

HARLOW COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

CORPORATION MEETING

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on MS Teams Thursday 13 June 2024 – 9.30am

Membership:	*Liz Laycock (Chair)	Vic Goddard	*Paul Taylor
	Sonny Bazzoni	*John Godley	*Michael Travers
	*Caroline Betts	*Stephen Isherwood	Dawn Tuner
	*Rod Bristow	*Ray Levy	*Ed Whittle
	*Hannah Cheesman	Lily Lin	*Heather Wilson
	*Julia Fillary	*Karen Spencer	

* denotes present

In attendance: Will Allanson, Deputy Principal
Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal
Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Lily Lin, due to personal reasons, Sonny Bazzoni and Vic Goddard, both due to work commitments.

2 Declaration of Interests

There were no additional declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2024 were approved by the Corporation as a true and accurate record of the meeting and were signed remotely by the Chair.

4 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5 Written Resolution

The Corporation received and noted the Written Resolution which was passed on 22 May 2024.

6 Ofsted

The Corporation received a verbal update on the College's recent Ofsted inspection, presented by members of the Principalship.

Karen Spencer thanked Governors for their input into the inspection, particularly those who met with the inspectors.

Karen Spencer and the Corporation thanked Becky Jones and Will Allanson for all their hard work as the College's Nominee and the College's Skills Nominee. The Corporation also thanked Paul Whitehead for his work throughout the inspection, particularly in relation to providing data.

Governors were reminded that the College has been graded "good" across all judgements with a "strong" judgment for contribution to meeting skills needs.

The College has received the draft report, has undertaken a factual accuracy check and has provided feedback to Ofsted. There are no surprises in the report and it reiterates what the College and Governors already know.

Will Allanson reported that in addition to gaining "strong" for skills, inspectors reported that the College is at the forefront and leading skills' development in the area.

The Chair of Governors thanked everyone for their effort and calmness throughout the process and reported that everything seemed to work very smoothly. Karen Spencer reported that it had been a smoother process compared to previous inspections and the College had everything available that the inspection team asked for. The College's strong digital systems helped with this.

Governors were informed that 750 students and apprentices completed Ofsted's survey and 100% said they would recommend the College.

The quality assurance inspector reported that the College comes across as a happy college for students and staff and reported that this is incredibly unusual.

A Governor congratulated the leadership team and highlighted that the positive outcome is a demonstration of the good things going on at College, along with a culture of continuous improvement. The Governor reported they were proud to be part of the team.

Paul Whitehead reported that the College aspired to be itself throughout the inspection and was open and honest throughout, with the College accepting that some areas were still improving.

Governors were informed that the report will be shared with Governors as soon as a final version is available for publication.

The Corporation noted the verbal update on Ofsted.

7 Update from Student Governors

The Corporation received an update from the Student Governors.

Last week both Student Governors were interviewed by ITV on young people voting and politics. This was an interesting and enjoyable experience.

The Student Governors had been involved in interviews with the Ofsted inspectors, taking about how the College is run and certain aspects of College life, such as tutorials.

The Student Governors met with Ed Miliband and gave him a tour of the College.

They have been involved in lots of open events and they reported that it was great to speak with potential new students and promote the College.

They have also been involved in filming as part of the i-Pad induction for new students.

Karen Spencer thanked the two Student Governors for all their support and involvement in so many events and initiatives. The Chair of Governors reported that she has been really impressed with the Student Governors this year and they have fully grasped their role as Student Governors.

The Corporation noted the update from Student Governors.

8 Governance Issues

8.1 Membership of Harlow College Further Education Corporation

The Corporation was informed that Kate Greer has resigned from the Corporation due to work commitments. The Search and Governance Committee will begin to identify a suitable replacement to recommend to the Corporation.

The Corporation agreed to appoint Liz Laycock to the Search and Governance Committee.

8.2 External Governance Review

The Corporation received an update on the External Governance Review, presented by Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance.

The Corporation was informed that the review has been completed and an initial draft report has been shared with the Chair of Governors, the Principal and the Head of Governance. The report will be presented to the Search and Governance Committee at its meeting on 26 June 2024 and to the Corporation at its meeting on 16 July 2024.

Governors were informed that three recommendations have been raised, with some additional best practice suggestions. Governors were informed that the recommendations are not substantive and are to enhance current practice.

The Chair of Governors reported that it was worthwhile and reassuring process, with some items to be look at taking forward. A Governor reported that there is a need to be cautious about stating that the review is value for money when audit days have been reduced to accommodate the cost of the review. Ruth Lucas reported that in terms of output and best practice, the process has been beneficial to the College and more worthwhile than some other colleges are reporting.

The Corporation noted the update on the External Governance Review.

8.3 FE Commissioner Termly Newsletter – Spring Term

The Corporation received the FE Commissioner’s termly newsletter for the Spring Term, presented by Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance.

