

# HARLOW COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

## CORPORATION MEETING

### Minutes of the meeting held at Harlow College – Thursday 6 July 2023 - 9.30am

Membership:	*Liz Laycock (Chair)	Alex Hanson	*Karen Spencer
	*Jon Bouffler	Mike Hardware	*Paul Taylor
	*Rod Bristow	Stephen Isherwood	*Michael Travers
	*Hannah Cheesman	Ray Levy	*Dawn Tuner
	*Julia Fillary	Lily Lin	*Ed Whittle
	*John Godley	Rachel Miller	

\* denotes present

In attendance: Will Allanson, Deputy Principal  
Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal  
Becky Jones, Vice-Principal  
Deanne Morgan, Executive Director – Finance  
Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance

#### 1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mike Hardware, Stephen Isherwood and Lily Lin due to work commitments and Ray Levy and Rachel Miller due to personal commitments.

#### 2 Declaration of Interests

Michael Travers declared an interest in agenda item 10.2 – Health, Safety and Environment Committee reports as he is the College's Health and Safety Manager.

#### 3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 May 2023 were approved by the Corporation as a true and accurate record of the meeting, subject to one typographical change, and were signed by the Chair.

#### 4 Matters Arising

##### 4.1 Annual Accountability Statement (minute 5 – Principal's Report refers)

The Corporation was informed that the College had submitted its Annual Accountability Statement to the ESFA in advance on the 31 May 2023 deadline.

##### 4.2 Exam Papers (minute 8 – Standards and Curriculum Committee Meeting – 14 March 2023 refers)

A Governor asked if the issue with the missing exam papers had been followed up with Pearson. Paul Whitehead reported that the College had met with senior staff at Pearson and worked through the issues that had arisen.

A Governor asked if there had been a negative impact on the students. Paul Whitehead reported that unexpected situations with exams often occur and the College has experienced no more this year than in previous years. Any issues arising have all been followed up. Becky Jones reported that the College will look at the results in August and take any further action if necessary.

#### **4.3 Climate Change Survey (minute 10 – Any Other Business refers)**

Ruth Lucas reminded Governors to complete the climate change survey if they had not already done so and the link to the survey will be recirculated after the meeting.

### **5 Principal's Report – Local Skills Improvement Plan and Local Skills Improvement Fund**

The Corporation received and considered the Principal's Report – Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) and Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF), presented by Karen Spencer, Principal.

The Corporation was informed that the Essex Chamber of Commerce is the employer representative body for the Greater Essex LSIP and that the LSIP had to be submitted to Government and detail how they are going to seek to improve skills in Greater Essex.

Karen Spencer highlighted the engagement work that had taken place in order to produce the LSIP and confirmed that she sits on the LSIP Board.

The key findings of the LSIP were highlighted, along with the emerging themes around soft skills, green skills, digital skills and physical activity creating opportunities for economic growth and well-being. LSIPs nationally are identifying similar themes and there is a recognition that locally it is very difficult to recruit and train staff.

Karen Spencer reported that the LSIF is the successor to the Strategic Development Fund.

The College is acting as the lead partner across Greater Essex. The expression of interest was successful and now the Stage 2 application is being developed with a deadline of 15 September. The College will be notified of the outcome of the application by the end of October. Governors were informed that the guidance for the Stage 2 application has only just been published.

In 2023-2024, there is £2,694,630 funding available for Greater Essex with a 50% / 50% capital / revenue split. In 2024-2025, there is £2,863,044 available however this is 100% capital. The 2023-2024 funding needs to be spent by 31 March 2024. £100,000 mobilisation funding is available, taken from the 2023-2024 budget, to spend on developing the Stage 2 application.

Delivery partners for the LSIF are Harlow College, Chelmsford College, Colchester Institute, Colchester Sixth Form College, New City College, South Essex College, USP

College and Writtle University College. Wider partners are Essex County Council and the Essex Provider Network (including ITPs and ACL)

The funding will fund four projects, three revenue projects and one capital project, as follows:

- Revenue 1 – Essex teacher recruitment, development and retention.
- Revenue 2 – Essex Talent pipeline - development of softer skills for students, outreach with employers, CEIAG development, work related engagement, career pathway development.
- Revenue 3 – Essex Bespoke - Employer engagement and development of bespoke programmes for employers, including ONAs, TNAs and associated development, developing a more responsive and flexible skills system.
- Capital 1 – a programme of capital projects across Greater Essex with a focus on net zero, renewables and carbon reduction and digital technologies

Governors were informed that Essex County Council has committed £610,000 revenue funding to help continue the revenue projects until the end of the 2023-2024 academic year.

