



## FE Corporation Minutes

Meeting held on May 10<sup>th</sup> 2018 at 5.30pm in Conference Room 1, Redcar & Cleveland College

**Governors:** Phil Cook (Principal and Chief Executive), Subhash Chaudhary, David Craig, Michael Duffey, Rebecca Hodgson, Richard Poundford, Michelle Stephenson, Mark White (Chair) and Norma Wilburn

**Officials:** Jason Faulkner (Vice Principal: Curriculum), Mark Flannery (Director of Students), Phil Hastie (Vice-Principal: Corporate Planning and Performance), Mick Hickey (Deputy Principal), Sarah Thompson (Clerk to the Corporation), Tracy Thomas (Governance Support Officer) and Fiona Sharp (Finance Director)

**Apologies:** Sana Chaudhary, Paul Hiser (HR Director), Russ McCallion

*(Meeting commenced at 5.30 pm)*

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The Chair welcomed members.

### **18/25      Agenda Item 1 – Progress Update against 2017-18 Improvement Plan**

The Deputy Principal presented members with an update on the College Improvement Plan to May 2018 and was pleased to report good progress overall. In terms of Value Added, SRC Bede had received a high proportion of good/outstanding observations indicating good quality teaching. Retention had improved. Progress monitoring indicated that more learners were exceeding their minimum target grades.

The update was received and noted.

### **18/26      Agenda Item 2 – Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment**

The Deputy Principal presented members with a report on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Similar graded observation outcomes were recorded to those reported at the same point last year. Significant developmental work had been completed at NETA although it was felt important to highlight a reluctance to impose a rigorous observation process on staff until they were sufficiently supported. [Redacted] With regards to Higher Education, the foundation degree in Counselling had shown significant improvement. Stretch and challenge was felt to be a key issue at SRC and it was envisioned that this would improve as teachers' skills improved. It was noted that HMI had highlighted low value added. Instability with staffing and structure was being addressed and overall good progress was reported.

A governor challenged the Deputy Principal about a perceived decline in the quality of teaching performance at graded observation. [redacted] Governors wondered whether it was, for example, new teachers who were under-performing and this was felt not to be the case. The observation process was described as quite rigorous with lessons being selected arbitrarily so that, where generally good teaching practice existed, observation could unfortunately capture the one poor lesson that week. Governors asked for, and received, clarification on the

focus of this element of the report which would seem to concentrate on NETA but which actually included Construction.

The report was received and noted.

### **18/27      Agenda Item 3 – Attendance, Retention and Progress**

The Deputy Principal presented his report which indicated good overall progress. Retention for 16-18 was similar to, and impacted by, performance during the previous year. There was high retention at 19+.

At SRC Bede retention had improved and was now close to 2015-16 levels. It was forecast that figures for 2018-19 would reflect better performance due to structural changes of the A Level. Improved performance in English and maths was indicated.

At NETA, level 3 provision was highlighted as an area of concern in terms of retention although this was felt to be an issue that had “pre-dated the current team”.

There was some discussion around the ways in which the behaviour of employers could affect retention, particularly in relation to apprenticeships. It was felt that this was an area that should be addressed by curriculum managers and viewed in terms of risk assessment.

Work was being undertaken to ensure provision was valuable, solid and prone to high levels of achievement and a detailed report would be presented at Standards Improvement Committee in June.

The report was received and noted and the Chair commended senior managers for well written, accurate papers which indicated good progress.

### **18/28      Agenda Item 4 – Recruitment Update**

A Learner Recruitment (applications) update was provided by the Director of Students who reported that applications for 16-18 were up [redacted] on last year and that headlines were encouraging. In terms of the spike in withdrawals, work on data cleansing had been undertaken so that data held was now felt to be ‘cleaner’. ‘Active’ applications were also improved with more growth forecast.

