

HARLOW COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

SEARCH AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at Harlow College at 10am on Tuesday 13 February 2024

Membership *Kate Greer
 *Ray Levy
 *Lily Lin (Chair)
 *Karen Spencer

*denotes present

In attendance Pauline Odulinski, External Reviewer
 Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal
 Deanne Morgan, Executive Director – Finance
 Julien Sample, Executive Director – Business Development
 Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance

1 Apologies for Absence

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made.

There were no apologies for absence.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Search and Governance Committee meeting held on 21 November 2023 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

4 Matters Arising from the Minutes (not mentioned elsewhere on the agenda)

4.1 Register of Membership (minute 6 refers)

Ruth Lucas reported that Julia Fillary has been appointed as a member of the Audit Committee and will no longer be a member of the Resources Committee.

4.2 AoC Further Education Code of Good Governance (minute 9 refers)

Ruth Lucas reported that the Corporation adopted the AoC Further Education Code of Good Governance at its meeting on 14 December 2023.

4.3 Any Other Business (minute 11 refers)

Karen Spencer reported that the College's Annual Strategic Conversation with the DfE and FE Commissioner's Office took place on 7 February 2024.

Paul Whitehead provided the Committee with an overview of the discussions

held. It was an open discussion, honest and wide-ranging discussion.

There was a focus on the College's strategic intentions and the next stages in the College's strategic planning cycle. The challenges with planning strategically with very little foresight into funding were raised, along with the College's longer-term vision, including Phase 2 at Stansted Airport College and expansion at Harlow College, and the need to plan the infrastructure in the longer-term.

Paul Whitehead reported that there are some inherent challenges since ONS reclassification, such as borrowing from banks, and this could pose risks to the College in the longer-term in relation to growth and large infrastructure projects.

Governors were informed that capital funding in the education is complex and the amount available has been impacted by unplanned expenditure due to RAAC.

Paul Whitehead reported that colleges are being asked to plan strategically however this is difficult as funding allocations have not yet been confirmed for next academic year, which is now less than six months away.

Karen Spencer reported that a discussion was also held around qualification reforms which are creating financial uncertainty and impacting young people and the College's curriculum offer.

Governors were informed that a formal note of the meeting will be produced by the DfE and will be presented to the Committee.

The Search and Governance Committee noted the update on the Annual Strategic Conversation.

5 Register of Membership & 6 Membership of Harlow College Further Education Corporation

The Search and Governance Committee received and considered the Register of Membership and update on the membership of Harlow College Further Education Corporation, presented by Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance.

Governors were informed that Liz Laycock's term of office expires on 18 May 2024. A discussion has been held with Liz and she would like to be considered for reappointment. The Search and Governance Committee acknowledged the strength she brings to the Corporation and unanimously agreed to recommend her reappointment to the Corporation.

The Committee noted that Jon Bouffler is retiring from Anglia Ruskin University on 1 March 2024 therefore his term of office will end on the same day. The Search and Governance Committee thanked Jon for his service as a Governor.

The Search and Governance Committee considered the appointment of Vic Goddard to Harlow College Further Education Corporation. Vic is the Chief Executive of Passmores Cooperative Learning Community and has extensive educational experience in Harlow. It is proposed that he would sit on the Standards and Curriculum Committee. The Search and Governance Committee unanimously agreed to recommend Vic Goddard's

appointment to the Corporation.

The Search and Governance Committee were informed that Michael Hardware, Harlow District Council, has resigned from the Corporation due to work commitments. The Council has proposed a replacement who is the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Governance. It is proposed that he would sit on the Audit Committee. A meeting is scheduled to be held with him, the Chair of Governors, the Principal and the Head of Governance on 27 February 2024.

A Governor asked if the membership of Committees now has the right balance of skills and Ruth Lucas confirmed that this was the case following the recent moves and recent appointments.

