirm acceptance annually. The AoC Code of Good Governance had been extensively revised and governors were asked to consider adopting this with effect from 1 August 2024; a review of compliance would form part of the Governors’ Workshop in September.Governors:1. **agreed** the proposed changes to the Standing Orders;
2. **reaffirmed** their acceptance of the Code of Conduct for Corporation Members;
3. **adopted** the AoC Code of Good Governance 2023 and **agreed** the proposed process for assessing compliance;
4. **agreed** the Ofsted Group terms of reference and the group’s membership and the Chairs' Group terms of reference;
5. **agreed** the proposed Scheme of Delegation.
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| **24/86** | **16.2 Governance Update**The Group Director of Governance confirmed that the circulated report included the regular termly update on governor involvement and attendance and asked governors for any verbal feedback on events or development opportunities they had attended.David Watson commented on the fabulous performance of We Will Rock You which he had attended along with other governors. Amanda Olvanhill observed that the RCC Celebration of Achievement had been well organised and how much she had enjoyed meeting students. Dot Smith had attended the AoC Governors’ Summit; there had been an interesting session presented by two staff governors at which one had commented on the volume of paperwork and how hard it was to find time to read it so used AI to generate questions to ask at board meetings. This prompted a discussion about confidentiality and data protection considerations. Stu Blackett had attended the Stockton Riverside College (SRC) awards and an ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) coffee morning which he reported had been absolutely buzzing; he added that it had been humbling to hear the students’ personal experiences.The Corporation Chair emphasised that he was very conscious of the time that governors gave and that they should not feel under any obligation to attend events; the invitations sent out by the Governance Team ensured that governors felt included but were not an expectation, but he was also aware how much governors enjoyed these opportunities.Governors **noted** the update, including the importance of attendance and involvement in ensuring a highly informed, effective and engaged board; the use of Chair’s action in respect of re-negotiated energy contracts, as discussed under agenda item 7, was also **noted**. |
| **24/87** | **Agenda Item 17 – Feedback from Audit Committee**  |
|  | Subhash Chaudhary, Chair of the Audit Committee, presented key themes from the committee’s meeting held on 6 June and highlighted the following:* There had been healthy debate at the meeting, with some concerns raised by the committee about service delivery from the internal audit providers
* He outlined the three recommendations from the committee in respect of the Risk Management Strategy, the external audit strategy and the reappointment of TIAA for the 2024-25 academic year, subject to clear performance expectations

