

Further Education Corporation

Approved Minutes

Minutes of a Meeting of the Further Education Corporation held at the Thurrock Campus, Woodview on Monday 17 March 2014 at 6.00 pm.

Present: Mr R Launder (Chairman)
Mr S Burrell
Dr R Gray
Mr Y Goolamali
Mr R Hughes
Mr T Knight
Ms E Mead (from item 2)
Mr B Neagus
Ms A O'Donoghue CBE
Mr Paramjit Singh Narang
Mr R Patterson
Mr T Thompson
Mrs M West
Mrs G Williams

In Attendance: Mr J Hayles (Deputy Principal)
Mr A McGarel (Deputy Chief Executive)
Ms C Anson-Higgs (Vice Principal, Business Development)
Mr S Smith (Turner & Townsend) (Item 7)
Mr S Williams (HE Sabbatical Officer – Observer)
Mr R I Millea FCA (Clerk to the Corporation)

1. Appointment of New Member and Student Vacancy (Paper FEC.14.01)

The Board **APPROVED** the appointment of Ms Elaine Mead to the Board with effect from 17 March 2014 for a four year term, on the recommendation of the Search & Governance Committee. The Clerk reported that Ms Mead is completing all joining procedures and has undertaken formal induction.

The Clerk further confirmed that induction procedures have been carried out for Paramjit Singh Narang, Maya West and Stuart Burrell, following their appointment to the Board at the last meeting.

The Clerk reminded the Board that, following the resignation of Kirsty Davison as President of the Student Union, which the Clerk had communicated to the Board recently, she has ceased to be Student Member of the Board.

The Student Union is about to conduct elections to its Committee in preparation for the 2014/15 academic year and it is hoped to bring forward candidates for appointment to the Board at the July Meeting. It is noted that Lewis Wright is eligible for re-election to the SU Committee and could therefore be again proposed as a candidate to the Board.

2. Curriculum Offer

As part of the Governor Development and Training programme, the Principal & Chief Executive gave a short presentation on the College's Curriculum Offer, both academic and vocational.

She indicated that the College's HE Strategy is being revised and rewritten and will come to the next Board Meeting for approval.

She stressed the Government pressure on students to gain a GCSE (to at least level C) in Maths and English by the age of 19. She also observed that the only real growth area at the moment for Colleges is in Apprenticeships.

A copy of her presentation is attached to these minutes.

3. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr D O'Halloran (Vice Chairman), who is recovering from a minor operation, Ms O Buck, Mrs S Carr, Mr B Morris, Mr L Wright and Mrs W Barnes (Vice Principal, Curriculum).

4. Urgent Business

Lancaster House reception

The Chairman gave a brief verbal report on the reception he attended at Lancaster House, London on 24 February 2014, hosted by Matthew Hancock MP, Minister for FE and Skills in the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills.

The Minister focused on Maths and English, on employer engagement and on Boards having sufficient business experience. The Minister also said that a good College inevitably had a good Board. Questions to the Minister exclusively related to funding reductions and he did not give any credible answers to questions raised. Subsequently, it has been learned that some mitigation of these funding cuts is likely in the future where real distress is being caused to a College.

FE Commissioner

The Clerk tabled a letter for the information of Members, which had been sent to the Chairman and the Principal, by the FE Commissioner concerning his first six months in the role. The Commissioner is sent into Colleges that have failed an Ofsted inspection and/or have unacceptable standards and/or inadequate financial health or management.

5. Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 9 December 2013

The Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday 9 December 2013 were **APPROVED** and **SIGNED** by the Chairman.

6. Matters Arising

The Clerk reported that the final Ofsted Report had been circulated to all Members, and the final Self-Assessment Report will be loaded onto the Governors' SharePoint. The latter document was uploaded onto the SFA portal by 31 December 2013.

7. Strategic Developments in South Essex (Paper FEC.14.02)

These matters were deemed to be Confidential Items under the Instrument & Articles and a separate minute has been prepared in this connection and is attached to these minutes.

8. Quality Matters (Paper FEC.14.03)

a. The Deputy Principal presented a number of quality papers for the attention of the Board, all of which had been considered in detail by the Curriculum & Quality Committee at their meeting on 10 February, the minutes of which form another agenda item this evening. These minutes record the detailed consideration given to those reports by the Committee.

These papers were Current Learner Performance (Retention/Attendance/Learner Numbers), Analysis of Compliments and Complaints and Progress against the Quality Improvement Plan.

It was noted that FE 16-18 Learner Numbers for 2013-14 are almost up to target. Retention figures are encouraging for both 16-18 and 19+ and are close to last year's position at this stage. Similar improvements are being seen in Attendance for this year compared to last year. There are grounds for optimism in these areas.

Since the Curriculum & Quality Meeting on 10 February, 79% of appraisals are now complete (previously only 40%) and all others are now in progress so it seems fair to RAG rate this area as AMBER not RED. The targets set will be reviewed again for next year. Teaching observations have been strengthened and there is optimism of the target of 85% teaching observed as good or better being achievable for 2013/14.