There had been concerns in 2016-17 about recruitment at both NETA and SRC Bede. Applications at NETA were now [redacted] against [redacted] last year, an increase of 67%. Accepted offers had increased by [redacted]; growth of 63%. Progress was evident. At SRC Bede applications at 27 April were [redacted] against [redacted] last year (an increase of 12%) and accepted offers had grown by 26%. Investment in marketing and support which had included work on the web-site, social media platforms and other key areas, was proving to be beneficial. However, there was a continuing need to improve conversation rates and activities such as open evenings.

Higher Education applications were also up by around [redacted] on 2017-18, although there were some challenges around Business and Computing which were noted to be difficult areas in terms of marketing activity. The re-branded Teesside University Colleges Partnership had helped gain momentum in the marketing of Higher Education. A marketing professional had been recruited at Redcar & Cleveland Colleges and would work across the group.

Applications for apprenticeships were reportedly healthy though the challenge of learners’ reluctance to engage with full-time study programmes was seen to be impacting on 16-18 learner numbers. Members were asked to note that a report by TVCA highlighted that, in terms of apprenticeships, demand outstripped supply by approximately 11 candidates for each

position. Attempts were being made at interview level to signpost students applying for, and being unsuccessful in securing, an apprenticeship.

Overall, the Director of Students, described a positive picture for recruitment with the next few months being focussed on conversion activity.

Discussion ensued around the difficulties in marketing Business and Computing courses and whether there was need for capital investment in this area. It was felt, however, that the challenge was competition from universities in this field and a staff governor noted that there had been significant investment in dual screens and re-branding.

There was some concern expressed around recruitment for catering. Also, where some areas were seeing growth in apprenticeships and decline in classroom based learning, Hairdressing was reportedly experiencing decline in both. Growth was evident in Health & Social Care, particularly in Higher Education provision. The assumption that market demand was the underlying cause in poorly performing areas was brought into question by the SRC Principal who stressed the importance of establishing a clear picture, in a timely manner, where difficulties were being experienced. It was anticipated that Vector software would facilitate comparison with other providers to provide evidence for the decision making process moving forward. Governors stressed the importance of ensuring that considerable attention was given to market research as well as the business development aspect of marketing. Assurance was given by the Director of Students that this was given a great deal of consideration and this would be reflected in future marketing related updates.

The Chair discussed developments at the new Hilton hotel in Stockton and renovations to The Globe theatre and was advised that students from Construction would be visiting in the near future. The appointment of a General Manager at the hotel was underway and members were asked to be vigilant for up-coming opportunities as this was felt to be an exciting prospect. In response to a governor's question Michael Duffey advised the group that SRC were not yet involved in apprenticeships around the renovation work at the theatre although an offer had been received through the local authority to visit with painting and decorating students. The SRC Principal advised members that a meeting had taken place with Neil Schneider, Chief Executive and Richard McGurkin, Director of Economic Development, at Stockton Borough Council which had been reassuring in tone; though he advised prudence in terms of expectations and underlined the need for a revised business engagement strategy. Interviews for the role of Director of Business Engagement would take place early in June and governor, Russ McCallion would participate in the selection process.

The Chair requested an update on performing arts and was advised that productions were going well but that recruitment was experiencing some difficulty. A potential opportunity for growth in this area working in close collaboration with Teesside University was discussed in outline. This was felt to be in its really early stages. It was felt by governors that the time was right to celebrate the success of our performing arts students more visibly.

The update was received and noted.

## **18/29      Agenda Item 5 – Safeguarding**

The Deputy Principal presented his Safeguarding Update and reported that there continued to be a high level of compliance with mandatory training. Action on the learner survey at NETA had been addressed. The Safeguarding Link Governor was pleased with progress.

The update was received and noted.