A Governor asked if the LSIF requires match funding. Karen Spencer confirmed that there is no requirement for match funding however the Essex County Council funding will be used as match funding.

A Governor asked if the College would get funding for managing the project and Karen Spencer confirmed that this would be the case.

A Governor asked if there were any specific projects linked to digital infrastructure. Will Allanson reported that previous capital funding received was used for expenditure related to the College's Property Strategy. The LSIF funding will be used to focus on digital and immersive technology, with the College and other partners developing immersive sites. This will include VR technology, a virtual campus and AI. Paul Whitehead confirmed that the first stage for the College is to ensure that the infrastructure is correct and able to support the development in digital technologies. A Governor asked if there was funding available for infrastructure and Karen Spencer reported that the guidance needs to be worked through in detail to identify what is in scope.

Karen Spencer reported that there has been a discussion in Essex about bringing Chairs together to discuss the LSIP and agree Governing Body approaches to reviewing skills priorities. It was agreed that an event would be held in the Autumn for Principals and Chairs to take this forward.

The Corporation noted the Principal's Report – Local Skills Improvement Plan and Local Skills Improvement Fund, approved for the College to act as the lead partner on the LSIF and approved for the College to submit the Stage 2 application, based on the projects and skills priorities outlined above.

## **6 Update from Student Governors**

The Corporation received a verbal update from the Student Governors, presented by Hannah Cheesman, Student Governor.

Hannah Cheesman reported that Ambassadors have been helping to shape the College's induction to fit the students better. Videos have been produced by students on how i-pads are used for digital learning, along with FAQs which are answered by students.

Hannah Cheesman reported that she will continue as a Student Governor next academic year and informed Governors that the role had helped her to develop new skills, increase her confidence and to work collaboratively. Being a Student Governor has opened her mind, being able to see things better and understand how the College is run and managed.

Ruth Lucas reported that Alex Hanson's term of office expires on 31 July 2023 and he is progressing onto university. The Corporation thanked Alex for this time and commitment to the role of Student Governor and wished him well for his future.

The Corporation noted the verbal update from the Student Governors.

## **7 Standards and Curriculum Committee Reports**

### **7.1 Minutes of the Standards and Curriculum Committee Meeting – 16 June 2023**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 16 June 2023.

#### **7.1.1 Item 1 – Key Performance Indicators 2022/2023**

The Corporation received and considered the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2022/2023, presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

Governors were informed that the KPIs were discussed in detail at the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 16 June 2023.

Governors were informed that the walkthrough data had been scrutinised and it was agreed that some criteria on judging will be merged.

Governors were informed that since the report was written, achievement is now currently at 83.7% and retention at 92.2%.

The Corporation noted the Key Performance Indicators 2022/2023.

#### **7.1.2 Item 2 – Quality Improvement Plan 2022/2023**

The Corporation received and considered the Quality Improvement Plan 2022/2023, presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

Governors were informed that the QIP was discussed in detail at the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 16 June 2023.

Karen Spencer reported that Ofsted are proposing to make some changes to inspections from September 2023. The pre-inspection skills meeting will be merged with the pre-inspection deep-dive meeting therefore there will be a longer window between the deep-dive meeting and the start of the inspection. It is also likely that inspection windows will be published so that providers will have an indication of when their inspection is likely to take place. There is also an expected change to the approach to inspections however there is currently no proposed change to the one-word judgements. Once the changes are published, they will be communicated to Governors.

The Corporation noted the Quality Improvement Plan 2022/2023.

### **7.1.3 Item 3 – Qualification Reform**

The Corporation received a presentation on qualification reform, presented by Becky Jones, Vice-Principal.

The presentation covered what is currently known around qualification reform and the impact this will have on the College.

A discussion was held around if there is a risk that the number of enrolments at the College will reduce. Becky Jones reported that this is possible however to manage this risk, the College has delayed the implementation of the reforms where possible.

Karen Spencer reported that there could be some movement on some of the proposed reforms and the proposed timescales.

The Corporation noted the presentation on qualification reform.

## **8 Finance and Resources Reports**

### **8.1 Resources Committee Reports**

#### **8.1.1 Minutes of the Resources Committee Meeting – 27 June 2023**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Resources Committee meeting held on 27 June 2023.

Paul Whitehead highlighted the Gender, Ethnicity and Disability Pay Gap reports which were presented to the Committee and reported that the most significant shift has been the move to align to the Real Living Wage.

#### **8.1.2 Item 1 – Management Accounts for the Period 1 August 2022 – 31 May 2023**

The Corporation received and considered the management accounts for the period 1 August 2022 – 31 May 2023, presented by Deanne Morgan, Executive Director – Finance.

