

# EXETER COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

## CORPORATION BOARD

**Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 13 October 2023 in the Boardroom, The Tower Building, Hele Road, Exeter**

<b>Present</b>	Bindu Arjoon	Chair
	Glenn Woodcock	Vice Chair
	John Laramy	Principal/CEO
	Graham Atkins	
	Sue Clarke	
	Pamela DeGregorio	
	Laura Eggins	
	Neil Hitchings	
	Rob Hutchins	
	Stewart Noakes	
	Ayomide Okesola	
	Tim Quine	
	Victoria Roberts	
	Lindsay Skinner	
	Patrick Tigwell	
	Sally Wolkowski	
<b>Observers</b>	None	
<b>Apologies</b>	Carol McCormack	
	Stewart Noakes	
	Cynthia Sedgman	
<b>In Attendance</b>	Rob Bosworth	Deputy CEO
	Jade Otty	Vice Principal
<i>Item 5.3 only</i>	Gemma Noble	Executive Director of People and Organisational Development
	Alison Layton-Hill	Head of Governance

- |    |  |               |
|----|--|---------------|
| 1. | <p><b>Welcome and Apologies</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed colleagues to the first Board meeting of the academic year. She extended a particular welcome to Ayomide Okesola as FE Student Governor and Laura Eggins as HE Student Governor and highlighted how much the Board values the input of student governors.</p> <p>Apologies were received from Carol McCormack, Stewart Noakes and Cynthia Sedgman.</p> <p><b>Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>Bindu Arjoon, CEO, Exeter City Council declared an interest in any items relating to Exeter City Council.</p> | <b>Action</b> |
|----|--|---------------|

Glenn Woodcock, Member of Council, University of Exeter declared an interest in items relating to the University.

Tim Quine, Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of Exeter declared an interest in items relating to the University.

John Laramy, Member of the Pearson Board, for any items relating to Pearson.

## 2. **Minutes of Meetings**

2.1 The open minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2023, as circulated, were agreed.

2.2 The confidential minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2023, as circulated, were agreed.

## 3. **Matters Arising**

3.1 Pay Award written resolution

The Board noted the confirmation of the written resolution related to the staff pay award.

3.2 Board Self-Evaluation 2022/2023

The Board received the self-evaluation which had been updated following the previous meeting. The Chair explained the self-evaluation process. The Head of Governance explained that the areas for consideration in the SAR are overseen by the Search and Governance Committee as part of a governance improvement action plan. The need to appoint a lead governor for careers was raised as an action to include.

**The Board approved the self-evaluation for 2022/2023 subject to the minor amendment noted above** **HofG**

## 4. **Chair's Oral Report**

The Chair thanked those governors who had attended the dinner for Emma Bradshaw-Smith and Matt Roach in recognition of twelve exceptional years serving on the Board. The students at the College's @34 restaurant were impressive and it was an excellent opportunity for governors to spend time together in a social environment. The Chair extended her appreciation to students and staff for their hard work in making the event such a success.

The Chair acknowledged Sarah Brampton's contribution as a governor over eight years and in particular her role as chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. Sarah had been unable to join the meeting, however a letter of thanks and a gift would be sent to her.

The Chair reminded governors that the Higher Education Graduation Ceremony was taking place on 20 October 2023.

The Chair acknowledged the outstanding exam results, which were shared with the Board later in the meeting. On behalf of the Board, she offered her thanks and congratulations to staff and students.

## **The Board noted the report**

### **5. Strategic Matters for discussion**

#### **5.1 Principal's Strategic Report**

This item was dealt with as a confidential item in accordance with the College's Confidentiality Policy and recorded in the confidential minutes.

#### **5.2 Exeter College 2022 Results**

The Board received a presentation highlighting the excellent exam results for 2023, most of which were well above the national averages for the previous year. The Vice Principal explained the achievements and results data. Although standards were impressive, the Board noted some areas of focus for 2023/2024.

The Board acknowledged the impressive results particularly when considering the extraordinary breadth of the curriculum. The challenge of securing T level placements was noted, particularly for digital as much of the industry had not returned to working in person. Level 2 learners would receive additional support through catch-up funding.

Part of the A level success was attributed to a new strategy whereby students could opt to receive extra contact time for a subject they considered to be their least strong. The College prepares A level students well by retaining the AS exams, therefore providing essential exam experience.