A discussion was held around the length of time Governors can serve as a Governor and that the Search and Governance Committee reviews the skills and expertise that Governors bring to the Corporation and the College when considering reappointments. In one Governor's case, they bring strong employer and community links, along with a strong skills set to support the College in many different aspects. Therefore there are cases when a Governor will serve more than two terms however this is clearly documented and incorporated into the College's Governor Recruitment Policy and Procedures.

The Search and Governance Committee noted the Register of Membership and update on the membership of Harlow College Further Education Corporation, and recommended the following to the Corporation for approval at its meeting on 28 March 2024:

- The reappointment of Liz Laycock as a Governor of Harlow College Further Education Corporation for a period of four years from 19 May 2024 – 18 May 2028.
- The appointment of Vic Goddard as a Governor of Harlow College Further Education Corporation for a period of four years from 28 March 2024 – 27 March 2028 and that Vic would become a member of the Standards and Curriculum Committee.

7 Governance KPIs and Improvement Plan 2023 – 2024

The Search and Governance Committee received the Governance KPIs and Improvement Plan 2023 – 2024, presented by Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance.

Ruth Lucas reported that the report provides the final position for 2022 – 2023 and the progress to date during 2023 – 2024.

Governors' attention was brought to the one area RAG rated amber which is vacancies on the Corporation being filled within six months. The Committee was informed that one vacancy took seven months to fill however this has been discussed in detail at previous Search and Governance Committee meetings as the Corporation wanted to appoint a Governor with extensive community links and was therefore waiting for the right Governor to become available.

The areas RAG rated in amber for 2022 – 2023 were highlighted and Ruth Lucas provided an update with how these are being addressed in 2023 – 2024.

The Committee was informed that a more formalised induction process has been

established and Kate Greer confirmed that this is working well. She particularly valued the tour of the College and the meeting with the Head of Governance in advance of this meeting to go through the papers.

The Committee noted that 92% of Governors took part in a curriculum visit as part of the College's self-assessment process in the Autumn Term. Further visits will be planned for this academic year.

The Committee noted that many of the additional events which Governors are invited to take place in the Summer Term and the College cannot mandate Governors to attend these.

A discussion was held around Link Governors and it was noted that for some, there are formal processes in place for feeding back to the Corporation, such as Safeguarding and Health and Safety. However there is not such a clear link at present for the Careers Link Governors and it was agreed that a specific training and development session of this would be beneficial.

Pauline Odulinski asked if individual training plans are in place. Ruth Lucas reported that training is recorded in the New Governor Induction Checklist and that a central Governor Training Log is held. All Governors are sent the details of relevant training opportunities and are encouraged to attend. Karen Spencer reported that Governors also take part in development activities, such as the FE Commissioner's Roadshows however these do not form part of a training plan.

The Search and Governance Committee noted the Governance KPIs and Improvement Plan 2023 – 2024 and progress made to date.

8 External Review of Governance

The Search and Governance Committee received a verbal update on the External Governance Review, presented by Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance, and Pauline Odulinski, External Reviewer.

Ruth Lucas reported that the review has commenced and all Committee and Corporation meetings this term will be observed as part of the process. The rest of the review will take place early in the Summer Term.

Pauline Odulinski provided an overview of her approach to the review and informed the Committee that she took part in the DfE's pilot scheme and will follow that guidance. Pauline confirmed that her approach would be to add value to governance from practice seen elsewhere and to look at taking governance from good to great. The review is not an inspection and Pauline is not sitting in judgement of governance.

A draft report will be presented to the Search and Governance Committee at its meeting on 25 June 2024, with the final report being presented to the Corporation at its meeting on 11 July 2024.

The Search and Governance Committee noted the update on the External Governance Review.

9 ONS Reclassification

The Search and Governance Committee received a verbal update on the ONS reclassification, presented by Karen Spencer, Principal.

Karen Spencer reported that there is nothing more specific to add at this point in time and reminded the Committee that ONS reclassification is a standing agenda item for this Committee.

