

HARLOW COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

SEARCH AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held at Harlow College at 9.30am on Tuesday 21 November 2023

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

*denotes present

In attendance Deanne Morgan, Executive Director – Finance
 Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance

1 Apologies for Absence

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 2 May 2023 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

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

4.1 Annual Accountability Statement (minute 7 refers)

Ruth Lucas reported that the Annual Accountability Statement was approved by the Corporation at its meeting on 18 May 2023 and was submitted to the ESFA in advance of the 31 May 2023 deadline.

5 Membership of Harlow College Further Education Corporation

There were no new recommendations for appointment for the Search and Governance Committee to consider.

6 Register of Membership

The Search and Governance Committee received and considered the Register of Membership, presented by Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance.

Governors were informed that discussions are being held around finding a community governor. A potential candidate at Rainbow Services and another potential candidate with good education and community links in Uttlesford have been identified. The Committee agreed that the Head of Governance should continue these discussions.

A discussion was held around two Governors whose attendance during 2023-2024 was

unsatisfactory and Ruth Lucas has contacted these Governors to discuss whether they have the time required to commit fully to the role. If this is the case, the Search and Governance Committee agreed that the Head of Governance and Principal could approach the organisations that these two Governors represent, asking them to nominate a replacement.

The Search and Governance Committee noted that the elected Student Governors are strong and it is hoped that this will continue in future years.

A discussion was held around potential Committee moves for Governors and the Search and Governance Committee agreed for the Head of Governance to investigate the possibilities further.

The Search and Governance Committee noted that the term of office for two Governors expires in the Summer Term 2024. No action is required on this at this point.

The Search and Governance Committee noted the Register of Membership.

7 Self-Assessment of Governance

The Search and Governance Committee received and considered the self-assessment for governance for 2022-2023, presented by Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance.

Ruth Lucas gave an overview of the sections included in the report.

Governors noted that overall Governor attendance has increased by 79% for 2021-2022 to 82% for 2022-2023.

The results of the recent skills audit were highlighted. Whilst there are no major gaps in skills, it was noted that areas that scored lowest were community involvement, quality strategy and processes, education policy, estates / property and marketing. The Search and Governance Committee will be mindful of these gaps where searching for new Governors.

The results of the recent self-assessment of governance were highlighted which Governors had completed individually. The majority of scores were 4s and 5s, on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high). Areas of focus for 2023-2024 resulting from the self-assessment are managing public money in line with ONS reclassification and curriculum links with Governors, along with raising the profile of the breadth of skills across the Corporation and to review the Terms of Reference of the Remuneration Committee. The latter two points have been amended from those originally stated in the self-assessment of governance report and the report will be updated accordingly. It was agreed that pen portraits of Governors published on the College's website would be beneficial and that Deanne Morgan would deliver a training session to Governors on managing public money and the ONS reclassification.

The list of training undertaken by Governors and the Head of Governance in 2022-2023 was highlighted and Governors noted that there had been a good level of engagement with training.

Governors' attention was brought to the KPIs and improvement plan. The three areas rated amber were highlighted and a discussion was held around how these would be addressed in 2023-2024.

The Search and Governance Committee approved the self-assessment of governance 2022-2023, subject to the amendments outlined above, and agreed to recommend its approval to the Corporation at its meeting on 14 December 2023.

8 External Governance Review

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

Ruth Lucas confirmed that Pauline Odulinski has been appointed as the external reviewer for the College and the review will take place in Spring 2024. Pauline will attend Corporation and Committee meetings, meet with Governors, the Chair, the Principal and Head of Governance, and review the Corporation's governance arrangements.

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

9 AoC Further Education Code of Good Governance

The Search and Governance Committee received and considered the report on the AoC Further Education Code of Good Governance, presented by Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance.

Governors were reminded that the Corporation adopted the AoC Code of Good Governance for English Colleges in July 2015. The Code went through reviews in 2018 and 2019 and at 32 pages with 10 principles and numerous requirements within each principle, it has become unwieldy, often duplicating information found in other sources.

In September 2023, the AoC published the Further Education Code of Good Governance, to replace the Code of Good Governance for English Colleges. The new Code is based on six fundamental principles, emphasizing sources of assurance without it being an audit tool or checklist.

Corporations wanting to adopt the new Code need to do so by 2024-2025 and report on compliance in December 2025 at the latest. Corporations can adopt the Code earlier if they choose to do so.

The new Code was highlighted, along with a template for Corporations to complete to monitor compliance with the new Code.

After a detailed discussion, the Search and Governance agreed to recommend to the Corporation at its meeting on 14 December 2023:

- the adoption of the AoC Further Education Code of Good Governance for Harlow College Further Education Corporation from the beginning of the 2023-2024 academic year onwards;
- monitoring of compliance with the AoC Further Education Code of Good Governance will be a responsibility of the Search and Governance Committee.

10 ONS Reclassification

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

Karen Spencer reported that the College has received extra funding through an increase in the student base rate and capital funding from government.

Deanne Morgan reported that the sector is hoping that VAT reforms will be considered, along with a guarantee on the Local Government Pension Scheme.

There has been discussion around a change to the year-end date however the sector and the AoC are sending strong messages to the DfE not to change the date.

The draft financial handbook is due to be published soon and this will have more detail in around the requirements linked to the reclassification.

Governors were informed that more regular discussions will be held with colleges and the regional ESFA teams.

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

11 Any Other Business

Karen Spencer reported that the College's annual strategic conversation with the ESFA is scheduled for 7 February 2024.

Karen Spencer provided the Committee with an overview of strategic planning events for 2023-2024.

12 Dates of Next Meetings

Spring Term 2024	Tuesday 13 February 2024	9.30am
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 – Self-Assessment of Governance

To receive and approve the self-assessment of governance for 2022-2023.

2. Item 2 – AoC Further Education Code of Good Governance

To receive and approve the adoption of the AoC Further Education Code of Good Governance.