## 18/30 Agenda Item 6 – Curriculum Developments/Strategies

The VP: Curriculum reported that each department continued to develop its curriculum offer. SRC Bede had broadened its vocational offer which could add value to A Levels and provide a competitive breadth of curriculum. Business Planning was in the early stages of decision making and removing programmes where appropriate. The Prince's Trust continued to develop its Achieve offer. Retention for Health Care and Education was doing well and the department had approval to run a BSc in Health and Social Care and BA Hons in Counselling. More creative courses (make-up and hair, make-up artist etc.) were increasingly replacing traditional hairdressing. Members discussed opportunities in computing at foundation degree level which would help companies to up-skill staff who could study areas such as cyber security.

Work was being undertaken to prepare for extended work placements with the introduction of T Levels in 2021. A number of employers had attended an employers' breakfast event including representatives from local school academies who were reportedly reducing the number of apprenticeships they would consider due to the levy. A twilight engagement was under consideration to engage more fully with employers.

Members were advised particularly of concern regarding viability of provision in Hair and catering and also the intention to seek to appoint a Creative Director for performing arts. Discussion centred on strategic intent at business planning with a governor requesting clarification around future opportunities for growth. The SRC Principal assured members that senior managers were expected to be mindful of future requirements in terms of investment.

The report was received and noted.

## 18/31 Agenda Item 7 – Merger Update (Strictly Confidential)

The SRC Principal provided a verbal update [redacted]

The Chair discussed the consultation process which had been undertaken and felt that this had been symbolically important. Support had been received from MPs, Tees Valley Combined Authority, Director of Children's Services and Leader of Stockton Borough Council, Teesside University, Stockton Sixth Form College, Hartlepool College. Trade Unions were not opposed. Middlesbrough Borough Council were unsure because of the potential impact on Middlesbrough College and the MP for Middlesbrough was also unsure. The Chair and Principal of Middlesbrough College had submitted objections. All organisations within the colleges' Local Authority areas were supportive. The FE Commissioner was very supportive as were ESFA.

A governor requested a quantitative sensitivity analysis and was advised that this had been undertaken as part of Due Diligence and would be provided along with additional work undertaken by the Turnaround Director. The Finance Director undertook to provide this.

The update, together with minutes of the Merger Implementation Group meetings held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March and 25<sup>th</sup> April were received and noted.

## 18/32 Agenda Item 8 – Corporation Minutes and Actions

Minutes of the FE Corporation meetings held on 12<sup>th</sup> March and 26<sup>th</sup> April were formally **approved** as an accurate record of the meetings. The notes of the Governor Workshop held on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2018 were **received** and **noted**. Progress against **actions** was **noted**. There were no matters arising that were not covered on the agenda.

**Agenda Item 9 – Committee Task & Finish Groups****9.1 Subsidiary Companies**

**9.1.1** The minutes of the NETA Board meeting held on 16 March 2018 were **received** and **noted**.

**9.1.2** The minutes of the Tees Valley Catering Board meeting held on 16 March 2018 were **received** and **noted**.

The Chair requested an update on progress [redacted] and the Finance Director reported good progress and a pleasing start by Kimberly Stevenson, Estates Manager, who had taken an operational lead temporarily.

**9.2 Corporation Committees**

**9.2.1** The minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 27 March 2018 were **received** and **noted**.

**9.2.2** The minutes of the Standards Improvement Committee meeting held on 29 March 2018 were **received** and **noted**.

The Chair reported positive feedback at the close of the meeting from Redcar & Cleveland College governor, Dot Smith. Dot had also been able to provide some useful advice to the Deputy Principal and Head of Quality on reporting.

**9.2.3** The minutes of the Finance and Employment Committee held on 29 March 2018 were **received** and **noted**.

The outgoing Chair reported that the committee was running well and felt that college finances were in safe hands. There were one or two areas of concern however and the Chair reminded members not to become complacent about income (particularly apprenticeships). There were felt to be opportunities in monitoring and reporting of workforce matters and the new HR system would assist in trend analysis re absence levels etc. Subsidiary company finance reporting had improved greatly but should focus on a 'snapshot' and risk identification rather than performance matters.