Governors were informed that the outturn for this year is better than previously reported and forecast due mainly to the interest being received on the College's bank account and to some staffing budget savings.

Governors were informed that work is continuing to look at ways to save money and reduce costs.

Governors noted that the College had not invested in any fixed-term investments to date as there is no benefit to do so at present.

The Corporation noted the management accounts for the period 1 August 2022 – 31 May 2023.

## **8.2 Joint Resources and Audit Committee Reports**

### **8.2.1 Minutes of the joint Resources and Audit Committee Meeting – 27 June 2023**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the joint Resources and Audit Committee meeting held on 27 June 2023.

### **8.2.2 Item 1 – Two Year Financial Forecast 2023– 2025 and Draft Budget 2023 – 2024**

The Corporation received and considered the two-year financial forecast 2023 – 2025 and draft budget 2023 – 2024, presented by Deanne Morgan, Executive Director – Finance and Paul Whitehead, Vice-Principal.

Deanne Morgan reported that these papers were considered and discussed in detail at the joint Resources and Audit Committee meeting held on 27 June 2023.

Governors noted that there is a deficit position in 2023 – 2024 and that no pay award is included in the plans, as previously agreed by the Corporation, however the position on pay awards will be reviewed by management in the Autumn Term.

The 2024-2025 plan looks to continue to reduce the gaps in the budget and increase performance, based on assumptions in growth and funding rates. It is uncertain what the year 2 position will be in reality however the College will continue to work to get to the best financial position as possible. The deficit will look to be reduced further and senior management will work closely with the Corporation. Governors acknowledged that it is difficult to plan for 2024-2025 at present due to the large number of uncertainties.

The financial plan indicates that the College would have good financial health and the bank covenants will be met, due to a waiver being agreed by the bank to permanently reduce covenant 1 from 1.4 to 1.25.

This will ensure that the College does not breach the covenant and be put into financial intervention.

The Corporation approved the two-year financial forecast 2023 – 2025 and draft budget 2023 – 2024.

## **9 Audit Committee Reports**

### **9.1 Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting – 23 June 2023**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 23 June 2023.

#### **9.1.1 Item 1 – Internal Audit Plan**

The Corporation received and considered the internal audit plan for 2023 – 2024, presented by Deanne Morgan, Executive Director – Finance.

Deanne Morgan reported that Scrutton Bland, the College's internal auditors, has considered the College's risk register and have set out audit proposals for the following academic year, based on this and discussions with management.

The Corporation was informed that the plan was considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting held on 23 June 2023 and that the Audit Committee recommends its approval.

Paul Whitehead reported that all internal audits in 2022 – 2023 had provided the College and Governors with either strong or significant assurance levels.

Paul Whitehead informed the Corporation that the College has been randomly selected for ESFA and GLA audit in 2023 – 2024, which will be based on this year's learner records. The College has no further details on timings of the audit at present.

The Corporation approved the internal audit plan for 2023 – 2024.

#### **9.1.2 Item 2 – Review of the Risk Register and Risk Management Policy**

The Corporation received and considered the risk register and Risk Management Policy, presented by Deanne Morgan, Executive Director – Finance.

The risk register was taken as read.

The Corporation was informed that the risk register was considered in detail by the Audit Committee at its meeting held on 23 June 2023. Governors noted that the top risk is curriculum reform.

Deanne Morgan informed Governors that the Risk Management Policy has been revised to reflect current practice in the College. The Corporation noted that the Risk Management Policy was considered in detail by the Audit Committee at its meeting held on 23 June 2023 and that the Audit Committee recommends its approval.

The Corporation noted the risk register and approved the Risk Management Policy.

## **10 Reports from Committees**

### **10.1 Stansted Airport Advisory Group Meeting – 17 May 2023**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Stansted Airport Advisory Group meeting held on 17 May 2023.

### **10.2 Health and Safety Committee – 8 June 2023**

#### **10.2.1 Minutes of the Health and Safety Committee – 8 June 2023**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Health and Safety Committee meeting held on 8 June 2023.

#### **10.2.2 Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Policy**

The Corporation received and considered the Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Policy, presented by Michael Travers, Health and Safety Manager.

Michal Travers reported that the Policy is reviewed on an annual basis and that minor changes have been made to the Policy in relation to membership of the Committee in the Terms of Reference section and referrals to College sites.

The Corporation approved the Health, Safety and Welfare at Work Policy.

### **10.3 Safeguarding Committee – 14 June 2023**

The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Safeguarding Committee meeting held on 14 June 2023.