The Search and Governance Committee noted the update on ONS reclassification.

10 Annual Accountability Statement and the Local Needs Duty

The Search and Governance Committee received and considered the report on the Annual Accountability Statement and the Local Needs Duty, presented by Julien Sample, Executive Director – Business Development.

Julien Sample reminded Governors that last year was the first year that an Annual Accountability Statement was required and forms part of the College's Annual Accountability Agreement with the DfE.

Governors were informed that there is now a requirement under the Local Needs Duty for providers to review their provision in relation to how they will meet local skills needs and consider their position relation to other local providers. This is closely linked to the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF).

The DfE have combined the Annual Accountability Statement and Local Needs Duty into one document for colleges to produce and have set out a framework for doing so, which is detailed in Appendix A of the report.

Governors' attention was brought to the Greater Essex Commitment Statement in Appendix B of the report. An event was held with Chairs, Principals and Governance Professionals from across Greater Essex and the Commitment Statement was agreed by all present. This forms the requirement of the Local Needs Duty. Karen Spencer reported that there is a strong partnership in Essex with the Federation of Essex Colleges and the Essex Provider Network and there is a long history of providers working together across Essex. It is hard to rationalise provision across Essex due to Essex's geography and the difficulties in travelling across the county.

Governors were informed that the Annual Accountability Statement needs to be updated annually however with the College's Strategic Plan currently due for renewal, it is too early to present a draft Annual Accountability Statement to this meeting. A strategic planning event for Governors and Senior Managers is taking place on Wednesday 14 February 2024 with a focus on reviewing the current Strategic Plan, KPIs and Annual Accountability Statement and to start the process of the next strategic planning cycle for the College. The Strategic Plan will be reviewed and updated with annual targets which will then be used to form the basis of the Annual Accountability Statement.

The Committee was informed that the Annual Accountability Statement needs to be submitted to the DfE by 30 June 2024, therefore a draft will be presented to the Search and Governance Committee at its meeting on 2 May 2024 and a final version for approval at the Corporation meeting on 22 May 2024.

The Search and Governance Committee approved:

- The approach set out in the report;
- The Greater Essex Commitment Statement in Appendix B and recommended its approval to the Corporation at its meeting on 28 March 2024.

11 Annual Report of the Further Education Commissioner 2022 – 2023

The Search and Governance Committee received and considered the Annual Report of the FE Commissioner 2022 – 2023, presented by Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance.

Governors were informed that the report provided an overview of the FE Commissioner’s Team’s work and that there has been a move from intervention to more active support from the Team.

Paul Whitehead reported that at the Annual Strategic Conversation, the College was asked to review the list of support available from the FE Commissioner’s team to see if any of it would be relevant to the College. The College will undertake a review and consider the support on offer. The representative from the FE Commissioner’s Team who took part in the Annual Strategic Conversation would like to see more of the College so she will be invited in to talk through College processes first and to see if their support could provide anything in addition.

Julien Sample highlighted the “Just One Thing” initiative. This is aimed primarily at new Principals, Chairs and Governance Professionals however there are some events that the College is keen to take part in.

The Search and Governance Committee noted the Annual Report of the FE Commissioner 2021-2022

12 Any Other Business

There were no items of any other business.

Pauline Odulinski thanked the Committee and reported that the meeting was informative and helpful.

13 Dates of Next Meetings

Summer Term 2024	Thursday 02 May 2024	9.30am
	Tuesday 25 June 2024	9.30am

Key Points From The Meeting For Corporation:

- 1. Item 1 – Membership of Harlow College Further Education Corporation**
To receive and approve the recommendations of the Search and Governance Committee.
- 2. Item 2 – Annual Accountability Statement and the Local Needs Duty**
To receive and approve the Greater Essex Commitment Statement.
- 3. Item 3 – Annual Report of the Further Education Commissioner 2022 – 2023**
To receive and note the Annual Report of the FE Commissioner.