The SRC Principal advised members that the Executive Director of Finance would be responsible for staffing costs and associated monitoring at a strategic level in terms of staffing.

**9.2.4** The minutes of the Search and Governance Committee held on 26 April 2018 were **received** and **noted**.

9.3 [Redacted]

**Agenda Item 10 – Governing Body Membership**

The Chair spoke to the Clerk's report on Governing Body membership. Applications had been invited from the board of governors at Redcar & Cleveland College in order to draw upon their level of experience. Search & Governance Committee, chaired by Dan Johnson, had received three applications from this source.

Dot Smith, a relatively new RCC governor, placed on the board by the TVCA was an ex-civil servant with 20 years of experience within the FE sector. Dot had made a fantastic

contribution to the Redcar & Cleveland College Board in terms of Quality & Standards and engagement with Ofsted. Rob Mitchell, who had attended the SRC Governors' Strategic Seminar in his role as a senior manager within Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council had applied and it was felt that he would be a valuable attribute. John Lowther, a long-serving member of the RCC Board and its Deputy Chair, had also applied.

Members were asked to **approve** the **recommendation** to **appoint** Dot Smith to the FE Corporation of the college post-merger for a period of 4 years.

Members **noted** the **recommendation** and **approved** the appointment.

Members were asked to **approve** the **recommendation** to **appoint** Robert Mitchell to the FE Corporation of the college post-merger for a period of 4 years.

Members **noted** the **recommendation** and **approved** the appointment.

Members were asked to **approve** the **recommendation** to **appoint** John Lowther to the FE Corporation of the college post-merger for a period of 1 year (guidance from the Association of College's 'Code of Good Governance' specifies a normal term of office of two four year periods and the length of John Lowther's service to Redcar & Cleveland College is nine years).

Members **noted** the **recommendation** and **approved** the appointment.

The Clerk to the Corporation reminded members of the intention to reserve one vacancy for a member of the Sir William Turner Trust Foundation which had been strongly supportive of the merger. The Chair added that it was important that the appointed member was pro-active and engaged with FE Corporation business.

The SRC Chair undertook to communicate the appointments to the RCC Chair.

The Clerk advised members that the Board's recruitment priorities of an education professional and a professional with strategic finance expertise criteria had not been fulfilled and **recommendation** was made to increase the FE Corporation Board to a membership of 17 post-merger.

Members **noted** the **recommendation** and **approved** the increase.

The Clerk advised members that there had been two external applications only one of which was being taken forward at this time, and that Student Governor, Josh Clarke, had tendered his resignation following a recent period of ill-health. Student governor recruitment would be taken forward in the autumn term.

## **18/35 Agenda Item 11 – Calendar of Meetings and Cycle of Business 18/19**

The Clerk had circulated a draft Calendar of Meetings and Cycle of Business for 2018/19 and members were asked for their **approval**.

Members **noted** the documents and **approved** the Calendar of Meetings and Cycle of Business for 2018/19.

The Chair requested that the calendar be circulated to members and the Clerk undertook to do so.

**18/36 Agenda Item 12 – Governor Development**

The Clerk had circulated a report on Governor Development and members were asked to **note** the report and reminded to advise the Governance Team of attendance at any College or related external events.

Members **received** and **noted** the report.

**18/37 Agenda Item 13 – Standing Orders**

Standing Orders had been reviewed and a number of minor changes had been proposed. The Clerk had circulated a document highlighting the changes and members were asked to review and **approve** the changes.

Members **reviewed** the changes and **approved** the **recommendations**.

**18/38 Agenda Item 14 – Governors’ Code of Conduct, Governor Disqualification Criteria and Amendment to Instrument and Articles of Government Agenda**

Members were asked to approve the revised Code of Conduct and reaffirm their acceptance of the Code.

Members **received** the revised code and **reaffirmed** their **acceptance**.

Members were asked to note the extended disqualification criteria for governors and some senior managers (Principal and Finance Director) effective from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2018 and the intention to ask all governors and relevant senior managers to sign an updated declaration.