The impact on resits of potentially inflated GCSE grades during Covid was explained. It was confirmed that the requirement to learn English and maths GCSE until a grade 4 is achieved will likely continue.

The Board enquired as to whether there was any comparative data with colleges in the region. It was confirmed that no other non-selective college had achieved better A level results in terms of high grades. The College was also ahead of many selective education providers.

The Board queried how results feed into minimum entry requirements for future years. It was confirmed that GCSE results are reverting to normal distribution and the College is back to the shape it should be. The College is careful to recruit with integrity to ensure learners are on the right level programme.

The "75 by 25" goal related to apprenticeships was supported by the Board, however governors sought clarification in terms of the process of monitoring. It was confirmed that there is a sophisticated system for

constant in year monitoring to ensure learners achieve the required progress between check points. Ofsted had confirmed the quality of teaching and review. Retention was more of a challenge and the College is giving some focus to this area.

*Gemma Noble, Executive Director of People and Organisational Development joined the meeting for item 5.3 only*

### 5.3

#### HR Annual Report

The Executive Director of People and Organisational Development was welcomed to the meeting. The Board received the HR annual report, which covered the period from 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023, and an oral overview of the key themes.

The Board noted that the staff survey had provided a mainly positive endorsement about working at the College. However, governors asked for a progress report to be received by the Quality and Standards Committee related to the few areas of concern.

**JO**

Governors asked about the correlation between some staff rating 'being listened to' as low and the provision of leadership development training. The many formats to hear the staff voice were explained along with the work to improve leadership development. Governors would receive additional assurance on this in the coming months.

**GN**

The Board asked whether there had been any analysis related to the age profile and sickness absence which had both increased. It was acknowledged that the age profile had increased for the first time and some analysis of the possible impact would be provided to a future meeting.

**GN**

The Board challenged that the diversity of the workforce could be improved to be more representative of the South West region. The College had prioritised the need to fill vacancies, however the People team is now proactively attending recruitment events and will increase the focus on diversity going forward.

Governors queried the disparity between the salary of a FE college teacher and a sixth form college teacher. Class sizes were considered a factor but it was explained that Exeter College manages its class sizes well and therefore teacher pay is more comparable with sixth form college pay.

The Board highlighted the need to increase the response rate of exit questionnaires. The People team intends to encourage information gathering by automating a prompt through the people first system. It

was also suggested that improved promotion of the availability of exit interviews would help.

The Board expressed surprise to note that staffing numbers had not increased along with student numbers. The role of Associate Lecturers was highlighted as having an impact, along with some faculties reducing in size.

The Board supported trying to ensure that regulatory training was as engaging and interactive as possible.

### **The Board thanked the Executive Director of People and Organisational Development and noted the HR Annual Report**

- 5.4 Meeting the Skills Need  
The Board received the skills update and agreed the assurance process whereby the Accountability Agreement would be scrutinised by the Quality and Standards Committee prior to Board approval.

The Board requested that a reference to the relationship with the SWIoT is included along with the total number of job postings split by sector.

The Board noted the report and agreed to receive the Heart of the South West document.

**RB**

### **6. Learner Voice**

#### **6.1 College News**

The report was received and taken as read.

### **The Board noted the report**

#### **6.2 Learner Voice update**

The report was received and taken as read.

## **Part 2 REPORTS FOR NOTING/APPROVAL**

### **7. Recommendations from Search and Governance Committee**

- 7.1 Executive Summary from Committee Meeting on 18 September 2023  
The report summarising the key issues considered by the Search and Governance Committee meeting held on 18 September 2023 was received and noted.

#### **7.2 Appointments**

The Committee had reviewed the CV of Stephen Wiltshire, MD of Exeter Airport and the Board noted that he had met with the Sue Clarke, the Principal/CEO and the Head of Governance. Stephen's skills and expertise was felt to be of significant benefit to complement the skills of existing Board members. The Committee recommended that Stephen

Wiltshire is appointed to the Board and that he is invited to serve on the Business Services Committee.

**The Board approved the appointment of Stephen Wiltshire as a governor of Exeter College with effect from 1 November 2023 and agreed to invite Stephen to serve on the Business Services Committee**

### 7.3 Governance Policies

The Committee had reviewed the following governance policies:

- Associates of the College
- Attendance of Non-Committee Members at Committee meetings
- Complaints against the Board, Board Members and the Head of Governance
- Conflicts of Interest and Register of Interests
- Governor Appointments and Removal

The Board received the summary of changes and the Committee recommended the governance policies to the Board for approval.