Members stressed that data be stratified so that it is contextualised, particularly in terms of the number of students affected.

Having regard to the scrutiny given to these Reports by the Curriculum & Quality Committee and the follow-up action planned, the Board **ACCEPTED** these Reports.

b. The Deputy Chief Executive presented a Key Performance Indicators Report to inform the Board of progress against the previously approved KPIs for 2013-14, which are, in turn, linked to the targets set in the Strategic Plan 2013-16.

The DCE noted that the SFA have adjusted the 16-18 Apprenticeship contract downwards (in year clawback) by just under £500K and this has been adjusted in the management accounts.

The Report was **NOTED**.

c. The Board accepted the recommendation of the Curriculum & Quality Committee and **APPROVED** the Equality & Diversity Annual Report, incorporating the Action Plan for the future. Members felt it was a good report indeed.

d. The Board received from the Deputy Principal feedback from the Ofsted Improvement Service as regards the steps being taken by the College to seek to improve the College's grading from 3 Requires Improvement to 2 Good by the time of the next Ofsted inspection, which is likely in the summer term 2015. Members were assured that all these steps have been taken and considerable progress made or being made.

It was noted that Ofsted are majoring on work placements as part of qualification routes at present.

This Report was **NOTED**.

9. Tuition Fees for International Students (Paper FEC.14.04)

On the recommendation of the Policy & Resources Committee, the Board **APPROVED** proposals for Fees for International Students of the College for 2014/15.

10. Shared Services Development (Paper FEC.14.05)

This is deemed to be a confidential item and a separate minute has been prepared as for 7 above.

11. Change Management Strategy (Paper FEC.14.06)

The Deputy Chief Executive presented this document, which builds upon Phase 1 of the Strategy, implemented last year after approval by the Board.

The Strategy was discussed in detail at the Policy & Resources Committee at its meeting on 24 February 2014 and, on its recommendation, it was **APPROVED** by the Board.

The thrust of the Strategy Phase 2 is to professionalise the College's Support Services and to review staffing requirements in that connection in the context of business efficiency. There is linkage between the Strategy and the Shared Services Development noted in the Confidential Minutes to this Meeting.

The underlying risks in this Strategy are recorded and will be monitored by the Audit & Risk Committee through the College Risk Register.

12. Corporation Matters (Paper FEC.14.07)

The Board received an Outline Training Programme for noting. It is being implemented on a gradual basis.

The Board noted the revised Time Commitment for Governors, prepared by the Clerk, and discussed by the Search & Governance Committee. It has been placed on the Governance Section of the College website to give potential governors an indication of the likely commitment, should they wish to apply to join the Board.

The Clerk provided a verbal update on the Governor Links Programme, noting that comments from Members are passed to the Principal & Chief Executive and the Deputy Principal and will be reviewed on a regular basis by the Curriculum & Quality Committee. It seems to be working well and productively. All new Governors have now been allocated to a Departmental Area and no areas are unrepresented.

The Clerk updated the Board on the Student Union constitution where the SU will discuss amending their rules so that the President of the Union does not automatically go forward as the HE Student candidate for appointment to the Board.

13. Reports from Corporation Committees (Paper FEC.14.08)

The Board **RECEIVED** Reports on the business of the Audit & Risk Committee, which met on 6 March 2014, and the Policy & Resources Committee, which met on 27 January 2014 and 24 February 2014.

The Board also **RECEIVED** a copy of the minutes (approved by the Chairman of the Committee and the Principal and Chief Executive) of the Curriculum & Quality Committee, which met on 10 February 2014, and of the Search & Governance Committee (approved by the Chairman of the Committee), which met on 27 January 2014.

The Board also **RECEIVED** a summary of the matters covered during the Board Development Day on 20 January 2014, which included a Teaching & Learning Workshop.

The Clerk gave a brief verbal report on the National Clerks' Conference, which he attended last Friday at BIS, London. It was a disappointing event. He informed the Board that, in his capacity as Vice-Chairman of West Suffolk College, he will be attending the National Governors' Conference in London on 27 March and will report back in due course.

In future, the Board asked the Clerk to provide full minutes of all Committee Meetings to the Board, rather than summaries of the business. It was noted that these minutes will not have been approved by the Committee, although it is current practice for draft minutes of Committee Meetings to be agreed by the Chair of the Meeting as soon as practicable after the meeting was held.

14. Forthcoming Events (Paper FEC.14.09)

The Board **NOTED** the paper prepared by the Clerk.

The Clerk **reminded** the Board that the next Meeting of the Board will be the Board Development Day, scheduled to be held at the Thurrock Learning Campus on Monday 23 June 2014 at 1.00 pm.

15. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 7 July 2014 at the Southend Campus.

There being no further business, the Meeting terminated at 8.30 pm.

Signed.....Dated.....