A Governor asked about the reported position that Governors should not serve more than two terms of office and if the College has challenged this. Karen Spencer reported that the College has been raised with the ESFA and the FE Commissioner’s office as part of the College’s Annual Strategic Conversation. The feedback is that it is about getting the right balance across the Corporation and it is an issue when the majority of Governors have served for more than two terms. Ruth Lucas reported that the College’s Governor Recruitment Policy and Procedure details the Corporation’s approach to this and that it was not raised as an issue in the External Governance Review. Governors were reminded that where Governors have served over two terms of office, their roles on the Corporation and Committees have changed throughout this time period therefore not allowing “cosy” relationships to form.

The Corporation noted the FE Commissioner’s termly newsletter for the Spring Term.

9 Resources Committee Reports

9.1 Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting – 09 May 2024

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 9 May 2024.

9.1.1 ESFA Financial Health Rating Letter and Governing Body Finance Dashboard

The Corporation received and considered the ESFA financial health rating letter and the Governing Body financial dashboard, presented by Karen Spencer, Principal.

Karen Spencer reported that this is a standard letter which colleges receive annually based on the financial statements’ submission to the ESFA. The information gives Governors and the College assurance on what they already know. It was noted that the dashboard measures certain metrics in a different way to how the College measures them in the financial statements and management accounts.

The Corporation noted the ESFA Financial Health Rating Letter and Governing Body Financial Dashboard.

9.1.2 Management Accounts

The Corporation received and considered the management accounts up to 30 April 2024, presented by Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal.

The Corporation was informed that at the May Resources Committee meeting the February management accounts were considered as the

March accounts were sketch accounts due to the economic closure over Easter.

Governors' attention was brought to the Resources Committee minutes which stated that the LSIF project funding had not been fully reconciled and Paul Whitehead confirmed that the LSIF funding has now been fully reconciled and the April accounts now reflect this. The College has been able to reallocate resources therefore the LSIF funding has made a greater contribution to the College's project income which has made a positive impact on the April management accounts.

Governors were informed that agency spend is higher than expected which is having an impact on overall staff costs.

Governors noted that the current year-end prediction is a £130k surplus and the College's overall financial health rating is outstanding at this stage due to the improvement in the current ratio. The College's cash position is strong and the College is meeting both bank covenants.

The Corporation was informed that the College's BACS payroll facility needed to be increased from £950k to £1m per month due to changes in National Insurance which are a cash benefit to employees. This increase was approved by the Corporation.

A detailed discussion was held on the College's loans and whether the College should explore repayment options.

The Corporation:

- Noted the management accounts up to 30 April 2024 and the College's position in terms of financial health and banking covenants.
- Approved the revised bank BACS payroll facility.
- Approved for the College to explore loan repayment options, with a report being presented to the next Resources Committee and Corporation meetings.

9.1.3 ESFA College Financial Handbook 2024

The Corporation received and considered the ESFA's College Financial Handbook 2024, presented by Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal.

Governors were informed that management met with the College's external auditors. They have no concerns with the College meeting the requirements of the Financial Handbook and it matches the College's financial approach.

The Corporation noted the ESFA's College Financial Handbook 2024.

10 Strategic Plan 2024 – 2029 and Annual Accountability Statement 2024 - 2025

The Corporation received and considered the Strategic Plan 2024 – 2029 and Annual Accountability Statement 2024 – 2025, presented by Karen Spencer, Principal.

Governors were reminded that they had been involved in a number of strategic planning sessions and discussions from which the draft Strategic Plan for 2024 – 2029 has been developed. Governors received the draft Strategic Plan for 2024 – 2029 in advance of the College’s recent Ofsted inspection and the draft was also shared with Ofsted.

Karen Spencer reported that the major disciplines and sectors along with the key priorities are stated upfront and that ensuring the College has excellent teaching and learning is a constant theme. The Standards and Curriculum Committee will revisit CPD and industrial updating aligned to teaching, learning and assessment. College finances are stable therefore they are only referred to in the Strategic Plan. The College’s Financial Strategy, HR Strategy and Estates Strategy, being presented next term, will underpin and support the College’s new Strategic Plan.

A Governor reported that the Strategy is very clear and compelling.

A Governor suggested that more on the external environment and future skills’ needs would be useful in the section on Strategic Context. Karen Spencer reported that this is covered in the Annual Accountability Statement and it was agreed that the section on Context and Place from the Accountability Statement should also be included in the Strategic Plan.

Karen Spencer asked the Student Governor if the section on soft skills and behaviours contained the right themes. The Student Governor confirmed that the skills and behaviours listed in the section are great and the ones that should be focused on, particularly around employment and enrichment.

The Corporation:

- Approved the Strategic Plan 2024 – 2029, subject to the addition as detailed above being incorporated into the Plan.
- Approved the Annual Accountability Statement 2024 – 2025 for its submission to the ESFA and publication on the College’s website.

11 Any Other Business

Karen Spencer reminded Governors about the Student Awards Events taking place, along with the Investors in Diversity session which Governors have been invited to.

Karen Spencer thanked Governors for attending the end of year performance and exhibitions.

12 Dates of Future Meetings

Summer Term 2024	Tuesday 16 July 2024	9.30am
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