**The Board approved the governance policies**

### 7.4 Terms of Reference

The Board received the summary of changes for all committee terms of reference which the Committee recommended for approval.

**The Board approved the terms of reference for all committees**

### 7.5 Standing Orders

The Committee had reviewed the Standing Orders and the Board received the summary of changes. The Committee recommended the updated Standing Orders to the Board for approval.

**The Board approved the revised Standing Orders**

### 7.6 Governance SAR 2022/2023

All committees and the Board had undertaken a self-assessment in the summer term to identify areas of impact and those for consideration. It was noted that the Committee would be undertaking additional work on succession planning for the Board, the Vice and Chair and the Chair of the Corporation. The Committee recommended the Governance SAR to the Board for approval.

**The Board approved the Governance SAR 2022/2023**

## 8. Recommendations from Remuneration Committee

### 8.1 Executive Summary from Committee Meeting on 18 September 2023

The report summarising the key issues considered by the Remuneration Committee meeting held on 18 September 2023 was received and noted.

The Committee Vice Chair explained the role of the Committee and the Board noted that the end of year performance reviews for the senior post holders had taken place and all had been positive. The Committee had agreed performance objectives and was working towards setting longer term targets for the senior post holders. It was noted that external independent support had been secured for the Principal/CEO's appraisal, although this is not common practice in Further Education. The Committee was mindful of the need to oversee succession planning for the senior post holders.

- 8.2 Remuneration Committee Annual Report 2022/2023  
The Committee had received the Remuneration Committee Annual Report for 2022/2023 and recommended it to the Board for approval.

**The Board approved the Remuneration Committee annual report for 2022/2023**

9. **Recommendations from Business Services Committee**  
9.1 Executive Summary from Committee Meeting on 25 September 2023  
The report summarising the key issues considered by the Business Services Committee meeting held on 25 September 2023 was received and noted.

The Committee Chair highlighted the items that had been agreed within the Principal/CEO's opportunities and developments report. The additional focus on sustainability and net zero was noted and the Board noted its thanks to Stewart Noakes for his role as lead governor.

- 9.2 Financial Regulations 2023, Financial Regulations Appendices 2023 and Financial Procedures 2023  
The Committee recommended the Financial Regulations and Procedures 2023 to the Board.

**The Board approved the Financial Regulations 2023, Financial Regulations Appendices 2023 and Financial Procedures 2023**

10. **Recommendations from Quality and Standards Committee**  
10.1 Executive Summary from Committee Meeting on 2 October 2023.  
The report summarising the key issues considered by the Quality and Standards Committee meeting held on 2 October 2023 was received and noted.

The Committee Chair particularly thanked staff for their efforts supporting local refugees in taking GCSE exams. The Board was pleased to note that all 16-18 refugees still attended and that the College had

ensured they had all progressed onto Level 3 courses. Governors had received an update on the impact of catch-up funding and an explanation as to how the funding would be used in this academic year.

The Board noted that Bindu Arjoon had agreed to take on the role of link governor for careers.

The Committee had received the EDBV annual report and had noted the progress with the EDBV action plan. The Stakeholder Feedback report had been received and governors had requested additional information related to the timeliness of responding to complaints.

### **The Board noted the report**

- 10.2 Residential Ofsted Report and Action Plan  
The Board received the Ofsted report and action plan.

### **The Board noted the report**

## **PART 3: REPORTS AND MINUTES FOR INFORMATION**

1. **Reports**  
The following reports were **received and noted**.
  - 11.1 Opportunities and Developments Risk Register
  - 11.2 Sustainability report
  - 11.3 ICT annual report
  - 11.4 Catch-up funding
  - 11.5 EDBV annual report
  - 12.6 Stakeholder Feedback report
  - 11.7 Letter from FE Commissioner
  - 11.8 Governance and Sealings report
12. **Dates of scheduled meetings for 2023/2024**
  - 8 December 2023
  - 19 April 2024
  - 5 July 2024

The Chair thanked all those in attendance and reminded governors that the staff leading on the development of the new strategic plan would be joining for lunch.

Signed by the Chair 

Date: 8<sup>th</sup> December 2024