Members **noted** the extended disqualification criteria and **agreed** to sign an updated declaration.

Members were asked to agree to amend the Instrument of Government to reflect the legal changes with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2018.

Members **agreed** to the amendment.

Members were encouraged to seek advice from the Clerk outside of the meeting in confidence should they so desire. The Principal and Finance Director were advised to speak to the Chair outside of the meeting, in confidence, should they so desire.

**18/39 Item 15 – Any Other Business**

The Chair reminded members that this would be the last meeting to be attended by David Craig. David had been Vice Chair of Bede 6<sup>th</sup> Form and Chair of SRC F&E, Standards Improvement and Audit Committees. His background in finance had brought insight, thought, clarity and challenge to every aspect of the operation. David had been instrumental in helping to re-shape College and governance structures. The Chair described David as having been a magnificent governor and ambassador for the College, a superb mentor to Fiona, the Finance Director and a superb supporter and challenger to the Principal. He would be enormously missed. The college was felt to be in its current position, in no small part, due to the commitment of David, his challenge and drive and his forensic insight. The Board thanked David for his contribution and David responded that he had been privileged to work with such a committed group.

*Michael Duffey, Michelle Stephenson, Jason Faulkner (Vice Principal: Curriculum), Phil Hastie (Vice-Principal: Corporate Planning and Performance), Mick Hickey (Deputy Principal) and Fiona Sharp (Finance Director) left the meeting.*

18/40

**Agenda Item 16 – Senior Post Holder Appointments (confidential to governors excluding staff and student members)**

The Principal advised members that interviews had taken place to appoint Senior Post Holders. The interview panel had been chaired by Mark White with two other members present, one of which was a member of RCC.

Members were asked to agree to appoint Mick Hickey as Executive Director, Quality & Standards with effect from merger date.

Members **agreed** to the appointment.

Members were asked to agree to appoint Fiona Sharp as Executive Director, Finance with effect from merger date.

Members **agreed** to the appointment.

Members were asked to agree to appoint Phil Hastie as Executive Director, Planning and Infrastructure with effect from merger date.

Members **agreed** to the appointment.

Members were asked to note the appointment of Mark Flannery as Director of Marketing with effect from merger date.

Members **noted** the appointment.

Members were asked to note the appointment of Jason Faulkner as Campus Principal RCC with effect from merger date.

Members **noted** the appointment.

Members were asked to note the appointment of Mandy Morris as Vice Principal: Curriculum with effect from merger date

Members **noted** the appointment.

The Chair commended the Finance Director for an extraordinarily good performance at interview and thanked members for their valuable counsel, guidance and support.

Members were advised that the role of Director of Business Engagement would be advertised early in June and that Russ McCallion would participate in selection.

*The following two paragraphs were deemed confidential.*

Members were asked to note the appointment of Ben Robinson as Principal of SRC Bede.

Members **noted** the appointment

Members were reminded that the above update had been provided in confidence and that notices would be sent by the Chairs of both colleges in due course (possibly through *Ask Penny*).

A governor queried whether the SRC Principal would be titled Chief Executive post merger and was advised that his title would remain as Principal and Chief Executive.

Members were given some background information on the role of Campus Principals.

**18/41      Agenda Item 17 – 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 following exceptions:

- 2017-18 Improvement Plan, Teaching, Learning and Assessment data, Attendance, retention and progress data, Recruitment information, curriculum development update and TVCA application information, which was deemed commercial in confidence
- Safeguarding Update, which included confidential information regarding learners
- Subsidiary Company and Committee minutes, which were draft pending approval by the relevant committees
- Confidential section of the Corporation minutes, Senior Post Holder Appointment report and governor application forms, which included personal information regarding College staff and prospective governors

**18/42      Agenda Item 18 – Date and Time of Next Meeting**

Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2018 at 5.30pm, Stockton Riverside College, Room 301

*(The meeting ended at 7.30pm)*