The Group Director of Governance thanked governors for their feedback which had helped develop the risk appetite statement. The Chief Financial Officer added that a co-opted member of the Audit Committee had suggested there should be discussions on risk appetite further down the organisation but this had not yet been developed enough to include in the strategy.That governors **noted** the committee feedback and: 1. **approved** the Risk Management Strategy including Risk Appetite Statement;
2. **approved** the external audit strategy for audit of the 2023-24 accounts;
3. **approved** the reappointment of TIAA as internal audit service for the 2024-25 academic year, subject to clear performance expectations.
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| **Concluding Items** |
| **24/88** | **Agenda Item 18 – Annual Review of Chair and Vice Chair Appointments** |
|  | *Stuart Blackett and Dot Smith left the meeting.* The Group Director of Governance confirmed that the Chair’s performance was reviewed each year and thanked governors and SMT members for their feedback; this had been generally very positive and the Corporation Chair had appreciated the areas for development identified. A governor commented on the complementary skills of the Chair and Vice Chair and their inclusive personalities.Governors **agreed** to re-confirm the appointments of Stuart Blackett as Corporation Chair and Dot Smith as Corporation Vice Chair for the period 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2026.*Stu Blackett and Dot Smith rejoined the meeting.*The Group Director of Governance confirmed that governors had been happy to re-confirm their appointments; the Corporation Chair thanked the Vice Chair for all her work and support.Referring to the email he had circulated to all governors, the Corporation Chair re-emphasised that he welcomed feedback on areas in which he could improve and asked governors and senior managers to get in touch if they wanted more contact from him. |
| **24/89** | **Agenda Item 19 – Any Other Business** |
|  | The Group Director of Governance explained that this would have been Alfie Mearman’s last meeting as a co-opted student governor but he had been unable to attend due to work commitments; she read out a message from him and confirmed that a card and gift would be sent to him on behalf of the Corporation to thank him for his involvement.The Corporation Chair then thanked Subhash Chaudhary for his work as a governor over the past eight years, adding that he had been a great colleague and a well-respected member of the board. Subhash responded by thanking everyone for their help and support, especially colleagues on the Audit Committee. He thanked the Governance Team for their help with streamlining the journey and reflected on the group’s achievements over the past eight years and how taking calculated risks had opened up opportunities. For him, the key achievements had been the turnarounds of NETA and RCC and the development of fabulous systems of risk assessment and management. He promised to maintain links with the group and, in particular, with Bede. |
| **24/90** | **Agenda Item 20 – Dates, times and venues of upcoming meetings** |
|  | Governors **noted** the following meeting dates for 2024-25; *FE Corporation meetings:* Thursday 7 November 2024, 5.30 pm, Redcar and Cleveland CollegeThursday 12 December 2024, **3 pm**, Stockton Riverside CollegeThursday 20 February 2025, 5.30 pm, Bede Sixth Form Thursday 22 May 2025, **3 pm**, Stockton Riverside CollegeThursday 10 July 2025, 5.30 pm, Redcar and Cleveland College*Governor Workshops*Thursday 12 September 2024, 5.30 pm, TeamsThursday 16 January 2025, 5.30 pm, TeamsThursday 1 May 2025, 5.30 pm, Teams*Governors’ Strategic Conference:* Friday 21 March 2025 (full day) to Saturday 22 March 2025 (half day), venue to be confirmed |
| **24/91** | **Agenda Item 21 – 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, Careers Strategy; 5, Innersummit integration; 6, Chief Executive’s Report; 8, Finance; 11, Apprenticeships Update; 12, Quality Update; 13, Stakeholder Feedback; and 14, Safeguarding Update, which all included business sensitive information. Minutes would be made available following approval and consideration at the next meeting. |
| **24/92** | **Agenda Item 22 – Meeting Effectiveness and Key Themes** |
|  | i) Meeting participants considered the effectiveness and impact of the meeting, particularly examples of governor challenge, and highlighted the following:* Discussions around due diligence and lessons learned in the Innersummit acquisition
* The continuing impact of raised awareness of potential positivity bias, reflecting on the assurance gained from the frank presentation on Innersummit and the importance of an open and honest culture
* Lessons learned from Chair’s action on energy contracts, including the suggestion to convene small groups of governors
* Improving completion rates for stakeholder feedback, including learner surveys

ii) Risks relevant to the Corporation had been considered during the course of the meeting.iii) Key themes to highlight to absent governors:* Appointment of Gareth Davies as Staff Governor and marked the final meetings for Alfie Mearman and Subhash Chaudhary
* Presentation on Innersummit integration and development of Professional Services; governors were assured by the actions taken and the leadership of the Deputy Head of Sixth Form, Bede, whilst noting lessons learned on the acquisition
* Approval of 2024-25 budget and financial forecasts for the CFFR submission, including proposed subcontracting
* Feedback from committees and Ofsted Group and agreement of committee recommendations
* Chair’s action regarding energy contracts noted, with suggestion that a small group of governors should be convened for future time critical decisions of this magnitude
* Approval of policies and strategies: Careers, Health & Safety, Financial Regulations, Risk Management and Low Level Concerns appendix to Safeguarding Policy
* Positive Chair’s review outcomes and re-confirmation of the appointments of the Corporation Chair and Vice Chair; recognition of their complementary skills sets
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(*The meeting ended at 8.15 pm*)

**Approved at a meeting held on 7 November 2024**