Liz Laycock reported that there are now two Governors who sit on the Safeguarding Committee and highlighted the Gangs training which Governors had been invited to. Ruth Lucas will circulate the links to the training to Governors after the meeting and asked for Governors to let her know if they access the training so that it can be logged on the central Governor training and development log.

### **10.4 Equality and Diversity Committee – 21 June 2023**



The Corporation received and noted the minutes of the Equality and Diversity Committee meeting held on 21 June 2023.

## **11 Governance Issues**

### **11.1 Standing Orders, Terms of Reference and Scheme of Delegation 2023 – 2024**

The Corporation received and considered the Standing Orders for 2023 – 2024, presented by Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance.

The Corporation received, considered and approved the Standing Orders for 2023 – 2024. Ruth Lucas informed Governors that the Standing Orders have been reviewed and provided Governors with a summary of the proposed changes.

The Corporation received, considered and approved the Committees' Terms of Reference for 2023 – 2024. Ruth Lucas informed Governors that each Committee had reviewed their Terms of Reference and amended them where required. Governors were informed that the Terms of Reference for Committees have been updated in light of the ONS reclassification.

The Corporation received, considered and approved the Scheme of Delegation for 2023 – 2024 and noted that amendments were proposed in line with the updated Terms of Reference.

The Corporation approved the Standing Orders 2023 – 2024, the Committees' Terms of Reference 2023 – 2024 and the Scheme of Delegation for 2023 – 2024 as outlined above, subject to the proposed changes as detailed in the main report.

### **11.2 ONS Reclassification**

The Corporation received an update on ONS reclassification, presented by Karen Spencer, Principal.

The Corporation noted that this had been mostly covered in previous agenda items.

Karen Spencer reported that the College is working the way through guidance as it gets published. Governors noted that the College's financial regulations and Committee terms of reference have been updated in light of the reclassification. Karen Spencer confirmed that once guidance has been published, the College is implementing what is required as a result of the guidance.

The Corporation noted the update on the ONS reclassification.

### **11.3 Governor Visits**

Liz Laycock reported on her visit to ESOL and Choices and reported that the staff could not be praised enough. There are so many challenges that the students

and the teams face. The students were a delight and they could clearly articulate how much they value the help, support and input from the College.

Liz Laycock highlighted the work the team is doing in relation to support employment and internships and the amount of funding that had been raised for a new kitchen.

Liz Laycock also reported on the end of year events she had attended and encouraged Governors to attend where possible.

## **12 Policies for Approval**

The Corporation received and considered the Safeguarding and Prevent Policy and the Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, presented by Will Allanson, Deputy Principal.

Governors were informed that the Safeguarding and Prevent Policy has been reviewed in light of changes in the Keeping Children Safe in Education guidance.

Governors were informed that there are no substantive changes to the Policy and that the proposed amendments are highlighted in blue in the Policy.

Governors were informed that the Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure had undergone a significant review and has been reshaped. Additional guidance has been included for managers and cross-references have been made to other policies. The stages have been reshaped and responsibilities have been moved.

A Governor asked if plagiarism or the use of AI had been included in the Policy. Karen Spencer reported that this is included in the Academic Misconduct Policy which was reviewed and approved by the Standards and Curriculum Committee at its meeting on 16 June 2023.

A Governor asked how many students fall into the gross misconduct stage. Will Allanson reported that the numbers are low however there is a lot of work to be undertaken at this stage. The College is putting in support earlier in an attempt to reduce the numbers.

A Governor asked if there were any trends with disciplinaries. Will Allanson reported that the levels are back to pre-Covid levels, however the challenges and issues are different and it is not a significant proportion of learners who are subject to disciplinary procedures. A full breakdown on types and numbers is reported annually to the Standards and Curriculum Committee.

The Corporation approved the Safeguarding and Prevent Policy and the Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

## **13 Any Other Business**

A Governor asked if there was an update on the installation of electric vehicle charging points. Will Allanson confirmed that the College is waiting delivery of a piece of equipment and this is expected in mid-July.

## **14 Dates of Future Meetings**

Autumn Term 2023	Monday 16 October 2023	9am
	Thursday 30 November 2023 (self-assessment reviews)	9.30am
	Thursday 14 December 2023	9am
Spring Term 2024	Thursday 28 March 2024	9am
Summer Term 2024	Wednesday 22 May 2024	9am
	Thursday 11 July 2024	9am

All meetings will commence at 9am with a half hour training session on different topics.

All meetings will be held onsite at Harlow College.

Liz Laycock thanked all Governors and staff for their commitment over the year and wished everyone an enjoyable summer.